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TOWARD SOLVING THE TEACHER-STUDENT CONTRADICTION:

USING WHOLE-CLASS WORKSHOPS TO CREATE A STUDENT-

FOCUSED, RHIZOMIC WRITING COMMUNITY

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A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

English Composition

_____

by

Bridgette Mary Callahan

December 2012

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ABSTRACT

In the well-received *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* first published in the US in 1970, the late Paulo Freire spoke of the teacher-student contradiction and called for its solution. According to Freire, polarized views of teacher-experts and student-novices create a contradiction because, in truth, no such black and white roles for teachers and students exist. Freire embraces both/and versus either/or notions of teachers and students and rejects what he calls the banking concept of education, in which teachers "deposit" knowledge into passive students.

Theorists have long spoken of solving the teacher-student contradiction, but many teachers, in practice, find it difficult to create depolarized classrooms, classrooms in which the roles of teacher and student overlap. As one way to create such classrooms, composition teachers have advocated small-group workshops (SGWs) since the late 1960s. While SGWs have become a well-established, well-researched part of composition theory, compositionists have largely ignored SGW's larger counterpart—the whole-class workshop (WCW)—despite numerous benefits. Among these benefits, WCWs represent an ideal way to move away from banking-concept teaching and toward classrooms that encourage active dialogue between teacher and students. With this thesis, I will examine WCWs as a new solution to the teacher-student contradiction and thus add a study of WCWs to composition scholarship.

Chapter One opens with a discussion of Freire's notions of the teacher-student contradiction and the banking concept. This chapter then defines and explores the student-focused classroom, exploring the literature that discusses teacher and student roles in such classrooms, and ends with a discussion of the principles of flexible authority and complementarity.

Chapter Two examines both SGWs and WCWs, exploring their history, process, as well as their benefits and drawbacks and paying special attention to how the benefits and drawbacks of each type relate to student-focused classrooms. This chapter's exploration outlines the procedures for running either SGWs or WCWs. Together, Chapters One and Two set a theoretical foundation for a study of how WCWs can create student-focused classrooms in practice.

Chapter Three retrospectively examines my own classroom's WCWs, using the rhizome—a type of stem that grows horizontally into an interconnected root network—to demonstrate how and why WCWs can reduce the binary between teacher and students and create a student-focused writing community. This chapter begins by discussing my preparations for running WCWs in my composition classroom, for studying them retrospectively, and for analyzing them with the rhizome. Chapter Three then examines the WCW as a student-focused classroom, a writing community, and a site of dis-cussion or chaos.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In memory of my dad, Jerry Callahan

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CHAPTER ONE

EXAMINING THE TEACHER-STUDENT CONTRADICTION

AND THE STUDENT-FOCUSED CLASSROOM

If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts.

But if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties.

—Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*

That is the beginning of knowledge—

the discovery of something we do not understand.

—Frank Herbert, *God Emperor of Dune*

As we prepare to adopt new roles in life, we often theorize ourselves as inhabiting the role in one way or another. The summer before my first quarter as a first-year composition instructor (a mentored teaching associate), I struggled with two contradictory images of myself as a teacher. On the one hand, I pictured myself as the wise teacher who knows something about everything her students bring up, the teacher my father, if he had had the chance, would have embodied. On the other hand, I saw myself standing in front of the classroom with my own paltry knowledge and nothing wise to offer my students. Ultimately, both my aspiration to wisdom and my fear of a lack thereof led me to identify with the sort of teacher Parker Palmer, who often writes on teaching and education, speaks of: "[S]ome teachers get nervous about the need to 'cover the field.' They feel obliged to deliver large numbers of facts that students simply must

master" ("Good Teaching" 12). I felt responsible to immerse my students in the genres and techniques of academic writing and to ensure that they left my classroom at least having begun to master those genres and techniques.

As I stepped into the classroom, however, I found the image of myself as a font of knowledge distracting, and as the quarter progressed I began to shirk the burden and pressure of filling the omniscient professor's shoes. I remembered Charles Dickens' description of Mr. Gradgrind in *Hard Times*—as "a kind of cannon loaded to the muzzle with facts" (11)—and realized that I had no desire to fill the shoes of educators such as that. In my own shoes, I identified more with compositionist Donna Qualley's "tentative teacher-learner, filled with uncertainty about what she is doing, yet energized and . . . proceeding nevertheless" (2). I began to realize that I didn't need complete certainty of my myself as a teacher and that I didn't need to know everything—instead, I could direct my energy toward being open to my students' perspectives and to the knowledge *they* could contribute. Granted, they didn't always say wise things, but my respect for their ideas allowed us to step toward knowledge and wisdom together. In other words, after encountering the reality of myself in the classroom, I no longer aspired to the role of teacher-expert.

Many teachers, in fact, refuse to assume the role of expert, standing authoritatively at the front of the classroom, or to cast their students in the role of novice, sitting passively and absorbing the teacher's expertise. Such teachers do not see their students as, to return to Dickens, empty "vessels . . . ready to

have imperial gallons of facts poured into them" (10). On the contrary, many teachers believe that their students have much to offer by way of knowledge and that teaching should involve a reciprocal give and take more than a one-sided conveyance of the teacher's knowledge. Such teachers prefer the learner's shoes to those of the expert. The late Paulo Freire, a Marxist philosopher and professor of education, has served as a model for teachers who value learning from their students as much as they value teaching them. For Freire, the ideal teacher is a "student among students" (*Pedagogy* 75).

<p style="text-align:center">Defining the Teacher-Student Contradiction</p>

In his ground-breaking *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, published in Portuguese in 1968 and English in 1970, Freire speaks against what he calls the " 'banking' concept of education," in which teachers deposit facts and figures into silent, submissive students (72). In this view, "students are to be 'filled' with words [and ideas] the teachers have chosen" and "not born of the creative effort of the learners" ("Adult" 207; 208). In classrooms founded on the banking concept, Freire points to the binary relationship between teachers and students: "[K]nowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing" (72). Teachers and their expertise, that is, rest at one side of the pole, waiting to impart the gift of knowledge, whereas students and their deficits rest at the other, waiting to receive it. This teacher-student, expert-novice dichotomy parallels John Locke's

notion of a student as a *tabula rasa*—the knowledgeable teacher actively fills the "blank slate" of a passive student's mind. For Freire, such dichotomized views create the "teacher-student contradiction" because, in reality, the either/or extremes of expert and novice do not exist. He instead asserts that the teacher and students "are simultaneously teachers *and* students" (72), actively creating knowledge together.

Charles Deemer, a compositionist writing in 1967, similarly speaks against the binary created by traditional notions of teachers and students, referring to the "fragmentation of the composition course" into teaching (the " 'teacher' speaks from his place in the front of the classroom") and learning ("the class in the rear listens or pretends to"). Deemer puts his assertion in psychological terms when he adds that the "fragmentation" or "division is as clear as stimulus and response. Lecture and note-taking." (121). Deemer calls to mind disturbing Pavlovian images as he describes the fragmented classroom as a dichotomy between the front/" 'teacher'-as-wise-authority" and the back/"class-as-recipient-of-knowledge" (121). In the fragmented classroom, the teacher's lecture acts as stimulus and the students' note taking as response and no give and take interactions between teacher and students take place. In order to create less fragmented and more balanced classrooms, Deemer calls for active student roles akin to those of Freire, describing education as a dynamic experience or "happening" that involves "*both* students and 'teacher' " (122).

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Teachers who wish to solve the teacher-student contradiction need to replace lectures with a pedagogy that focuses on the students and their ideas—indeed, the lecture seldom registers in today's composition theory. As Brock Dethier asserts in his teaching guidebook *First Time Up*, lectures have "been largely discredited in composition classrooms, and now we strive for the anti-lecture, where students end up explaining their new understanding to their teachers" (103). The focus, then, shifts from the teacher to the students and their knowledge, knowledge they have either brought to or learned in class. As Kenya Thompkins puts it, "They bring with them their own literacies and understandings of the English language. The writing classroom is a wonderful place for the exchange of ideas and no longer are teachers expected to assume the traditional authoritative role where they demonstrate their level of expertise by lecturing for an entire hour" (6).

But what does an "anti-lecture" in the practice of a composition classroom look like? Today's composition classrooms tend to focus on large-group discussions—on the anti-lecture that takes place when teacher and students discuss a text's meaning or an author's rhetorical techniques. In addition to group discussion, composition teachers have used small-group peer review to create depolarized classrooms since the late 1960s, though theorists such as Jennifer Maher—writing more than thirty years later—still discuss the necessity of finding ways to solve the teacher-student contradiction (87). Moreover, where composition teachers commonly rely on small groups, they rarely turn to large-

group, whole-class peer review. As evidence of this, compositionist Ian Barnard points out that we in composition tend to conflate the terms "peer review" and "small-group workshop" (SGW) (126). While Barnard admits that it took a colleague three years to convince him to try large-group workshops, he now says that he "cannot imagine teaching composition without whole-class workshops" (125). In a whole-class workshop (WCW), the teacher and students as a group review student papers—a large-group discussion (or anti-lecture) that focuses on student writing. For me, WCWs present an ideal means to creating a classroom in which the teacher does not represent expert and the students do not represent novices, a classroom in which the teacher and students learn and create knowledge together.

With this thesis, I suggest WCWs as one way to resolve the teacher-student contradiction, as a practical solution to our theoretical discussions of reducing the expert-novice binary. In the remainder of Chapter One, I will discuss teacher and student roles in classrooms that seek to create balanced teacher-student relationships, exploring the literature that discusses such roles and classrooms. In Chapter Two, I will examine both SGWs and WCWs, exploring their history, process, as well as their benefits and drawbacks. I will pay special attention to how the benefits and drawbacks of each type relate to student-focused classrooms. In Chapter Three, I will examine my own experiences using WCWs in the composition classroom, using the rhizome—a type of stem that grows horizontally into an interconnected root network—to

demonstrate how and why WCWs can reduce the binary between teacher and students and create student-focused classrooms. To begin, I will answer the following questions in Chapter One, using Freire as my project's foundation: What do teacher and student roles look like in classrooms that have begun to solve the teacher-student contradiction? And what does such a classroom look like? More specifically, do any key elements or principles stand out in examining such teachers, students, and classrooms?

Defining a Student-Focused Classroom

In order to move away from the banking concept and its focus on the teacher, we need to find practical ways to allow teachers to shift the classroom's focus to the students. I don't mean to say that we should shift *all* the focus to the students, but rather that the teacher and students should share the spotlight, so to speak, in order to create classrooms that encourage a joint formation of knowledge. While theorists such as Palmer and compositionists such as Dethier use the term "student-*centered,*" I prefer the term "student-focused." Yes, student-focused involves much the same concept as student-centered, but student-*focused* downplays the visual image and extreme notion of the classroom revolving around the students. In my conception of the student-focused classroom, the teacher does place much of the focus on the students and their ideas, but the teacher and her ideas also play a role. In other words, teachers in a student-focused environment seek to balance the limelight between themselves and the students, avoiding the either/or extremes of student- versus

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teacher-centered. In Freire's terms, teachers must become "partners of the students" (*Pedagogy* 75)—partners in the sense of sharing the focus—as they create a depolarized environment that strives to balance the teacher's and the students' ideas and perspectives.

As one way to balance the teacher-student relationship, Freire outlines the "problem-posing" education, asserting that it "consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information" as it "breaks with the vertical patterns characteristic of banking education" (79; 80). For Freire, the problem-posing concept equalizes the relationship between teachers and students, such that the teacher no longer stands at the front of the classroom doling out information to silent students, but rather conducts an anti-lecture as she poses texts, topics, and issues as matters of discussion. Such teachers expect students to ask questions, to think and speak for themselves, and to actively participate in creating knowledge. Thompkins, for example, believes in asking "students questions about various topics" to foster an "exchange of ideas" (6), and Carlyn Maddox asserts that "all a teacher has to do is ask questions" because "[s]tudents have stories and will love to tell them to you—if you ask" (64-65). Ultimately, asking questions—whether about the day's topics or the students themselves—leads to what Maddox calls "a continual verbal back-and-forth" (64). In other words, asking questions opens an active classroom dialogue, a key aspect of Freire's theory.

According to Freire, "Through dialogue, . . . a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is . . . himself taught in dialogue

with the students. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow" (80). As opposed to the dichotomized, one-sided roles teachers and students hold in the banking concept, teachers and students involved in problem posing participate in creative, interactive, and reciprocal knowledge-making. Students become dynamic members of such classrooms: "The students—no longer docile listeners—are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher" (81). Moreover, the late compositionist Donald Murray puts Freire's "co-investigators" into composition terms when he labels the "discoveries [teachers and students] make together" as the "energizing force which drives the writing course forward. Because of this force, the teacher becomes less important towards the end of the writing course. . . . [T]he teacher is not leading but hurrying after them, trying to keep up" ("Teach" 60). Rather than Foucauldian docile bodies (1637; 1642)—students who have been conditioned into passivity and silence—Freire and Murray envision students as dynamic, vital members of the classroom who investigate, discuss, and create knowledge *with* the teacher. For me, dynamic teacher-student dialogue must take place in student-focused classrooms, but I see dialogue as only one key element of such classrooms.

Characteristics of the Student-Focused Classroom

What does a student-focused classroom entail? What characteristics, that is, might Freire wish to see in an active, problem-solving classroom? In the student-focused classroom I envision, several key elements emerge—teachers

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who aim for humility and an open mind; students whose teachers encourage them to participate actively in class and to speak from experience and in their own voices; and classrooms that exist as sites of active discussions that may lead to disagreement and chaos but also to real learning. These themes arose as I reviewed the literature that discusses anti-banking concept, student-focused classrooms, classrooms in which the teacher aims not to fill the shoes of an expert, but rather those of a humble, open-minded learner.

The Teacher—Humble and Open-Minded

A teacher's humility plays a fundamental role in the student-focused classroom. In order to balance the teacher-student contradiction, teachers must humbly step down from their pedestals, for as Dethier puts it, "the higher the stool, the less human you can be" (107). Without humility, a teacher will find it difficult to take the role of learner—and to allow students to take the role of teacher—in order to share the classroom's focus. For compositionist Jennifer Maher, who grounds her concept of "invitational interaction" in Freire's ideas, teachers need to express humility by exposing themselves "as people who are indeed reflecting critically upon the world in which they exist and, also, as people who invite and are open to others investigating for themselves such matters" (92). Maher's invitational interaction contains two key points: Firstly, teachers should humbly present themselves as learners by allowing students to see them considering and "reflecting critically" on classroom matters at hand. Secondly,

they should invite their students to think critically, to discuss their ideas, and to arrive at their own, perhaps different, answers.

Maher focuses on the way teachers externally position themselves in relation to their students, whereas Lad Tobin and John Gaughan advocate humbly turning inward as part of effective teaching. Tobin, who often writes on the teacher-student relationship, offers himself as a model of a teacher self-reflecting on how his beliefs and values affect his teaching: "I need to discover in what ways my biases and assumptions—both conscious and unconscious—are shaping my teaching" ("Reading Students" 347). Tobin asks that we study our own perspectives in order to understand how they affect our pedagogies and interactions with students, as does Freire when he claims that "the educator must strive for an ever greater clarity as to what, at times without his conscious knowledge, illumines his path" ("Adult" 212). Gaughan, too, calls for self-awareness and self-examination, asking us to consider not only our own perceptions but also "how they evolved" ("From Literature" 318).

In addition to examining our own views and their genesis, Qualley asks us to consider our ideas in relation to those of other people. In a process she calls "reflexive inquiry," she asks teachers to persistently and self-critically turn "back to discover, examine, and critique one's claims and assumptions in response to an encounter with another idea, text, person, or culture" (3). Freire, too, advocates self-reflection that considers other people, pointing out that a "problem-posing educator constantly re-forms his reflections in the reflection of

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the students. . . . The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers her earlier considerations as the students express their own" (*Pedagogy* 80-81). Freire's problem-posing teacher tries to keep her mind open and flexible by considering her own perspectives against those of the students, revising her own when necessary. Qualley and Freire believe that teachers should not only affirm *themselves* as open and flexible but also the *ideas* they bring into the classroom, thus allowing students to see knowledge as dynamic and approachable versus static and closed. To combine self-awareness with Maher's invitational interaction, if a teacher openly reflects on her own ideas in relation to those of the students, she sets a classroom precedence for being open to another person's perspective.

For Freire, self-reflection plays an important role in creating a new type of classroom because "reflection—true reflection—leads to action" (*Pedagogy* 66). In other words, only teachers who critically examine themselves and their classrooms can change the way they teach. Freire believes that teachers should acknowledge themselves "as beings in the process of *becoming*—as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality" (84). Teachers, then, who engage in "true reflection" and humbly view themselves and their teaching as engaged in a "process of becoming" can bring change to the classroom. For Freire and the other theorists, teachers should foster an environment in which teacher and students alike have room to grow, shift, and change, an interactive environment in which a teacher's humility rests at the

forefront, for "dialogue cannot exist without humility" (Freire 90). Humility in the form of self-reflection plays an important role in the student-focused classroom—only teachers who willingly examine and challenge their own beliefs can encourage students to do the same. In the words of Freire, a teacher is "a person constantly readjusting his knowledge" as he dialogues with and "calls forth knowledge from his students" ("Adult" 217-18).

The Students—Active and Experienced

A teacher's humility directly relates to whether or not students will be willing to express themselves—classrooms founded on principles such as invitational interaction, reflexive inquiry, and problem posing encourage students to actively participate and share their experiences. In her insightful essay "When the First Voice You Hear Is Not Your Own," compositionist Jacqueline Jones Royster warns of the danger of speaking at versus with our students, of the danger of not speaking from humility: "Students may find what we do to be alienating and disheartening. Even when our intentions are quite honorable, silence can descend. Their experiences are not seen, and their voices are not heard" (1125). Further, Royster, a black American, describes the alienating experience of being forced to listen silently as " 'authorities' " speak for and about a community she calls "me and mine" (1118)—Royster reminds us that we must avoid pushing our "expert" version of stories onto our students, for our "expertise" might shut them down and silence them. Similarly, Palmer believes that teachers should focus on their students' subjective life stories and "autobiographies" rather

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than the universal truths and "super-stories" of objectivism ("Good Teaching" 13)—truths and stories, no doubt, such as the authoritative claims that Royster resists. For Royster and Palmer, we should not force our own expertise and truths on our students and should instead listen openly to *their* stories. In Palmer's terms, teachers should allow knowledge and autobiography to intersect (14). The teacher in a student-focused classroom, with humility and an open mind, should encourage students to build knowledge from their own experiences.

Gaughan, author of several books on teaching, similarly touts the importance of encouraging students to begin with their own knowledge and perspectives, asserting that students need to self-reflect, "to examine where they are and where they're coming from" (*Reinventing English* 7). While Gaughan teaches high school English, his pedagogy demands much of his students and thus translates well to the college writing classroom. Like Freire, Gaughan wants his students to think critically and for themselves: "I don't want to cow students into compliance—to have them write what they think I want to hear" ("From Literature" 313), so "I question or suggest rather than insist or prescribe. . . . I try to make them think—but not exactly as I do. I share my point of view but welcome theirs" (325). Gaughan clearly respects his students' ideas as he creates a balance between their views and his own. Deemer outlines a similar student role: "The goal is a class of students actively aware and participant, a class that does not swallow the 'teacher's' remarks but *considers* them" (123). Similar to our other theorists' classrooms, Gaughan's and Deemer's classrooms

represent an environment in which teachers encourage their students to share their perspectives and experiences and to thus take a hand in creating knowledge.

Tobin also wants to push his students to think, but he adds a personal element to the mix: "I *want* to meddle with my students' emotional lives, and I want their writing to meddle with *mine*" ("Reading Students" 342). For Tobin, asking students to speak and write about their personal experiences leads to a classroom in which teacher and students, ideally, "meddle" with each other's thinking, a classroom in which such "writing relationships . . . can allow us to accomplish and become all sorts of things that we could not do or be on our own" (*Writing Relationships* 17). For Tobin, the composition classroom represents a place of community in which teacher and students complement each other and help each other grow, a place in which they push each other to think. Further, Tobin's classroom operates on principles similar to the problem posing of Freire's classroom: Tobin believes in posing and exposing problems in the classroom, asserting that the "teaching of writing is about solving problems, personal and public" ("Reading Students" 342). Both Freire and Tobin encourage the growth of students and teachers through thought-provoking interactions and open, active discussions of personal experiences and public issues, discussions that force "the revision of what is already known so [teachers and students] can know it better" (Freire "Dialogue" 383). In other words, many theorists call not only for

students to share their experiences but also for students to critically examine and reflect on them (e.g., Freire and Macedo 380-385).

The Classroom—Dialogue, Dis-cussion, and Chaos

As students examine their beliefs and try to reconcile them in relation to those of their classmates, dynamic dialogues and discussions will (hopefully) occur. A look at the etymology of the word "discuss" sheds light on the meaning behind the word and on its usefulness as a concept for active classroom dialogue. The word "discuss" derives from the prefix *dis-*, meaning "apart," and the word *quatere*, meaning "to shake" (think of the suffix -*cuss* as in "con*cuss*ion" or "per*cuss*ion"). This leads us, then, to the idea of dis-cussing or dis-cussion as *shaking things apart*—of interacting or dialoguing in order to shake our ideas apart.

For both Maher and Freire, dialogue plays a fundamental role in the student-focused classroom. Maher describes "fruitful interaction" as an essential aspect of the classroom (86)—"interaction" as in back and forth discussion between teacher and students and "fruitful" as in something will result from the interaction. While interaction between teacher and students represents an important first step, teachers must encourage students to express their own ideas for any real knowledge to result from classroom interactions. In Freire's terms, a teacher can "initiate" the act of dialogue (*Pedagogy* 169), but the students must participate in a dialogic exchange of ideas in order to arrive at genuine knowledge, otherwise the learning amounts to nothing more than the

banking concept's rote memorization of predigested facts and conclusions. A student-focused classroom cannot exist without active student participation and interactions.

Dialogue and social interaction, then, rest at the heart of creating knowledge. Freire believes that teachers should not impose their own certainty and ideas on students, defining "imposition" as the willful refusal "to present alternatives and multiple points of reference" ("Dialogue" 390). Contrary to the banking concept's static, positivistic facts waiting for teachers to impose them on students, English professor Carolyn Miller sees "facts" as socially constructed: "Facts do not exist independently, waiting to be found and collected and systematized; facts are human constructions which presuppose theories" (615). For Miller, human beings in dialogue construct facts, theories, and knowledge. Similarly, Palmer speaks of the "objectivist myth's" notion that "[o]bjects of knowledge . . . reside 'out there' somewhere" (*Courage* 102), passively awaiting discovery. On the contrary, says Palmer, "In the community of truth, as in real life, there are no pristine objects of knowledge and no ultimate authorities. . . . In the community of truth, knowing and teaching and learning look less like General Motors and more like a town meeting, less like a bureaucracy and more like bedlam" (104). Just as Miller sees facts and theories as actively constructed versus passively discovered, Palmer's "community of truth"—described as "circular, interactive, and dynamic" (106)—sees knowledge as fluid and created in dialogue between people rather than as one-size-fits-all facts systematically

fed to people in an assembly line (the fact awaits discovery, the scientist discovers it, the teacher delivers it, and the student receives it). In an assembly line, inert packages of knowledge are neatly handed down from person to person—something akin to Alfred North Whitehead's "inert ideas," which "are merely received into the mind without being utilised [sic], or tested, or thrown into fresh combinations" (1). In a town meeting, however, people create knowledge in dialogue, dialogue that may lead to the messy "bedlam" and chaos that meetings of diverse minds often entail.

The potential for chaos clearly exists in these sorts of meetings or discussions, especially if you think not only of shaking our ideas but also of shaking them *apart* and trying to reconcile them in light of other people's ideas. As opposed to resisting such chaos, many teachers affirm it as a way to foster learning. Indeed, dynamic class discussions may help us grow in knowledge—either by coming to a better understanding of our own ideas or by recognizing inconsistencies or errors as we examine our ideas from other perspectives. As Qualley puts it, "Even though we may not adopt another's interpretation in the end, we may find that dialogue with other perspectives can help us to illuminate or rethink our own" (146). Qualley adds that students need to become comfortable with disagreement, for retreating to relativism—falling back on the notion that " 'everyone's entitled to their own opinion' "—or merely agreeing to disagree will not result in real learning; instead, we should encourage open dialogues and "productive conversations" (147-49).

To the fruitful, productive interactions of which Maher and Qualley speak, Palmer inserts an element of tension, asserting that "there is no knowing without conflict" ("Community, Conflict" 25). Palmer calls for "creative conflict," which he defines as the "ability to confront each other critically and honestly over alleged facts, imputed meanings, or personal biases and prejudices" (25). In other words, an ideal learning environment grants students the freedom to critically, honestly examine matters that arise in the classroom, because even though such atmospheres may lead to friction, they may also lead to knowledge. For Palmer, a "healthy [classroom] community . . . includes conflict at its very heart, checking and correcting and enlarging the knowledge of individuals by drawing on the knowledge of the group" ("Community, Conflict" 25). Creative conflict, then, amounts to a form of conflict that creates rather than distributes knowledge, and such productive conflict can only take place when teachers welcome a diversity of opinions and encourage dialogue and dis-cussion.

Palmer's creative conflict meshes well with Gaughan's notion of an effective classroom, which he describes as "a forum to air different views, to consider controversy, to shake foundations" ("From Literature" 318). Gaughan aims for a classroom in which students can freely explore different perspectives and the issues that surround them in order to shake the ideas and test their strength. Gaughan does not want his students to simply accept " 'the way things have always been' " without thought (311), pointing out that inviting versus avoiding conflict might push students to see things in new ways (318). Gaughan

thus welcomes the chaos that wrestling with new ideas and perspectives may breed. Ultimately, for both Palmer and Gaughan, opening the classroom to disharmony may also open it to new knowledge and even enlightenment.

In addition to Qualley, other composition theorists uphold the importance of conflict in classrooms, especially in classrooms that seek to create knowledge through dialogue. Joseph Harris, for one, not only anticipates but also aspires to classroom discord: "I would expect and hope for a kind of useful dissonance as students are confronted with ways of talking about the world with which they are not yet wholly familiar" (754). For Harris, teachers who encourage students to engage and discuss new ideas should expect the "useful dissonance" that may accompany clashing opinions. Further, as Ann Berthoff resists the idea of positivistic truth, she points out that disorder may lead students to make meaning and sense of new ideas: "Meanings do not come out of the air; *we make them* out of a chaos of images, half-truths, remembrances, syntactic fragments, from the mysterious and unformed" (648, emphasis added). While some of this chaos ricochets around students' brains as they grapple with new ideas, some of the chaos may also ricochet around the classroom during active discussions. Harris and Berthoff, then, see dissonance and chaos as useful tools of the learning process, as tools that enable students to tackle and make sense of new ideas through classroom interactions. Dis-cussion and chaos thus play important roles in student-focused classrooms that seek to lead students to knowledge rather

than to spoon-feed it to them. In a classroom dialogue, the teacher opens the classroom to perspectives other than just her own.

To tie everything together, a pedagogy of openness runs through each element of the student-focused classroom: Teachers demonstrate both a sense of humility and an open mind in regard to their own opinions. Students openly, actively share and consider their perspectives and experiences. And the classroom revolves around active dialogue as teachers open it to dis-cussion and chaos as useful tools of learning. In the student-focused classroom, balancing the focus between teacher and students reduces the teacher-student hierarchy, and in such a classroom, the teacher's authority becomes essential.

The Principles of Flexible Authority and Complementarity

As teachers have attempted to solve the teacher-student contradiction, some theorists assert that classroom interactions have swung too far in the other direction—that is, some teachers have shifted too much focus and emphasis to the students. According to Palmer, a "pedagogy based on an antithetical principle has arisen: students and the act of learning are more important than teachers and the act of teaching. The student is regarded as a reservoir of knowledge to be tapped" and "there is sometimes a tendency toward mindless relativism" (*Courage* 118; 122). Freire, too, speaks of teachers who inadvertently yield too much authority as they seek to share the floor and create dialogue—he cautions against "falling prey to a laissez-faire practice" and becoming "a

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facilitator who merely orchestrates the participation of students in pure verbalism" ("Dialogue" 379; 383). Rather than seeing students as empty vessels, teachers at this extreme of the pole see students as chockfull of knowledge, and such teachers may encourage students to express themselves without encouraging them to problematize or question their views. Consequently, such classrooms may lose opportunities for dialogue and debate—not to mention growth and learning—as the focus shifts too far toward the students and their ideas.

As opposed to positivism's single correct answer, a classroom too centered on the students may end up with countless, perhaps contradictory answers. In order to prevent such quandaries, teachers should encourage a dialogue—and perhaps a bit of chaos—that allows the class to examine the various responses, rather than just quietly accepting that each person's perspective is correct relative to their own beliefs, cultures, and experiences. Both Palmer and Freire recognize that solving the teacher-student contradiction involves more than simply sharing the floor with our students: For Palmer, teaching "can never be reduced to [a] technique" such as putting "chairs in a circle and hav[ing] a conversation" (118). For Freire, we must not view dialogue "as a mere tactic" but rather "as a process of learning and knowing" (379; 382).

Students, then, should have a voice in our classrooms, but not at the expense of the teacher's voice. According to Tobin, the "notion of teacher-as-non-authority developed as a necessary stage of antithesis to the thesis offered by traditional classroom teachers" ("Reading Students" 339), but, adds Tobin,

"the new role most process teachers have adopted is in many respects as narrow and rigid as the old one. I'm referring to teachers who describe themselves as 'facilitators' (as if they have no agenda of their own, or rather, as if their agenda is not important)" (338). For Palmer, Freire, and Tobin, the pendulum between teacher- and student-centered classrooms has swung too far toward the students—as teachers have moved away from the rigid confines of the banking concept, they may have moved to the opposite pole, the just-as-rigid confines of the teacher with no agenda and no claim to authority.

Freire swings us toward reality as he points out that "while facilitators may veil their power, at any moment they can exercise power as they wish" and that "[t]eachers maintain a certain level of authority through the depth and breadth of knowledge of the subject matter that they teach" (378). Freire's assertions are twofold: Firstly, teachers hold the classroom authority whether or not they will admit it, and secondly teachers can and should assert subject-matter expertise. Freire calls us to solve the teacher-student contradiction, but teachers cannot create balanced, student-focused classrooms if they allow themselves to become "a shadow of their learners" (379) as they attempt to reduce the shadow that the teacher behind the podium casts on students—indeed, Freire also calls for teachers and students to become partners in the enterprise of learning.

While the term "student-focused" might seem to imply that rules and order, along with the teacher, take a back seat in such classrooms, authority actually plays a fundamental role in the student-focused classroom, which challenges

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traditional teacher-student roles. We can't, of course, conceive of authority in the same terms as in traditional classrooms, in terms of teachers holding all the authority. Instead, we need to view authority in student-focused classrooms in new terms, in terms of a flexible form of authority that focuses more on how teachers and students resemble each other, than on how they differ. Thomas Nilsen's "flexible authority" meets the needs of such classrooms: Nilsen acknowledges that authority appears "to be essential to human organizations," but couples this recognition with the caveat that a group's leadership must also respect its members. According to Nilsen, "if human dignity is to be preserved, the structure must be flexible enough to adapt to the changing needs of people, and the authority limited, conditional, and exercised with prudence" (77). As Nilsen points out, flexible authority can lead to a form of authority that focuses more on "human dignity"—on our common bond of humanity—and less on the separation between the leader and the led. Flexible authority thus renders authority as "limited" and "conditional" according to what we share as human beings. This form of authority allows a leader to either apply authority/expertise or to step aside and yield the authority to someone else.

As a model of flexible authority, we can look to psychology's "authoritative" parenting style, which psychologists advocate as the most effective style. Parents who avoid the extremes of either "authoritarian" or "permissive" parenting give their children equal measures of leadership and independence, and these children tend to prosper under such balanced conditions. Teachers,

too, can aim to give students both the guidance they need to explore unfamiliar ideas and the independence to appraise things for themselves. Many teachers believe that we must strive for a balance between teacher- and student-focused classrooms. Dethier, for example, in a discussion on teachers and humility, asserts that we need to find a balance between the "know-it-all" "grammar police" and the unassuming co-learner—teachers, that is, need "confidence without arrogance, humility without humiliation" (106). While Dethier supports teacher humility, he points out that saying "I don't know" too often may damage credibility and weaken authority. Dethier calls for balance in the teacher-student relationship, asking not for a teacher who never exerts authority or expertise, but rather for a teacher who takes a stance between overbearing and timid.

Tobin, too, asks us "to move beyond either/or thinking—either we have authority or they do, either we own the text or they do. . . . Rather than dichotomizing the teacher's and the student's roles, we need to see how they are inseparably related" ("Reading Students" 339). Tobin advocates a both/and approach to teacher and student roles—he sees teachers and students as related in the Freirean sense of the teacher-student and students-teachers. In other words, the authority or the teacherly role in a student-focused classroom will at times shift from teacher to students and back again, depending on the classroom activities and topics under discussion. When the teacher, for example, allows a bit of chaos into the room or a particular student's experience to take the focus, the authority may shift away from the teacher toward the

students. However, if the chaos becomes too much or the focus shifts away from the student's experience, the teacher may have to reclaim the authority. In such a classroom, Nilsen's flexible authority rules—the teacher does not believe that *either* he has the authority *or* the students do, but rather he prudently takes the authority and adapts it according to the classroom's shifting needs.

While the concept of flexible authority allows us to envision teachers as exercising authority respectfully and judiciously, the idea of teachers and students sharing the authority and expertise follows along the lines of "the international concept of complementarity," which envisions group members as complementing each other. Although individuals may find it difficult to position themselves as absolute equals, they can learn to complement each other, with each person contributing their individual strengths and skills to the relationship or community (Garcia). The "international" aspect pertains to cases in which differing cultural backgrounds might otherwise impede harmonious, productive relationships and work environments.

However, we can easily extend a more general concept of complementarity to the composition classroom, and more specifically, to the student-focused, workshopping classroom, in which teacher and students learn to balance and complement each other. While each workshop member offers unique talents and experiences, the teacher offers writing experience and expertise. Complementarity fits well with Freire's teacher-student and students-teachers—as opposed to the binary opposition of *the* teacher versus *the*

students, we can view teacher and students as complementing each other, with the roles of teacher and student alternating between the classroom's members. The concept of complementarity thus relates to the student-focused, workshopping classroom in two ways: The teacher and students complement each other as they bring individual contributions to the workshop and as they learn to extend notions of teachers and students from *either* teacher/*or* student to *both* teacher/*and* student.

Palmer, too, wants teachers to move away from either/or conceptions of focus and authority: The "problem, of course, is that we are caught in yet another either-or. Whiplashed, . . . we fail to find a synthesis that might embrace the best of both" (*Courage* 118-19). As a solution, Palmer suggests "a classroom in which the best features of teacher- and student-centered education are merged and transcended by putting not teacher, not student, but subject at the center of our attention" (119). To keep the pendulum from swinging too far in the direction of either the teacher or the students, Palmer suggests focusing on the subject rather than on *either* teacher *or* students.

In a writing class, the subject matter often involves professional, model texts. However, teachers have become familiar with such texts, and some of the authority on the texts therefore rests with the teacher. In order to move away from teachers and the professional models *they* have chosen, we need to find a different subject on which to focus. In a writing class, the opportunity to focus on texts other than professional texts naturally presents itself—we can shift the

focus to the students and *their* writing. As Qualley remarks in response to a discussion of writing teachers as learners, "the teacher's job is to help her or his students teach the teacher what they have to say" (89). In the case of student texts, especially those that explore experiences and reactions that belong to the writers, the teacher represents no more the expert than does the rest of the class. How can we focus on student texts as the subject matter of the composition classroom?

Small-group workshops (SGWs) represent one well-accepted, well-documented classroom practice that brings the focus to student writing and takes some of the focus off the teacher. However, as pointed out earlier, another type of writing workshop exists—large-group or whole-class workshops (WCWs). While much scholarship regarding SGWs exists, composition scholars have rarely studied WCWs. As Ian Barnard, one of the few compositionists to discuss WCWs, contends, "[A]lmost all of the scholarship on peer critique in the composition classroom discusses small-group work, rather than whole-class workshops" (126). With this thesis, I will add to composition scholarship a discussion of both types of workshop and the ways they balance the teacher-student relationship and create student-focused classrooms. In the first half of Chapter Two, I will examine the history, process, as well as the benefits and drawbacks of SGWs, looking especially at the ways the benefits and drawbacks relate to student-focused classrooms. In the second half, I will do the same with WCWs, looking for benefits that perhaps only WCWs can offer.

CHAPTER TWO

EXAMINING SMALL-GROUP AND WHOLE-CLASS WORKSHOPS AND THEIR POTENTIAL TO CREATE STUDENT-FOCUSED CLASSROOMS

> In point of fact, *word is a two-sided act....*
>
> Each and every word expresses the 'one' in relation to the 'other.'
>
> I give myself verbal shape from another's point of view,
>
> ultimately, from the point of view of the community to which I belong.
>
> —Mikhail Bakhtin, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*

As I began my second quarter as a first-year composition instructor, I entered the classroom as a different kind of teacher. No longer interested in the image of myself as an expert, I instead sought the role of a teacher who enjoys listening to her students as much as she enjoys teaching them. I had set aside the notion of teacher-expert and instead aspired to teacher-learner.

During the month-long break between my first and second quarter as a teaching associate (TA), I searched for ways to make the role of teacher-learner possible. Although I did not yet have the terminology, I see in retrospect that I sought ways to make flexible authority and complementarity and even the anti-lecture possible in my classroom. I was, in effect, searching for ways to create a student-focused classroom. I remembered my experiences with whole-class workshops (WCWs) in creative writing courses—as much for how they helped my writing as for how they helped create a sense of community in the

classroom—and decided to use them to create a classroom in which my students' ideas mattered as much as my own. I see now that choosing workshops as a way to challenge traditional roles and change the classroom dynamics was a valid decision. According to compositionist James Williams, "Classroom workshops require a reevaluation of the writing teacher's traditional role, in which one lectures to the class about the characteristics of good writing or leads the class in a discussion of a professional model. They tend to shift the focus of the writing class from the teacher to students" (199).

As I sought to create a student-focused classroom in practice, however, I may have given up too much authority—I may have strayed too far from the expert pole, perhaps saying "I don't know" more often than Dethier would have recommended. In making changes to our ways of being or of doing things, we may make extreme changes that set us off balance. Indeed, as teachers have tried to find ways to solve the teacher-student contradiction, some of them have gone too far in the direction of the students. In a class discussion, for example, teachers may shy away from questioning students' opinions or from expressing their own, thinking that everyone is entitled to their own views or worrying that they will trample their students' self-esteem. Such teachers may try to scale back their classroom authority. Composition teachers, for example, commonly use small-group workshops (SGWs), a type of workshop in which teachers intentionally take less active classroom roles.

WCWs, on the other hand, allow teachers to choose a more active role. The key word is *choose*, for WCWs also give teachers the freedom to choose a less active role. In a WCW, teachers can monitor the whole group's progress— WCWs give teachers the flexibility to decide on the spot whether or not to provide feedback or exercise authority. In this way, WCWs help create student-focused versus student-centered classrooms—they create a balance between the teacher and the students—and thus provide a viable solution to the teacher-student contradiction.

In order to propose WCWs as a new solution to the teacher-student contradiction, I will examine and discuss both the literature on SGWs as well as WCWs. The literature of both types present similar benefits, although theorists and researchers focus attention on different points. From my perspective, juxtaposing both sets of benefits, we can largely apply the advantages of one type of workshop to the other, although WCWs magnify several of the benefits. In this chapter, I will glance at the history, examine the process, and explore the benefits and drawbacks of first SGWs and then WCWs. I will specifically focus on the benefits and drawbacks that relate to my project—on what certain advantages and disadvantages tell us about SGWs and WCWs in relation to reducing the expert-novice binary and creating student-focused classrooms.

The Small-Group Workshop

During the 1960s and '70s, the field of composition went through major

changes as its focus shifted from the product of writing to the process of writing.

In the composition classroom, teachers began using SGWs in response to this

"paradigm shift" (DiPardo and Freedman 119; 123), and the use of SGWs grew

as the new paradigm became established (Tang and Tithecott 21).

Compositionists such as Donald Murray promoted process versus product and

saw SGWs as an ideal way to initiate students into the writing process (*A Writer*

Teaches Writing) and to "acquire strategies" and support each other during the

process (Tang and Tithecott 21). According to Murray, SGWs make the writing

process visible as they "[a]llow students to see many drafts at different stages of

the writing process" (198). The process approach to writing led many

composition teachers away from lectures and abstract talk about writing and

toward SGWs and actual student writing in progress.

In the 1970s and '80s, a growing interest in collaborative learning further

established SGWs in composition pedagogy. Kenneth Bruffee, for one,

endorsed collaborative learning and touted SGWs as one practical way to

encourage students to engage with and learn from each other (DiPardo and

Freedman 125). Later researchers focused on learning to write as a process that

depends on social interaction; many of them turned to developmental

psychologist Lev Vygotsky's social learning theories. In the late '80s, for

example, Gloria Tang and Joan Tithecott cite Vygotsky and point out that "peer

response groups afford an opportunity for such interaction" (21). This emphasis

continued into the 90s, as shown by Anne DiPardo and Sarah Freedman's

contention that "Vygotsky's theories suggest a close relationship between talk

and writing" (122). Researchers such as these focus on the theory that

interactions about writing, lead to learning about writing. The emphasis on

writing as a process—in particular, as a social, collaborative process—

established SGWs as a permanent fixture in the composition classroom.

How Small-Group Workshops Function

SGWs serve as a social forum in which students can interact and work

collaboratively on their writing. Small groups allow peers to discuss their writing

with each other, away from the teacher and the rest of the class. As Erika

Lindemann points out, "[d]ialogues and trialogues" help students "learn the

language of constructive criticism without embarrassing a student in front of a

larger group" (196), and in Murray's terms, SGWs "[a]llow the students to

become used to workshop without facing a whole class audience" (197).

In a typical SGW, the teacher arranges students into either pairs or small

groups of three to six students—preferences vary from teacher to teacher. On

the one hand, Fiona Paton finds that groups of three work best because

"[s]tudents need more than one response to their writing, but any more than two

tends to be counterproductive" (295). On the other hand, Susan and Stephen

Judy contend that groups of four to six students work best, as the "groups are

large enough so that a student can get several responses to a paper . . . yet

small enough so that they can develop a sense of community and interdependence" (101). Williams narrows it down to groups of five, pointing out that groups of three allow "two members to take sides against the third" and groups of four tend "to split evenly whenever decisions are called for" (203-04).

Compositionists thus disagree on the most effective size for SGWs, as they also disagree on the best way to choose students. Judy and Judy (101) as well as Williams (204) point out that balancing the groups between confident writers and those less confident may help the process run smoothly—the stronger writers may naturally fall into teacherly roles. One teacher's guidebook takes things a step further as it advises balancing groups "in terms of writing ability, race, age, personality, and gender" and aiming for groups in which students don't know each other well enough to discuss anything but writing (Glenn 65). Paton cautions against the former, contending that "students quickly perceive a teacher's underlying agenda" (295). Others suggest choosing groups randomly or letting students arrange their own groups. Lindemann, for example, prefers letting students group themselves with peers they know as this "removes the risk of criticism from strangers" (196). Williams, however, warns that students might group themselves according to gender or ethnicity (204), and Paton warns that groups who "become comfortable cliques" may stop challenging each other (295). No matter the size or makeup of the groups, the next step involves asking the students to bring copies of their papers for each group member.

During SGWs, students either silently read each other's papers or they take turns reading them aloud. After they finish reading, the students respond to and critique the paper, while the teacher circulates amongst them in order to answer questions, to briefly join discussions, and to keep students on task. Judy and Judy define the teacher's role as one of "side coach," with jobs such as monitoring readings and discussions and making sure that all students participate (102). Some researchers also comment on the freedom that SGWs offer teachers—Lindemann, for example, suggests that SGWs leave the teacher "free to confer individually with students and to offer help when it's requested" (195), although she cautions against offering help and authority too quickly (198). Williams, too, points out that SGWs "allow teachers to move freely about the room to offer advice on papers that are still in draft form" (199), thus bringing us back to SGW's role in writing as a process.

Teachers should also keep an eye on the clock, aiming for about thirty minutes per writer in order to allow adequate time for both reading and critiquing the papers. Depending on the size of the groups and the length of the class, this process may take from one to three class periods. To reduce the class time needed for SGWs, the writers can distribute their papers ahead of time so that their peers can read and comment on them at home, perhaps reducing the class time to fifteen or twenty minutes per writer.

The Benefits of Small-Group Workshops

SGWs have many well-documented benefits and help students develop as writers in several key ways. Firstly, SGWs teach students to view writing as a process rather than as an isolated activity that results in a perfect paper. Moreover, SGWs teach students to view writing in new ways—as they help their fellow writers, they learn to see *their own* writing differently and eventually begin to see from the audience's perspective. SGWs also encourage students to find their own solutions to writing problems, rather than relying solely on the teacher, and thus encourage active, student-focused learning.

SGWs show students that writing is a process and that the teacher and their peers can play a role in it. In a discussion on social learning and SGWs, Janet Emig contends that moving students toward writing as a process helps them move away from writing as " 'a silent and solitary activity' with 'no community or collaboration' " (qtd in DiPardo and Freedman 123-24). More recently, Paton stresses that as students' awareness of writing as a process increases during SGWs, their anxiety about the written product decreases (291). SGWs thus teach students to view writing as a process they can approach with the help of their teacher and peers rather than as a product they have to approach with angst and in isolation.

As SGWs allow students to peer into the writing process, they begin to see writing with new eyes. Initially, workshop interactions teach student respondents to see from the writer's perspective—they learn to look at the paper

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under discussion from the standpoint of its writer. In their study of revision in SGWs, María de Guerrero and Olga Villamil note this development, calling it "joint regard" and observing that it begins when a reader tries "to see through the writer's eyes by eliciting his opinion and searching for agreement" (64). Importantly, as students practice joint regard, appraising their fellow writers' work and attempting to see through the writers' eyes, they will also begin to view their own writing differently. Researchers such as Richard Gebhardt, Bruffee (640-41), and de Guerrero and Villamil (65) point out that students who learn to critically examine their peers' work will learn to do the same with their own work. Gebhardt calls this phenomenon "transfer-of-learning" and describes it as the "principle by which students gain insights into their own writing as they comment on the work of others" (69). With experience, students will learn to apply critiques they have applied to their peers' work to their own work—they will learn to see through their readers' eyes and they will develop a "writer's intuition" (DiPardo and Freedman 123). According to Vivian Zamel, SGWs help students develop this "crucial ability of re-viewing their writing with the eyes of another" (206).

As student writers learn to see from the reader's perspective, SGWs help them develop a concrete sense of audience. Researchers such as Paton (291), Cássia Mendonça and Karen Johnson (756), and DiPardo and Freedman attest to the value of SGWs for developing students' audience awareness and for giving them "the valuable insight that language does not always do what its

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author intended" (123). As Tang and Tithecott point out in their discussion of the value of SGWs, "Through interaction, writers become aware of the reader for whom the text is composed" (21). Other researchers emphasize that SGWs expose students to an audience composed of more than just the teacher (Lindemann 195)—SGWs, that is, help students gain a more realistic sense of audience. Further, Murray demonstrates that the teacher may "expand the audience" for students by creating different groups (197), although Williams contends that any gains offered by a larger audience are offset by losses in a student's sense of comfort and connection in smaller groups (204). While researchers may not agree on exactly how to create an audience for students, all seem to agree that SGWs increase a student's sense of audience.

SGWs, then, work as forums in which students develop a sense of writing as a process, a sense of themselves as writers, and a sense of how they as writers affect their audience. While these represent important benefits, an additional benefit speaks directly to my project: SGWs lead to active, student-focused classrooms. In Judy and Judy's terms, students enter the composition classroom viewing the teacher as "the writing guru" (93). However, SGWs shift the attention from the teacher to the students (Williams 199), with the teacher milling about rather than standing in front of the classroom. SGWs focus on the students and their texts, decreasing the teacher's authority and increasing the students' responsibility (Murray 198). As Tang and Tithecott point out: "Peer response groups allow the writing instructor to move toward an equitable balance

between teacher-centered instruction and student-centered activities" (21). No longer taking the role of writing guru, teachers who bring SGWs into their classrooms humbly seek to balance their own authority with that of their students. As Williams puts it, composition classrooms "should draw on what students already know about discourse" (200). Teachers can use SGWs to help students learn to recognize and trust their own knowledge of writing.

SGWs teach our students to see themselves as active rather than passive learners (Paton 292). In their study of the negotiations involved in SGWs, Mendonça and Johnson found that SGWs push "students to exercise *their* thinking as opposed to passively receiving information from the teacher" (765, emphasis added). Some theorists speak in Freirean terms of SGWs enabling students to take the role of teacher (Bruffee 641; Murray 198); Lindemann, for example, notes that students take this role as she points out that SGWs "encourage students to teach each other by exchanging solutions to writing problems" (195). Students, then, can work collaboratively to deal with writing issues, using their collective resources to teach each other. Beyond acting as teachers, De Guerrero and Villamil's study shows that SGWs lead students to assume "a more active role as reviser by taking the initiative in revising and repairing trouble-sources on [their] own" (65). SGWs can enable students to take more active classroom roles; moreover, this benefit may extend beyond the classroom as students assume more responsibility for revision and begin to tackle writing issues on their own.

The Drawbacks of Small-Group Workshops

While SGWs have undeniable benefits—notably, they help create active learners and student-focused environments—they also have drawbacks. As SGWs shift the classroom's focus to the students, they may give students too much power, power that may lead to motivation issues. Students tend not to trust their abilities to respond to their peers' work, and this anxiety may result in students who seem uncommitted to SGWs. In order to prepare students to respond, teachers may create SGW guidelines. As they do so, however, they may inadvertently create another issue—strict guidelines can shift the focus away from the students and back to the teacher. Another drawback involves students' resistance to peer feedback—students often doubt their peers' abilities to give feedback as much as they doubt their own. Students, therefore, tend to prefer the teacher's feedback, and this tendency can also shift the focus back to the teacher.

Firstly, some teachers believe that SGWs give students too much power and that students will abuse this power by coming to class unprepared or by straying off task during workshops. When teachers break their classes into small groups, they do assign students a large measure of power—if a teacher has arranged groups of two, for example, she may end up with twelve or thirteen individual groups. In arguing for and researching an alternative to SGWs, Michael Graner points out that "[e]ven with the most energetic supervision, no teacher can effectively monitor all groups" because "several conversations are

occurring simultaneously, and it is virtually impossible for the teacher to guarantee that these discussions do not become small talk or social chit-chat" (41). We could label such students "unmotivated" and leave it at that, but examining power and motivation in SGWs uncovers several reasons behind students' apparent lack of commitment.

Students may appear unmotivated because they doubt the value of their input—they may not know how to respond effectively or they may not want to criticize their peers' writing. Graner discusses several limitations of SGWs, among them that students "lack the skill to make effective evaluations" and "often feel uncomfortable making negative criticisms of peers' work" (40). Certainly, some students may resist SGWs by arriving unprepared, but others may resist them out of fear and uncertainty related to providing feedback. Tang and Tithecott's study, for example, found that many students worried about giving useful comments and that most of them worried about giving criticism (31). Ultimately, students often do not trust themselves as responders and may thus resist participating in SGWs and taking the role of authority in regard to their peers' work.

As a solution to the motivation issue, teachers can better prepare their students for SGWs—for one thing, they can present model workshops to demonstrate effective (or ineffective) interactions. As another solution, teachers often create workshop guidelines in order to give their students constructive ways to respond. However, while teachers such as Judy and Judy (102) and Paton

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(293) tout the advantages of guidelines to create productive sessions and keep students on task, others believe that explicit guidelines swing the classroom power away from the students and back to the teacher.

DiPardo and Freedman, for example, observed that in one of the classrooms analyzed for their study, "the teacher did not relinquish control of the groups; she gave them specific directions and had group members complete sheets she prepared. . . . [T]he students were oriented to the teacher and the teacher's tasks rather than to one another's writing" (141). Nancy Grimm, too, worries about the consequences of strict guidelines and "response sheets," reporting that they caused her students to develop "fill-in-the-blank syndrome": "Students mechanically filled in the empty spaces without the analytical thought or oral exchange that a good response session demands" (92). Lisa Cahill concurs, noting that her students spent more time in "contact with the paper" and answering her questions than interacting with their peers (306). Detailed guidelines may thus run contrary to student-focused classrooms. Although teachers have the best intentions for response sheets—to keep students focused and productive—such guidelines often reassert teachers' authority even as they aim to reduce it.

In addition to the issue surrounding power, motivation, and the teacher's role in SGWs, another issue involving the teacher arises with the use of SGWs and peer response: Many students doubt the value of their peers' comments and thus prefer the teacher's. While some studies show that students appreciate

both types of input (Mendonça and Johnson 765), others show that students prefer teacher versus peer response. In a study of three classes of college writing students' preferences, Hiroko Saito found that students preferred teacher feedback or "corrections" because, in one student's words, " 'I can't trust other students' " (58-59). In a later study, Tang and Tithecott found that many students favored teacher feedback and worried about "the usefulness of feedback from peers" (31). Students, then, tend not to trust the comments they receive anymore than the comments they provide. Ultimately, this overall distrust of student feedback impacts the efficacy of SGWs.

During SGWs, teachers forego much of their own input in order to shift the classroom's focus to student input. This is not to say, of course, that such teachers don't respond in other ways and on other occasions—teachers who use SGWs typically rely on a combination of teacher and peer response. But in their efforts to create student-focused classrooms, composition teachers often turn to SGWs and *peer* feedback, a practice that many students question and resist. Teachers, too, seem to worry about their students' abilities to comment effectively, a worry they may assuage by creating stringent workshop guidelines. As students resist peer response and teachers provide strict guidelines, the classroom's focus shifts away from the students and back to the teacher, undermining attempts to create student-focused classrooms. Is there a way to offer both teacher and peer feedback side by side, such that student writers can observe the teacher and the other students discussing their papers? In this way,

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with the teacher's comments as reinforcement (or not), students might learn to trust their peers' reactions. In this way, teachers can model effective critiques and responses and teach students to comment effectively—thus easing the feedback worries of students and teachers alike. WCWs give teachers the flexibility to provide feedback in just such a manner.

The Whole-Class Workshop

Whole-class writing workshops by no means represent a new phenomenon. Anne Gere, in fact, traces writing workshops back to 1719 when the first literary societies began to form (10). In the classroom, the history of creative writing workshops dates to the 1890s, when the first workshop courses began appearing across the US—in the West at the University of Oregon, in the Midwest at the University of Iowa, and in the East at Harvard (Moxley xii). The first workshop program began at the well-known Iowa Writers' Workshop (at UI) in 1936 (xii). According to George Garrett, while Iowa's workshop program didn't "kick in" or start to prosper until post-WWII, "Iowa" is "still humming along today" as one of the country's most prestigious creative writing programs and has also served as a model for many contemporary writing programs (53-54).

During the late 1940s and early '50s, in a step toward the writing workshop, many English teachers allowed students to submit creative work instead of formal papers, often as part of the "great books"/classics courses, and the teacher and students would then respond to these works in something akin to

creative writing workshops (Garrett 48). During the 1960s, the University of

Arkansas in Fayetteville founded another groundbreaking creative writing

program, establishing itself as a "reformed version" of the early Iowa Writers'

Workshop, though a more rigorous and selective program (Garrett 54). Today,

UA offers programs in fiction and poetry as well as text translation (defined on

their website as "an act of creative writing"), and even the translation program

emphasizes workshops. Also, many non-university writers' workshops have

cropped up over the years; for example, the Squaw Valley Community of Writers,

established in Northern California in 1969, holds annual summer workshops in

fiction, poetry, screenwriting, and creative nonfiction.

Where SGWs have become a staple in composition classrooms, WCWs

became a staple in creative writing classrooms and programs. During my

research, I sought an explanation as to why one field settled on SGWs and the

other on WCWs—I couldn't find one. Similarly, Barnard says, "It is not clear to

me why teachers of composition have not embraced whole-class workshops with

the zeal of our colleagues who teach creative writing" (125). Barnard asserts that

teachers may doubt the "pedagogical effectiveness" of as well as the "practicality

of implementing" WCWs in the composition classroom (125). For one thing,

teachers do worry about the time that WCWs necessitate. For another, perhaps

they also worry, as I did, about "covering the field" and about whether or not

students will learn enough in WCWs to be prepared for future writing courses.

Ultimately, teachers' fears seem to center on whether or not the time spent in

WCWs will lead to stronger student writers. After a look at how they function in the classroom and with these worries in mind, I will examine both the benefits and drawbacks of WCWs.

How Whole-Class Workshops Function

As with all workshops, WCWs revolve around student-written texts, whether fiction, poems, scripts, nonfiction, or even translations. The workshopping process involves three main components—distributing the student texts, reading and commenting on them, and discussing them during the workshop. Before handing out texts, however, students must choose or be assigned a workshop date. Typically, teachers pass around a list of dates from which the students may choose. Each date has a space for two or three students to write in their names. Alternatively, teachers such as Ian Barnard ask their students to draw random workshop dates (128); other teachers may assign dates to students. Whatever the case, teachers need to emphasize that the students must distribute their work *before* their actual workshop day. In other words, students need to understand that the workshop process involves *two* important days—one day for text distribution and another for the workshop.

In order to prepare students for the actual WCWs, some teachers assign readings on topics such as audience or distribute a handout that discusses the dos and don'ts of workshopping. Others conduct hands-on techniques before the first WCW takes place. I have a colleague, for example, who prepares her students for WCWs by inviting a panel of two or three model responders to

workshop a paper she has written, while she (as the writer) and the rest of the class sit silently and observe. At the end of the mini-workshop, she responds to the panel with comments and questions as per WCWs. After speaking for a few minutes, she allows the students to ask questions of either her or the panel. I have played a role in these panels twice, and I believe they helped teach the students to respond in useful, productive ways and reduced some of the trepidation students feel in regard to having their papers workshopped. As another example, Murray (who taught both composition and creative writing) suggests having students take part in SGWs to familiarize them with the workshopping process before they have to face the whole group (197). Once preparations have taken place, students are ready for the first step in the workshopping process.

In their well-received creative writing textbook, Fred Leebron and Andrew Levy emphasize that most workshop teachers ask their students to distribute their work a few days or a week before their actual workshop in order "to give everyone the opportunity to read the manuscript and prepare comments" (287). Typically, students distribute their work during the class before their workshop. Alternatively, students may email their texts to their peers or post them to a website such as Blackboard. However, the potential for problems definitely exists with this option—firstly, relying on the writer to do the emailing (on time) and, secondly, on the students to check their email and print out the texts (where issues abound: computer access, computer/Internet connections, printer

ink/paper). Whatever the distribution timeline or arrangement, student writers

must hand (or send) out their texts beforehand, because WCWs cannot proceed

without student texts.

As Leebron and Levy indicate, the second step in the workshopping

process involves the teacher and the students taking home the text(s) in order to

both read and comment on them. Joseph Moxley, editor of *Creative Writing in*

America, stresses that students must distribute their texts beforehand "so their

peers can write comments on them and be prepared for discussion" (xiii). In

order to aid both written as well as oral commenting, teachers can ask

readers/responders to number each paragraph of their copies of the text, which

will allow them to name certain paragraphs in their comments. As for the reading

of texts, teachers often read and ask their students to read each text twice—the

first time without commenting, the second with commenting. The rationale

behind reading each text twice rests on the idea that a first-read should entail

reading and appreciating the text, whereas a second-read should entail

evaluating it. For one thing, saving critiques for the second-read may keep

readers from asking questions that may be answered or criticism that may be

undone by continuing to read the text. As for written comments, they usually

include both marginal and in-text comments as well as a longer end-of-text

comment, which is either hand- or typewritten. For Leebron and Levy, end

comments "provide a summary of all those impressions [you had while reading],

and emphasize those compliments and criticisms that seem most important"

(289). Further, many teachers emphasize structuring an end-comment by first mentioning a text's strengths and secondly mentioning its weaknesses or making suggestions for improvement.

Step three revolves around the actual workshop day. Students bring their marked copies of the text to class. If the teacher has asked them to type their end comments, they typically bring two copies—one for the teacher to read and grade and one for the writer to use in revision. They turn in one copy, and keep the other copy to consult during the discussion. In most cases, the teacher and students arrange their desks in a circle at the beginning of each workshop. As they form the circle, the teacher can ask the students who haven't already numbered each paragraph of that day's texts to do so. To begin the workshop, the teacher may briefly mention a few of the paper's strengths, or he may ask one of the students to do so. Some teachers may go around the circle and ask each student to comment on the work, often asking them to mention the strengths and then the weaknesses. Other teachers may begin by asking the writer to read a short passage from their work. Murray preferred turning to the writer first, but rather than asking the writer to read, he advocates asking the writer, " 'How can we help you?' " (200). After a brief response, the writer listens silently to the workshop discussion. Even if the writer has opened by mentioning the text's weaknesses, the first responder can still begin with the text's strengths.

No matter how the workshop begins, the silent writer remains a constant. As writing teachers Wendy Bishop and David Starkey point out, one reason for

the writer's silence is to avoid "an extended self-defense of the work" (198).

Rather than mounting a defense, the silent writer can take notes during the

workshop and save questions and comments for later. To close the workshop,

the teacher may bring the discussion back to the text's strengths—many

teachers advocate sandwiching the negatives between the positives. At this

point, the writer briefly takes the floor (for about five minutes) in order to discuss

questions and concerns that arose during the workshop. Depending on the

length of the class and allowing twenty-five to thirty minutes per text, an average

of two to three students may be workshopped per day.

In order to "further guide" the revision process, as Bishop and Starkey put

it, at the workshop's end, the responders either return the annotated text and

typed comments to the writer (198) or, if their end comments are on the actual

texts, the teacher may ask the students to hand them in. She will then read the

comments, assign them a grade, and return them to the writer. No matter the

procedure, returning the texts to the writers allows them to consider the written

comments of each workshop member during revision.

As for grading the comments/responses, most teachers choose to do so,

since student feedback plays an important pedagogical role in a class that will

spend a good deal of time workshopping. Some teachers assign responses an

actual letter grade, some use a point system (say, 10 points per response), and

some grade them on a credit/no credit basis. Barnard, for example, grades

responses credit/no credit, but he informs the students that he will not give credit

for simply turning in their comments (129). Regardless of the scoring method,

teachers use grades to hold students accountable for several reasons. Most

obviously, if teachers don't evaluate responses, students may neglect to turn

them in or they may not take them seriously—worse yet, some students may not

even read their peers' texts. Students such as these undermine not only the

WCW itself but also the teacher's attempt to create a student-focused classroom,

for such classrooms cannot exist without active student input. Grading

comments, then, seems necessary to creating student-focused WCWs; however,

don't teachers also exercise authority as they assign grades? While we could

say that grades return authority to the teacher, for grades and authority do go

hand in hand, we could also say that grades help create student-focused

classrooms by encouraging student response and (hopefully) self-motivation as

students begin to see the opportunity they have to share their stories and the

importance of their voices in the WCW. In this way, grades can also work to

lessen the teacher's prominence and authority. Ultimately, if students don't take

the time to comment on their peers' work, they will miss many of the benefits of

student-focused WCWs.

The Benefits of Whole-Class Workshops

In confirmation of Ian Barnard's contention that WCWs are "under-

theorized" (124), I found far less scholarship in researching WCWs than SGWs.

For SGWs, I found a plethora of articles and mention of them in nearly every

composition handbook I picked up. For WCWs, I had trouble finding anything

beyond Barnard's article, which I tracked down because I knew he had taken part in a 2011 CCCC's session on WCWs. Creative writing handbooks, of course, abound with information on WCWs, and I even tracked down a few composition handbooks that mention SGWs and WCWs (Glenn; Judy and Judy; Murray). I did find one empirical study of WCWs: Michael Graner's "Revision Workshops: An Alternative to Peer Editing Groups" (written in 1987).

In Graner's study, students workshopped anonymous essays from other classes and thus provided but did not receive peer feedback. His findings show that "peer editing groups" and "revision workshops" led to similar "gains from initial to final draft" (42). For Graner, WCWs avoid the drawbacks of SGWs (such as unskilled or uncomfortable students, as discussed earlier [40]), while still leading to "significant gains" and improvements in student writing (42-43). While he supports WCWs and presents a valid study, he focuses on a particular type of WCW where my study focuses on traditional WCWs, including both giving and receiving feedback—Graner's study, while interesting and promising, thus has a different focus from mine.

Although Graner's article does represent a formal study of WCWs, even his work doesn't represent typical composition scholarship—Dr. Graner works today not as a compositionist but rather as the Superintendent of Schools in Ledyard, Connecticut. Graner, I believe, thus reinforces Barnard's contention that composition scholarship largely overlooks WCWs. Due to the dearth of WCW research, my discussion of WCW benefits and drawbacks unavoidably

consists of anecdotal support—writers and teachers discussing their own experiences with WCWs (even Barnard, though a compositionist, speaks from personal experience).

Nevertheless, many writing teachers—creative writing, a few composition, and many who teach both—attest to the benefits of WCWs. Over a period of weeks, WCWs allow students to see writing as a process as well as their own writing in a new light and from the audience's perspective. Importantly, WCWs teach students to see writing differently as they allow students to hear both their teacher's and peers' perspectives—WCWs require students to listen silently to the workshop discussion. Ultimately, as WCWs enable students to witness firsthand that writing can be a collaborative versus a solitary activity, students may learn not only to see writing differently but also to see their classroom as a writing community.

Just as SGWs initiate students into the writing process, creative writing teachers point to WCWs as a way to train students to see writing as a process. Alan Ziegler, for example, claims in his handbook on WCWs that a "writing workshop is a 'state of minds,' with an atmosphere that supports all aspects of writing," including "[d]iscussing the writing process" (9). WCWs expose students to the inner workings of writing, allowing them to see their peers struggle with writing and giving them a role in the struggle and a period of weeks in which to see the writing process in action. Importantly, as they react and respond to their peers' work, their own writing will improve (Gebhardt's "transfer-of-learning," 69).

Creative writing teacher Bonni Goldberg asserts that when students see "writing challenges" that resemble their own, they will learn to spot problems in their own work and gain "new ideas" for how to deal with them (125). According to Leebron and Levy, "Reading workshop pieces carefully and engaging in discussion will inevitably inform [students'] own writing" (297). In other words, these teachers believe that students will naturally progress as writers as they participate and gain experience in a succession of WCWs.

As we saw with SGWs, WCWs enable student writers to see from the reader's perspective—students can hear what the audience heard and thus what they really said versus what they intended to say. According to poetry professor David St. John, "It is necessary in working with young writers to allow them . . . to consider for a moment that, often, what they *thought* they were saying is, in fact, a great deal different from what they have actually said or conveyed" (192). In a WCW, the responders act as a sounding board, allowing the writer to see the effect of his ideas on numerous people. Ultimately, the experience gained in workshops helps writers develop an inner workshop voice—what DiPardo and Freedman call "writer's intuition" (123) and what Gebhardt calls the "the principle of feedback through which students sense how well their writing is communicating" (69). Students can learn to read more objectively and to internalize this new objectivity in order to apply it to their own work—they can learn to see writing as a process and to read their own work through the eyes

and ears of the workshop. In other words, WCWs help students learn to see from the audience's perspective.

While SGWs also help students develop audience awareness, WCWs magnify this benefit by exposing students to the voices of the teacher as well as a classroom full of peers—on average, some twenty-five perspectives. According to Goldberg, "Because [they are] interacting with the other participants as well as the teacher, there's potential for soaking up a wider spectrum of writing and revising insights" (124-25). Although Murray demonstrates that teachers can expand the audience by rearranging the students in SGWs (197), WCWs allow students to receive feedback from *each* of their classmates. According to Judy and Judy, who discuss both types of workshops, "Whole class reading [and responding] is . . . as close to a real audience that one can get within the confines of a composition classroom" (102). As WCWs offer students a larger audience, they also offer students a larger array of perspectives on their writing—the "real audience" of which Judy and Judy speak. I don't mean to say that SGWs don't create a real audience, but rather that WCWs create an audience that includes each class member's input and thus a host of opinions. Teachers such as Judy and Judy (102) as well as Barnard highlight this benefit of WCWs, with Barnard asserting that "the larger workshops give students a much greater amount and variety of feedback" (126). According to poetry professor Steve Kowit, WCWs expose writers to "new ideas and a variety of critical points of view" (247). While any outside perspectives present writers with valuable

feedback, WCWs create a broad audience that presents writers with a diversity of ideas and perspectives.

Further, WCWs force writers to listen silently to the workshop members' various reactions and responses—for most of the workshop, the writer does not have the chance to try to explain or defend her work, as Bishop and Starkey point out (198). In an SGW, however, more on-the-spot interaction takes place between writer and reader. While I certainly see the value of writers discussing their texts with the reader(s), a real audience rarely has the chance to discuss a text with its writer. As WCWs allow writers to hear the diverse responses of the workshop members, they also allow writers to witness how a group of actual readers responds to their work.

Similar to the effects of SGWs, WCWs unravel the idea of writing as a solitary act. As Emig points to the importance of workshops for demonstrating writing as a collaborative process versus a " 'silent and solitary activity' " (qtd in DiPardo and Freedman 123), Goldberg contends that "[i]t's a detrimental modern myth that writers do their work all alone" (131). What is the danger of the isolated writer myth? Writers who learn to see writing as a solitary act will miss the benefits of writing in community, and writers who write in a vacuum of isolation tend not to produce their best work. Having worked as both a writing teacher and a writing tutor, I have repeatedly heard young writers profess that they *hate to write*. Indeed, many students hate to write, and perhaps their distaste for writing develops as they write *in isolation*. Whether SGW or WCW,

workshops allow the classroom to become a writing community. WCWs, however, allow the community to exist for an extended amount of time—rather than a period of days, WCWs last over a period of weeks, thus increasing the possibility that students will come to see writing as a process and the classroom as a writing community. The time spent on WCWs might thus encourage a sense of community among teacher and students.

In particular, two benefits of WCWs relate directly to solving the teacher-student contradiction—WCWs help create writing communities and student-focused classrooms. Barnard asserts that the workshopping classroom begins to function "as a communal whole" (127) as students participate in WCWs: "By speaking about writing to and through other students in the class, and through experiencing the value of their peers' feedback, students come to conceptualize the class as a community of writers" (130-31). For Barnard, as workshops allow students to share their ideas about writing and expose them to the value of peer response, they begin to experience writing in community. In Leebron and Levy's terms, WCWs "create an atmosphere of communal ambition and care" (297) as the classroom's goal becomes the growth of every writer. In her handbook on writing groups and workshops, Eileen Malone adds nuance to the idea of a writing community as she introduces the concept of "interdependence": "It is through . . . interdependent participation that [they] receive the support and sense of belonging that participation in a writers group offers" (13). In WCWs, workshop members learn to rely on each other for help, support, and new

ideas—they become interdependent—and this interdependence often leads to a sense of belonging to a writing community. Moreover, the students learn to rely on the teacher and their peers, leading to a *student-focused* writing community. In other words, rather than relying on either the teacher or their peers, WCWs allow them to receive feedback and perspectives from both.

As WCWs demonstrate writing as a process and the workshop as part of it—rather than writing as a product and the teacher as lone evaluator—they lead to de-centered, student-focused classrooms. As mentioned in Chapter One and as an SGW benefit, focusing on student texts helps create de-centered classrooms, as even the teacher does not represent the authority on the text. The silenced student writer, after all, represents the expert and *author*-ity in a WCW. According to Ralph Fletcher and JoAnn Portalupi, authors of a book on workshopping, "The writing workshop does not place the teacher under the bright lights on center stage" (3). Instead, WCWs aim the spotlight at students' texts.

While Fletcher and Portalupi contend that WCWs take the teacher off center stage, the teacher often plays an active role in WCW discussions. In an SGW, teachers roam around the periphery of the groups and spend no time at the classroom's center. However, as discussed as an SGW drawback, teachers who use strict guidelines shift the focus back to their own agendas, while those who don't use guidelines may give students too much control and may allow SGWs to fall into unproductive feedback and/or chatting. As one solution, teachers can create less stringent guidelines. As another, they can turn to

WCWs, which give teachers the flexibility to step in with feedback or authority

when necessary—if a student needs a bit of coaching toward an effective

comment, the teacher can model an appropriate response, and if a class

ventures too far off topic, the teacher can bring them back to task. This same

flexibility allows side by side teacher and peer feedback, allowing teachers either

to encourage (perhaps by silently observing) or to dissuade students' comments.

The Drawbacks of Whole-Class Workshops

Teachers, then, play a bigger role in WCWs than in SGWs, and critics can

thus point to WCWs as less student-focused, as returning authority to the

teacher. The teacher's active presence represents one of the biggest potential

drawbacks regarding WCWs as student-focused classrooms. Additionally, some

teachers fear that the diverse feedback received in WCWs can amount to more

of a curse than a blessing as inexperienced writers sift through mounds of

responses that may contradict each other and thus impede learning. Overall,

however, most composition teachers seem to resist WCWs due to the time they

require.

In their discussion of WCW "conundrums," Bishop and Starkey pose a

question regarding the teacher's role in WCWs: "Does [the teacher] use her

superior wisdom and experience to firmly guide the classroom give-and-take, . . .

or does she adopt a less directive position and place herself in the role of fellow

writer and 'co-learner,' possibly allowing patently bad advice to go

unaddressed?" (199). Bishop and Starkey's question suggests that teachers

must choose between two extreme positions on authority—the stance of either bold, wise authority or timid co-writer/co-learner. In other words, the question sets up a Freirean contradiction—teachers take the authority, or they give it to their students. I would like to pose another question: Can teachers "firmly guide" WCWs without choosing one extreme or another? Such teachers can aim for a balance between the extremes—choosing, perhaps, to step in authoritatively to keep a WCW productive, but to then step out and let it follow a *student*-led course. Such teachers can aim for firm but *flexible* guidance and authority. Ziegler, for example, establishes his leadership in the beginning of each term so that he can later share the authority with his students: "When I feel respected by the students, I am then strong enough to stand back and let things happen, knowing I can pull everything together when it's appropriate" (11). We can apply the concepts of flexible authority and classroom complementarity to teachers who actively guide WCWs—that is, such teachers will at times take the role of leader, but at other times they will let students take the lead. Teachers often prefer that students lead discussions, for WCWs depend on active students.

Moreover, teachers can try to ensure that their opinions don't outweigh those of their students. Barnard, for example, humbly refuses to write responses to his students' papers "in order not to undermine the responses of the other class members" (130). Additionally, Barnard has his *students* facilitate the workshops "because [otherwise] students tend to want to address themselves to the teacher-facilitator" (131). For Barnard, student-facilitators "wean" the class

away from "teacher-centeredness" (130). Alternatively, some teachers choose to observe rather than participate in WCWs. My colleague, for example, runs her WCWs in a manner similar to SGWs—she breaks the class into two large groups, allows student facilitators to lead the groups, and then observes them with as little input as possible. She follows something along the lines of Barnard's words: "While I participate in the workshops, I make every effort not to take over and not to allow students to privilege my comments" (130). As Barnard and my colleague demonstrate, teachers may reduce their authority by taking the issue of classroom power into consideration as they plan WCWs.

However, other solutions exist for teachers who want to play active roles in WCWs even as they invite and privilege student input. These teachers can employ techniques such as "wait time"—pausing a few seconds before joining a discussion or after asking a question—in order to allow students to speak before the teacher does. According to Ziegler, "if we don't fill the vacuum [of silence], someone else will" (though he suggests explaining the tactic to keep students from doubting the teacher's leadership abilities) (21). Becoming aware of wait time represents a step toward prioritizing the students' voices over the teacher's as well as toward ensuring that the teacher doesn't exert too much authority over WCWs.

Teachers may take an active role in WCWs for another reason—active participation allows them to model effective responses and critiques, as touched on earlier. This represents an advantage over SGWs, in which students' lack of

experience and fear of criticizing can lead to ineffective, surface-type feedback: "I liked your paper" or "It was good." In SGWs, although teachers can overtly caution against such comments, they can't monitor all groups at once to listen for unproductive feedback. In WCWs, teachers can monitor all comments and can thus more readily step in with model responses: "Maybe the writer could try. . . ." or "I liked the paper *because*. . . ." or "For me as a reader, more information would be helpful in paragraph two." With their comments, teachers can demonstrate that giving writers options and specific feedback matters most. Moreover, teachers can also demonstrate the use of "I" and "me," helping both the students who are afraid to criticize as well as the rare student who wants to point the finger of blame at the writer. Also, WCWs allow teachers to re-model comments and patterns that students don't pick up and begin to use, and they allow teachers to do so without overt instruction. Over the course of WCWs, teachers who play an active role can promote and reinforce student learning— monitoring discussions, offering model responses, and repeating these "lessons" as necessary.

While teachers have had the time and experience to become effective responders, student responders have had neither and may thus give their peers praise and criticism that contradict each other—what one reader praises, another may criticize. While conflicting responses may occur in any WCW, they may happen more often in WCWs comprised of responders-in-training. As Bishop and Starkey point out, "students often find it difficult to sort through the

sometimes wildly varying responses from their peers" (199). This is a conundrum, but the teacher can point out that, ultimately, the responsibility for the work belongs to the writer, and therefore the writer must choose which criticism to take and which to ignore. Student writers can thus learn to sift through the various responses in order to decide for themselves how best to put their ideas into words. Moreover, the teacher encourages active, independent learning as she gives the responsibility to the student.

As for the criticism that WCWs consume too much time, Barnard indeed points to the "the considerable amount of class and homework time that these workshops take up" as the number one reason his colleagues resist WCWs (135). As for the homework time, composition classes typically involve reading and responding to texts. If workshop teachers didn't ask students to read and respond to their peers' texts, they would likely ask them to read and respond to those of professional writers—in other words, asking students to prepare for workshop discussions is just as valid as asking them to prepare for any other classroom discussion. The real issue, then, rests in how teachers want to allocate classroom time. As composition teachers, as teachers who want to create student-focused classrooms, what do we want to focus on and prioritize? What might we be resisting when we cite time as the main reason to avoid WCWs? Barnard puts our resistance in Freirean terms as he points out that it may stem from a reluctance to give up our own agendas in order to make time and space for our students' texts (135). Also, as mentioned earlier, the time

spent in WCWs encourages the formation of a writing community—spread over a period of weeks and giving airtime to each student's writing and ideas, WCWs create the potential for camaraderie and community amongst workshop members.

For very reluctant teachers, however, ways to work around the time issue exist. My colleague, for example, uses half-class rather than whole-class workshops in order to save time. Another colleague conducts one-day WCWs as a way to prepare her students for SGWs—she and the class spend one class period workshopping two or three anonymous student papers (from her class and with the writers' permission). Granted, I'm pulling for several weeks as opposed to one day, but I so believe in the efficacy of WCWs that I support even one class period devoted to whole-class workshopping as a way to teach students to become active, productive responders and, ultimately, better writers.

For teachers who seek ways to create student-focused classrooms, WCWs represent a valid way to solve the teacher-student contradiction, a way to bring the theory of student-focused classrooms into practice. Teachers such as these may be willing to adjust their own agendas in order to shift the focus off themselves and onto the students and their writing. In WCWs, the principle of complementarity rules—every workshop leads to opportunities for teacher-student and students-teachers to interact and create knowledge together.

In Chapter Three, I will examine my own experiences with WCWs in the composition classroom, focusing on ways that WCWs helped reduce the expert-

novice binary and helped build a student-focused classroom. I will demonstrate how and why WCWs can help shift the focus from the teacher to the students. As part of this, I will explore the rhizome—with its horizontal way of growing and developing into an interconnected root network—as a way to show how WCWs can create an interdependent community of writers.

CHAPTER THREE

THE WHOLE-CLASS WORKSHOP IN PRACTICE: CREATING A STUDENT-FOCUSED, RHIZOMIC WRITING COMMUNITY

> No man is an island, entire of itself;
>
> every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.
>
> —John Donne, "No Man Is an Island"

I entered my second quarter as a mentored teaching associate (TA) with more latitude as far as choosing the reading material and arranging the course schedule, and this gave me the opportunity to stretch—I could explore my role as teacher and experiment with ways to run my class. Although I looked forward to fully inhabiting the role of teacher-learner and to creating a student-focused classroom, I have to admit that I hesitated to use workshops.

Firstly, I was among the teachers who feared shortchanging students as far as not "covering the field" or preparing them for future writing courses. No one I knew, after all, structured a composition course around whole-class workshops (WCWs). Secondly, as a new teacher, I had looked forward to choosing and discussing readings, and I resisted sacrificing some of them in order to make time for WCWs. Looking back, I see that I resisted sacrificing my own agenda. In the end, I chose WCWs because I believed that they would help rather than hurt my students' chances of success in future writing courses and that they would be worth the missed readings. Moreover, I knew that my class

would offer students one of the few times they would ever have to exclusively study writing. My job wasn't to cover the field or worry about future writing courses—my job was to focus on writing.

Part of my concerns, of course, related to bringing WCWs into the composition classroom. Although I trusted that WCWs would work just as well in composition as in creative writing, I nonetheless worried as to how my students would accept them, as evidenced in a self-reflective blog written after our first WCW: "At first, I was nervous about the workshops, not knowing how the students, as either readers or writers, would react to them" ("Workshops Begin"). They had, after all, signed up for a quarter of first-year composition, not creative writing, and they would not expect WCWs. Would they cooperate by bringing copies of their papers and by bringing them on time? Would they fear the criticism and the criticizing? Would they speak?

With these questions niggling in the back of my mind, we began the quarter. I had divided it into two sections, with the second section (three weeks) devoted to workshopping (for course schedule, see Appendix A). For the first section we read, analyzed, and discussed professional essays that revolved around our class theme—"Ways of Seeing." As per our theme, we focused on essays that pushed us to see things from other perspectives—essays, for example, by John Berger, Annie Dillard, and Zora Neale Hurston (see Appendix A). Central to the essays I would assign, we also read Mary Louise Pratt's "Arts of the Contact Zone," which speaks of the "contact zones" that exist between two

people or groups and their differing perspectives, and Gloria Anzaldúa's poem "Borderlands," which describes the overlapping borderlands between two cultures. I hoped that reading essays written from diverse perspectives would aid students in exploring their own perspectives and in being open to those of their classmates.

I assigned the essay in two sequences: For the first, they would examine a contact zone/borderland from their own life. For the second, they would expand the first by examining their contact zone in terms of a conflict that had taken place within it (see Appendix B). Essay one would be due during the first part of the course—that way, I reasoned, I would have an idea of what their contact zones entailed and could avoid being blindsided by something during a WCW (we had also discussed their topics after I handed out the prompt). Essay two would be due on the workshop date they would choose. With many group discussions and essay one under our belts, we prepared to enter the second part of the course: Workshopping essay two as a whole class.

In Chapter Two, I explored several ways to manage WCWs as well as their benefits and drawbacks. In the first part of Chapter Three, I will set the stage for my analysis of WCWs in my classroom: Firstly by explaining how I prepared for and ran WCWs, and secondly by describing how I prepared to study them retrospectively, since I hadn't planned ahead of time to write about them. Working toward my analysis, I will also introduce the rhizome as a way to discuss WCWs metaphorically. I will examine WCWs from three angles—as a student-

focused classroom, as a writing community, and as a site of dis-cussion and chaos—using the rhizome to help me explain how and why WCWs work as a new solution to the teacher-student contradiction in the composition classroom.

Setting the Foundation for the Study

How I Prepared to Use Whole-Class Workshops in the Composition Classroom

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the first step in the WCW process involves creating and passing around a list of days/dates. My class consisted of seventeen students, lasted just over an hour, and met three days a week. Our workshop schedule thus had room for two students per day and covered a three-week span near the end of the quarter (see Appendix A). After the students had chosen dates and entered their names in the schedule, I created a formal handout that included a reminder that the writers needed to distribute their essays and turn in essay/draft one to me during the class before their scheduled workshop date (see Appendix C). In order to give the first writers plenty of writing time, I asked the students to choose dates about two weeks before the first WCW. Just before we began workshopping, I gave them a few guidelines. As part of a handout on revision (see Appendix D), I gave my students three workshop caveats:

- Start with the positives.

- Mention the paper's (and not the writer's) strengths and weaknesses.

- Be specific—don't just say, "It's good."

In addition to these three standards, one of our first class readings introduced Peter Elbow's believing and doubting games as ways to approach reading material. In order to prepare my students for the diverse readings we would cover, I wanted to give them a tool to help them look at things from other perspectives—thus the introduction of Elbow's "games" or exercises early in the quarter. While the reading's authors—Bruce Ballenger and Michelle Payne— advise applying Elbow's games to professional texts, I also intended the following questions to help my students respond to each other's texts and thus to set a foundation for both our readings and WCWs:

The Believing Game Queries

- What part of this can I agree with?

- What does this say that I hadn't considered?

- What seems the strongest point?

- In which ways am I sympathetic to the writer's thoughts or feelings about this?

The Doubting Game Queries

- What part of this do I disagree with?

- What questions does this raise for me?

- What seems the weakest point, the flimsiest evidence?

- What are the gaps in the argument? What has the writer failed to consider? (44-45)

Additionally, I now see that Elbow's games fit well with the benefits of workshopping—for example, as WCWs introduce writers to an audience's diverse viewpoints, some of which writers may have trouble accepting, the games can help them deal with the feedback. As quoted in Ballenger and Payne, Elbow points out that " 'doubt caters too comfortably to [our] natural impulse to protect and retain views we already hold' " (47). We can employ this idea in two ways—firstly as a reader looking at a text from the writer's perspective, and secondly as a writer looking at a text from the reader's perspective. That is, my students could firstly try to believe rather than doubt professional writers' or their peers' texts and later to believe rather than doubt the feedback on their own texts.

As part of encouraging my students to write with an audience in mind, we also read Linda Flower's "Writing for an Audience." In just two pages, Flower brings the phrase "write for your audience" to life, asserting that "good writers do more than simply express their meaning; they pinpoint the *critical differences* between themselves and their reader and design their writing to reduce these differences" (88, emphasis added). Flower speaks of three "critical differences" between the writer and the audience and advises writers to consider each area as they write:

- Knowledge: Differences in formal/explicit knowledge and experience regarding the topic. What background knowledge does

the audience have? What information/facts do you need to provide

to help them understand your claim/perspective?

- Attitudes: Differences in informal/implicit attitudes and images.

  What is the audience's attitude toward your topic? What attitudes,

  images, and associations might your work provoke?

- Needs: Differences between writer and audience needs. Why is

  the target audience reading your work? How can you adapt your

  work to meet their personal and/or professional needs? (88-90,

  adapted from Flower)

Additionally, Flower points out that the greater the differences between writer and

audience, the more work it will take for the writer to help them understand (and

perhaps accept) their claim/perspective (89). I hoped that reading and

discussing Elbow's and Flower's theories would help my students begin to see

from the audience's perspective and to develop their inner workshop critic.

As per the second step of WCWs, during the class session before their

workshop day, the writers distributed their essays. In most cases, this system

worked well; however, toward the end of WCWs, a few writers emailed their

papers to the class and/or brought them on their workshop day, rather than

following our protocol of distributing work beforehand. This resulted in far less

feedback for the writers, not to mention that we lost valuable workshop time

when we had to read one student's essay during class (even I didn't get an

advance copy). Looking back, I should have made our class protocol mandatory.

At any rate, most of the students distributed their essays on time, allowing me and their peers ample time to read and comment on them before the WCW.

As for the comments, I asked the students to hand write in-text, marginal, and end-of-text comments. I had them turn in the texts to me after each workshop—so that I could read, grade, and record their comments—and gave them ten points per text. They did fairly well with the in-text and marginal comments. With the end comments, however, it depended on the student, and even with the strong responders, some comments were better (and longer) than others. Also, the size of hand-written comments can be misleading, appearing longer (especially to the student) than they really are. Looking back, I should have joined ranks with the teachers who require typed end comments. I could have required longer, typed responses and offered more points per response, and writers would have then received more feedback.

On our actual workshop days, we followed the typical WCW model. The writers listened silently to the workshop and took notes on their copies of the text. During the last five minutes, each writer commented on the discussion and/or asked questions. The readers/responders started by mentioning a text's strengths, focused on the paper and not the writer, and gave their peers specific feedback. I agree with novelist-writing teacher Anne Lamott that writers "need someone to respond to their work as honestly as possible but without being abusive or diminishing" (155). I wanted the readers to provide honest feedback, but only constructive responses that focused on the writing. As for the teacher, I

led the workshop and freely took part in the discussions, although I did offer my students the chance to open each discussion. If I noticed quiet students or students who seemed ready to comment, I called on them. Also, active participation in WCWs allowed me to model effective comments and critiques in order to help allay any fears my students had as to how to respond (and any fears I had about their potential responses). As Judy and Judy point out, "In leading the whole class discussion, the instructor has the opportunity to guide students' thinking to points of particular appropriateness" (102). While I did lead and participate in the WCWs, I gave the floor to any of my students who took it upon themselves to initiate a discussion or to lead the workshop in one direction or another. Also, I tried to pause and employ wait time before entering a discussion or after asking a question—that is, I tried to embrace rather than resist any silence that arose. I was far from comfortable with the silence, but becoming aware of wait time and trying to prioritize my students' comments was a step toward creating a student-focused classroom. In the words of John Gaughan: "I want[ed] my students to speak" ("From Literature" 320). On our best days, I sat and listened as my students interacted and worked together to evaluate the student paper at hand.

As part of our class, we had three international students (two from Korea and one from Taiwan), students who spoke English as their second language (L2). Although their written responses/assignments often included insightful comments, they rarely commented during class discussions. I worried as to how

they would fare in WCWs—I pictured them as silent listeners sitting amidst

rapidly fired comments that they could not follow. If they couldn't ask questions

or ask us to repeat something, how would they get anything out of the workshop?

I briefly considered letting them participate in their WCWs—that is, I considered

letting them interact with the workshop members rather than listening silently to

our discussion.

I settled, however, on a master class (MC) or conference between all

three students and me, with the rest of the class listening silently as the four of us

workshopped the papers. We would use the last five to ten minutes of the MC to

allow the rest of the class to comment and ask questions. While dubbing it a

"master class" sets up the notion of expert-novice, I saw this as a case in which I

needed to apply flexible authority by taking more control than I would have had in

a WCW. Additionally, I saw the three of them as the experts as far as taking a

writing class in an L2 and hoped that they would offer each other feedback that I

could not provide—we could thus complement each other by providing different

types of expertise. I scheduled the MC toward the end of our WCWs, thinking

that the other students would know WCW protocol by that time and could thus

more easily follow our discussion. In preparation for the MC, I first spoke with the

three students and then informed the rest of the class in advance as to my plans

and the reasoning behind them. Although I was concerned that they might not

agree with my reasoning, my worries proved unfounded. They not only

understood but also enjoyed the MC and the chance to focus on the international

students, as evidenced by the barrage of questions they asked at the end of the MC—our question and answer session lasted at least ten minutes past the time class normally ended.

Preparing to Study Whole-Class Workshops

As I began using WCWs in my classroom, I did not set out to study them. It was only as the quarter progressed and my students began to speak about writing with more authority that I realized how well WCWs were working to create what I would now call Freirean students-teachers. Toward the end of the quarter, I realized that studying our WCWs would make a fruitful project. Prior to our last class session, in which they would turn in their revised essays, I mentioned to the class that I was considering writing about our workshops for my thesis. I asked them to bring all the copies of their essays, including the copies on which their peers' had commented, if they were interested in participating.

Although all seventeen of my students provided their contact information and brought in their piles of papers, by the time I was ready to begin, only six officially responded by returning the Informed Consent (Appendix E) via email. I will therefore conduct a retrospective case study of the written comments of these six students. My data consist of a series of essay drafts (including essays one and two) from each of the six, their essay cover sheets/end-of-course reflections on the workshops, and the essays that they annotated. The data also include two self-reflective blogs that I wrote as a requirement of the TA program. Additionally, I will rely on my personal workshop recollections.

As for the six students in my study, they each brought unique contributions to our classroom and WCWs. I'll introduce them according to the order in which they first appear in my analysis. "Anna" grew up amongst a family who worked in swap meets and wrote an essay that explored the contact zone/borderland between the people who work in Southern California swap meets and those who frequent them. Perhaps due to the work ethic she acquired from her hardworking family, Anna was a serious student who was quick to contribute her ideas to class discussions. "Thomas," on the other hand, was laid-back and as quick to offer a joke as he was to offer his views. Thomas had two main groups of friends—one group black, the other white—and wrote about his experiences in the contact zone between the two groups.

From Korea and studying abroad in the US, "Emily" was one of our three international students. Emily was a hardworking student who wrote confidently in English but took part in discussions with less confidence. Emily explored the contact zone between herself and her mother, a teacher who pushed Emily to excel academically. Also writing about the borderland between herself and her mother, "Lisa" spoke of the American culture of her childhood and the Hispanic culture of her mother's, pointing to "the Spanish language" as their contact zone. Lisa applied herself both as she honestly explored their relationship and as she commented on her peers' work.

"TJ" explored the contact zone between himself and his dorm-mate—TJ liked sports, loud music, and lots of socializing, whereas his roommate enjoyed

time to himself, drawing, and meditation. TJ did a nice job of explaining the borderland between them as well as their attempts to meet on "common ground." In both writing and class discussions, TJ had a penchant for academic language, and I often commented (in writing) that less academic jargon would make his ideas more clear. Although TJ spoke freely in discussions, his written comments to peers were meager.

"Amanda" also discussed a conflict zone involving a family member, but she focused on the borderland between herself and an older sister. Amanda and her sister had grown up in very different environments, and as a result they had trouble relating to and communicating with each other. Amanda reluctantly wrote about the "drama" involved in their relationship, expressing a worry that she had portrayed her sister as someone "not to like." Amanda, however, worked hard and presented both sides/perspectives of the contact zone between them. In fact, she worked hard throughout the quarter, and I enjoyed seeing her confidence as both a writer and student grow. Although some students contributed more written comments than others, these six students together supplied valuable data.

As I reviewed the data, I examined the six students' comments to see what their written responses on each other's papers could tell me about WCWs in practice. I looked for evidence that WCWs could help solve the teacher-student contradiction. As I did so, I noticed patterns—according to my notes, "themes" and "common threads"—amongst their comments, patterns that

blossomed into signs of a teacher-student working with students-teachers. I also looked at their end-of-course reflections to see what their direct responses to WCWs would tell me—no one responded negatively and many responded with words that connected to my project, words such as "understanding," "perspective," and "connection." Additionally, I used my blog, the essays, and their comments to jog my memory and to give substance to my personal recollections. With this data assembled, I set out to explore WCWs as leading to a student-focused classroom, a community of writers, and to occasional instances of chaos and dis-cussion.

Preparing to Analyze Whole-Class Workshops with the Rhizome

I first encountered the rhizome during the 2011 CCCC's convention. In a session entitled "Genres as Rhizomes: Mapping the Performance of Genre," compositionist Anis Bawarshi used the rhizome as a metaphor for the overlapping connections between genres, describing generic connections as "lines of movement" and "holds between objects." Building on Anne Freadman's uptake theory, which defines "uptake" as the links between genres and the process of linking them (Emmons 189), Bawarshi asserts that by means of uptakes—a drawing up or over—one genre leads and connects to another. As opposed to fixed categories, Bawarshi sees genres as informing rather than excluding each other and as rhizomically connected. Different types of genres, then, exist on an overlapping continuum rather than as distinct entities. Where Bawarshi examines genres through the lens of the rhizome, I would like to

examine the student-focused classroom and the overlapping roles of teacher and student.

Historically, theorists have used the rhizome as a metaphor since Carl Jung's 1961 biography, in which he compares the rhizome to the "ephemeral" nature of life—a visible but fleeting "blossom" and an unseen but active, enduring rhizome (4). Perhaps most famously, Gilles Deleuze and Fèlix Guattari explore the rhizome in the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, published in 1980. Deleuze and Guattari describe the rhizome in opposition to taproots—large, independent roots that grow straight down, deep into the soil. They most often use the tree as an example, but carrots and dandelions also have taproots. Conversely, rhizomes grow horizontally, just beneath the surface—as in ginger, irises, and wild grasses. An underground stem, rhizomes contain nodes from which buds and shoots develop on the upperside and roots develop on the underside. The intertwining roots form a complex, interdependent system that confuses the beginnings and endings of individual roots. Deleuze and Guattari apply the rhizome to various systems—from the "lines" formed by ants as they come and go (9), to the brain's neural network (15), to the American West's ever-changing frontier (18-19). They also characterize their book as a rhizome, referring to its chapters as "plateaus."

Applied to the student-focused classroom, the rhizome provides a visual metaphor of the WCW as a horizontal plane on which neither teacher nor students represent the classroom's central focus or subject. The rhizomic WCW

represents a space in which everyone actively participates and "teaches," and teacher and students thus complement and learn from each other. As opposed to the binary of teacher-as-expert and student-as-novice, a rhizomic classroom allows teacher and student roles to overlap and creates a space for the teacher-student and students-teachers.

The rhizome also works as a metaphor for the connections or "lines of movement" between the various WCW members—whether between teacher and students or between individual students. As opposed to traditional banking-concept classrooms, a rhizomic WCW depends on the interactions of teacher and students alike, allowing the creation of bonds that might not otherwise form. According to composition and creative writing teacher Carlyn Maddox, teachers should aim for "a continual verbal back-and-forth that is centered on learning" and for "a genuine rapport" between themselves and their students—for a "good classroom is a good conversation" (64). Moreover, the rapport and connections established in a rhizomic classroom lead to interdependence. Traditional classrooms foster independent teaching and learning and operate under a binary—the teacher teaches and the students listen/learn. Rhizomic WCWs, however, foster interdependent teaching and learning and destroy the binary as the teacher and her engaged students teach and learn together.

Using the Rhizome to Explain How and Why Whole-Class Workshops
Created a Student-Focused Writing Community

Our WCWs created a rhizomic, student-focused classroom in three main

ways: They created a horizontal plane that enabled me to teach without lectures

and without claiming all the authority; my student-responders to teach each other

as we workshopped their papers; and my student-writers to assume more

responsibility for their own work as they applied newfound writing expertise to

their papers. As opposed to the passive, "docile bodies" of hierarchical banking-

concept classrooms, WCWs allowed my students to become active, involved

learners. There were times when the students expanded their classroom roles in

order to try on the writing teacher's hat, so to speak, along with other times when

they sat quietly and observed a roomful of "teachers" discussing their writing. As

opposed to teacher-expert, I now saw myself as teacher-student and my

students as students-teachers.

Moreover, rhizomic WCWs created not just a student-focused classroom

but also a student-focused writing community, allowing students to reach out to

me as well as each of their peers. They often used their written comments to

communicate directly and connect with each other. These personal lines of

movement and connection led to a community atmosphere in our WCWs.

However, the connections related to writing created a *writing* community as

students used their comments to offer perspectives on each other's work—

perspectives that sometimes overlapped, other times did not, but at all times

gave writers new insights and options. Other elements of our writing community

included the teacher as flexible authority, a shared community language, and occasional dis-cussions. Ultimately, rhizomic WCWs helped resolve the teacher-student contradiction as they created a balanced, interdependent teacher-student environment.

The Whole-Class Workshop as a Student-Focused Classroom

Looking back, I now see that some of the things that stand out in my memories of our first workshops are signs of the WCW as a student-focused classroom. One of the first things that caught my attention involves my students' use of rhetorical terms and phrases that I hadn't formally taught—no planned lecture had taken place. While I had drawn their attention to such terms and techniques earlier in the quarter, WCWs gave the students a forum in which they could reintroduce the terms on their own and practice using them as we workshopped their peers' texts.

For our first WCW, we spent the entire class on "Anna's" essay, in which she examines the behind-the-scenes happenings of swap meets and dubs herself a "modern gypsy." As we began the discussion, I tried not to rush in with my own topics and agenda. My silence and restraint paid off as "Thomas" brought up Anna's use of parallelism (our class shorthand for anaphora or parallel structure) and several students nodded their heads in agreement. I provided reinforcement by nodding my head too, impressed that Thomas had noticed and mentioned the parallelism (which I had wanted to discuss).

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Later, as I reviewed the written comments on Anna's essay, I noticed that several students had responded to the parallel structure Anna had created using the word "because." "Emily's" comments, in particular, strike me because she not only uses the term but also supplies a simple explanation of parallelism's effect: " 'Parallelism' makes things clear!" (personal communication, 28 Feb. 2011). My students' use of the term surprised me because rather than a formal lesson on parallelism, I had introduced it early in the quarter during a discussion (or anti-lecture) on Sherman Alexie's rhetorical strategies in "The Joy of Reading and Writing." My students enjoyed this piece and borrowed, on their own, several of Alexie's strategies. It went something like this: Anna experimented with parallelism, Thomas noticed and supplied the term, I acknowledged them, other students began using the term in both spoken and written comments, and nearly every student tried the technique in their own essays. Rather than silent and independent learning, rhizomic WCWs allowed us to work interactively and interdependently toward new knowledge.

While most of the students tried parallelism, several of them also borrowed Alexie's technique of using short sentences to create emphasis. Alexie uses both parallelism and a succession of short sentences in the same passage: "I refused to fail. I was smart. I was arrogant. I was lucky" (13). "Lisa" experimented with this technique when she ended her essay with the following description of her mother: "She is old-fashioned. She speaks little English. She is a foreigner. She is my mother." While Alexie's passage may have stood out

enough for a few students to mimic his techniques on their own, I don't believe that nearly every student in the class would have experimented with parallelism had they not had the benefit of reading and discussing essays such as Anna's and Lisa's. I also doubt that they would have become so comfortable using this and other terms—I did introduce the readings/terms, but my students became so familiar with the terms during WCWs that *they* incorporated them into their comments and our discussions.

Aside from the repeated use of parallelism, students frequently used the term "rhetorical question" in their comments, as Lisa demonstrates when she compliments two writers who open their essays with questions—commending one for a "Great intro with the rhetorical questions" and another for a "nice Rhetorical Question" (personal communications, 2 Mar. and 14 Mar. 2011). "TJ" also mentions a writer's use of rhetorical questions. Although he doesn't mention the term "rhetorical," he does provide a description of what the questions help accomplish: "[G]reat job with the questions, they pose a dilemma for the reader to consider" (pers. comm., 14 Mar. 2011). As the students' use of terms such as "parallelism" and "rhetorical question" show, WCWs allowed them to become active learners and experts at using the new terms they had learned. Rhizomically speaking, WCWs allowed the classroom to function as a space in which my students could (re)introduce and thus reinforce the learning of terms and techniques—as opposed to a dichotomous space that aligns teacher with

expert and student with novice, WCWs made room for the students-teachers to apply newfound writing expertise.

WCWs thus created a student-focused environment that moved away from banking-concept teaching as students learned "rhizomically" by actively participating in WCWs. As we proceeded through WCWs, this phenomenon began to manifest itself in another way, as I mention in my blog:

> I can see that some of the students are applying new knowledge from class in their second drafts. . . . I am amazed by the improvements I see from essay one to essay two in nearly every essay. These students are working diligently and many are making drastic changes that they themselves have decided to make (as opposed to changes that I have prompted). ("Workshop Update")

While I didn't apply any Freirean labels to my observations, I now see distinct Freirean overtones. The students learned things during WCWs that I hadn't explicitly taught. I didn't lecture on rhetorical devices such as parallelism or rhetorical questions (in fact, I was going through a stage in my teaching where I rarely wrote anything on the board or stood in front of the class). And yet the students nonetheless came to understand such terms—both theoretically in discussion and practically in their papers—as a result of WCWs. In other words, the horizontal plane of rhizomic WCWs helped reduce the hierarchies of banking-concept teaching, such that I could comfortably use the anti-lecture and allow my students to take active roles in the teaching-learning process.

As part of this process, as my blog mentions, the students initiated many changes *on their own*, without any direct input from me. Lisa, for example, took it upon herself to add an Amy Tan quote from one of our readings ("Mother Tongue") as she revised essay two—a change I had not suggested. While she may have been trying to reach the required five quotes, none of my comments mention the number of quotes she did (or didn't) have. Moreover, Lisa also decided on her own to use a phrase from the Tan quote to change her essay's title from "The Beauty of Language" to "The Power of Language." I don't, of course, mean that I never gave my students direct feedback; I gave plenty of advice and they took much of it, but they also made changes of their own accord.

WCWs allowed us to practice classroom complementarity and allowed me to practice flexible authority; I didn't have to take the role of authority by lecturing or providing direct feedback in order for them to learn. Instead, my students at times took the role of teacher—as Thomas did when he introduced parallelism into the WCW, or they took more responsibility for their own writing—as Lisa did with her essay revisions. For my part, I applied flexible authority as I played expert long enough to reinforce Thomas's use of the term and then backed down and let the discussion continue. As for Lisa, I acknowledged and praised the changes *she* decided to make. Thus my students became active learners and our classroom became a dynamic, rhizomic environment in which the focus wasn't always on the teacher. As opposed to the role of teacher-expert that I had formerly aspired to, our interdependent WCWs allowed me to share the focus

and authority with the students. Metaphorically, our classroom did not contain a tree with hierarchical stature or an independent taproot. Instead, we functioned rhizomically and our classroom consisted of an interdependent network that fostered an overlap of teacher and student.

As part of these overlapping roles, the students often used their written comments to speak directly with each other. I may have acted as a model for their feedback/teaching and used WCWs to offer them occasions to respond, but the students then taught each other—without my presence—via their written comments. Two students, for example, assume the teacher's role as they give Lisa suggestions for quoting more effectively: Emily asserts that the essay "would be more perfect if you provide more explanation about your quotations that'll match with your contents more" and Thomas suggests using a direct quote from Alexie instead of relying on paraphrase (pers. comm's., 9 Mar. 2011). Later that same week, Lisa takes the teacher's role as she offers the quoting advice: "[I] would incorporate more sources to make the essay stronger" (pers. comm., 11 Mar. 2011). Perhaps the advice that Lisa received influenced how she later responded to her peer's paper.

As these students show, WCWs reduced the teacher-student contradiction as the seventeen *students* offered each other direct suggestions and thus became students-teachers. Some of this assistance also took place during actual WCWs. In one case, a writer mentioned during her response time that she had had a hard time finding outside sources. Almost immediately, a nearby

peer mentioned that she had a reference in mind, and the workshop ended with the two students chatting about the new source. WCWs enabled them to connect in a way that might not otherwise have occurred. While small-group workshops (SGWs) can lead to the same sorts of connections, such a connection would have depended on the students ending up in the same group. WCWs, however, allowed the whole class to be privy to this writer's struggle with outside sources and one individual *student* to offer help. As one student applied her expertise by directly suggesting a source to a peer, our classroom operated rhizomically according to complementarity and flexible authority.

During our WCWs, there were other ways that students contributed their expertise. Anna, for example, represented the authority when it came to swap meets, as the rest of us—including me—knew nothing about such lifestyles. As we focused on Anna's text, WCWs allowed Anna to become our teacher. As "Andrea's" comments show, Anna broadened our perspectives: "You've opened my eyes into inner workings of swapmeets & the people who go there" (pers. comm., 28 Feb. 2011). Similarly, another student took the role of expert as she introduced us to the fine points of girls' softball and discussed the contact zone between the players and coaches. When her turn to speak came, we had many questions for her as we all wanted to learn more about her softball experience. WCWs enabled the students to try on the role of teacher as they taught the class about their respective experiences—that is, the anti-hierarchy created by rhizomic WCWs allowed each *student* to become the authority.

The Whole-Class Workshop as a Writing Community

In addition to using written comments to share advice directly with each other and thus to build a student-focused classroom, my students also used their comments to reach out and connect with each other—offering friendship and support, honesty, and empathy. While class discussions and SGWs do allow students to become familiar with each other, WCWs take familiarity a step further—my students read and interacted with a text written by each classmate, and these interactions allowed them to get to know each other and helped bring rapport and a mood of community to our WCWs. Moreover, many of their WCW interactions related directly to writing, and these connections helped establish our writing community. Metaphorically, their comments (as well as mine) represent the rhizomic "uptakes" or "lines of movement" that allowed us to reach out and connect with each other and thus to create community.

Many of the students used their comments to reach out in friendship and support. Thomas, for example, uses his written comments to welcome Emily, one of our three international students, to the US, scrawling "I hope you like America!" after his end comments (pers. comm., 16 Mar. 2011). As another example, Andrea uses her remarks to empathize with Emily, who writes on the difficulties of growing up with the label "teacher's daughter": "[The name calling] must of been hard for you" (pers. comm., 16 Mar. 2011). And Thomas, too, empathizes and commiserates with a fellow student, a student who had struggled with outside sources, as had Thomas, who laments, "I can't find many either"

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(pers. comm., 11 Mar. 2011). Moreover, Andrea and Thomas both comment in regard to having the same last name—Andrea with an "aha!" next to Thomas's last name in his essay heading (pers. comm., 11 Mar. 2011), and Thomas with a smiley face and his last name in parentheses after his end comments on Andrea's essay (pers. comm., 4 Mar. 2011). I had asked the students to comment on each other's writing, but these students show that they used their comments to connect as human beings as well.

Many students praised classmates who had extended themselves and shared their stories in such a way that we could relate and connect to them. Several students commented on the frank nature of Thomas's essay, in which he explores his role in the contact zone between his white friends and his black friends. "TJ," for example, commends Thomas for writing an essay that was "relatable and had a personal tone to it" (pers. comm., 11 Mar. 2011). Anna, too, comments on Thomas's candor and also demonstrates that she has become familiar with Thomas as a person: "I like your honesty and how you kept your personality (what I have witnessed in class) in the essay" (pers. comm., 11 Mar. 2011). Anna shows that WCWs allowed students to connect with each other both in class as well as through reading each other's work, and she gets even more specific in her end-of-course reflection: "I think these workshops have helped us gain an understanding of one another through the pieces of writing we have created" (pers. comm., 25 Mar. 2011).

TJ and Anna certainly react in part to the necessarily personal nature of Thomas's essay. My students, after all, had written about personal relationships in their contact zones. This might also account for Thomas's end comments to Andrea: "I liked your essay. It was pretty personal and meaningful and very easy for many to relate to" (pers. comm., 4 Mar. 2011). Because of the personal subject matter in the essays, we can't outright say that WCWs in and of themselves led my students to connect with each other—if they had written objective research papers instead of subjective experience papers, they might not have related to one another on the same level.

Nevertheless, WCWs did enable my students to reach out and connect through shared experiences—the writers with an honest discussion of their contact zones, and the readers with an understanding of the writers' experiences. Several comments illustrate the bonds they created. Emily, for example, empathizes with two of her peers: On one paper, she responds, "I understand what she's talking about because I'm the 'one' [who's different] too," and on another, "Just like me!! It's wonderful we experienced the same thing" (pers. comm's., 4 Mar. and 9 Mar. 2011). Similarly, Andrea shows an understanding of a peer's experiences: "I can completely relate to being compared to siblings & trying to prove that you['re] not them but your own person" (pers. comm., 4 Mar. 2011). In metaphoric terms, WCWs allowed them to create rhizomic lines of movement and connection with each other.

As part of relating to each other as members of a *writing* community, my students used both written and oral comments to share their perspectives on writing, as Thomas's end-of-course reflection points out: "It did help out a lot seeing my peers different views and opinions, as well as getting 18 different opinions on my paper" (pers. comm., 25 Mar. 2011). In slightly different terms, Andrea's reflection echoes Thomas's: "Everybody's comments helped me see my essay in a new light. . . . The workshops are a great way to help students see other people's perspective on their writings" (pers. comm., 25 Mar. 2011). At times, WCWs showed writers that elements of their papers were working well, as Anna could see when we all praised her use of parallelism. In another case, the student who wrote on girls' softball mentioned her "favorite diamond" before mentioning that she loved softball—she received much positive feedback regarding this metaphor, and she could therefore see its strength. Other times, however, the audience's perspective told writers that something was not working.

Sometimes we as an audience pointed to small issues—many of us, for example, agreed that we needed to know the name of one writer's sister to bring her to life, so to speak, and that we needed to hear the whole name of another writer's grandma before we heard her nickname. Oftentimes, we wanted details or a stronger explanation—an example of a song's lyrics and not just its title; a quote interpretation and not just the quote; an example or a quote to support something the writer had said. Lisa, for instance, asks for more explanation when she points out that "the quotes would be more understandable with an intro

and interpretation" (pers. comm., 4 Mar. 2011). As another example, the writer who spoke of her favorite diamond used the term "showcase tournaments," but many of us didn't know the term and therefore wanted a definition. Other times, we wanted more than details or explanations—we wanted clarity. One writer, for example, had repeated a phrase at the end of each paragraph, and many students expressed confusion—both in written and oral comments—as to the phrase's meaning (an example of parallelism gone bad). Through our feedback, WCWs enabled the writers to hear our various perspectives on their work, and the rhizomic lines of movement created by our comments and ideas helped us create a writing community as we worked together to help the writers.

As part of building a community that valued every member's input, I tried to let issues arise as part of our discussions, rather than directly mentioning them myself. That is, I tried to establish myself as a flexible authority—taking the role of expert only when necessary—and to avoid establishing a hierarchy that placed my comments on top. However, if no one brought up an issue (or a virtue) I had noticed, I did step in to mention it when we neared the topic or at least by the end of the workshop. Whether a passage of writing was or wasn't working, WCWs created a community in which my students and I discussed writing and in which each writer experienced the whole class reacting to their text. Moreover, our community allowed us to create a sense of interdependence—picture the rhizomic lines of movement linking us together and creating a scaffold—such that

we could give each writer the support and encouragement that inexperienced writers often need.

As part of this community, the writing terms and phrases that we used became our community language or discourse. As Mary Oliver points out, "a workshop can . . . make sure that members of the group learn the necessary language of their craft" (112). Oliver refers to the language of WCWs as "common language" and discusses such language regarding poetry workshops (112; 115). However, WCWs work just as well to introduce the "common language" of the non-fiction essay. Indeed, through our workshops, my students became familiar with the jargon of the essay as well as some of my personal ways of talking about writing, as Andrea demonstrates with the phrase "soften it" in response to a passage in Thomas's essay that could potentially strike the reader as discriminatory (pers. comm., 11 Mar. 2011). My input thus had an effect on the students, but WCWs allowed them to apply our community discourse in any way they saw fit.

As we worked through our WCWs, terms and phrases naturally became part of our classroom's common language, a language that helped us understand each other and form a writing community. During a self-reflective blog, I describe the experience, noting that "They are throwing around terms during workshops (as a class, we all seem to be fascinated by parallelism—nearly every student has tried using parallel sentence structure in their essay) and I see in their comments on each other's papers that they are starting to talk about writing

differently" ("Workshop Update"). Although I had yet to tie WCWs to building a student-focused writing community, I see now that the new ways my students learned to talk about writing relate to both the community as well as the community language that WCWs helped us establish, for a community needs a common language to allow its members to communicate and connect with each other.

The Whole-Class Workshop as a Site of Dis-cussion

In any dynamic community, some of the rhizomic lines of movement will lead not to connection but rather to dis-cussion and even chaos. In other words, the ideas and interactions of a diverse community will not always coincide and result in instant agreement. Although our WCWs never led to actual chaos, we did have a few instances in which not all of us agreed, instances in which we had to approach each other with humility and open minds as we worked through our differing opinions.

On one occasion, for example, we disagreed on a word Anna had chosen to portray the little known aspects of life amidst the swap meets—she had described the lifestyle as "esoteric." While the word confused some of the students (many placed a question mark by it in their marginal comments), the academic-sounding word pleased others. During the WCW, we went back and forth about whether or not esoteric was the best fit. For my part, I didn't think the word quite expressed the meaning she had intended, and I offered a couple of alternative words in my marginal comments. However, after observing her

audience's clashing perspectives, Anna chose a new word of her own ("abstruse"), along with a definition that explained how she was using it (during her WCW, we had discussed defining words/terms for the reader). Because our dis-cussion took place in a student-focused writing community, Anna examined the various perspectives and then chose the word that best fit her intended meaning from *her* perspective. Our discordant lines of movement thus proved useful to the writer as she took control of her own work.

On another occasion, we disagreed about whether or not one writer needed to describe her grandma as "racist" earlier in a paragraph that discusses her grandma's negative reactions to Asian drivers (ironically, her grandma is Asian). As the paragraph stood, some of us (including me) felt blindsided when the writer labeled her grandma "racist" late in the paragraph. Others reacted to the humor of the situation, and neither the term nor its placement bothered them. Thomas, for example, reacted with a series of "hahaha's" and "That's hilarious!" in his marginal comments (pers. comm., 14 Mar. 2011). For revision, the writer decided to add a sentence early in the paragraph that provided an explanation and not just the pejorative term. Ideally, our dis-cussion led to growth for the writer, who had to listen silently to our conflicting views as to whether or not she should mention racism earlier in the paragraph and to then reconcile her own opinion on the matter with all of ours. She may have felt a little pinch as she listened to us dis-cuss and wrestle with her work, but in the end *she* decided to

revise that section, and hopefully she learned that some readers need to be eased toward controversial terms and ideas.

During another workshop, I brought up a point that no one in the class related to—TJ's use of, in my opinion, overly academic words that obscured his own "voice." TJ and I had discussed this topic before, so I hesitated to bring it up during his WCW. However, I decided to bring it up in order to garner some other opinions on TJ's word choices. Basically, no one but me saw an issue. And so, with his peers' support—many voices versus my lone voice—TJ left the academic language largely in place. While this doesn't count as an instance of true chaos, it does count as an instance in which the students' unity outweighed the teacher's authority, an instance in which I had to embrace flexible authority as I humbly set aside my personal opinion out of respect for our community's collective opinion.

On each of these three occasions, we worked through our differing perspectives as a class in order to present the writer with a fair look at how the audience had reacted. While these examples represent minor instances of discussion, they do represent times when we as a class had to open our minds in order to reconcile our conflicting views. Moreover, they also show that in our classroom the students could disagree with anyone, including me, and decide how best to revise their work for themselves.

In this classroom, I did not represent the ultimate authority—I did have more writing expertise, but my students contributed their own forms of expertise

to our WCWs. We complemented each other and created an interdependent writing community. While the first part of the quarter set the foundation for our WCW interactions, the actual WCWs allowed us to connect with each other even as we learned about writing. WCWs, that is, allowed us to create not just a community, but a student-focused community of active learners and writers. I would like to end this chapter with a comment from Lisa, who shows me that the time spent in WCWs was time well spent:

> I believe your method was extremely successful. I not only made a connection with you as a teacher but as a person who was willing to listen to what we the students had to say. There are few teachers that are willing to do that now a days. You brought the class together by making us connect with one another through our papers. I am happy that I was able to be a part of your class. . . . (pers. comm., 12 Feb. 2012)

Conclusion

With this thesis, I hope to have shown that WCWs represent a practical, promising way to solve the teacher-student contradiction. By no means, do I suggest them as the only solution or as a replacement for SGWs but rather as a new pedagogical technique worthy of our time and consideration. As a new composition teacher, I appreciate having had the opportunity to bring WCWs into my classroom and to explore my role as teacher. Although my students

expressed anxiety about WCWs, my worries that they would resist or not participate proved unfounded, and they amazed me as they amiably and even enthusiastically undertook a new experience. While we had some trouble with paper distribution and an occasional quiet day, my students for the most part distributed papers on time, participated actively, and applied WCW feedback in their revisions. Did every workshop function smoothly? No. Did we have rough spots and times when I wondered what I was doing? Yes. Will I use WCWs in the future? Absolutely.

For those composition teachers who wish to experiment with WCWs, I hope to have provided ample information—including options for running things differently—to allow them to do so. Chapter Two, in fact, provides information on how to run both SGWs and WCWs, and might thus allow new composition teachers to become familiar with the technical and theoretical aspects of both. Ultimately, Chapters One and Two work together to provide a theoretical foundation for Chapter Three's examination of how WCWs can create a student-focused writing community in practice.

While I believe that my thesis adds valuable and much-needed information on WCWs to composition scholarship, I also recognize that the retrospective, naturalistic nature of my study leaves room for further, perhaps more structured studies. For example, where my study focuses on how and why WCWs work to create a student-focused writing community, other studies could focus on how and why WCWs work to improve student writing. Also, while I theorize on chaos

and dis-cussion, my data revealed no real chaos in our WCWs. And in the area of flexible authority, my study shows more instances of me sharing authority than of me taking it. Indeed, my study raises many questions, for example:

- Do SGWs and WCWs differ as far as improving student writing? If so, how and why? What would an empirical study of the benefits and drawbacks of both types of workshop show?

- Are SGWs and WCWs compatible—that is, can they be used productively during the same course, one as preparation for the other or as different ways to reach the same result (for example, creating community or improving writing)? Might students' personalities affect how they respond to and benefit from either SGWs or WCWs? Are there certain variations of WCWs that better fit into composition classrooms?

- What is the role of chaos in WCWs? Does it play a big enough role in either the classroom or WCWs to warrant further research?

- Might an empirical study of teacher authority and workshops (SGW and WCW) demonstrate which type most effectively allows students to share authority, to play active classroom roles, and to take responsibility for their own work? What are the concrete benefits of sharing authority? Do WCWs give too much authority to the teacher? Or do they take too much away?

These represent a few of the questions my study raises. With this thesis, I hope to have piqued other composition teachers' interest in trying WCWs in their

classrooms as well as other composition researchers' interest in conducting future studies. Ultimately, however, I hope to have rendered WCWs as a valid way to reduce the binary between teachers and students—as a way to create a student-focused, rhizomic writing community that gives students active roles in the classroom and thus in their own education.

APPENDIX A

WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE

English 107 (Advanced First-Year Composition) Weekly Course Schedule (subject to change):

Week/Day/Date	Topic	Reading Due	Writing Due
Week 1:	**Course Introduction:**		
Mon., Jan. 10	Course intro. & syllabus		
Wed., Jan. 12	Annotating; the rhetorical triangle	Adler & rhetorical triangle handouts (in reader and on Bb)	
Fri., Jan. 14	Believing & doubting; critical & generous reading; audience	"How Do You Know?"; Flower's "Writing for an Audience"	Reading Response 1: Dialectical journal due today or Wed.
Week 2:	**The Value of Reading:**		
Mon., Jan. 17	No class—campus closed		
Wed., Jan. 19	Personal reading narratives	Piassa's "A Love Affair with Books"; Douglass's "Learning to Read and Write"	
Fri., Jan. 21	Does learning to read equal change? Can it change your perspective?	Mailer's "One Idea"; Baldacci's "Changing Lives Through Books"; Alexie's "The Joy of Reading and Writing"	Response 2: Dialectical journal due today
Week 3:	**The Borderlands/Contact Zone:**		
Mon., Jan. 24	Introduction to the borderlands/zone	Anzaldúa's poem "Borderlands"; Rodriguez's "A Public Language"	Response 3: Formal journal due today (your ideas for change)
Wed., Jan. 26	The contact zone	Pratt's "Arts of the Contact Zone"	
Fri., Jan. 28	Language codes/registers	Mellix's "From Outside, In"; Tan's "Mother Tongue"	Response 4: Dialectical journal due today
Week 4:	**The Power of Language:**		
Mon., Jan. 31	Language & perspective; language & identity	Begley's "What's in a Word?"; Sausser's "Jefferson"	

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Week/Day/Date	Topic	Reading Due	Writing Due
Wed., Feb. 2	Language & perspective/ identity continued	Naylor's "The Meanings of a Word"; Bernard's "Teaching the N-Word"; Mairs' "On Being a Cripple"	
Fri., Feb. 4	**Ways of Seeing:** Subjectivity & perspective	Berger's "Ways of Seeing"; Rumi's poem "Elephant in The Dark"; Cooper's "Labyrinthine"	**Essay 1** Due today
Week 5:			
Mon., Feb. 7	Conferences		**Response 5:** Formal journal due today or Wed. (literacy narrative)
Wed., Feb. 9	Conferences		
Fri., Feb. 11	**Ways of Seeing:** Perspectives and change: Can you change how you see things?	Dillard's "Sight into Insight"; Walker's "Beauty"; Twain's "Two Ways of Seeing a River"	**Response 6:** Dialectical journal due today
Week 6:	**A Multiplicity of Perspectives:**		
Mon., Feb. 14	Diverse perspectives	Hughes's poems; Hurston's "How It Feels to Be Colored Me"; Cofer's "The Myth of the Latin Woman"	**Response 7:** Dialectical journal due today, Wed., or Fri.
Wed., Feb. 16	Diverse perspectives	Mukherjee's "Two Ways to Belong in America"; Shah's "Tight Jeans and Chania Chorris"	
Fri., Feb. 18	Diverse perspectives & identity	Liu's "Notes of a Native Speaker"; Sullivan's "What is a Homosexual?"	

Week/Day/Date	Topic	Reading Due	Writing Due
Week 7:			
Mon., Feb. 21	Perspectives on intelligence & identity	Asimov's "What Is Intelligence, Anyway?"; Dillard's "Terwilliger Bunts One"	Response 8: Dialectical journal due today, Wed., or Fri.
Wed., Feb. 23	History as Dynamic: Perspectives on History	Tompkins' " 'Indians' "	
Fri., Feb. 25	Perspectives on history	McCullough's "Why History?"; Pitts's "On 9/11, Innocence Was Lost Again"; Yolen's "How Basic is Shazam?"	
Week 8:			
Mon., Feb. 28	Essay workshops		Response 9: Formal journal due this week or next—discuss your "literate art" (see E. Bernard page 85/41)
Wed., Mar. 2	Essay workshops		
Fri., Mar. 4	Essay workshops		
Week 9:			
Mon., Mar. 7	Essay workshops		
Wed., Mar. 9	Essay workshops		
Fri., Mar. 11	Essay workshops		
Week 10:			
Mon., Mar. 14	Essay workshops		
Wed., Mar. 16	Essay workshops (master class)		

Week/Day/Date	Topic	Reading Due	Writing Due
Fri., Mar. 18	Essay workshops		

Week 11:

	Perspectives on Academia:		
Mon., Mar. 21	What is an academic? Voice	Sommers' "Between the Drafts"; Graff's "Hidden Intellectualism"; Soto's "The Jacket"; O'Brien's "If I die in the Combat Zone"	Response 10: Formal journal due today (favorite writerly moves)
Fri., Mar. 25	Final's day (class meets at 12:00 p.m.): **Essay #2 revision due;** Potluck		

Developed by Bridgette Callahan

APPENDIX B

ESSAY PROMPTS

Entering the Contact Zone/Borderlands

"Without contraries is no progression." —William Blake

We have read about Anzaldúa's *borderlands*, which she describes as existing "where two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory . . . where the spaces between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" or familiarity (Bartholomae and Petrosky, *Ways of Reading* 27). We have also read about Mary Louise Pratt's *contact zones*: "Social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other" (501). In other words, the borderlands/contact zone represents a hypothetical "territory" or "space" where our different ideas, beliefs, opinions, or perspectives may overlap but may also "clash," a place where we often have to "grapple" and negotiate to find a middle ground or resolution between our differing perspectives.

Anzaldúa's and Pratt's ideas can be extended to relationships in our own lives. To accomplish this, we will have to broaden our idea of culture to include the relationships we have with other individuals and groups in our everyday lives, in our own unique cultures. A borderland or contact zone exists, for example, between a parent and child, a husband and wife, a coach and his team, or a teacher and her class.

Essay #1:

For this essay, you will examine a borderland/contact zone that is present in your life. As you begin, you should focus on defining and describing your two groups and the contact zone/borderlands that exists between them, keeping in mind that the second part of the essay will explore a particular conflict that has taken place—or continues to take place—in your contact zone.

To use Pratt's term, you will be writing an *autoethnography*—you will not only be examining and describing yourself, but also examining and describing yourself in ways that address and "engage with" how the other individual/group sees you (Pratt 501). It may help to describe yourself or your group in terms of Benedict Anderson's *imagined communities* (507). Various aspects of yourself or your community are *imagined* to the extent that they describe how you see yourself—your theory of yourself, if you will. How do you or your group see yourselves? What are your core values, principles, ideas, beliefs, etc.? How do you see these characteristics coming into play in the contact zone/borderlands? Will they help or hinder you as you try to negotiate and progress toward new understanding with the other individual/group? How or why will they be helpful or a hindrance? Do the ways you see yourself correspond with the ways the other person/group sees you? Do they differ?

You should also examine the role of language in your contact zone/borderlands. Do you or your group—that is, your *discourse community*—use language in a particular way, in a way that differs from the ways the other individual/group uses language? Is language and the way you use it a factor in the contact zone? Does it help or interfere with communication? How and why does it help or interfere? Do you have to *code-switch*—shift or switch into a different way of speaking—when you are in the contact zone with the other individual/group?

This essay should be approximately 3 typed, double-spaced pages, follow MLA format (consult the MLA essay handout in our reader (5-6) or *The Little, Brown Handbook* chapters 46 [644-691] and 47 [691-725]), and include at least one quotation from our readings. Also, remember to give your essay a real title—I don't want to see essays entitled "Essay #1." Your essay's title is your first chance to give me a clue as to what your essay will be about. I look forward to reading about you and your contact zones/borderlands.

Essay #2

You have introduced your contact zone—the "zone" or area where you and another person or group, with your two differing perspectives, meet in a borderlands of sorts. Similarly, Bharati Mukherjee's "Two Ways to Belong in America" and Sonia Shaw's "Tight Jeans and Chania Chorris" explore contact zones that each writer encounters with a family member. Moreover, Mukherjee and Shaw also explore a conflict within their respective contact zones—Mukherjee discusses her sister's contrary beliefs on US citizenship, whereas Shaw discusses her sister's differing ideas on fashion.

Using essay #1 as a foundation, you will now explore and discuss a conflict that has taken place in your contact zone—a conflict that has required you and the other individual or group to examine, grapple with, and negotiate your differing opinions and perspectives in order to resolve your differences. You should also revisit the role of language—did it help or hinder your efforts to reach a resolution?

Further, as you explore the conflict in your contact zone, I would like you to cite a total of three of our readings (including the one from essay #1) as well as two outside sources to support your ideas and assertions. The outside sources will require a bit of work and research on your part, but bringing in a few outside voices will make your essay stronger and will help establish your credibility as a writer (ethos). In "On Being a Cripple," for example, Nancy Mairs turns to the writers George Orwell (268) and Elisabeth Kübler Ross (276) for support. Similarly, in "Sight into Insight," Annie Dillard turns to numerous outside sources; for example, as she describes her own delight in the wind, Dillard turns to Stuart Edward White, who says that he has " 'always maintained that if you looked closely enough you could *see* the wind' " (701, italics in original). Further, Dillard later turns to Donald E. Carr as she discusses the brain, saying that Carr "points out that the sense impressions of one-celled animals *are* not edited for the brain" (702, italics in original). She also turns to Van Gogh (704), Galileo (705), Buber (707), and Thoreau (708) among other notable sources. As you integrate your new sources, feel free to add sources to the first part of your essay. Also, feel free to ask me for help as you search for outside sources.

Essay #2 should be 6 typed, double-spaced pages, follow MLA formatting requirements, include a total of 5 quotations (3 from our readings and 2 from outside sources), and include a works cited page. Remember, you can consult the model essay on pages 5-8 in our reader for help with MLA formatting and the works cited. Also, pages 15-20 have numerous ideas for how to work with quoted material.

Developed by Bridgette Callahan

APPENDIX C

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

English 107 Workshop Schedule

Remember: You must pass out your essay during the class before your workshop date, so that we can all have a chance to read and comment on your essay before your workshop. Also, please turn in draft #1 (with my comments) to me.

Workshop Dates:

Mon., Feb. 28th

1. "Anna"

Wed., Mar. 2nd:

1.
2.

Fri., Mar. 4th:

1. "Andrea"
2.

Mon., Mar. 7th:

1. "TJ"
2.

Wed., Mar. 9th:

1. "Lisa"
2.

Fri., Mar. 11th:

1.
2. "Thomas"

Mon., Mar. 14th:

1.
2.

Wed., Mar. 16th: (Master Class)

1. "Emily"
2.
3.

Fri., Mar. 18th:

1.

APPENDIX D

REVISION QUESTIONS

Revision Questions

"A writer is unfair to himself when he is unable to be hard on himself." —Marianne Moore, poet

" . . . failure . . . is the poet's only real business. The one hope is for a better and better failure."
—John Ciardi, poet

1. Have I focused on my topic?

2. Does my thesis make a clear statement about my topic?

3. Is the organizational pattern I have used [logical and] the best one, given my purpose?

4. Does each paragraph have a topic sentence? Does the topic sentence of each paragraph relate [and connect] to my thesis? Does each paragraph have one main idea, or do I jump from topic to topic?

5. Do I have enough supporting details, and are my examples the best ones that I can develop? Are my details/examples relevant—that is, do they connect to my thesis/main points? Have I provided enough examples to support my thesis/points? Have I given the reader enough information?

6. How are my transitions? Are the transitions from paragraph to paragraph smooth? Are the transitions within paragraphs (i.e., between ideas) smooth?

7. How are my quotes? Have I introduced each one? Have I cited each one? Have I interpreted/analyzed and explained the significance of each one?

8. Do I have a good title? Does it indicate what my subject is and hint at my thesis?

9. How effective are my beginning and my ending? Can I improve them? Does my ending connect to my thesis and introduction?

(Adapted from Rosa and Eschholz's "Questions for Revising," with some additions.)

Note: These questions can also be used for workshop, with three caveats:

"He [Ezra Pound] was a marvelous critic because he didn't try to turn you into an imitation of himself. He tried to see what *you* were trying to do."   —T.S. Eliot, poet (emphasis added)

- 1. Start with the positives.
- 2. Mention the paper's (and not the writer's) strengths and weaknesses.
- 3. Be specific—**don't** just say, "It's good."

Work Cited

Rosa, Alfred, and Paul Eschholz. "Revising." *Models for Writers: Short Essays for Composition.* 9th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007. 21.

APPENDIX E

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

AND INFORMED CONSENT

Academic Affairs
Office of Academic Research • *Institutional Review Board*

January 09, 2012

Ms. Bridgette Callahan
c/o: Prof. Karen Rowan
Department of English
California State University
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Prof Callahan:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Toward Solving the Teacher-Student Contradiction: Creating a Rhizomatic, Workshopping Classroom Community" has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The attached informed consent document has been stamped and signed by the IRB chairperson. All subsequent copies used must be this officially approved version. A change in your informed consent (no matter how minor the change) requires resubmission of your protocol as amended. Your application is approved for one year from January 09, 2012 through January 08, 2013. One month prior to the approval end date you need to file for a renewal if you have not completed your research. See additional requirements (Items 1 – 4) of your approval below.

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following 4 requirements as mandated by the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 listed below. Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located on the IRB website under the forms menu. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years.

1) Submit a protocol change form if any changes (no matter how minor) are made in your research prospectus/protocol for review and approval of the IRB before implemented in your research.
2) If any unanticipated/adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research,
3) Too renew your protocol one month prior to the protocol end date,
4) When your project has ended by emailing the IRB Coordinator/Compliance Analyst.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, IRB Compliance Coordinator. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Sharon Ward, Ph.D

Sharon Ward, Ph.D., Chair
Institutional Review Board

SW/mg

cc. Prof. Karen Rowan, Department of English

909.537.7588 • fax: 909.537.7028 • http://irb.csusb.edu/
5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY SAN BERNARDINO, CA 97407 2393

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ELECTRONIC INFORMED CONSENT

STUDY'S TITLE:
Toward Solving the Teacher-Student Contradiction: Creating a Rhizomatic, Workshopping Classroom Community

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate how whole-class composition workshops can lead to interactive, student-centered classroom environments. This study is being conducted by Bridgette Callahan under the supervision of Karen Rowan, Assistant Professor of English, California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE:
Composition teachers have long sought to solve the contradiction between advocating nonhierarchical classrooms on the one hand and finding themselves front and center of the classroom on the other. In order to create student-focused spaces, teachers must find effective ways to reduce classroom hierarchies. My study's main objective is to explore whole-class writing workshops as one way to build nonhierarchical, interactive composition classrooms.

DESCRIPTION:
If you agree to participate in this study, various drafts of your final paper will be studied for the purpose of identifying how the workshopping classroom environment might have affected such things as techniques, terms, and concepts that you used in your paper(s). Your writing may be summarized, paraphrased, or quoted as evidence of the workshop's effectiveness.

I will conduct my study retrospectively, which means I will be looking back and studying various drafts of your final paper, reflecting on my notes regarding the paper(s), and reconstructing key workshop discussions.

PARTICIPATION:
1. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary.

2. You may refuse to participate in this study or withdraw from this study at any time.

CONFIDENTIALITY OR ANONYMITY:
1. All identifying information will be blacked out in your writing samples.

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2. All writing samples will be coded using pseudonyms--your real name will be replaced by a fake name, and your real name will not be used under any circumstances.

3. All identifying information will be removed from summarized, paraphrased, or quoted excerpts in my thesis.

RISKS:
There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study. Since your papers have already been graded, there is no risk of psychological distress or embarassment.

BENEFITS:
There are no known benefits to participating in this study.

CONTACT:
If you have any questions or concerns regarding your participation in my study or would like more information about this study, please contact my advisor, Dr. Karen Rowan, Assistant Professor of English: English Department, California State University, San Bernardino, University Hall 301.32; phone: (909) 537-3854; email: krowan@csusb.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the IRB Compliance Coordinator, Michael Gillespie, in the Office of Academic Research at (909) 537-7588 or mgillesp@csusb.edu.

I understand that I must be eighteen years of age or older to participate in this study.

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