University of Texas at El Paso

ScholarWorks@UTEP

Open Access Theses & Dissertations

2021-07-01

Writing Inside And Outside The Rhetoric Of Containment: An Analysis Of Writing Strategies In First Semester Students Transitioning To The First Year College Composition Classroom

Brenda R. Gallardo
University of Texas at El Paso

WRITING INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE RHETORIC OF CONTAIMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF WRITING STRATEGIES IN FIRST SEMESTER STUDENTS TRANSITIONING TO THE FIRST YEAR COLLEGE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

BRENDA R. GALLARDO

DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION

APPROVED:

Isabel Baca, Ph.D.

Lou Herman, Ph.D.

Erika Mein, Ph.D.

Stephen L. Crites, Jr., Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

WRITING INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE RHETORIC OF CONTAIMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF WRITING STRATEGIES IN FIRST SEMESTER STUDENTS TRANSITIONING TO THE FIRST YEAR COLLEGE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

by

BRENDA R. GALLARDO, M.A.T.

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at El Paso

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

AUGUST 2021

Acknowledgements

As I reflect upon the completion of this very important project, I look back at how all I've learned has shaped who I am now. I am certainly not the same person I was when I first began this project, and for that I am thankful. This project showed me how strong I could be and how much of myself I admire for staying true to my path. This process was one of renewal and ultimate reflection—a major test of my abilities, dedication, and potential and proof that I, too, am able to break out of my containment, fight for what I believe in, and make my dreams come true. Finally, and most importantly, I am forever thankful to those who helped me through this journey, those who believed in my potential, who recognized my hard work, and who valued this project.

Dr. Baca, it was a pleasure working with you. Thank you for helping me rebuild and for believing in me—I could not have done this without you.

Dr. Herman, it was wonderful working with you once again. My memories from the UWC are some of the best. Thank you for joining this project.

Dr. Mein, your insight has been an indispensable contribution to this project. Thank you for allowing me to work with you.

To Mr. Pool and the wonderful students of RWS first year composition—thank you for participating in this project.

T.R., thank you for always giving me such beautiful inspiration.

To my dearest family, Mom and Kris, you are my wings. You give me the strength to go anywhere and do anything. Without your support, I would not be where I am. Without your support, I would not be who I am. I love you endlessly. This is all for you.

Abstract

Based on Bowden's (1993) notion of containment, this study analyzes how containment—as well as other pedagogical restrictions and limitations—was manifested in the high-school-to-college transition of first year student writers. This study addresses the following questions of inquiry: *How do participants' experiences in high school affect them as writers in college?; What practices and strategies do students in the first year composition classroom apply to overcome containment in the college writing classroom?*; and, *How can instructors use pedagogy to overcome containment?* This dissertation applies a qualitative design to gather data via interviews, questionnaires, and classroom observations. Via grounded theory, data gathered for this study was analyzed in three major phases and participants' contributions were connected to major themes and key words. Findings from the collected data demonstrated various degrees of containment for student writers as they attempted to navigate the college composition classroom in their first semester of college. General recommendations for this study offer how to guide students out of their containment through instructor pedagogy and how instructors can use more creative assignments in the classroom. Finally, recommendations also discuss how to make writing more performative as well as the ways in which pedagogical training could prove beneficial to instructors with no pedagogical background.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

"We are all apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master."
--Ernest Hemingway, New York Journal, July 11, 1961

Writing has always been a fascinating practice to me. This particular quote from Hemingway, I think, perfectly describes the wonderful elusiveness that is writing. As writers, we become stronger the more we practice our skills; however, we are always in growth and learn new concepts each time we write, making us eternal students in the craft that Hemingway alludes to. Indeed I believe that we can never become masters of this craft because I perceive writing as fluid and mutable and alive in that it is always changing with every new idea we think of and every new word we replace. It is charged with our experiences, our beliefs, and our identities— who we are. All of this stirs in my thoughts a lingering curiosity about how we write. How is it, really, that we as thinkers and creators of knowledge can construct and put together characters that accurately represent our thoughts, feelings, emotions, and opinions? What is the process of getting thought onto page and is there one, overall way to do it? And when we do manage to write something, who decides what is labeled as "good" versus "bad?" Writing is not only a skill to practice, but it is also deeply personal. We pour our deepest thoughts into our writing and expose it to others for criticism and feedback. This, I believe, is what intimidates some more than others—the idea of being judged for their writing.

My own experiences as a writer—both positive and negative—have offered me a variety of tools to hone my skills and become a stronger writer each time I manage to write something successfully. My memories of writing, however, have not always been pleasant and perhaps this is why I am now so passionate about the topic of writing. Although I am forever grateful for all of the educators in my academic journey, I, sadly, cannot recall a significant teacher who helped

me grow in my writing. Unable to get past the standardized testing as I experienced it myself, I can remember only preparing tirelessly for prompts and writing that would entail the ubiquitous five paragraph essay. As I transitioned to college and began my own journey in college level writing, I realized how different the process could be. It was a particular professor who, with his creativity and imagination, helped me develop my own process. I found myself free from the constraints of prompts and tests and learned that writing could be much more than words on a page. I discovered and learned that writing could be colorful, musical, poetic, and could breathe life into any idea or topic. This "off-center" sort of writing was very liberating to my own process as it helped me step outside of the box I had been placed in for so long and essentially contributed to my growth as a writer.

In my own writing process, I recognize the importance of always learning something new and never assuming that I have mastered the craft of writing. In learning something new, I expand my own knowledge and become a stronger writer. My experiences in education, however,—as both a former high school English teacher and current first year composition instructor—have brought me insight into the ways in which writing is created, shaped, and labeled within the classroom. Being a teacher, I have learned to relate to students' concerns, frustrations, and ideas about writing because I, too, am a writer like them. Most importantly, I have also witnessed how students become more confident in their skills as they learn to break away from formulaic strategies taught exclusively in the secondary classroom and prepare to navigate the college writing classroom.

Writing in High School

Having taught high school English in the past, I have encountered students who have often expressed their aversion to writing. The process of writing becomes one of being more concerned about page length and of overcoming the ubiquitous "writer's block" than the quality

of a message. Students seem to struggle to write, to maintain writing momentum, and are usually very quick in editing their thinking and ideas during their brainstorming. Additionally, the problem of what is labeled as "good" versus "bad" writing is also a major issue in student writers' thinking. In my teaching experience, students often feel that their writing is not good and often express how difficult it is for them to write and put their ideas down on paper. Because much of high school content seems to be aimed at standardized testing, students do not always connect to the content as it does not align with their personal interests, essentially making writing more difficult for them as they do not know what to write.

In my former high school classes, I found myself trying to personalize lessons for my students and tried to connect with their interests in order to create more meaningful writing exercises for them. A particular moment that highlights my teaching narratives was of one particular student I had when teaching Sophomore English. This student considered himself a bad writer and often complained about not being able to create ideas when it came to writing, leading to a difficult struggle for him. In attempting to connect content with his interests to make writing meaningful for him, I noticed that he often read baseball magazines. When I asked him about baseball, it was clear that he had a deep connection to the sport. It was then that I began asking him to write about certain baseball players, games, or moments that he considered his favorite. In doing so, his writing came alive and he was more willing to participate in writing activities. To me, this experience was one of learning how to help students connect to content in ways that can reach within their interests in order to pique their curiosity, drive their discovery, and make learning more meaningful, positive, and enjoyable.

Another issue is that many students do not appear to have freedom over their writing because of what they learned in previous writing environments; they begin to adopt foreign writing practices that are not natural for them, instead imitating what they feel is the "correct" form of writing. This, in turn, becomes problematic because it implies that, in their search for the

perfect written product, student writers will often overlook the value of the general process of writing and how it all comes together through the application of strategies they have learned. Students, then, may seem to be unable to break away from these restrictions and so they develop writing strategies based on formulaic practices that are taught to them in high school which mainly focus on testing standards. The process of writing for these students, then, becomes one that Bartholomae (2008) calls "imitation and parody [more] than a matter of invention and discovery" (p. 387) as students become accustomed to "appropriat[ing] a specialized discourse" (p. 382) they know nothing about. Student writers might feel prompted to compromise their writing practices and strategies in order to conform to writing for a grade and use strategies and processes that are not their own. When they overlook the importance of their personal writing process, emerging student writers may resort to imitating processes that focus solely on producing specific products for specific purposes. It is in this imitation that students become fixed on applying writing strategies that are not their own that leads to what Bowden (1993) calls containment. In situating the concept of containment within the context of writing pedagogy, Bowden's theory of containment explains how restrictive and limiting practices transform individuals into passive receptacles—or containers—to be filled with ideologies and perceptions of systems or individuals in power which ultimately interrupt agency, identity, and voice.

Containment, Bowden argues, transforms knowledge into a "commodity" (p. 373) that essentially becomes "static and decontextualized" (p. 373). It is important to acknowledge that as students prepare to transition from the secondary to postsecondary writing classroom, they inevitably carry any and all learned perceptions of what their writing is or should be and how they qualify as writers themselves. When student writers learn that they have to fit their own ideas and knowledge into a certain form, Bowden notes how students then are "…encouraged to 'pour' what is in their heads onto paper, [as] they are being encouraged to view…the mind [as a

container] …and being asked to subscribe to a view of knowledge that enables its transfer from one container to another" (p. 373). For instance, ideologies of a one-size-fits- all, linear type of writing promote limitations that are placed on student writing and ultimately interrupt student agency and voice as they struggle to break away from the limits of their containment.

The Transition

As students transition from high school to college and prepare to take on the task of college-level, academic writing, the question of whether or not these students are sufficiently equipped to meet the requirements of a first-year college composition course is significant. The problem, as I now see it in teaching college composition, seems to be that while some students transition smoothly from high-school to college-level writing, there are others who, unfortunately, struggle. With this in mind, it is important to consider the factors that contribute to the significant writing gap between secondary and post-secondary education. The alignment of high school lessons with college lectures may also be the reason for the misalignment in students transitioning to the college classroom. Nunez Rodriguez et al. (2017) note the importance of the relationship between high school teachers and college instructors as well as "…the dialogue and understanding needed among high school and college cultures" (p. 408).

Further, the dissonance between secondary and postsecondary writing plays a significant role in students' perceptions and definitions of writing, as their own writing process is being continually shaped, labeled, and categorized even before they enter the college classroom. Donham and Rehmke (2016) noted that high school students often lacked certain skills that they were not being taught in high school. They observed that while high school may focus on reporting about a topic, college leans more towards researching (p. 14). Venezia and Jaeger (2013) argue that "[t]he reason why more high school graduates are not ready are complex and highly dependent upon individual circumstances" (p. 119) and explain this disconnect by

alluding to the fact that "[h]igh school courses…often teach content …by using rote memorizations…rather than problem-solving and critical-writing exercises" (p. 119). Regarding writing, the notion of ownership is also important to consider and raises several questions:

> How can students—and when should they—break away from any possible containment that has been placed upon them from previous writing environments? And, how can the first year composition classroom help emerging writers develop their writing strategies?

Additionally, it is important to note the various factors which contribute to the formation of writing perceptions in students. For example, standardized testing in secondary education may be considered a static, generically structured, assessment that only values a certain type of writing and places student agency within the boundaries of a high stakes contained system of scores meant to determine what type of writing is labeled as pass or fail. It does not promote a free-thinking, creative writing process; rather, it generalizes a student's writing process as it restricts and contains personalization through a specific question, specific response process. About standardized testing, Kohn (2000) asserts that tests "…can't measure initiative, creativity, imagination, conceptual thinking, curiosity, effort, irony, judgment, commitment, nuance, good will, ethical reflection, or a host of other valuable dispositions and attributes (pg. 11).

Because students become so accustomed to such forms of writing, it may be safe to assume that such assessments only function to influence student inability to transfer their writing to other contexts as they are not sufficiently equipped to write rhetorically. Further, factors such as standardized testing have promoted strict, formulaic writing, and transitioning students are affected as they may struggle to overcome the containment—the formulaic approach to writing—that has been placed on them by curricular constraints, resulting in poor student perception of writing in the college classroom. According to Wiley (2000), formulaic writing becomes problematic in that it

forces premature closure on complicated interpretive issues and stifles

ongoing exploration…[by]…hindering students from exploring their

ideas, reactions, and interpretations—the rich chaotic mess from which

true insight and thoughtfulness can emerge. (p. 64)

In addition to standardized testing, pedagogical practices that do not allow for discovery

and active engagement through collaboration within the classroom promote a practice where

students become contained within the role of passive receptacles and compromise their agency,

writing identity, and voice. Scripted instruction, as defined by Reeves (2010), may also be a

reason as to why some teachers have to follow scripted forms of teaching to deliver to their

students. Scripted instruction is classified as a form of teaching that "…require teachers to

deliver instruction by reading and acting from the textbook publisher's pre-written script…" (p.

242). In my own teaching experience, I, too, had to follow scripted lessons in the textbooks that

I was provided for my classes (See Fig. 1-4 below).
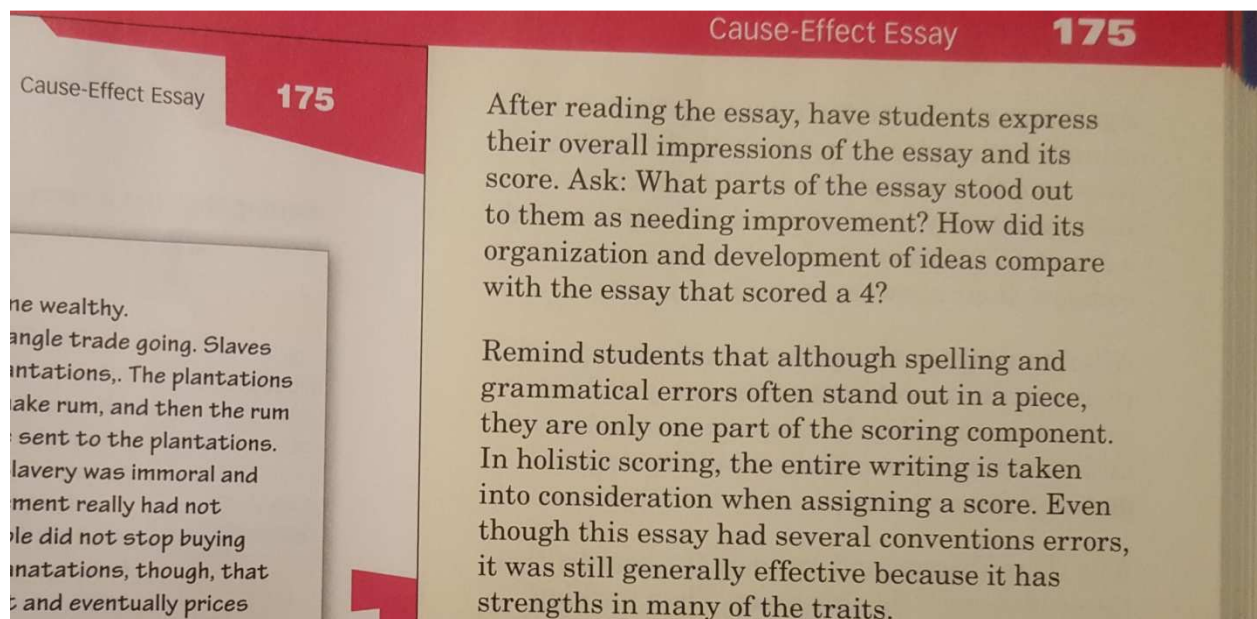
Fig. 1- Scripted Lesson 1

Again instruct students to cover up the left-hand column with a piece of paper or their hand as they read the example essay. Then ask them to list reasons why they believe this essay received a score of 2. At the end of each page, have them compare their answers with the side notes.

After reading the essay, have students express their overall impressions of the essay and its score. Ask: *How did the errors in conventions and lack of organization affect your ability to gain meaning from the essay?*

As a class, discuss and write on the board a clear thesis statement for this essay. Then working in small groups, have students revise the three middle paragraphs for organization and consistency of verb tense.

Fig. 2- Scripted Lesson 2

Expository Writing Warm-Up: Focusing on a Specific Topic

Explain to students that the expository paragraph they are about to write will share information about a specific topic. Students should understand that the purpose of writing the paragraph is to practice narrowing a general subject to a manageable topic and explaining something about the topic.

Point out, however, that writing the expository paragraph can be a good way to prepare for the cause-effect essay. A writer can use the paragraph to explore one aspect of the topic in more detail. Invite students to choose a topic that could be expanded into a cause-effect essay, if they wish to.

Try It!

You may wish to model narrowing the topic on the board for one or two of the general subjects listed to make the concept clearer to students.

Fig. 3- Scripted Lesson 3
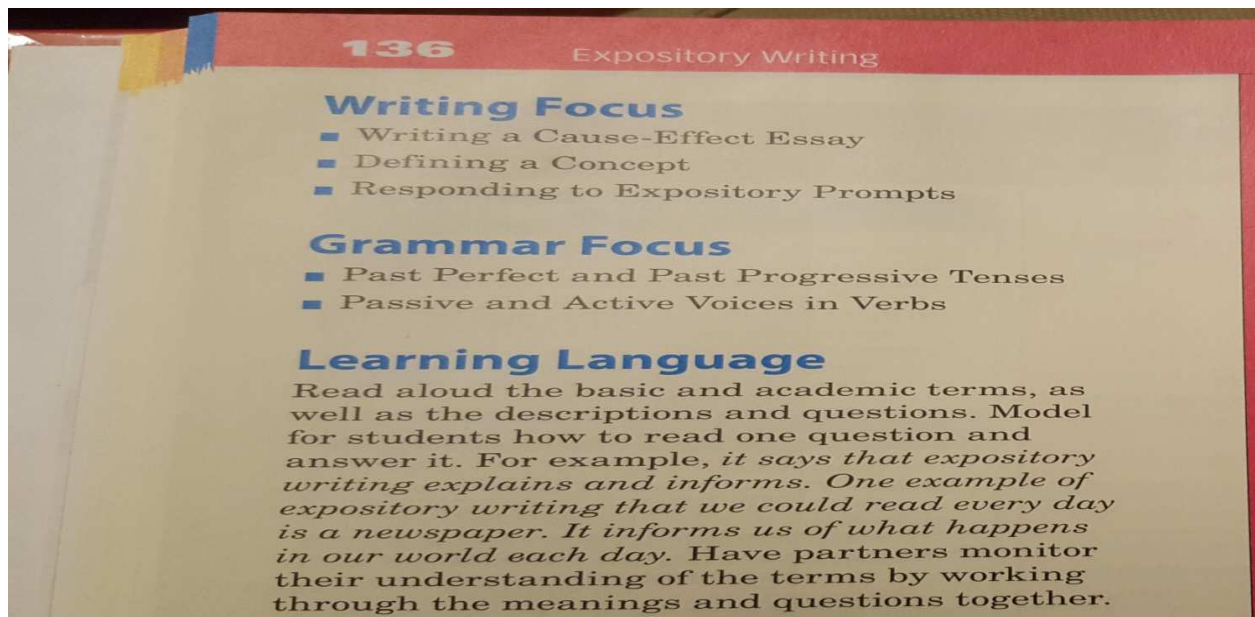
Fig. 4- Scripted Lesson 4

Because scripted instruction follows a specific plan and method, it forces learning to become linear and static, as opposed to being mutable and fluid. Teaching is a practice that depends highly on the active interaction in the classroom, however, in following a script, there is no sense of teaching or learning outside of the box. Many secondary school teachers have no other option than to follow teaching templates that do not support or promote a teacher's own creativity and expertise. These templates, then, may end up hindering students' ability to become more effective writers as scripted instruction is designed to direct both teaching and learning.

As opposed to high school experiences where students were possibly unable to own their own voices and gain any agency, this research demonstrates how students navigate through their containment towards the process of their own progress as more effective writers. While it is only logical for struggling writers to have access to carefully structured assignments to facilitate strategies and strengthen their writing skills, it is also repetitive writing formulas that create a "codependency on teachers who have agreed…that this sort of formulaic [writing] will be what they reward" (p. 65). Wiley explores implications of formulaic writing further by asserting that

[t]eaching writing as a formula reduces a complex, messy process to a step-by-step, follow-the-recipe procedure. When we teach this reductive process, we are telling students that each writing task, each writing problem, is essentially the same. No matter what the task, if students follow the recipe, the final product will satisfy all appetites, regardless of variation in the situation. (p. 66)

Similarly, Venezia and Jaeger (2013) note the ways in which "[h]igh school courses…often teach content…by using rote memorization [instead of] engaging students in problem-solving and critical-writing exercises that develop both deeper knowledge of the content and the more general logical and analytical thinking skills valued at the post-secondary level" (p. 119). Having taught high school myself, I found that most of the content taught to students revolved around the notion of standardized testing and essentially training students to perform well on a test.

Riding and Writing

In order to further explain the *only formulas* implications, I will use the metaphor of learning how to ride a bicycle. When we begin to learn to ride a bicycle, there are the *tools* that help us learn to ride—for example, training wheels. Training wheels function to help us keep our balance, ride in correct form, and keep us from falling over and getting hurt. When we start getting better and become stronger riders, training wheels become unnecessary as we learn to maneuver and ride on our own. In this sense, training wheels can actually *hinder* our progress as riders for they can hold us back and become intrusive in our potential for development.

When we begin to leave the training wheels behind, if we fall over, we learn to move to avoid getting hurt; if we pedal a certain way, we can surprise ourselves with riding tricks and different moves. Much like learning to ride a bike, first with training wheels, then without, the

same thing happens with writing: we employ the use of "training wheels" such as formulas to help us gain the confidence we need in order to become stronger writers and learn to apply our own writing strategies. By experimenting with various forms of writing aside from the formulaic, we learn by making mistakes and become stronger writers each time. "Training wheels" writing keeps writers from experiencing the full potential of their process.

Writing becomes restricted when it doesn't come from the true self. When we feel we cannot transit our voice or when our self cannot come across our writing, we might begin to perceive writing as a chore—something boring that causes us stress. Students must be taught that writing itself is not negative—it is the negative power they give to writing that transforms it into a disliked practice. When writing dictates to students what to say and how to say it, this takes away from a student's own power of choice and they eventually grow to dislike the process of writing. If, however, students begin to see writing as simply another form of communication, they will liken the process to that of speaking or texting and ultimately result in a shift of how they perceive writing—from impossible and negative to doable and positive. Writing is really about making it approachable and helping students to become more empowered in their writing processes and strategies.

Looking at Containment

Based on Bowden's notion of containment, I provide my own definition in connection with composition and the first year college writing classroom. Containment within a composition context, then, could be defined as a restriction of writing forms and strategies for students transitioning to the college writing classroom that could be transferred from the high school classroom. Through the lens of containment, this study aims to analyze FYC pedagogy and students' writing practices and strategies as they adapt from high school to college writing. With

the theory of containment I will seek to understand how containment practices such as formulaic writing, impact student perception of writing, as well as their writing itself. I argue that containment elements such as static pedagogical practices or standardized assessments, when present, interfere in students' ability to successfully transfer from high school to college writing as they cannot connect to the standards of a college writing course.

Via the questions of inquiry, this analysis will provide an in-depth examination on the elements of containment rhetoric as perceived in students, teachers, and the writing classroom and the ways in which it is manifested in transitioning students. This study will analyze how restrictive forms of writing may tend to manifest in the college writing classroom. Implications in composition stemming from the concept of containment include the ways in which student writers construct and apply strategies as they prepare to conceptualize their ideas in writing. Further, this study will examine practices, writing processes, and teachers' writing classroom pedagogy in an effort to identify how containment—when present—may be transferred from the secondary writing classroom to the post-secondary first year composition classroom. Analyzing this issue within the first year composition classroom will be significant because it should contribute to a better understanding of students' writing processes from the secondary classroom to the post-secondary classroom, leading to a better understanding of students' writing strategies as emerging writers and building towards more effective methods in writing pedagogy.

The questions of inquiry are as follows:

    1.) How do participants' experiences in high school affect them as writers in college?

    2.) What practices and strategies do students in the first year composition classroom apply to overcome containment in the college writing classroom?

    3.) How can writing instructors use pedagogy to overcome containment?

Through the presence of containment, it may be assumed that the logical progression between secondary and postsecondary writing becomes disrupted as such limitations are carried over through the transition between high school and college. The presence of containment, then, teaches students not only to view a text as a container, but also their minds in that they "are being asked to…view…knowledge as trasfer[able] from one container to another…from mind to paper. Once transferred and 'contained,' knowledge then acquires a character of locatability" (p. 373) that, according to Bowden, "confines and restricts movement" (p. 372) as it has "little or nothing to do with the social and historical world outside" (p. 373). If there are no connections to outside spaces, it would seem that students' ability to write rhetorically would be affected as well. The next question to consider, then, would be: How are students being prepared to apply a variety of writing strategies so that they can evolve as emerging writers inside and outside the classroom?

Bowden notes the importance of student agency as she argues that "[a] text is not the locus for learning how to write; the student is" (p. 375). Writing, in this sense, does not gain value from the texts that it produces; rather, from the way a writer combines and constructs their strategies for writing. When a writer owns the process of applying various strategies and experimenting with what works best for them, they become the source of power for their own writing, making them stronger and more effective in their craft. Similarly, Wiley states that

> [t]o develop as writers, students must develop a repertoire of strategies for dealing effectively with various writing tasks presented to them in different situations. They must also learn to make choices about genre, content, structure, organization, and style; and they must learn to hone their judgments about the effects of the choices they make as writers. (p. 64)

It is important to acknowledge that learning is not always learning if it hinders students' agency in their own writing process. Additionally, the presence of containment practices as manifested in the writing classroom may also be influenced by pedagogy as it plays an integral part in the formation of writing perceptions in students. Regarding teachers and pedagogy, it is necessary to note how teachers have to abide by curricular standards that do not always reflect how educators would like to teach. Administrative and national standards, as well as standardized testing, can also be considered limitations placed on teaching. Because of these restrictions, many teachers might feel pressured to teach to a test or concentrate on formulaic writing because that is what is expected of them. This, then, may also qualify as a form of containment as teachers are unable to step outside of the parameters that have been placed on them. If a teacher is constrained, their pedagogy will reflect their containment and this will inevitably pass on to the student as well. Containment practices such as teaching to a test or teaching writing only in formulaic structures, then, promote a cycle of writing that lacks student identity and voice as well as educators who cannot breach the barriers that have been put in place and teach as they would like.

By looking at containment elements in writing, educators can learn to better serve and prepare transitioning high school students into more rhetorically aware students as well as promote better communication between the high school and college spaces. Burkhalter (2000) notes that bridging secondary and post-secondary spaces is possible and states that: "[t]eachers from college and high school need to be given the opportunity to communicate frequently, and that communication needs to result in improved articulation between curriculum requirements in both schools" (p. 114). Additionally, teachers may be able to help students overcome any possible containment so that students may develop into stronger, more effective writers within any space. When this is accomplished, the writing gap may become smaller as students are able to bridge their transition between the secondary to post-secondary classroom with ease.

14

Chapter Overview

This dissertation will address the theme of containment in the following ways:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter discusses how the project began to come together based on the notion of containment offered by Bowden's (1993) theory of containment. Placed within a context of writing pedagogy and the college composition classroom, this chapter introduces the questions of inquiry that serve as the main focus of this project.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 discusses a foundation of expressivism in relation to Bowden's containment theory in relation to writing and the expression of the self. The works of Elbow, Murray, Flower and Hayes serve as points of construction for the framework of this project. Additionally, Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* functions as another connection to Bowden's containment theory.

Chapter 3: Methods

The focus of this chapter is to provide an in depth description of the data collection process for this project. This chapter provides and highlights the research design as well as the qualitative methods used to analyze and explore the elements of containment within the first year composition classroom. Further, this chapter provides instructor and student interviews, student questionnaires, and classroom observations.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

This chapter provides findings and a detailed analysis of the data collected for this project. Key terms, themes, and other new information are interpreted according to the main questions of inquiry and the notion of containment as established in previous chapters.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter 5 offers a conclusion to this project and provides recommendations based on data collected and analyzed. Limitations of the study will be addressed and discussed as well as implications of information collected in relation to containment.

Final Remarks

This research is meant to highlight those factors that may contribute to containment in the first year composition classroom. Taking into consideration the ways in which containment can come through for emerging writers, it is necessary to look for and find possible solutions that will help writers overcome any containment as they navigate the college classroom. By establishing connections to the foundations of writing within the context of containment, these solutions can be possible as various theories and scholarship can contribute to the construction of new knowledge that can provide successful ways of overcoming containment.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Defining Containment

In order to understand the ways in which students are struggling with writing identity and ownership, it is necessary to first look into writing and the ways it has been restricted by the practices of containment ideologies. Most post-secondary pedagogical focus is placed on teaching writing as a recursive process, a notion that Elbow, Murray, and Flower and Hayes addressed in several of their process versus product writings. Although the theories of such expressivists have come and gone, it is always important to be able to look back at significant movements in the field of composition in order to keep building information, create new knowledge, and fill in any voids with rich information. Through a revisionist gaze, it is possible to go back to certain scholarly areas in order to analyze how certain theories were constructed. In order to build a foundation for the future in the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition, it is important to focus and build upon scholars' contributions of the past. Goldblatt (2017) notes the lingering importance of expressivism: "Scholars today write about composition and healing, about love and wisdom, about rural place or multimodal storytelling. We may no longer see expressivism as a distinct faction within the field, but the insights from this movement are integrated into our research and teaching (p. 460). In regards to writing and the composition classroom, Richmond (2002) discusses the importance of emotion in an expressivist context: "…emotions are part of the human experience and as such, should be regarded as important components of learning" (p. 67). Expressivist practices—that promote writing from the self—can help emerging writers move past any containment they might carry with them to the college writing classroom.

I base Elbow's theories of the importance of the self within the Freirian context of a student centered pedagogy. In *Writing Without Teachers*, Peter Elbow challenges the traditional

methods of writing in support of a system that foregoes restrictive and linear processes. In the same way that Bowden makes use of metaphors in her notion of containment. Elbow metaphorizes his interpretation of writing by comparing the process to growing and cooking. Metaphors, according to Elbow, allow us the ability to use wrong names for familiar ideas and concepts, creating a multitude of conflicting thoughts that will promote a variety of ideas leading to growth, expansion, and richness in writing. He notes how the use of metaphors also leads to "thinking of something in terms of something else" (p. 53) which, in turn, help us see "thought or perception through the lens of another" (p. 53).

With this in mind, Elbow offers his insight about writing through a cooking metaphor that likens the process of writing to that of preparing a recipe. In preparing and choosing the right combinations, as noted by Elbow, a writer is able to explore and expand the possibilities of their writing through experimentation of ideas and strategies. "Think of writing…as a way to grow and cook a message…and end up thinking something you couldn't have started out thinking," Elbow states, further proving the mutability and flexibility of writing as an ever-changing element. He highlights the notion of writing as being a living organism as words freely "come together into one pile and interact with each other in that mess…and come apart into small piles according to some emerging pattern" (p. 24). "Writing," he says, is like a "horse which is constantly changing beneath you" (p. 25). In this sense, writing—as a process and its strategies—must always change, interact, and evolve in order to get better. In order to get better, a writer must, naturally, become invested in their "cooking" and continually experiment with the best strategies for writing. Elbow encourages writers to integrate conflicting ideas or contradictions as "[w]e are usually taught to avoid them" (p. 50) which ultimately leads a writer to become trapped in a space where their thoughts cannot interact with each other or produce new ideas or points of view.

Elbow notes how a writer must learn to let go of restrictive forms that might prevent

experimentation with strategies, eventually leading to a containment of ideas and words. He argues that "[i]nsisting on control, having a plan or outline, and always sticking to it is a prophylactic against organic growth, development, change" (p. 35) and that progress, as part of a recursive, "living" process, "is liable to require [some] regression" (p.46). Models of writing that do not allow for outside-the-box thinking, essentially contain the writer within writing boundaries or limitations. Within the composition classroom, in order to become better "cooks," or writers, Elbow argues that "schools often reward boring, obvious writing" (p.72) and that this should, instead, be replaced by the idea that writers should not be afraid to struggle, to question, to go back time and time again, and to change up their strategies when their old formulas for writing are no longer working. This is, in essence, what makes a stronger writer: the experience of knowing what to apply, when to apply it, and how to apply it to their writing.

Similarly, Ivanic (2004) emphasizes the importance of a recursive process when it comes to writing. A major problem when it comes to the teaching of writing, he states, is that much of the value does not seem to be placed on the process, rather, on the final written product. This "process approach," according to Ivanic (2004), should "include learning the processes and procedures for composing a text" (p. 231) as well as the "activities devoted to generating ideas, planning, drafting, [and the] various ways of providing and working with feedback on drafts, revising, and editing" (p.231).

In *A Method for Teaching Writing*, Peter Elbow notes the ways in which students can learn the value of effective versus ineffective writing through their own experimentation and exploration of writing strategies. He argues that in the classroom, teachers should seek to guide students to expand and refine their writing abilities and skills so that students will learn to become better judges of their own writing without depending solely on teacher judgment via grading or assessment. Containment, in this sense, is manifested in assessments as students become restricted in their writing practices and conform to their teacher's perceptions and

19

expectations of what writing is or should be.

If, however, students learn how to recognize effective writing processes and practices for themselves, students will be able to produce stronger writing products. In promoting the expansion of evaluation skills in students, Elbow states that teachers must demonstrate clear criteria that "enhance[s] and build[s] up [students'] own talent for distinguishing certain kinds of goodness in writing from certain kinds of badness" (p. 117) and determines that student criteria can, in fact, expand and become more refined. It is through the process of evaluation that students, too, will be able to learn the "correctness" in their own writing. Elbow advocates for a student centered pedagogy where the teacher guides students through their writing skills and abilities that will "force [students] to derive trustworthy criteria for themselves" (p. 118). As students become more confident in their writing, so will their writing voice, agency, and identity become stronger. He emphasizes the notion of building writing practices that begin with a writer's strengths—their natural use of language to meet purpose and audience and, therefore, gain rhetorical writing skills as they create their writing for a certain audience.

Elbow emphasizes the idea of collaboration between students and teachers as it applies to any form of writing assessment. He advocates for the concept of student-centered assignments in which students are encouraged to generate and brainstorm ideas or themes that they would be interested in writing about. In applying this concept, the teacher no longer plays the role of authoritative voice within the classroom setting; instead, teachers transform into educational guides who facilitate student writing. The teacher, as observed by Elbow transforms into a guide who will serve to "…help students achieve the goal they specified and…help students discover why some things worked and others did not" (p. 116). Elbow notes the important shift of teacher as dictator to teacher as guide within the model he presents. He emphasizes the importance of collaboration and feedback in helping students become judges and more effective readers of their own written work as well as the work of their peers. He continues with this notion by stating that teachers must be able to develop the pre-existing writing standards that students already possess and build effective judgment practices for the student. Elbow promotes a personalization of the

writing process through the mutual collaboration between student and teacher and opposes the notion of students as containers, made to receive generic information in order to abide by generic standards.

Elbow encourages the creation of a student-centered pedagogy where the teacher serves as guide and facilitator for both the student and their voice. He supports student agency and through the practice of having student responsibility when it comes to owning their own writing and thinking processes. Rhetorically, he urges students to "write from within the self" (p. 122) and to write what they know so that their own voice will transmit their message to the reader and enhance the effect of the message that is being delivered, thus creating an interaction and a transaction between reader and writer. When students gain the freedom to experiment within their learning processes, they also gain the ability to overcome containment and evolve into active—as opposed to passive containers—participants in their own learning.

As it concerns containment in writing pedagogy, Murray (1972) claims that writing should be taught as a recursive process that should not place ultimate importance on a single, final product. Murray contends that the method of dissecting the written product and focusing on the final element in the writing process is customary of many English teachers, as it is how they were taught to teach. He asserts that student writing does not improve with teacher criticism of the written end product and suggests that the process of revision and correcting becomes a cycle where a student writes, the teacher corrects, the student changes writing based on corrections, and the teacher grades. Ultimately, this cycle leads to a stagnant containment that continues once students have transitioned to other classrooms with other teachers who will, inevitably, interpret writing in much the same way. According to Murray this continuous process shows students how not to write and how to correct based on their teacher's comments and revisions. He calls this process "repetitive autopsying" (Murray, 1972, p. 3) and suggests that teachers shift from

mechanical revision and focus on end product to teaching writing as an ongoing process. This practice, then, restricts students to rely solely on teacher comments as students learn to value editing over revision, further limiting student writing as well as their agency and potential. When writing instruction becomes corrective rather than instructive, it simply becomes reductive.

Murray echoes many of Elbow's arguments as they both support the idea of student-centered process that promotes personalization and identity as well as discovery without restrictions. While Elbow stresses the importance of voice in student writing, Murray writes about the significance of the roles of both teacher and student. Both call for a shift in teacher roles from authoritative figure with ultimate creative control, to that of a guide for discovery and co-learner with their students. They both argue that students must develop their skills as learners, writers, and readers in order to more effectively discern between effective and ineffective writing. Concerning the need for an evolving teacher role within the student writing process, Elbow writes that teachers must "…help students discover why some things worked and others did not" (p. 116) emphasizing the notion that writing is recursive and experimental. Similarly, Murray notes that "[t]here is not [a] single standard, no one way to think or to write, and [teachers] must not give…students the illusion there is" (p. 118). Both Elbow and Murray support the idea of a student-centered writing process where teacher serves as guide and facilitator and where the student develops his or her own evaluative abilities so as to become more effective writers.

The notion of containment according to Bowden, then, may be placed within an expressivist framework based on the ideas of Elbow or Murray. Some writing pedagogy, especially in the secondary English classroom where students are being prepared for standardized tests, has transformed into a practice of what Bowden (1993) calls *containerization*.

22

Bowden notes how the notion of containment suggests that "something is hidden or inaccessible within [certain] boundaries…[and] is subject to restrictions and limitations…" (p. 370). Bowden's interpretation of containment within the pedagogical realm revolves around the idea of metaphors as they apply to books and their role in both reading and writing. She argues that texts promote a *containerization* of thinking and interpretation that do not exist freely within a reader or writer. She asserts that the spaces of a container and those contained are not mutually exclusive; rather, they become one and the same. In other words, that which is contained takes on the elements of where it is contained, losing its original identity in the process. This notion, therefore, leads to a loss of agency and autonomy for those who have been contained since they cannot act freely or think for themselves. While Bowden's argument of containment and *containerization* apply to both reading and writing, I aim to place it within an expressivist foundation and align it to the pedagogical and educational realm of writing. Through an expressivist lens, we can define writing as a personal practice that places a deeper emphasis on the self. Similarly, an expressivist notion would value the process of writing and the development of the writer versus what the writer produces as the final product. With this definition in mind, then, I aim to analyze how containment is manifested in writing instruction as well as in the writing strategies that students use when they approach a writing task and the results this containment has upon secondary to post-secondary writing pedagogy and students.

I also pair Bowden's notion of containment with Freire's (1970) "banking" concept of education. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Freire notes how education has transformed into a process of depositing information into receptacles, i.e. containers in Bowden's terms, waiting to be filled. Freire describes the process as having a teacher in a supreme role of supplier of knowledge where students do not interact or collaborate in the classroom; rather, they assume the

role of a container that needs to be filled and so abide by the restrictions and limitations ascribed

to them by their teachers. Agency within this process is limited and containment is enacted

through a mechanical process that does not permit students the freedom to think and act beyond

any academic boundary. Freire states that the

> banking concept of education…[is] based on a mechanistic, static,
>
> naturalistic, spatialized view of consciousness [which] transforms students
>
> into receiving objects [and] inhibits their creative power. (p. 41)

Similarly, Greene (1995) notes how students are often "conceived of as human resources rather

than persons…[and] are spoken of as if they were raw materials to be shaped to market demand"

(p. 32). She goes on to say that this form of containment leads to a "constructed category: beings

who are to be shaped…for uses others will define" (p. 32). Through mechanistic and static

practices, students, then, are contained within a restrictive pedagogy that does not allow for

agency, voice, or invention. Students, then, adopt a false writing identity as they adhere to

perceptions of writing for a grade or for teacher approval. Richmond (2002) discusses the ways

teacher influence can impact student writing and writes how "…a teacher's beliefs or feelings

about students could influence students' writing in ways that we are only beginning to

understand…and we may shape our students' writing…in our responses to them (p. 77).Students,

then, may adopt a false writing identity as they adhere to perceptions of writing for a grade or for

teacher approval. Greene asserts that students must not be contained within such restrictive

spaces; rather, they should be guided to "break through the limits of the conventional" (p. 109).

It is important to note that students as writers are not "mirrors, not reflectors, but creators"

(Stevens, p. 169) and knowledge created from this process is a "relationship, not a bounded

object" (Stevens, 2004, p. 164). Green (1995) argues that practices that seek to oppress students

within a particular space lead to a pedagogy where "people cannot name alternatives or imagine

a better state of things [and where] they are likely to remain anchored or submerged" (p. 52).

It is through an open-space pedagogy that may allow students to gain access to a multitude of perceptions in order to build knowledge instead of restrict it. "Knowledge," Freire states, "emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, within the world, and with each other" (p. 2). Knowledge in this sense, then, cannot be isolated or restricted as it depends upon an environment of collaboration, interaction, and participation between teachers and students. Knowledge—of any kind—must be transformed and elevated instead of transplanted and if it is not fed by active interactions, it becomes a dead element that cannot expand or grow. Bowden's expressivist theory of containment offers a different perspective for the composition classroom in that

> [m]oving away from the limits of containment undoubtedly means moving toward a language about writing that has different kinds of limits and entailments, but it is also a move toward broadening the ways students and teachers conceptualize texts and writing…and shift the focus…turning attention to the writer, the reader, and the a*ctivity* of writing. (p. 377)

Limits of Containment

One of the ultimate expressions of life, identity, and agency is perhaps writing itself. Through writing, a writer establishes and develops a voice and interacts freely with an intended audience, creating an active rhetorical transaction. Popen (2002) argues that containment, however, breeds containment and ultimately produces and contributes to a culture of containment (p. 386). She notes how identity loses value and that "not engaging student narratives runs a counter-risk of silencing them" (p. 387). So, what happens when a writer experiences containment? Such may be the case with students transitioning from the high school

to the college writing classroom.

Containment practices, I argue, are what limit student writing ability and force student potential into a one-size-fits-all academic container composed of generic standards that do not apply to all students equally, nor do they promote a successful transfer of knowledge from the secondary classroom to the first year composition classroom. Undoubtedly, there must exist a certain foundation—a set of rules—to prevent writing from verging into a chaotic practice. Formulas, guidelines, recipes, all exist in order to maintain the integrity of an element in practice. However, I argue that overly structured, mechanical forms of writing pedagogy lead to containment of writing in students which ultimately contribute to the writing gap between high school and the first year composition classroom.

Through the limitations of containment, students might not always effectively navigate different contexts or make connections to audience, discourse, and/or purpose. Containment in writing pedagogy, as well as the discourse students produce, also applies to spaces where writing is practiced and where student writing practices may be restricted or limited. Implications resulting from containment take the form of a particular state of "boundedness" (Bowden 1993) that "is hidden or inaccessible within those boundaries…and is subject to restrictions and limitations of the forces within the container" (p. 370).

Bowden asserts that a *containerization* within composition tends to "make it easier to subscribe to rule-governed systems [where] implied boundaries protect the contents of a paper from outside influences (including audiences and other discourses)" (p. 375). Further, the notion of containment and the way it is manifested in writing instruction exemplifies anti-rhetorical practices that do not promote student transfer to other situational contexts. Knowledge, then, becomes stagnant and bound by restrictions, ultimately transforming into a "static and decontextualized" element that has "little or nothing to do with the social and historical world outside" (p. 370).

By containing and attempting to categorize writing as a generic, formulaic practice, the pedagogy of containment is aimed at ultimately widening an ever growing writing gap that creates an inability for some students to successfully—and effectively—transition from the high school writing classroom to the first year composition classroom. In order to promote the growth and expansion—as well as agency—of a student as writer, creator, and designer of information, students must be guided from a site of static structure to one of discovery that integrates a heteroglossia of voices, ideas, perceptions, and experiences. When the writing process promotes elements of rhetorical containment, students' voices become integrated into a discourse of academic hegemony where all autonomy and agency is lost. Further, such systems of containment become "closed systems in which…activities admit little variation, are habituated over long periods of time, and are learned through repeated practice" (Anson, 2008, p. 115).

Containment rhetoric, as manifested through drill and kill practices, does not allow for new learning to take place, as no new ideas are able to permeate such dull practices. Students learn to write in particular ways for particular tests. Additionally, transitioning students will eventually encounter opposing ideologies between their high school and college writing classrooms. Where students were once expected to "learn a specific set of rules [promoting] rubrics, detailed drilling, and objective testing" (Fanetti, Bushrow, & DeWeese, 2010, p. 78), students in college will see that content varies with each instructor as they are simultaneously learning to navigate post-secondary education and often "left to figure out what's expected of them on their own" (Fanetti, Bushrow, & DeWeese, 2010, p. 78). Conditioning behavior through repetitive and rote forms inhibits student growth as they are unable to connect to discourses that are not, for example, test-centered. When student learning is contained through static pedagogical practices that value testing over agency, students become unable to meet the requirements of the college classroom as they have become accustomed to standardized and quantifiable writing practices. Writing without containment, however, places utmost importance

on student agency and gives back their voice to their writing. Additionally, it promotes transfer to various contexts in order to cultivate connections to the world, ultimately creating stronger, more empowered student writers.

Writing practices should integrate and promote such connections in mind in order to foster transformative and reflexive learning and pedagogy for both students and teachers. Through a shift in pedagogical paradigms, it is possible to create spaces where student identity and agency are not mutually exclusive; rather, they are co-constructed through equal interaction. An odd angled shift in pedagogy that promotes open learning will foster student agency and will lead to learning across a multitude of spaces where students will be able to read the world. It is, after all, "by changing perspective and playing with our knowledge, [that] we can make the ordinary extraordinary" (von Oech, 2008, p. 18).

High School Preparation and College Readiness

Although the importance of student-centered writing is a recurrent theme, the fact that students at the secondary level are continually tracked and assessed does not help to alleviate the threat of containment. Standardized testing is perhaps the biggest contributor to containment as its only purpose is to assess and categorize all student writers. Students at the secondary level are shaped and molded to meet the standards of a test that does not promote personalized education or student agency and instead views students as products that are "mass produced and measured everywhere by the same instrument" (Fanetti, Bushrow & DeWeese, 2010, p. 80).

Courses in high school appear to focus solely on standardized testing and teachers often teach content through rote memorization instead of "engaging students in problem-solving exercises that develop both deeper knowledge of the content and the more general logical and analytical thinking skills valued at the post-secondary level" (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013, p. 118). While formulas and memorization may be useful for recalling specific information quickly, it

does not necessarily reflect the importance of in-depth learning that promotes the evolution and growth of knowledge in spaces inside and outside the classroom. Venezia & Jaeger (2013) note the importance of breaking away from repetitive forms of teaching and learning as they note how "…college readiness requires students to go beyond rote memorization and to learn not only key content knowledge but also to develop skills around such abilities as effective analysis, communication, interpretation, and synthesis of information" (p. 130). The problem, they argue, appears to be that "far too many students enter college without the basic content knowledge, skills, or habits of mind needed to perform college-level work successfully" (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013, p. 118). Containment elements within the secondary classroom appear to sneak through to the post secondary classroom where they seem to promote systems of learning that, according to Venezia & Jaeger, " focus on the educational floor for high school graduation (minimum academic standards), not the ceiling (postsecondary readiness)…" (p. 130).

Students become accustomed to writing to a test and their transition to the college writing classroom will prove to be more difficult for them as "high school education is designed to be standardized and quantifiable [while] [c]ollege education is designed to be theoretical" (Fanetti, Bushrow & DeWeese, 2010, p. 78). Secondary education is linked to measuring, tracking and usually values test scores and standardized assessments while college is where students have the opportunity to develop their ideas, find their own voice, and expand their writing identities. The disconnect between secondary and post-secondary writing goals for students creates a paradox that further limits and contains student learning and potential. Fanetti, Bushrow, & DeWeese (2010) offer, perhaps, the best description of the shortcomings of the secondary to post-secondary writing gap by stating that students appear to be the Big Macs to a "college writing instruction allergic to red meat" (p. 80).

In order to situate students within experiences that contribute to a development of writing skills, writing cannot be subjected to restrictive pedagogical practices. Containment in pedagogy is also the cause of containment in students' writing processes. Fanetti, Bushrow, & DeWeese (2010) argue that teachers—at the secondary level—themselves are "forced into tightly prescribed expectations to teach successful test writing" (p. 80) brought on by curricular constraints. As a result of this, college instructors in the first year composition classroom resort to teaching their students to unlearn rules of methods learned in the high school classroom (p. 80). Standardized testing, curricular constraints, and containment pedagogy all contribute to a writing gap that places the blame on both high school and college instructors, but, who is really at fault? According to Fanetti, Bushrow, & DeWeese (2010), no one is. Instead, they claim, that we should assess the blame where it belongs: in the fundamental incompatibility between the product model of standardized testing as quality control and the process model of student-centered learning. In short, standardized testing is antithetical to real learning, lifelong or otherwise (p. 81). The impact that testing has on students' ability to develop and strengthen their writing skills may keep them contained as they transition to the college composition classroom.

Bridging a Gap

Standards of writing practices vary from high school to college as they each have various points of focus for student writers. For example, where high school aims at writing for a test, college may aim at rhetorical awareness. This notion creates an overall disconnect and a binary that may be problematic as a student writer may not be able to successfully apply what they have learned in one writing environment to another. I, then, propose the following question:

Is it possible to reconcile both sides of the writing disconnect in order to

benefit student writers? And, how can this be achieved?

In bridging the gap between the secondary to post-secondary classroom, containment it seems, might be less evident in student writing. Teachers from both high school and college would be pedagogically aligned to prepare a student writer for a smooth and effective transition from one classroom to another. Ideally, "[t]eachers from college and high school [would] need to be given the opportunity to communicate frequently, and that communication [would] need to result in improved articulation between curriculum requirements in both schools" (Burkhalter, 2000, p. 114). Improving upon this communication would open up spaces for student writers and could align them for success in other writing environments. Patterson & Duer (2006) note how this open communication is still something that needs to be addressed. They state that

> [h]igh school English teachers strive to teach the skills they think colleges
> and universities want from their students, but these teachers may have no
> way of knowing how well their efforts match up with the expectations of
> instructors of first-year courses at postsecondary institutions" (p. 81).

Building upon a successful co-teaching of writing, high school and college spaces could help promote growth and progress in their student writers. However, when containment ideologies are further supported by closed communication, containment may be more evident in static, outdated practices that categorize and label in order to mold, shape, and fit students into a specific container. As a result, students could learn to adapt to writing strategies that do not always have value in the college writing classroom.

Ideally, students would have agency over their own work in order to develop and strengthen their writing practices and become more mature, autonomous writers. Additionally, pedagogical practices should guide students through a writing process, but not overpower student agency and voice. Students should not be made to feel like they are not equipped with the proper tools to undertake any academic project, and as it applies to writing, they should, instead,

develop what they bring to the classroom and grow with the process instead of against it. If students are not being taught sufficient ways of writing besides the mechanical, static, and/or formulaic forms of writing, their transition to academic writing in college will be more difficult as they are so accustomed to testing-centered writing that they will inevitably lack the tools to effectively compose academic writing and navigate the first year composition college classroom. As Goldblatt (2017) states:

> without an urgency that is felt as personal, a writer will always be looking
>
> to the teacher, the boss, the arbiter for both permission to begin and
>
> approval to desist. This doesn't mean students must always write
>
> autobiographically, but they must learn how to find the motive spark,
>
> the intention to speak, within whatever subject they take up. (p. 461)

As students begin to emerge as more efficient writers, it is important to note how the notion of containment can potentially be transformed into a tool of empowerment and learning. When transferring from one learning environment to another, they must have instructors as guides in order to help them navigate the college composition classroom. Students who begin to re-gain their empowerment through their writing can also reclaim their agency and rely more on themselves as writers, applying their own strategies, and becoming stronger communicators. In expressivism, we can learn that when writing becomes personal and when students are encouraged to write from the self, they have the possibility of re-gaining the freedom in their writing that can break them free of any containment.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

This chapter provides an in-depth description of the research design applied for the study. I used qualitative methods to explore the elements of containment in students' writing practices and the writing classroom.

Aim of the Study and Research Questions

Through the lens of containment, this dissertation analyzes how pedagogical restrictions and limitations were manifested in the high-school-to-college transition of student writers. I examine how those might lead to a gap in students' writing abilities as well as potential difficulties meeting the requirements of college-level writing. Further, it also analyzes pedagogical practices in the college composition classroom that promote student agency, voice, and personal process in writing. The following questions serve as points of departure for this study:

1.) How do participants' experiences in high school affect them as writers in college?

2.) What practices and strategies do students in the first year composition classroom apply to overcome containment in the college writing classroom?

3.) How can instructors use pedagogy to overcome containment?

The questions of research can provide insight into the ways containment affects students' growth as writers. As addressed in question one, in analyzing participants' experiences with containment in high school, we can better gauge how students will perform as writers in the college composition classroom. The second question of inquiry focuses on practices and strategies that students may use to overcome any possible containment that prevents them from meeting college writing goals. Having students share their strategies gives them a point of reflection on how they are developing as writers and can help them become stronger in their skills. Finally, by analyzing pedagogy in the college classroom in first year students in college, we can learn how particular

pedagogical strategies help promote writing efficiency.

Research Approach

The study for this project was conducted at a university on the U.S./Mexico border. According to the university website, the university enrolls more than 25,000 students and is designated an R1 university (very high research activity) by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education and 81% of the student population is Hispanic. Approximately 4 percent of students are Mexican nationals and the university maintains one of the lowest out-of-pocket costs of any research university in the U.S.. Although it is important to note the location of the university in relation to the U.S./Mexico border as well as the implications that this might allude to, this study does not address this issue; rather, this study focuses on containment within the first year composition classroom.

In order to gain more insight into containment practices in writing pedagogy and in the writing process, I did the following:

1.) Interviewed the first year composition instructor in a pre-semester interview

2.) Conducted classroom observations

3.) Interviewed students in a beginning of semester interview

4.) Disseminated beginning of semester questionnaires the fifth week of the semester

5.) Asked students to complete an end of semester reflection questionnaire

6.) Conducted end of semester interviews with student participants

In order to gather information about prior writing environments, students were asked about their previous learning experiences about writing as well as strategies they used in their writing. This analysis helped determine the impact of containment—when present in student writing—and the ways it interrupts the emerging writer. Also, it is important to consider the ways in which first year composition instruction may have contributed to a break in

containment leading to stronger, more effective writers.

Questions included in the questionnaires were aimed at recording students' perceptions of self as writer and the writing process itself. Further, questions about the current assignment they were working on, before and after completion of assignment, played a significant role in promoting more reflexivity in students. Also, students were asked to share their opinions about the college classroom and their writing experiences, as well as their rhetorical decisions, within that space. To look for possible containment, students were asked to reflect upon the writing they learned in high school in preparation to what they were expecting to be writing in college.

The qualitative design of this study may function in ways that opens up spaces of communication and interaction between various discourses, resulting in a collaboration of constructed knowledge. Horner (2004) argues that applying various perspectives in qualitative research contributes to a social construction of knowledge (p. 17) that has a transformative potential. Similarly, Creswell (2013) asserts that qualitative research consisting of "material practices…make the world visible" (p. 43) and that, in turn, such practices have the power to "transform the world" (p. 43). By collecting stories and creating narratives, qualitative research provides the opportunity to see beyond what we as researchers know and construct the best representations by "…understanding of [an] issue…that can only be established by talking directly with people, going to their homes or places of work, and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature" (p. 48). Creswell continues by stating that "qualitative research involves closer attention to the interpretive nature of inquiry and situating the study within [a] political, social, and cultural context…" (p. 45). In designing a qualitative study, Creswell highlights the importance of the process and states that a qualitative approach must be applied to research that involves "…research[ing] a problem when the problem needs to be explored; when a complex, detailed understanding is needed; when the researcher wants to write in a literary, flexible style; and

when the researcher seeks to understand the context or settings of participants" (p. 65).

Sallee and Flood (2012) point to three areas that, they argue, classify as particular strengths of qualitative research. These strengths include: " (a) a focus on context, (b) its use of an emergent design, and (c) its use of thick description" (p. 139) that can be highly beneficial when attempting to "identify key factors that contribute to or hinder students' academic success," for example, through the use of "adaptive research designs, and contextual, rich stories" (p. 140). Although there is no "sure 'recipe' for doing qualitative research," (p. 889) Ambert, Adler, Adler, and Detzner (1995) suggest that "qualitative research emphasizes meanings [and a] multiplicity of realities…by being able to "vividly color in the meanings, motivations, and details of what [the] research can convey" (p. 885).

Using a definition of research as described by Le Compte and Schensul (1999), this study applied a qualitative analysis in the natural setting of the first year composition classroom where face-to-face interaction took take place in order to "present an accurate reflection of participants' perspectives and behaviors" (Le Compte & Schensul, 1999, p. 9). Additionally, such a collection of information and analysis provided sufficient opportunities for discovery of unknown phenomena, but also, "discovering the right questions to ask to understand the emic meaning of known phenomena, as well as [the] newly discovered phenomena" (Whitehead, 2005, p. 6).

Further, this study aimed to create a participatory design where interaction leads to collaboration and where narratives "…emphasiz[e] discovery" (Le Compte & Schensul, 1999, p. 35) through the building of rapport between researcher and participants. The participatory design of this study helped create and build a rapport between researcher and participants that co-constructed knowledge based on shared interactions. Because "meaning can only be created through interaction" (Le Compte & Schensul, 1999, p. 49), this study applied a constructivist /interpretive approach as it will be inherently participatory (Le Compte & Schensul, 1999,

p. 49) through collaborative methods and data collection between researcher and participants. Through detailed observations, this qualitative study analyzed writing pedagogy and students' writing process in the first year composition classroom as open spaces of "collaboration, multivocality, and self-reflexiveness" (Horner, 2004, p. 16) that will promote collaborative interactions as well as "social construction[s] of knowledge" (Horner, 2004, p. 17).

Further, this form of research in the classroom allows students to see beyond the boundaries of their classroom space and—through reflexivity—connect to outside contexts. In doing so, students will be able to see how they can be empowered writers in various situations and contexts. Containment might also be present when students become accustomed to a single site of learning that they tend to "view occasional encounter with classroom pedagogy that extends beyond classroom walls…[as an] experimental blip on the educational radar screen" (Gaillet, 2004, p. 108). Because the classroom is a "location that connects to other locations that subjects constantly inhabit, dwell in, and move between," (Keller, 2004, p. 211) it is important to consider how the role of qualitative research in the classroom would allow for students to see beyond their roles inside the classroom. Qualitative research, as observed by students, would allow them to see the value of their experiences and narratives as well as the significance of their contributions and participation. Qualitative research, in this sense, not only offers an opportunity for reflection and learning, but it also transforms into a tool of empowerment for students as they are able to freely share their voice, thoughts, and opinions about their own processes and, in turn, help co-create knowledge and discourse. Students, then, become more than just a "codifiable or mappable entity" (Keller, 2004, p. 215); they transform into what Keller (2004) calls

> Culturally transparent and spatially mobile people whose frames for
>
> the construction of meaning and contexts for the production of discourse
>
> constantly metamorphose in the wake of movement to, from, and between
>
> local and global, physical and nonphysical, terrains. (215)

Participants and Site of Study

This study aimed to gather and interpret narratives, experiences, and information pertinent to the notion of containment and the writing process in first year composition students through an analysis of student writing experiences as well as methods of pedagogy in an attempt to locate emerging themes that may lead to examples of containment in writing process and pedagogy. Volunteers for this study consisted of students in their first year of college who were entering and/or transitioning to the first year composition classroom in a university located on the U.S. /Mexico border. The student participants in this study were in their first semester of college and had previously been in the high school classroom. In choosing to work with a first year composition course, I first contacted the instructor, Mr. Pool (a pseudonym), and set up an appointment to speak to him about the research I was conducting and my interest in observing his class. My course selection was based upon times of availability and days where I could conduct my research. Mr. Pool agreed to the observations I would be conducting every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning for the entirety of the semester beginning the third week of August and ending the second week of December. Mr. Pool's writing course consisted of 25 first year college students and was conducted in the Fall 2018 semester. Regarding spaces and sites of learning, Kolb and Kolb (2005) note the importance of learning spaces and highlight how "…[a] learner's immediate setting, such as course or classroom…" (p. 199) essentially transforms into a "…community of practice" (p. 200) that influences learning.

The space of learning and site of the class I observed was located on the second floor of the Undergraduate Learning Center Building of the university (See Fig. 5). First year composition classes are usually held in computer lab classrooms that consist of a single entrance for access and exit with no open spaces or windows except the ones at the front of the classroom
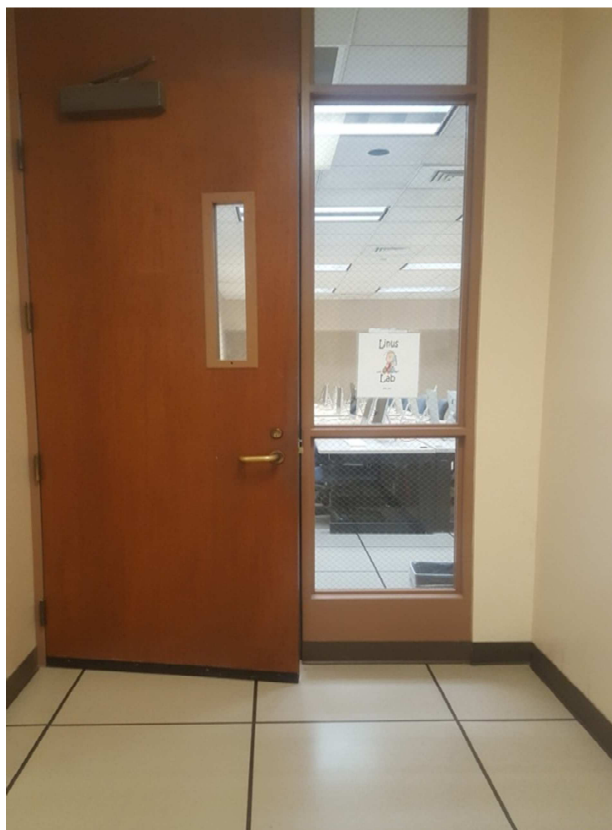
Fig. 5- Classroom A- *Linus Lab*   *Fig. 6-* Classroom B- *Woodstock Lab*

(See Fig. 6). There is a single office area outside near the entrance and inside where the computer classrooms are located. Groups of students usually gather outside of each lab class as y wait for their classes to begin and there is almost always a high number of students entering and exiting the lab area at the same time.

The classroom itself is quite plain with its white walls, white tile floor, white tables, a and white projector screen at the front of the class—all classroom labs look the same. The location of the classroom—computer lab—versus traditional classroom with desks and open spaces can also be an indication of containment within the composition classroom (See Fig.7). Colors, windows, even outside noises can all trigger students' creativity through something they see or hear and they might find it easier to develop ideas and construct productive thoughts.
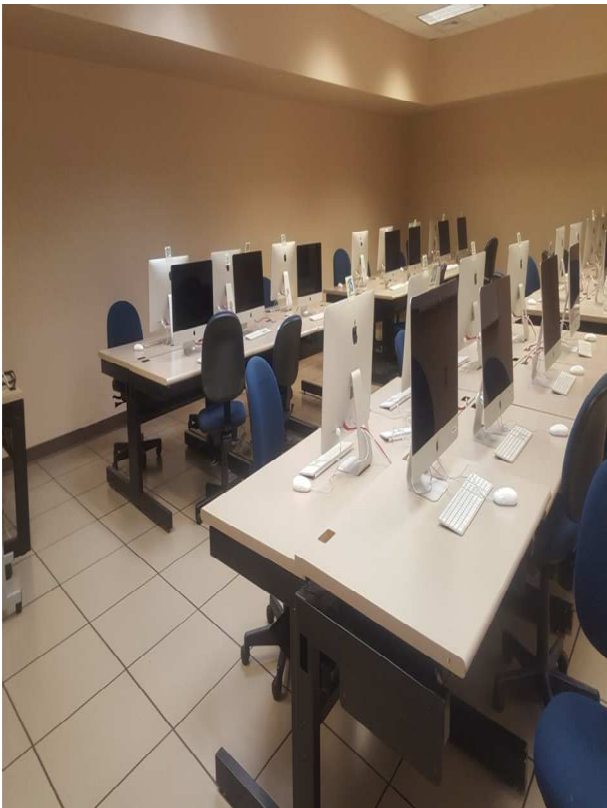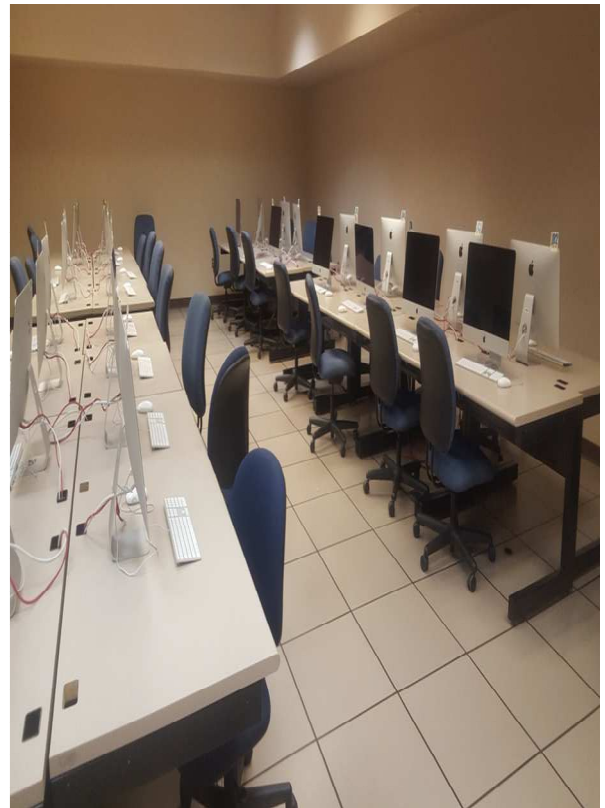
Fig. 7-Woodstock Lab   *Fig. 8-Linus Lab*

However, the lab learning space did not actively promote easy access to student conversation or

collaboration. By remaining seated in front of a screen, students were locked into their respective

spaces of learning and blocked from their peers by a computer (See Fig. 8).

Group work and discussion were more difficult in the laboratory classroom where

computer screens blocked students from facing each other as they each had to maneuver their

seats around large tables to get to each other. In a traditional classroom, for example, students

can move their desks or simply turn to face another student and communication can happen more

freely. According to Kolb and Kolb (2005), by "making space for conversational learning human

beings naturally make meaning from their experiences through conversation" (p. 207). By

analyzing learning spaces, we can see the importance of open interaction and collaboration for

students. By being unable to freely interact with each other, students are also physically contained within a classroom space that does not allow them to engage freely.

In the writing lab, each student is seated in front of their own desktop computer with a single printer next to the instructor's own computer. Conversation can sometimes prove difficult. Further, Kolb and Kolb note how conversation in the "…lecture classroom can be extremely restricted or nonexistent" (p. 208) as students usually restricted from conversing in the classroom tend to come alive with conversation after class. Unfortunately, sometimes conversations that come alive take place after class and outside of the closed learning space.

Data Collection

This section will provide details of how each portion of the data was collected and includes interviews with the instructor and students, as well as student questionnaires and in-class observations.

Pre-semester Instructor Interview

A week before the semester began, Mr. Pool and I met for a pre-semester interview about the upcoming course he was going to teach. We discussed things such as writing pedagogy, student writing, and overall assignments that students would be completing that semester. Additionally, Mr. Pool and I discussed his teaching experience, as well as his experience as a writer, and philosophy regarding the first year composition classroom. The questions were aimed at determining how previous learning environments might impact or affect students' potential and growth as stronger, more effective writers. The following questions were from of our pre-semester interview:

1. How many classes are you teaching this semester?

2. How long have you been teaching first year composition?

3. Talk a little about your teaching backgrounds and experience.

4. As far as writing, what have been your own experiences? Good/bad memories of writing? As students or as teachers?

5. Overall, how would you define writing? Is it a concept? A process? A necessary evil to know and learn? Etc.

6. How do you promote an overall acceptance of writing (positive perception of writing) in your classes while still honoring student agency?

7. How do you gauge student writing? How do you discern between labeling a written product as effective versus ineffective?

8. What are you expecting your students' writing skills to be like this semester?

9. What is most important to you to teach about writing to your students?

10. How do you encourage your students who have lost confidence in their writing or who hate writing overall?

11. Do you feel your students come to your class prepared to meet the requirements of the first year composition classroom/college writing? Why or why not?

12. What, in your opinion, would need to be done in order to close the writing gap for first year composition students?

13. How do you, in your own classes, promote student growth and evolution as writers?

14. Regarding the assignments designed for first year composition, do you think these promote student growth as writers?

15. Finally, what about writing do you want students to know and how do you incorporate this into your pedagogy?

My pre-semester interview with Mr. Pool offered insight into his pedagogy and how he structured his first year composition courses. He expressed great interest in having students grow as stronger, more effective writers and we discussed how he believed in the importance of a pedagogy that promoted student learning. Additionally, the interview questions helped us discuss his expectations of his student writers and the ways in which he planned to help them meet the

standards and requirements of a first year composition classroom. In connection to the major

questions of inquiry, the interview questions I asked Mr. Pool contributed to responses that could

help determine how writing pedagogy could help emerging writers develop their writing

strategies. Mr. Pool gave insight into his pedagogy and the ways in which he viewed writing

based on his own experiences with learning how to write. I asked Mr. Pool about his learning

experiences, memories, and overall definition of what writing was to him. Pedagogy, in this

sense, can be connected to the ways in which teachers learned how to write themselves. When

reflecting upon our own learning, we, too, can teach our students in ways that reflect our positive

learning experiences.

Classroom Observations

Mr. Pool and I finalized our pre-semester interview with basic information on how the

classroom observations would be set up and how I would be conducting them. My observations

took place in the *Linus lab* every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10:30 a.m. to 11:20 a.m.

of the entire Fall 2018 term. The semester consisted of 15 weeks with classes three times per

week, therefore, I attended approximately 45 class sessions. The semester began the third week

of August and ran through the second week of December. The class had 25 students—all of

which were first year, incoming freshmen. Observations and field notes were used to record and

focus on students' interaction with instructor, instructor interaction with students, instructor

pedagogy, and students' reception, comments, discussions, questions, and attitudes about

classroom writing assignments.

The first day of class, Mr. Pool introduced me and I spoke to the students about the

project and my role as observer in their class. I proceeded to discuss my research, why I was

there, and I explained to the students about the project I was currently involved in that brought

me to their class for the semester. It was important for me to establish rapport with the students

so that they may feel like participating and contribute to my project as well as develop a level of willingness to share their experiences with me. I informed them that I would be observing their class and asking for their voluntary participation in questionnaires and interviews during the semester.

As an observer, I collected field notes that consisted of writing everything that happened in class, discussions that took place in the classroom, activities performed, as well as instructor and student interactions. I recorded all of my classroom observations in a notebook that I had labeled and color coded each month in the semester for organization and to better locate specific notes I had written. In order to better access my information, I designated a color for each month and labeled my notes per day that I was there. At the edge of the pages, I labeled each day of observation. Every Monday observation label (See Fig. 9) was written at the top, each Wednesday observation was written in the middle (See Fig. 10), and each Friday observation label was at the bottom (See Fig. 11) so that I could look at a corresponding color for the month I wanted and then locate a Monday, Wednesday, or Friday class with ease. As the class began each day, I recorded how each lesson was delivered by the instructor and how students reacted, what questions they asked, what discussions carried on in the classroom, and how they worked together when they had to complete in-class tasks. I recorded students' comments about their class work, about the lessons, as well as their interactions with their instructor.
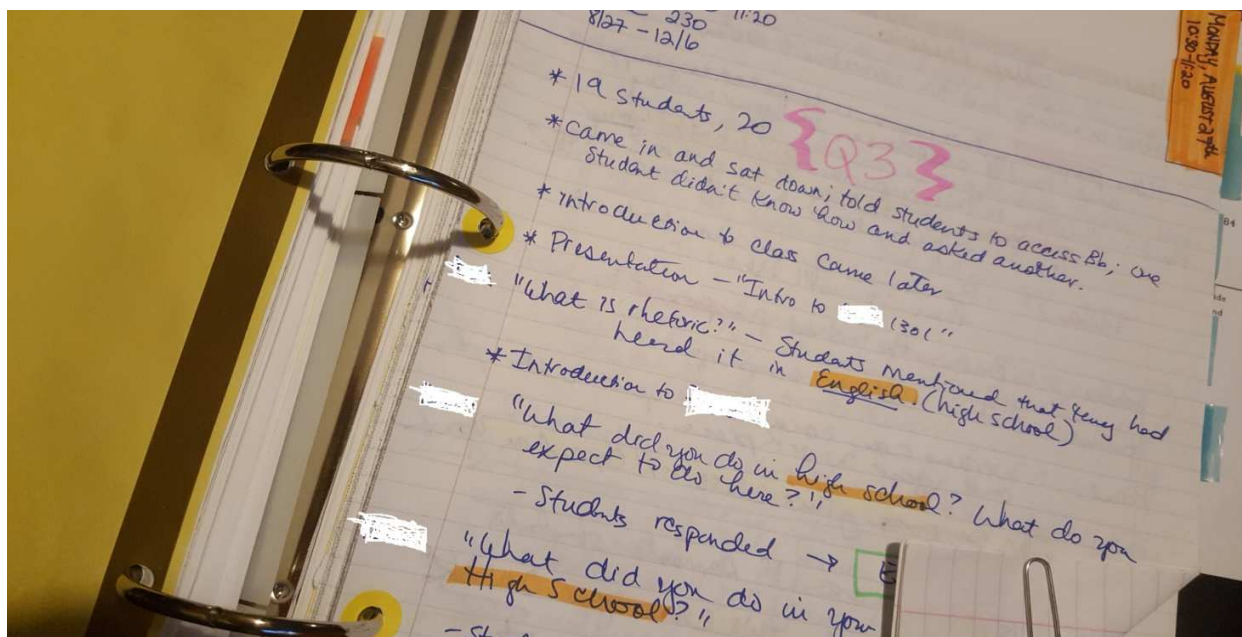
Fig. 9- Notebook *Monday observation*
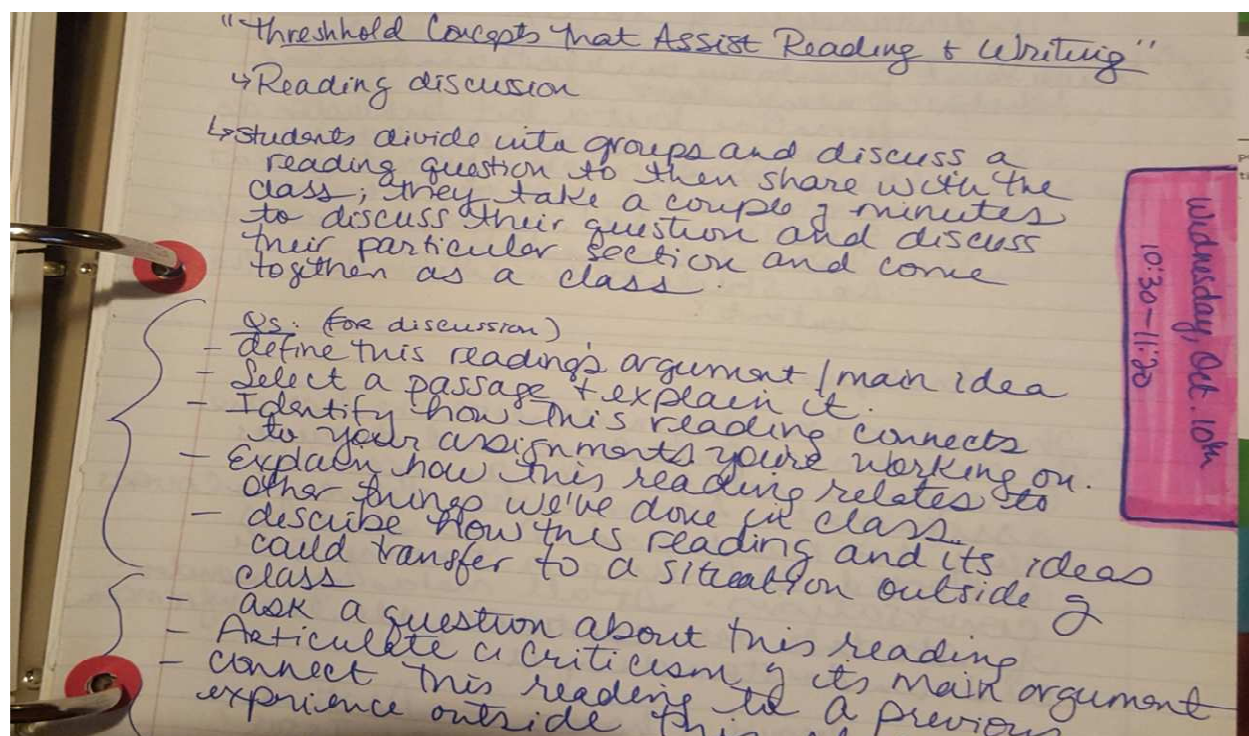
Fig. 10- Notebook *Wednesday observation*
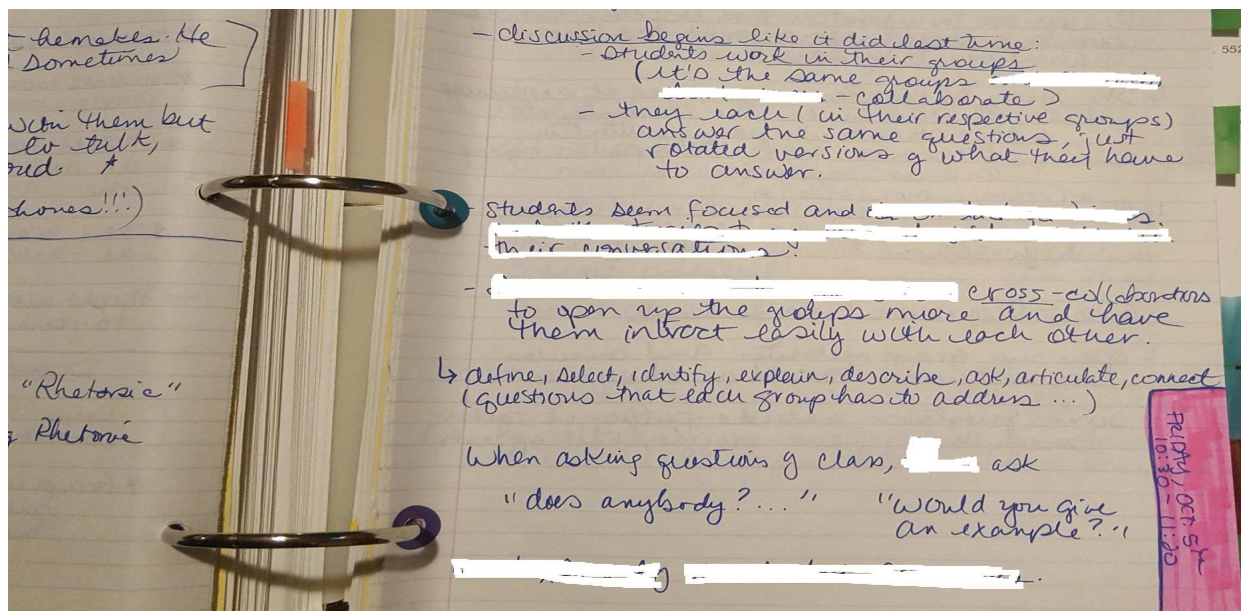
Fig.11- Notebook *Friday observation*

Classroom observations became an integral portion of the data collected for this study. Seeing in-person interactions and being in the classroom as an observer helped me see the class as not only a researcher, but also as a student.

Beginning of Semester Student Interviews

During the fifth week of the semester, I conducted beginning of semester student interviews. The fifth week seemed optimal for the distribution of student consent forms as the first two weeks of the semester were aimed at introductory elements of the course. Because I wanted students to feel at ease in the interviews I conducted with them, I felt it necessary to begin the interviews early on in the semester as the timing also coincided with the completion of their first assignment. Mr. Pool allowed me to disseminate student consent forms (See Appendix B for forms) that I had previously written explaining my project as well as the significance of students' contribution and participation.

Once I handed students the student consent forms, I read the form aloud to students while they followed along. I stopped to ask if they had questions or if they needed clarification on any part of the consent form. They noted that they understood the student consent forms as students signed and returned it to me and expressed their interest in participating. As a further incentive, Mr. Pool encouraged the students to work with me and offered them extra credit to contribute to my study. I, then, handed students a sign-up sheet where they could fill in their name and a time for a beginning of semester interview

I conducted student interviews in an office that was located in the main English building and provided to me by the university. I interviewed students and had conversations with them about their writing. Further, they became very comfortable interacting with me and shared their personal stories and narratives that all revolved around their identities as writers. Additionally, these interviews facilitated a more complete interpretation and analysis of students' views on writing as well as developed a rapport between interviewer and student. Weeks three and four had students focus on their first writing assignment. By choosing an early point in the semester to hand out the student consent forms, I was able to build some rapport with students in order to have them be more willing to participate and share their writing experiences with me during their interviews. Because a good connection with the participants is integral to the collection of data, it is important to open interactions at the right time. Creswell (2013) notes the importance of participant contributions as participants often "…suggest multiple perspectives on a topic and diverse views…" (p. 47) that can help influence and shape the overall results and interpretation of a study.

Student interviews were aimed to look into containment of the student writers as they entered the college classroom. Interviews attempted to look at possible containment in the students' thoughts and attitudes about writing. Interviews also helped to analyze how students

could emerge as more efficient, stronger writers in the first year composition classroom. Reflective questions prompted students to respond in relation to their writing process, how they learned to write, attitudes about their former writing spaces, and how they hoped to perform in the college classroom.

Student interviews were conducted twice during the semester. Before interviews began, I distributed to students a student consent form for them to sign and return to me if they agreed to participate in the study. I handed a sign-up form for students wanting to reserve a time and day for them to come to my office and participate via an interview. The interviews took place in my office at the university and the interviews ranged between 15 and 30 minutes. Each student who agreed to be interviewed signed up and reserved a time and day for them to come in and speak to me. In an attempt to make the students comfortable and willing to share their stories, the interviews took on a conversational format with specific guiding questions about their writing processes and skills. I purchased an Olympus audio recorder and designed questions that I felt could collect students' perceptions, experiences, and narratives about writing. Purchasing the audio recorder made it easier to record and store interviews for analysis. Student volunteers from class were interviewed about their writing and their writing strategies, as well as attitudes about the assignments they submitted in the first year composition course. After collecting the student interviews in my laptop, I created files for each interview I conducted. I transferred each set of interviews by listening to the recordings and transcribed everything down with pen and paper. A total of 5 students volunteered to participate for the beginning of semester interview. The following questions were from the beginning of semester interview:

1. What is your classification?

2. Is this your first semester at the university?

3. What do you think of when you hear the word "writing?"

4. What is the best and worst memory of writing you can think of?

5. How did you learn how to write? How were you taught?

6. What kind of writer do you consider yourself?

7. What kind of writing did you do in high school?

8. What do you remember most about writing in high school?

9. What kind of writing do you think you'll be doing in first year composition?

10. What differences do you see in the way writing was taught in high school versus how it is taught in college?

11. Do you think you've changed as a writer from high school to college? How so?

12. Do you think that what you learned in high school prepared you for what you will write about in first year composition?

13. What message would you give to high school students about college writing?

The questions I asked student participants during the interview were aimed at recording their experiences in writing as well as their perceptions of their identity as writers. Students recalled forms of writing they had learned and reflected upon their evolution as writers and effective communicators. Additionally, they had the opportunity to share their thoughts about the first year composition classroom and the writing they would be doing for the course. Overall, these questions connected more with the first question of inquiry which dealt with students' experiences with containment and how it affected them as writers in the college composition classroom. The interview questions prompted students to recall what their writing experiences in high school were versus the kind of writing they were doing in the college classroom. Most of the interview questions asked students to recall writing they had learned in high school and compare to what they were actively writing in college.

Student Beginning of Semester Questionnaire

The fifth week of the semester, students were asked to reflect upon their writing processes and strategies for the first assignment they had just completed and submitted—a Discourse Ethnography assignment. The first two weeks of the course were for introductory assignments, while the third and fourth week introduced the theme of discourse communities. The fifth week seemed optimal for the delivery of the questionnaires as it was the week right after students had submitted the assignment. The time frame allowed for students to more freely and more easily recall their writing processes as it had not been too long since they had submitted their assignment. The Discourse Ethnography assignment called for students to analyze a discourse community in terms of language, environment, and communication. The questionnaires prompted responses on how they prepared in completing this assignment based on what they knew about writing from their previous learning environments. I prepared the questionnaires and spoke to Mr. Pool about handing these out to students before class. I explained the questionnaire to the class and handed them out, giving students approximately 10 minutes to complete. The questions to the questionnaire are as follows:

Did you apply what you learned in high school to complete this assignment?

How would you describe your writing process for this assignment?

Did you consider your writing effective for this assignment? Why or why not?

The questions included in the questionnaire prompted students to think about the writing strategies they applied for the completion of the assignment. They were asked to reflect upon their process of writing and how they put together their assignment based on what they head learned in the previous environment of high school. In doing so, students become aware of how they apply the tools of knowledge they have gathered in order to construct their writing

50

that can help them to determine if their strategies are effective or ineffective in the first year composition classroom.

In order to analyze data, I applied the constant comparative method in order to create categories and classify collected information. By examining and coding the collected questionnaires, I was able to look for connections from one response to another as well as link certain words and phrases that repeatedly appeared in students' responses. Data analysis of questionnaires took place in three phases in accordance to grounded theory. I analyzed data in open coding where I took all of the questionnaires and looked for similar themes or key words that connected them. The axial phase allowed me to find and pull the themes or key words I had found within student responses and create these into categories. In the selective phase, I re-read the questionnaires and categorized information according to the categories I had previously observed. With each new connection, I created sub categories and looked for more connections until all information was exhausted.

Student Final Questionnaires

At the end of the semester, I handed students a final questionnaire that had them reflect upon the work they had done that semester in first year composition. Mr. Pool and I agreed that I would give students the questionnaires at the beginning of class where I explained the questionnaire and allowed students 10 minutes to complete it. The questions for final questionnaire are as follows:

Did you meet your writing goals this semester? Why or why not?

What did you learn about writing that you didn't know before?

Did your writing process change? If so, how?

What advice would you give to future first year composition students about the writing they will do in this course? How would you tell them to prepare?

By analyzing and comparing students' responses, I was able to create specific themes that I used in order to categorize all of the collected questionnaires. Creswell (2013) notes that the process of categorizing via a constant comparative method allows a researcher to "…reduc[e] the [data] to a small set of themes or categories that characterize the process or action being explored…" (p. 196). Tie, Burks, and Francis (2019) note the importance of coding and creating categories from a comparative analysis. They state that "codes are often verbatim quotes from the participants' words and are often used as the labels to capture the participant's words as representative of a broader concept or process in the data" (P. 5) which leads to finding particular "patterns and…comparisons between codes" (p. 5). By applying grounded theory to the data analysis, I was able to generate categories and themes of information that came directly from participants' responses. According to Wolfswinkel, Furtmueller, and Wilderom (2011), "[g]rounded theory enables the key concepts to surface, instead of being deductively derived beforehand [as] they emerge during the analytical process of substantive inquiry (p.2). Only by analyzing the data in depth was I able to interpret connections and pull certain pieces of data to create categories and themes.

I created categories in order to classify and code students' responses in their questionnaires. By coding students' responses and creating categories of the data collected, the information was more organized and accessible for analysis. Creswell (2013) emphasizes the importance of building information with patterns, themes, and categories as he states that through organizing data into patterns, categories, and themes, researchers can highlight the importance of complex reasoning as well as inductive and deductive knowledge (p. 45).

The categories are as follows:

1. *Structure*

2. *Prior knowledge*

3. *Discovering meaningful connections*

4. *Voice/agency*

End of Semester Student Interviews

The end of the semester interviews followed the same format as the previous interviews I had conducted. The interviews were held two weeks before the end of the semester and were aimed at providing students with a point of reflection upon the writing and the work they had done in their first semester in the college composition classroom. Questions also prompted students to think about how they transformed their writing and their knowledge of it. The location remained the same as well as the duration of my interactions with the students. The data collected for the end of semester interview came from a single interview that a student had signed up for and chose to participate in. The following questions are from the interview I conducted at the end of the semester:

1. Thinking about the writing you did this semester in first year composition, do you think you learned more about writing?

2. What did you learn about writing in first year composition?

3. How does what you learned in first year composition compare to what you learned in high school?

4. How do you think first year composition helped you become a stronger writer?

5. Now that you have taken first year composition, how do you think your high school writing and your college writing connect?

6. Thinking about the phrase "basics of writing," what do you think this means? What are "basics of writing" to you?

7. How would you compare or describe yourself as a writer at the beginning of the semester versus now? What has changed?

8. Do you feel you learned enough this semester to describe yourself as an expert writer?

9. As far as the writing you did in first year composition, was there anything you think you needed to learn more about this semester? Or did not learn enough about?

10. What about the instructor did you feel contributed to your growth as a writer? Did that play a role in your development as a writer?

Final student interview questions were aimed at having students reflect upon their growth as effective writers in the college course. Students were asked to look back upon the writing they did at the beginning of the semester versus the writing they did at the end of the semester. In doing so, students are able to physically see their own progress and re-claim their identity as writers while shedding the labels placed on them in other learning spaces. As students begin to see the ways in which writing can improve and how they, too, can become more effective in their writing, they can gain more control and agency over their writing processes and essentially break out of their containment. These questions, then, connected with the second question of research as it asks students to reflect upon the practices and strategies they apply to overcome containment in the college composition classroom.

Final Remarks

The methods applied for data collection in this research project are considered to be a part of the basic foundation of qualitative research. Creswell (2013) notes that the process of categorizing via a constant comparative method allows a researcher to "…reduc[e] the [data] to a small set of themes or categories that characterize the process or action being explored…" (p. 196). By analyzing and comparing students' responses, I was able to create specific themes that I used in order to categorize all of the collected questionnaires.

Further, Creswell (2013) describes four basic sources of qualitative information as

consisting of interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials (p. 52). Instructor and student interviews helped contribute narratives and first hand experiences that expanded upon the notion of containment. Audiovisual materials were incorporated through the recording of participant interviews. Observations in class created the opportunity to see interactions between instructor and students, spaces of learning, and the ways in which containment could also affect physical space. Finally, documents such as the end of semester questionnaire, offered students the opportunity to reflect upon their performance and growth as writers as they were able to analyze how their writing processes changed or evolved in order to meet the requirements of the college writing course.

CHAPTER 4

Findings and Analysis

This chapter will provide an analysis of findings of the qualitative research conducted for this project. It will provide major points of discussion in order to analyze and synthesize significant findings as well as an analysis of themes, patterns, connections, and overall interpretation of information. Further, I will describe the process of categorization, discovering themes, and sorting information to make meaning of the findings.

Aim of Study

The purpose of this study was to collect qualitative information regarding containment for students in their transition from the secondary classroom to the first year composition college space. Participants in this study consisted of a first year composition instructor and a class of 25 students. Students participating in the study were in their first semester of college. Findings for the study were collected in the following ways:

1.) Pre-semester instructor interview

2.) Classroom observations

3.) Beginning of semester student interviews

4.) Beginning of semester questionnaires the fifth week of the semester

5.) Student final questionnaire

6.) End of semester student interviews

Pre-Semester Instructor Interview

This project applied a grounded theory approach of analysis. Through grounded theory and participant narratives via interviews, I was able to collect vital information that contributed significantly to the analysis. Such narratives, according to Charmaz et al. (1996), provide

> [r]ich…views of human experience that etiquette, social conventions and

inaccessibility hide or minimize in ordinary discourse. Hence, rich data reveal

thoughts, feelings and actions as well as context and structure…By having this

kind of data, grounded theorists therefore can more readily discern what

participants mean and how they define their experiences. (p. 33)

In relation to how instructors can use pedagogy to overcome containment, this interview (See Appendix A for full interview) collected Mr. Pool's narratives as a writer, his experiences as a teacher, and the ways he applies his pedagogy to his classroom. Because pedagogy may affect containment in the classroom, it was necessary to ask questions that connected to what Mr. Pool's teachings as well as the learning tools he felt students needed to acquire in order for them to become stronger writers. Mr. Pool's responses addressed the ways in which writing pedagogy could help emerging writers navigate the college composition classroom. Via a well designed student centered pedagogy, then, students can use the tools they gain in order to break free from containment and ultimately learn to develop their own writing strategies and skills that work for them.

The major theme from this pre-semester interview from the instructor seemed to be the idea of giving students the ownership and agency they had lost in high school in order to re-gain it in the college composition classroom. It was important to learn about the instructor's own process of writing and his own memories of learning how to write as his own pedagogy might highlight certain elements based on what he values to be important. He mentioned he had been teaching for approximately 6 years and had previously been a writing consultant at the university writing center. After receiving his Master's, he transitioned to lecturer at the university. His own experiences in writing and literacy were positive memories that he had as he often shared them with his family.

About the importance of writing he notes that it's something that students have

to learn and that teachers need to be "[m]aking it easy for [students] and teaching [them] to be analytical about how writing is constructed… students hate writing because they haven't had agency and are asked to produce writing on demand for imagined audiences." He mentioned that he mainly gauged student writing by being subjective and mostly choosing to "*… focus [on] the concept of student active engagement and imagination…[as] active engagement is what I most value and what I most look for…*" as well as having students "*…tak[e] an idea and making it their own.*" . He expressed how he wanted students to be more engaged and apply more of their imagination to the writing they produced in the first year composition course. He noted how some students have the difficulty of connecting to their writing material and how he designed his assignments around the idea of having meaningful connections for students. He repeatedly spoke of agency, ownership, student engagement, and the importance of students connecting to their writing.

One of the most important things about Mr. Pool's pedagogy in regards to writing is that he is not only teaching his students how to write for the college composition classroom, but also "…[p]roviding validation to student writing…[as] some students have learned to believe these labels that have been placed on them by their [high school] teachers that they just don't question it anymore." In order to help his students grow as more experienced writers, Mr. Pool expressed that he felt that "[s]tudents need to be encouraged and need to know that they are doing a good job [and] [g]iving them agency and ownership of their work, I think helps students gain that confidence…" Through this new found agency and confidence, he says, students are more able to feel empowered as they begin to be more "*…responsible for their ideas and writing.*"

Indeed there are instances in which students might feel that they are labeled a certain way for the work they produce in their high school classrooms that they essentially take with them to the college classroom. This too can be portrayed as another form of containment as a

label tends to categorize and shape to fit certain elements into certain requirements or standards. In his pedagogy, Mr. Pool re-states the importance of making meaningful connections for students in their writing. He says that, "… *students need to know how to write, even if they land in a field where they don't write, they will be consuming other people's writing…[and teachers] should identify [a] meaningful connection between rich subject matter and the things students are interested in…"* Writing pedagogy, as demonstrated in Mr. Pool's classroom, helps students navigate any possible containment as students learn to develop their own writing strategies. When students gain more confidence in their writing, they are more likely to see the importance of their own voice, agency, and imagination. It is in that moment of recognition that students begin to overcome any containment they might have experienced in previous learning environments and start to emerge as more confident, effective writers.

Classroom Observations

The first year composition class I observed enrolled 25 students total and I was seated at the very front next to the instructor's desk. Although I did not interact with the instructor or students during class, they did acknowledge my presence and were very welcoming and open to having me in the classroom. My goal in the daily observations was not only to observe interactions in the classroom, but to also carefully record conversations, activities, and discussions without altering classroom behavior with my presence. In my classroom observations, Mr. Pool demonstrated the importance of helping students navigate their learning environments by emphasizing student agency, ownership, and reinforcing the idea of meaningful writing for students. His approach to teaching writing along with his pedagogical strategies presented valuable tools for students on how to break away from any possible containment. The following are examples that highlighted Mr. Pool's pedagogy and his classroom practices:

1. In teaching students an introduction to first year composition and rhetoric, Mr. Pool asked his students for a definition of rhetoric or what they perceived rhetoric to be. Most students responded that they had heard of rhetoric in high school to which Mr. Pool responded: "What did you do in high school? What do you expect to do here?" Students answered that they expected to analyze poems, read literature, and do some creative writing.

Mr. Pool then used this discussion to segue into the introduction to the course in which he emphasized that: "The purpose of this course is to practice, improve, and build confidence in your writing." I noticed that students thought about Mr. Pool's response and the following exchange took place between a student and Mr. Pool:

Mr. Pool: Why is it important to be a confident writer? What's your purpose in taking this class? Why is it important to be an effective writer?

Student: Because if you don't do it then it will show…

Mr. Pool: But, for what purpose?

Student: For future employers.

Mr. Pool: Writing can connect to your work goal and your workplace. The purpose of this class will depend on you. How can you make this class your own?

Through this particular exchange with his student, as well as the ways in which he asked his students to think back to high school experiences, Mr. Pool's emphasis on *purpose* in relation to students and the classroom create a space where collaboration between instructors and students can build and co-create knowledge in ways that will help students develop their confidence in writing. By making students aware of their *purpose* in the classroom, Mr. Pool essentially promotes student agency through motivation and encouragement.

2. For an introduction to a literacy narrative that the students were preparing for, Mr. Pool described the assignment in ways that students could easily connect to their own experiences, thus, creating connections between the students and their writing practices. Mr. Pool stated the following:

(to the students) Tell a story of your experiences in literacy and a time or event where literacy was important to you. Analyze how your family was involved in your literacy practices, or, you can also recount a failure in your literacy process.

These are just 3 suggestions. Write what feels natural to you. Let me model this for you and show you my own literacy narrative.

3. In preparation for the Discourse Community Ethnography assignment, Mr. Pool mentioned that he wanted his students to make "meaningful progress" and that he wanted to make sure that

the information "stuck" with his students. He encouraged his students to ask questions and go to his office hours for help.

Because the assignment was in APA format, Mr. Pool explained every part of each section in extreme detail for those students who expressed that they had never used APA format. He continually employed empowering language by reminding students:

I encourage you.

We're going to do the citations together.

Here is what I want to do together right now.

I'd like to go through this together.

I'd like for us to do this together.

You can do this along with me on your document.

Mr. Pool's language towards his students seemed to put the students at ease about their writing. In doing so, students might learn to become more confident and less critical about the writing they do in class, essentially leading to a more empowered, less contained writer. Mr. Pool sat at his computer and pulled up his screen for the class. He typed an example entry as all students—each in their respective computers—typed their respective citations on their screens. At the end of the exercise, students had composed a complete citation entry in APA format. Mr. Pool allowed his students to do it together and while he modeled to his class.

4. In preparation for writing their research paper for the course, Mr. Pool often encouraged his students to write in the classroom, allowing them class time to start a draft or keep working on what they had already begun.

See if you can write a few sentences.

See if you can move into your next paragraph and build up some momentum.

Submit any progress you make. Don't worry if it's just a few sentences. See how much progress you can make.

In my observation, students were visibly invested and working diligently on their writing as they worked on building their paper sentence by sentence and together with Mr. Pool.

In relation to the ways in which pedagogy can help overcome containment, the classroom observations provided significant evidence of the ways in which Mr. Pool's pedagogy helped

students in navigating containment and helping them as emerging writers through his pedagogical practices. Also, these observations demonstrated how Mr. Pool's pedagogy was focused on creating confident, effective writers by connecting their previous knowledge and integrating it into the first year composition course. Mr. Pool asked many questions that had students reflecting on what they had learned and what they expected to learn in his classroom. He used students' experiences in high school as a point of connection to the college classroom.

Mr. Pool had his students reflect upon the purpose of effective writing and made the class personal to each student by stating that the "…purpose of this class will depend on you." He gave learning meaning for the students, which, I feel, leads to more student agency and ownership. He placed heavy emphasis on student ownership and autonomy by connecting course content with student performance. Additionally, he mentioned the importance of imagination, make-believe, and meaningful writing. He stated the significance of having students make the class their own. He highlighted how failure was an acceptable part of any process and encouraged students to write about that as well.

Because Mr. Pool made students feel comfortable in the classroom, students were much more eager to open up and share, not only with each other, but with Mr. Pool as well. Containment for any student, then, could begin to break in the empowering experiences that would help students think and create on their own. By sharing and making their voice heard, students can become more independent from practices that have contained them and gain their power as writers. In regards to composition, when a writer has a confidence in voice and self, that will directly reflect upon what they compose and choose to share. Mr. Pool was very effective at encouraging his students in class. His language and the words he used revolved around the idea of creating confident writers. He was very inclusive in his language through his

use of "we" as a way to connect to his students. Mr. Pool seemed highly invested in his students' performance and success.

Through encouragement, he often modeled for his students and explained everything in great detail for his class. Modeling to students shows them that they are not alone and that they can become more empowered in their own writing practices and strategies. Modeling may help demonstrate to students how they have every possibility of taking ownership of their writing in order to become and emerge as stronger, more effective writers. Further, Schunk (2003) highlights the importance of modeling and states that "…[m]odeling informs and motivates. Models provide information about what sequence of actions will lead to success…[and] can raise efficacy among observers who are apt to believe that they, too, will be successful if they follow the same behavioral sequence" (p. 161).

At the beginning of semester interview, Mr. Pool expressed the importance of designing assignments that encouraged student writers as well as help them in the way they formulated and organized their ideas and thoughts. Mr. Pool spoke of the need for students to learn ways of writing that would promote their own strategies and practices in order to develop as more effective writers. Additionally, he mentioned learning communities and how often working together with other instructors to create lessons and assignments for their classes helped each other in developing ideas for practice in the classroom.

Mr. Pool's pedagogy was one that was continuously encouraging and inclusive for each of his students. He connected with his students on a deep level and invested in creating strong learning relationships with his students. Richmond (2002) argues for the importance of fostering strong connections to our students and states that:

Emotions, positive and negative, are a part of every human connection, including

relationships we develop with students and the kinds that we ask them to

enter into with one another…[they] are a vital component of the social fabric that we

create through conversations and nonverbal exchanges in and out of the classroom (p.

75).

In relating to his students, for example, Mr. Pool integrated popular culture with rhetoric which

only further connected with his students. He promoted student collaboration through his

participation with the class, and highly valued student opinion by prompting questions and

peaking students' curiosity. His repeated "Make writing your own" indicated a level of

expressivism that he integrated into each of his lessons. In deviating from a cultural-traditional

pedagogy, Mr. Pool displayed what McComiskey (2000) mentioned as the difference between

current-traditional writing instruction versus post-process writing instruction:

Whereas current-traditional writing teachers introduce *ideal* texts to their students as

models, post-process writing teachers introduce *cultural* texts to their students as objects

of critique, as representations of social values that institutions impose on their

readers…that has meaning both inside and outside the confines of the composition class.

There is little value in imitation-based *read-this-essay-and-do-what-the-author-did*

pedagogical strategies, and the post-process movement in composition studies avoids this

simplistic use of texts (p. 54)

Mr. Pool provided examples of how pedagogy—when practiced effectively—gave

learning meaning for the students, which leads to greater student accountability and ownership.

He placed emphasis on student agency and autonomy by connecting course content with student

performance. Further, he mentioned the importance of imagination, make believe, and

meaningful writing. He consistently reminded students to make the class "their own."

Additionally, in his lectures, he would frequently say "I encourage you…" to his students as he answered questions or explained content. This can be a very clear example of empowering language in how he communicated with his students. He often used inclusive language such as "us," "our," "we," or "together." He prompted for students to do writing in collaborative ways and encouraged students to be invested in their assignments and their progress.

Mr. Pool would frequently ask his students to "See if you can…," or "Don't worry if it's just a few sentences." In doing so, I believe that students began to feel more confident in their writing and less fearful or critical of their process or choices. To a first year student in their first semester in college, knowing they are not alone and hearing encouraging words from their professors certainly impact positively the progress a student makes in their journey at becoming stronger writers. Mr. Pool's course seemed to offer a supportive student centered pedagogy that valued students' experiences and connections to writing and guided students from high school writers to their emergence as college writers.

Beginning of Semester Student Interviews

Student interviews were aimed to look into containment practices used by student writers as they enter the first year composition classroom. Beginning of semester interviews attempted to look at possible containment in the students' writing progress and helped to analyze how students emerged as more efficient, stronger writers in the first year composition classroom. Student responses helped to see how the containment they brought from high school often manifests in the college classroom as well as the ways in which this has affected their writing process and perceptions. From a total of 25 students, four students participated for the beginning of semester interview. Interview questions (See Appendix B for full interviews) prompted students to reflect and respond in relation to their writing process and how they were performing

in the first year composition classroom. Additionally, in-person interactions facilitated a more complete interpretation and analysis of students' views on writing. The responses were recorded from the first interview I had with student participants at the beginning of the semester interview. The student participants in these interviews were the ones who signed up for days and times of their choice. Pseudonyms have been used to protect student anonymity.

Student A: "Bobby"

Bobby is a Freshman and first year composition student in his first semester in Mr. Pool's first year composition class. He described how he learned writing through the creative practice of storytelling and reading with his parents. He stated that he does not do any drafts in his writing process and that his research writing consists of collecting quotes and writing in connection to these quotes. He thinks that first year composition is more research based writing. Also, he mentioned that he attended a high school located in an affluent part of town where his first language was English. He was in AP courses and maintained good grades throughout his time there. He is a native English speaker who also speaks Spanish. Regarding writing in high school versus writing in college, Bobby states that: "High school writing was always very strict and it wasn't the content that mattered. That was kind of frustrating because I can't just sit down and write what pops up in my mind, but I have to think about each and every individual sentence I have to write." Further, he mentioned how he had learned in Mr. Pool's class that "…it wasn't the content that mattered, but, like, the quality of it…[in] high school writing…it wasn't the content that mattered."

Bobby brought much insight into the issue of grammar versus content. He stated that, in his senior year, he had been his high school's newspaper editor. Because his main focus was in editing, he noted how he did not place much importance on content. According to him, he completed his writing assignments in much the same way. Once he transitioned to college, he

felt that writing courses would solely consist of research writing. In regards to containment and my initial questions of inquiry, Bobby's writing experiences in high school did prove to transfer and manifest in the first year composition course at the university. When he was younger, he recalled how he was very enthusiastic about writing, but during and after high school, he seemed to only focus on grammar instead of his writing process or strategies. He claimed that since high school, all he could think about was spelling and being grammatically correct as the editor to his school's newspaper. This may be possible evidence of transfer of containment practices from one learning space to another as Bobby's perceptions of writing shifted and changed, eventually impacting his practice and perceptions of writing. Storytelling with his parents made him appreciate writing and he did it often as a family activity. That transitioned to editing and editing created a contained form of writing that Bobby transferred into the college classroom. Essentially, this student struggled with the notion of writing being something other than grammar.

Student B: "Annie"

Annie is a Freshman who sees writing as a form of expression. She thinks that writing can be a means to an end in completing assignments and feels she is progressively getting better at it but still struggles with writer's block at times. She recalls how she and her sister would compose short stories together when they were younger. Annie states that in high school, teachers didn't really help her with her writing. She mentioned the importance of making meaningful connections to her writing: "I think not having something to relate to is pretty hard because it puts you in a tough situation and you're just stuck." She is a native English speaker. Additionally, she claimed that "In high school, [teachers] would tell me that my writing wasn't that good." About RWS first year composition, she states that: "Everything's about writing, not

like in high school. If you don't learn anything in high school, it's not gonna help you come prepared here. It's gonna be really hard." Annie was very fearful of her writing and lacked confidence in her process. She spoke of how her senior year was particularly difficult as it related to her writing. She felt that she was always stuck and pressured to write about things that weren't of particular interest to her.

Annie labeled herself as a "decent" writer and not a very good one as she struggled continuously with her writer's block. She recalled how her teachers did not offer much help in her writing process and that she always preferred writing assignments that connected to her personal experiences. It is important to note that teachers form an integral part of any student's learning experiences and for this particular student, writing reflected how her teachers' assignments did not connect to her experiences as an emerging student writer. For this student, perhaps containment might have manifested in the ways her teachers created writing assignments that did not connect with her interests, her experiences, and her creativity, therefore, making it difficult to overcome her writer's block. Mr. Pool's pedagogy, for example, allowed for students to choose their topics of interest and research what they most wanted to be informed about, ultimately difficult to overcome her writer's block. Mr. Pool's pedagogy, for example, allowed for students to choose their topics of interest and research what they most wanted to be informed bout, ultimately promoting more effective writers by creating connections between content and student.

Student C: "Jenny"

"I never thought of myself as a good writer," recalls Jenny as she tells me about her writing experiences. She described how disappointed she was as she enthusiastically completed a writing assignment only to find out it did not comply with the teacher's standards. "When I

write, I'm like, 'yeah, this is really good,'" Jenny remembers, "and then I get [a paper] back, and then it's like, just kidding, I guess not."

She stated that high school writing was mostly literature based and that test scores negatively affected her writing. She also commented on the importance of teacher feedback and recalled how teachers didn't explain her grades or give her constructive criticism on her writing. To her, feedback was never clear, therefore, she never received the direction she would have wanted in regards to her writing process and writing strategies. She spoke of the importance of test scores and writing for testing as the way her teachers structured their writing lessons and assignments around a standardized test promoted one way of writing. She remembered how writing "…was all very structured [and] we had to follow specific formats. When asked what kind of writer she considered herself to be, she simply stated that she was "pretty bad, kind of average."

As with the previous two students, there is some evidence of containment elements within this student's narrative. The strict formats and structures of writing that were taught to her in high school may have contributed to her own perception of who she was as a writer when she felt that she was "pretty bad, kind of average." Containment manifested for this student when her own perceptions of writing were influenced by the forms of writing that she was being taught and the ways in which her teachers responded. In this sense, containment learned in high school shaped her perceptions of her own writing potential as she felt that she had gained a negative label through the work she produced. In order to help students who have already contained themselves by categorizing their writing as "bad," instructors must design low stakes writing and activities for students to begin to feel confident in their writing potential once again. When students become accustomed to red marks on their papers, they develop a sense of helplessness

that ultimately affects their writing in negative ways. However, when students are able to see that their writing brings about positive and constructive feedback, they can begin to open up as writers, reclaim their agency, and begin to develop their skills and strategies.

Student D: "Nancy"

Nancy noted how her perceptions of writing had dramatically changed as she moved from elementary to high school and now to college. Nancy is a Freshman who sees writing as creativity and imagination. Her memories of writing consist of fun competitions she participated in while in elementary school; however, once in high school, she states that writing became dull because it was all prompts and essays. She remembered how in high school, she "…had to follow so many rules when we wrote anything…[and] it was all about following exactly what the teacher told us." In her experiences, she began to lose interest in writing as she described how all the writing she did was only connected to prompt after prompt and textbook work that became boring and dull: "In high school, we'd always have these prompts to go after and we would have to copy down just research and it was overwhelming. That's all we did was prompts and bookwork. It was really dull." Because she used to write creatively when she was younger, she explained how she now has a difficult time writing as she did before. She mentioned how reading contributes to writing and imagination and that in order to write, she needs a topic to know what to write about. She claims that when she needs to do research writing, she encounters a significant "blockage" that impedes the word flow in her writing. In being assigned a topic, she needs to focus thinking and write to her prompt. When she doesn't know her topic, she struggles to gather her thoughts and begin her writing.

Like the previous student narratives, she, too, had noted her appreciation for writing and described herself as a creative writer who valued imagination. When she was younger, she was always picked to lead writing groups as she was an avid reader who wrote mini-stories for her

own entertainment. However, as she went on to high school, writing turned from creative to a process she lost confidence in. As a student in college, she felt a bit lost and confused as she questioned whether or not she would be able to meet the standards and requirements of a college writing. She stated that her mother was a history teacher and always wanted her to go into teaching as well. Nancy said that she was thinking about going into teaching one day in order to help her students the way she would hope that teachers had helped her.

Students' interviews allowed them to reflect upon their high school writing as well as the ways in which they would write for particular assignments. It was through these experiences that students expressed how they learned how to write. The "prompts and bookwork" that one student describes can also be connected to scripted instruction or pedagogy that does not allow for much creativity or imagination in emerging student writers. If students cannot connect to writing in meaningful ways, they might begin to see writing as a way of simply reporting what they read about or writing to fulfill a prompt—yet another form of containment that they could potentially carry on to the college composition classroom.

Beginning of Semester Questionnaires

Through a constructivist design of grounded theory, I attempted to explain participant narratives as they experienced possible containment through questionnaires. In applying a grounded theory approach, data was a vital element in order to generate meaning and explain a process that pieces together a story from the bottom up. The participant responses in the student questionnaires co-create narratives that helped explain any experiences of containment. Further, these participant narratives functioned as explanatory in the search for meaning for the participants.

71

The following are recorded results from the questions students responded to at the beginning of the semester regarding a discourse community ethnography assignment. The assignment consisted of choosing a discourse community and constructing a profile of the chosen community through the interpretation of language, texts, and forms of communication. Students were then asked to compose a 4-5 page report on their chosen community.

By applying grounded theory to the analysis of the data, I was able to build and layer information from the ground up. I used grounded theory on the questionnaires in three phases— open, axial, and selective. I, then, was able to create 4 major categories based on students' responses. In the open phase of data analysis, I read through each of the student questionnaires as I sorted the responses. I highlighted key words that were repeated as well as those that I thought were significant to containment. In the axial phase, I looked over the highlighted responses and looked for any significant themes or connections. In the selective phase, I took what I perceived as major connections and key words and created 4 categories that I used to cluster student responses. The categories are listed below:

1. S*tructure;* 2. *Prior Knowledge;* 3. *Discovering meaningful connections;* and 4. *Voice/agency*

To the first question of the questionnaire, *How would you describe your writing process/strategies for this assignment?* Students' quotes that connected to containment used specific keywords and phrases. From a total of 22 responses, there were 5 responses in particular that corresponded to the theme of structure. The responses are provided as follows:

Table I. Structure

Student Quotes	Key words/ phrases connecting to structure
I followed the template given to us…	template
We were taught to follow a structure…	structure
In high [school] we were taught to use the basic structure of writing an essay intro, 3 body paragraphs, and conclusion…	basic structure
When writing, I like to go…from intro to conclusion in that order.	order
[In high school] we would do outlines, I have a template for it so I use it to guide me.	outlines, template

The writing processes and strategies that students applied in order to complete their

Discourse Community Ethnography assignment relied heavily on outlines, templates, and a

particular structure they learned from their high school teachers. Students expressed that they had

followed templates, basic outlines, and specific organizations in order to write their assignment

in first year composition. These responses about applying a particular order or form to complete

the writing assignment, fit the theme of structure. Students mentioned specific words

such as template, structure, basic structure, order, outlines, and template. In order to complete

their assignment, the students who responded in this way felt it was necessary to follow a general

process of order when it comes to their writing.

The 16 other student responses are as follows:

I ended up changing my mind.

I was able to conduct research, compose notes.

I started by doing research and then figuring out main ideas.

[I] researched my [assignment] then brainstormed ideas.

I broke down the writing process into an introduction, discussion, and conclusion.

I tend to do research first, then separate each topic and eventually start building the paper.

My [writing] process was unorganized…

I try to ask myself what is my part in writing and then break down why I feel the way I do.

When writing, I like to go in sequential order from intro to conclusion in that order.

I made multiple rough drafts and had a friend of mine edit some grammar mistakes.

My writing process went good, it went smooth and it was easy.

At the beginning I couldn't start my writing.

I write little by little and then put it all together.

My writing process/strategy is simply to write until I no longer am able to.

My strategy to write…is to get all the information needed and structure everything and to have it planned.

I make an outline, check the rubric, and brainstorm.

These responses demonstrate the practices and strategies that students use to navigate their college writing course as well as any possible containment that might hinder their writing process. For this question's responses, students seemed to value the importance of conducting research before beginning their writing for an assignment. Several students specifically mentioned the word "research" and the process of building their paper bit by bit. Additionally, these responses also mentioned how students apply templates or outlines to put their writing in order and give it—as they put it—structure. Students also indicate that, in their preparation for this assignment, they preferred a sequential structure of writing. Further, this implies that perhaps these students perceived writing as a more linear, beginning to end process.

One student, for example, recalled how they have a specific template for their writing, indicating that perhaps it is the same template they use in the completion of all of their writing assignments. It may be that by focusing only on the linear process of structure, students produce

their writing in order to fit the form of an outline or template. Writing, for students in the composition classroom, can vary in process depending upon what students write about. If, for example, a student needs to write about what they don't know, they are more compelled to conduct research and plan their paper according to outlines or templates. On the other hand, if a topic is closely aligned to a student's interest or knowledge, the student might be more likely to explore or experiment outside of such templates and expand their writing in more recursive, non linear forms.

The next question in the questionnaire was: *Did you apply what you learned in high school to complete this assignment?* Students' responses included keywords and phrases that particularly mentioned that they applied strategies they learned in high school to complete their assignment.

Table II. Prior knowledge

Student Quotes	Key words/phrases connecting prior knowledge
I used the basics of writing learned in high school	basics of writing
In high school we were taught to use the basic structure of writing...	basic structure
Most of it, I did. Although in high school, they don't really show you how to write and primarily grade it on how much you write.	sample basics
I applied several of my knowledge from high school into this assignment but I still applied a lot of new learning and knowledge from reading and this class.	knowledge from high school vs. new learning
Yes, basic writing an essay and separating [sic] topics into paragraphs.	basic writing
Yes, in high [sic] we were taught to use the basic structure of writing and essay intro, 3 body paragraphs, and conclusion. And to always include a thesis.	basic structure
I applied sample basics from high school in the assignment. I mostly used techniques the professor had shared with us with his examples.	basics from high school
Yes, I applied a few of the things I learned in high school like APA format.	APA format (in high school)
Yes, I applied the citation form APA which I learned back in high school.	APA citation (in high school)
Yes, I applied my various writing skills which I acquired from high school.	acquired from high school
Yes, I used high school strategies that I learned	learned in high school

There were a total of 22 responses. Table II demonstrates 11 out of the 18 affirmative responses—7 of them answered only with a "yes." Out of the 18 "yes" questionnaires, there were 6 that specifically repeated "basic." Reading the exact wording in different responses from different students stood out to me. Students' interpretation of prior writing knowledge, to them, meant a "basic" design, structure, or format. The word "basic" could mean many things and can

be perceived as relative. Although I did not ask students about their definition of "basic writing," it would be interesting to see what students consider "basic writing" to be. Four students responded with "no."

The remaining 11 responses are as follows:

I did not.

No.

No.

Surprisingly, I did not use what I learned

In many ways, yes I did.

I applied what I learned in high school in the sense of putting my whole paper together and being able to research.

Yes, I applied what I learned in high school to complete this assignment.

I would use my citation when I learned in high school and make sure to have a thesis statement and not repeat myself.

I did actually used [sic] strategies I learned from high school like making connections, writing down thoughts and always do research to help find information.

A little for the paper.

I guess, but mostly what the professor taught us.

In these responses, students discussed the ways in which they applied particular forms of strategies to complete their assignments. While most of the student mentioned that they had applied prior knowledge from high school to complete their assignment, it is also important to note the ways in which they applied what they had previously learned. As it pertains to their writing assignment, many of the students mentioned "basics" or certain forms of citation and APA format. While students may transfer to the college composition classroom with knowledge from previous learning environments, it is important to know how they are applying their learned

77

knowledge in successful ways. Also, educators must be able to evaluate the "basics" that

students are learning in high school and if these learned practices are sufficient preparation for

the college composition classroom. Teachers may equip students with tools for learning when

students transition to and learn to navigate other learning spaces, but it is also important to

address if these are the right tools for students' success and if they are enough to match the

requirements of the college classroom.

The last question of the questionnaire asked students to consider the ways in which they applied
their writing strategies to the Discourse Ethnography assignment. Out of the 22 responses, there
were 6 responses that specifically connected to the theme of meaningful connections.

Table III. Discovering meaningful connections

Student Quotes	Key words/phrases connecting to discovering meaningful connections
I was able to take my time and form a piece I was satisfied with. My notes were not organized as they were in high school…and this made my writing better.	take my time and form a piece I was satisfied with
…my process was unorganized, but [it] pushed me to change my previous habits.	pushed me to change
I was able to express all of my ideas	express
I try to ask myself what is my point and then break down why I feel the way I do.	ask myself, feel
[I] was able to write while adding more without any added worry.	without worry
I got great feedback and felt comfortable and secure about my work.	comfortable, secure

The remaining 16 student responses consisted of the following:

I deleted my work various times…and it was just a time to keep moving forward.

I wrote more notes and changed my writing for the better.

I edited and revised.

I did research and brainstormed, but I could not express all of my ideas.

My writing is not the best, but I divided my paper into introduction, discussion, and conclusion.

It took a lot for me to understand but I just wrote a whole essay.

I think my writing has become more effective.

I'm messy at first but then get my thoughts and ideas out.

I ask myself what to write about first.

I like to give my commentary and describe my ideas.

I try to meet the requirements about the assignment.

I have a long way to improve, but I do my best.

I'll be better later on.

I really put the effort and my ideas helped me.

I can improve on my writing a lot.

I put a lot of thought and hardwork [sic].

Students' responses to this question highlighted the importance of meaningful writing and how valuable it was for them to have the freedom to make their own choices in their writing strategies. These responses also suggest that writing is never a perfect process, rather, a recursive process that builds upon itself through trial and error. Students' responses are aligned to the importance of discovery and making meaningful connections to their writing. The responses also demonstrated how they connect to their writing process in ways such as expressing their ideas, self reflection in posing questions about their thoughts, and in feeling more secure about their efforts and the work they produce. Their responses seemed to align to the notion of the self in relation to discovery within the context of writing. As students become stronger writers, they develop more awareness of their process, their thinking, and the emotions (*comfort, worry*) they associate with writing. The importance of their own self in connection to their writing seemed to be of more significance to them as they mentioned the ways in which

79

they changed who they were as writers.

Student Final Questionnaires

There were four main questions to the end of semester questionnaire. Out of 19 questionnaires, 9 of them provided responses that connected to the theme of voice and agency. To the question: *Did you meet your writing goals this semester? Why or why not?,* students responded in the following ways:

Table IV. Connections to Voice/agency

Student Quotes	Connections to voice/agency
I challenged myself the best I could.	challenged myself
I enhanced my abilities further.	enhanced my abilities
Just express yourself.	writing did improve
I try to express myself well.	challenged myself
I became a better writer.	I became
I changed how I analyze text and create new writing.	I changed
I learned to better express myself.	I learned, express
Managing my writing is the key to success.	Managing
I have expanded my knowledge about writing which helped me become a better writer.	become…better

The remaining 10 student responses were as follows:

I was surprised we did more annotated bibliographies instead of essays.

I didn't have any goals, but I guess I did improve.

I didn't meet my writing goals because I still struggle.

I enhanced my abilities further.

Yes, I significantly improved.

I believe I have met my goals this semester.

I met my goals in becoming a better writer.

I haven't met my goals because my writing could be better.

Yes, I learned to become a better writer.

I think I did meet my goals.

The final questionnaire gave students the opportunity to reflect upon their collective work for the semester. In connection to voice and agency, the 9 student responses highlighted how students felt they had met their writing goals for the semester. Students seemed to connect writing to the self once again. Their writing, according to them, speaks to how they have improved or how much they have learned. These particular responses emphasized how students were proud to challenge themselves, how they improved, changed, and learned to express themselves better. Students continuously mentioned how they were able to express themselves better, how they developed as writers, and how they ultimately improved their writing. It was a positive sign for students to reflect upon their transformation as more effective writers in order for them to see their own progress and, essentially, their own potential. The remaining 10 responses were a bit mixed in their feedback. Some students felt they had not improved in their writing, others felt they could become better, while the rest felt they had improved their writing. As students become more secure in their writing process, they start gaining more confidence and are more able to express themselves more freely, thus gaining agency and having more control over their voice. For these students, it seems that writing functioned as a catalyst to their overall growth and learning.

The second question prompted students to think about what they had learned in their writing class. Out of the 19 questionnaires, these 8 stood out for their responses. To the question,

What did you learn about writing that you didn't know before?, students answered in the following ways:

I learned that everybody truly goes at their own pace, and there is no such thing as a perfect writer.

Writing doesn't come naturally, it's how much you put work into it and learn from your mistakes

Writing is a huge part of our life.

I learned that writing can be open ended and is not just a straight line.

I learned how writing is like yoga, flexible.

Writing takes a lot of time and effort because there are so many different ways of writing something.

I learned that there's a whole deeper meaning to writing.

I learned not to be so hard on myself when it comes to writing because everyone has their own experiences with writing.

In these responses, students reflected upon how they had grown as writers and the way in which their writing had become stronger. Writing, as reflected in these responses, seems to be a mutable, flexible process that is never linear and becomes more effective as more practice and time are applied. Students realized that the writing process is personal and, again, connected to the self in that everyone "goes at their own pace." Another response mentioned the nature of writing and the ways in which no one is a born writer—we all have to work at getting better. Again, the notion of self is evident as these responses highlight the nature of writing in relation to our efforts and practice of it and writing as an important element to our lives. "There are many

different ways of writing," says one response while another states the importance of our own

personal experiences with writing. It is positive to see how students reflect upon what they have

learned and realize that writing is something with deeper meaning. This response may imply that

perhaps writing is more than just outlines, grammar, or prompts, and actually reflects more of

who we are, because, ultimately, who we are is how we write.

Out of 19 total questionnaires, 7 of them provided a deeper, more reflective response. To the
third question, *Did your writing process change? If so, how?,* students answered the following:

*In a way my writing process did change. I now create ideas and spread out, and then I can just
edit that as I go and bring a sort of neatness and organization to my initial mess.*

Yes, I have become more organized which has helped me with the structure.

*Yes, I believe I improved my vocabulary and writing tremendously by the different writing
techniques the professor taught us.*

Yes, my writing style has changed and I believe I write in a more mature way.

My writing process did change because I learned how to properly write and organize my essay.

*My writing process has changed, I now incorporate more critical thinking into actual revision
instead of worrying about grammatical errors.*

My writing process has changed into more structural and strategizing.

All of these responses observed a change within a writer and their writing process

overall. These students not only mentioned that they had, indeed, improved upon their writing,

but also reflected on how they had become more "mature," "proper," and "organized" while

focusing more on their critical thinking skills. Additionally, some responses highlighted the ways

in which students now focused more on their thought processes versus grammar. The first

response, for example, shows that the student—by stating that they "now" create more ideas—

implies that, perhaps, they were not as creative with their writing before. Additionally, they say

that, out of all of their ideas, they are now more able to organize their original "mess" and

transform it into a successful written product. Two other responses attribute their change to the

fact that they now write more maturely or more "proper," while another mentions the importance

of vocabulary. It may be that the growth of vocabulary for students also contributes to more

confident writers as it directly reflects students' expansion of knowledge.

The final question prompted students to reflect upon the advice they would give to other students about the college composition course. Out of 19 total responses, these 7 provided more in-depth responses. To the fourth question, *What advice would you give to future first year composition students about the writing they will do in this course? How would you tell them to prepare?,* students answered the following ways:

Just express yourself through your writing, the more prominent your voice is the better.

Be ready to read a lot!

Overall, more reading would be useful to prepare for college courses.

Read a lot and try different ways of writing like free writing.

I would give them knowledge of how writing can be so different and easier to flow instead of having a strict structural outline to follow.

I would tell them to prepare by writing more meaningful and to be ready to learn a new type of process when it comes to writing.

Stop worrying about grammatical errors and focus more on what [you] have to say when [you] write.

The responses that students provided in the fourth question helped to gain insight into what

students think is valuable to know and learn about the composition classroom. In giving

future advice, students are able to reflect upon how they grew as learners and thinkers as well as how they navigated the composition classroom. Students stated repeatedly how they perceived reading as vital to success in the composition classroom. Similarly, they also said that expression and a focus on the true essence of writing versus grammar were important points for future students to consider.

End of Semester Student Interviews

The second and final interview (See Appendix F for full interview) was delivered at the end of the semester and prompted questions of reflection for students about the writing in first year composition. Towards the end of the semester, it was more difficult to gather student participants for the end of semester interview as many students signed up for interviews but did not follow through on showing up. For this interview, student participant responses were analyzed in relation to pedagogy and containment. The following interview was from a single student participant. There were no other students who participated in these interviews.

Student E: "Millie"

In reflecting upon the writing she did for the semester, Millie feels that she improved as a writer. She states that: "In high school, writing is prompt based. Here, the professor isn't just giving us a block of writing like body, conclusion, etc.. My professor definitely played a role in my development as a writer. I think I'm pretty good at writing now, but I'll get better soon. The more the professors care, the better I do."

For this final interview, Millie was asked to reflect upon the writing she did in her first semester in RWS first year composition. She noted how she felt she had grown as a writer and credited Mr. Pool with her progress. She praised his organization, his lectures, and the

way he took the time to assure that his students understood all assignments and class content. In this student's narrative, it is evident to see how a professor is able to design and execute a strong student centered pedagogy that values students for the knowledge they each bring and contribute to the classroom. In this case, any possible containment brought in to the college classroom was overcome through the design of assignments aimed at teaching and guiding students to become stronger, more confident and effective writers.

Final Remarks

When it comes to offering advice, students in Professor Pool's class reflected upon their own processes and mentioned ways of preparing for college style writing. Many discussed ways of thinking and seeing things differently to open up ways of learning. They wrote of how necessary it was to make mistakes and to not be afraid of reaching out for help. Most importantly, students realized the value of the writing as recursive, of applying various writing methods, and the freedom to explore their knowledge and apply different skills. Through Mr. Pool's class, I learned that students sometimes transition to the college classroom with the idea that their writing is not "good" and that college level writing is only based on research. Once students began to see the various forms of writing they could do in Mr. Pool's class, for example, they became less afraid and more willing to share their writing with their classmates—they began overcoming any containment and transforming into more effective writers.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter will highlight major themes and key points in relation to the collected data and what it all means to the central theme of containment. Finally, this chapter will provide future recommendations based on the research findings from this study.

Final Reflections

When I began to set the path for this research, I found myself revisiting ideas that I had learned as a student and I often questioned how what I had learned would help me in my own classroom as a teacher. Ideas and theories that helped shape and train me as an educator definitely influenced my pedagogy and philosophy of teaching, but it was my experiences in the classroom and the interactions I had with my own students that made me aware of a problem that I continuously attempted to address. In finding Bowden's work, I knew that containment was the name of problem I had always wanted to solve. By applying Bowden's theories to what I had learned as a student and experienced as a teacher, I knew that it would help me construct the path for my future research. In my search for information, I found that scholarship about containment was, unfortunately, quite limited.

Containment, as I interpret it, is something that should be researched much more as it is a very real problem for emerging writers. Further, containment could also be the contributing factor to the writing gap between secondary and post-secondary education. For the field of rhetoric and composition, it is of absolute importance to be able to address significant issues that might hinder our students' potential, not only as writers, but as effective communicators, especially within a rhetorical context. By applying knowledge of containment, instructor pedagogies could reinforce students' own knowledge and guide them towards becoming more empowered in their learning and writing processes.

This study was designed to analyze the ways in which containment manifested in the

college composition classroom and how students were able to navigate and overcome any containment from previous learning environments, particularly from high school to college. I argue that students who experience containment need to gain the freedom to experiment and encounter their own writing process in order to learn to apply their own strategies and become more effective writers; however, we cannot assume that there could be writing without any guidelines and formulas at all. There must always be a foundation and rules must always be in place in order to prevent any forms of chaos, even within the writing context. Formulas undoubtedly provide students with the foundation of writing that they need—it is how they *begin* to learn how to write. Order and structure don't have to restrict growth and can, instead, "...come through underlying forms that can move students through real and meaningful work…" (Kutz & Roskelly, p. 251). I argue that writing that employs or teaches *only formulas* takes away the possibility for students to grow in their potential, strategies, and rhetorical awareness within their own writing. A focus on a formulas only process leads to the inability to break free from containment and ultimately creates static forms of writing Kutz and Roskelly (1991) argue against:

> [these] forms…allow less opportunity for student writers to be in control of what they produce. Much of the writing is in the form of note taking or of short answers or short essays on tests, but there is also…some essay writing. Yet most of this writing is used primarily to evaluate what students have read and learned. And the student is writing to an examiner no matter what the "assigned" audience might be (p.160)

Recommendations

This study offered the opportunity to analyze various collected data in connection to the notion of containment. Additionally, it also allowed for me to consider the ways in which the data could offer possible solutions to containment. Based on the research I have conducted, as

well as the feedback that both students and instructors have provided, I offer four recommendations.

I. Assign low stakes writing and odd angled prompts to promote and build confidence in writing

The interviews I conducted with Mr. Pool's students gave insight into the ways their perceptions of writing shifted as they progressed through their learning environments. Having begun his writing experiences through creative and imaginative ways such as storytelling, students like Bobby, for example, emphasized the ways in which he learned that grammatical correctness became the focus of his writing process. Because Bobby learned to focus on strictly grammar, his writing lost the creative factor that he had once had. As he practiced writing in high school, he found that his teachers made grammar a priority. As a result, he lost focus on writing strategies and how to apply his writing skills. According to Kutz and Roskelly (1991), "[t]he linking of error and grammar and the belief that error correcting is the primary purpose of language study are often responsible for students' poor attitudes about themselves as writers" (p. 125). Additionally, Annie and Jenny both lacked confidence in their writing because of how their negative experiences with writing in high school. They frequently suffered from writer's block as they noted how they felt that they had to write about something which they knew nothing about or weren't interested in.

Based upon these student narratives, my recommendation would be for instructors to engage students in more low stakes writing as a way to help build student confidence in their processes. Palmeri (2012) emphasizes the importance of having teachers "employ…informal, low-stakes writing as a way to help students overcome their panic for correctness" (p. 96). For example, low stakes prompts might include an *odd angled* question that would help students

make connections outside of the norm and see things in different ways. Lesnick (2009) explains the significance of odd angled questions and prompts:

> …[d]evising 'odd angled' questions challenges teachers to resist generic questions such as asking students to identify the main idea or the significance of key words or images, and instead give attention to the text…[these] questions call for a stance toward meaning that attends to surfaces—what is noticeable—as well as depth—what is invisible. Seeing from odd angles opens perceptions so that our imaginations are not held captive to familiar pictures, [or] well-worn discourse. (79)

Odd angled questions might include anything from, *How is writing like your favorite food?* to having students choose an image that reflects how they view writing. Such questions promote inferences between themes and ideas that are not necessarily connected, essentially promoting discovery while stepping out of zones of containment. As they sit silently thinking about food and writing, they begin to write and lose their fear of writing or need for grammatical correctness. No outlines are necessary. No drafts are needed. Students simply begin to write and, as they begin to think about the odd angled question, they shift their focus from fear to curiosity to confidence. Students shift their focus from grammar and correctness and become more engaged with attempting to decipher an odd question as they prepare their written response.

These odd angled prompts present opportunities for low stakes writing that get students to think and make connections in various ways. Students could begin to build their confidence in writing as they participate in a safe writing space without the fear of being judged. Additionally, these strategies often serve as ways of demystifying writing for students by creating writing prompts or short answer response questions that will create relatable connections to their own experiences.

Such writing exercises should not be graded and instructors could provide the student with feedback and comment upon their originality and creativity. In promoting this sort of writing, it not only makes students more comfortable to actually write, but it also helps them connect to different contexts in new ways—they begin to break out of any containment of writing or thoughts that they might have brought with them from previous writing environments. Low stakes writing builds writing confidence and the application of odd angled prompts makes writing interesting, perhaps strange, sometimes funny, but never boring.

II. Make assignments more meaningful

In connection with the previous recommendation, when writing relates personally to students it becomes more meaningful to them. So, how can instructors teach students to make more personal connections to their writing? Kutz & Roskelly (1991) note how much of writing instruction "…focuses on the five-paragraph essay with an introduction, three main paragraphs, and conclusion, and/or on surface structures of spelling and punctuation and 'grammar." Such writing is rigidly separated from creative writing or personal writing…[and] is seldom self-motivated and…seen as a tool of inquiry or learning" (p. 161). Instructors can take more time to design projects and assignments aimed at promoting creativity and have students practice their writing skills by using more of their imagination.

To promote writing skills, the assignment could take on a reflection format where students are able to personalize their projects according to their experiences and narratives. Corkery (2005) asserts that such narratives function as "… stories [that] confer upon students the importance and relevance of personal experience…[and] demonstrate how the individual voice can prevail over institutionally imposed forms of literacy (p. 49). Further, assignments that connect to a student's experiences or identity may promote a movement out of containment.

91

Corkery (2005) notes that these assignments present the opportunity "for revising and strengthening…student identity" (p. 51) as well as the ability for a student to "redefine [themselves] desirably" (p. 51). Through the telling of a personal narrative, students have a greater opportunity to reclaim their writing process and step out of the containment they have learned from previous learning environments. Ideally, an assignment like this could lend itself to creating an activity for students where they can research their own narratives based on their learning processes, literacies, discourse communities, and/or writing experiences. The assignment would help students reflect on their learning and connect to their content in more meaningful ways. Students, in their interviews and surveys, expressed interest in researching and connecting with content that was particularly interesting to them. In order to be better, more efficient writers, students believed that they had to directly connect to the content. Writing that allows for personal reflection always connects with students and I have found that students enjoy writing more when they can place themselves within their writing content.

Additionally, multimodality could also be an important element to integrate into a student project. Giving students the opportunity to present this in written form as a formal report or visually in a video would give students that connection they yearn for as they have different ways of creating or putting together their own interpretations. Further, a multimodal assignment would "help students think beyond the five-paragraph essay…and a conventional outline" (Palmeri, p. 34). An assignment that would allow for reflection as well as promote a multimodal format would allow for students to use their creative abilities and create a narrative that is personal in content as well as design. Rubrics may be created based on the effectiveness of the transmitted message, connection to audience, and thorough analysis of discourses presented.

92

III. Make writing VISIBLE: writing as performative, dramatized, so students can see that writing goes beyond the written page (communication is everywhere and everything!)

In helping students build more confidence as writers, it could be beneficial to have students break away from the typical practices of writing that they are accustomed to. Writing is everywhere and everything. We are constantly composing via email, text, art, conversation—in other words, we are always writing in action and through action. By seeing that writing can go beyond the written page, students might become more aware of the connections between communication and writing.

Performative writing strategies and other pedagogical practices that taught students to see writing beyond the page proved to promote more creativity and enjoyment for students. Cremin et al., (2006) assert that when it comes to writing, drama can "become a conduit which facilitates a flow of imagination between process and product (p. 3). In this research project, each student interview echoed another as each student repeatedly stated that they had learned to write in a creative, imaginative, or storytelling way. Bobby, Annie, and Nancy all mentioned writing as performative. Bobby began to write when he could write stories with his parents and act them out. In elementary, Annie would write stories and participate in competitions for school. Nancy valued the ways in which she used to write fun stories as a child. Performative forms of dramatizing writing are always effective when teaching students about writing, rhetoric, and communication.

A conversation, for example, is writing in action, and a conversation—just like a written piece—is delivered to an audience. In having students perform skits, delivering their projects, creating presentations, or simply participating in fun activities of persuasion, writing goes beyond the written page into the live communication we all do. Palmeri (2012) notes the importance of having instructors integrate new forms of "teaching writing as a multimodal

93

process, not just an alphabetic product" (p. 34). For example, when composing a written piece, students could pair up and talk about their research and papers as their partner writes down what they are saying each taking turns and exchanging papers. Richmond (2002) similarly emphasizes the importance of opening spaces for students to share their work and notes that:

> [w]hen students discover that their seemingly individual emotional responses to a writing assignment or situation are similar to those of their classmates, they can construct (or acknowledge a culturally constructed) shared vocabulary of emotions, which facilitates peer response and their willingness to discuss their own writing (p.75).

At the end of the activity, each student could have something to begin their papers with—this could be effective in overcoming potential writer's block. Also, when students begin to learn about rhetoric, they could act out different scenarios depending on message and audience. Students could get very creative with their original material and be free to experiment with their content.

In regards to writing, instructors should try to teach students that writing goes beyond the written page. Cremin et al., (2006) highlight the importance of a dramatized composition classroom and argue that

> [d]rama can do much more than motivate young writers; it has the potential to contribute markedly to composition and effect in writing, to create writing which captures the reader's interest and attention, uses powerful language and evokes a strong sense of the writer's stance and voice…[it] also fosters commitment and concentration in writing and prompts [students] to revisit their writing to shape it further…[therefore], teachers of writing deserve to become better acquainted with its symbolic and transformative potential so they can support young writers and seize engaging and effective moments

94

to write during process drama. (p.18)

As a form of communication, writing should be taught as one of many forms of transmission to an audience and students should be aware that they are involved in writing every day. By helping students see that through texts, emails, or random conversations they have with friends or family, writing can be more accessible and less intimidating, leading to more confident writers. Writing as performative communication could prove to be very effective for students as they begin to see that writing is not only restricted to a blank page and is not only necessary for the English classroom. Finally, it is important to highlight the ways in which writing can be learned and applied, and with it, offer a re-invention and re-interpretation of what writing is. Downs and Wardle (2007) suggest that

> Instead of teaching situational skills often incorrectly imagined
>
> to be generalizable, FYC could teach about the ways writing works
>
> in the world and how the 'tool' of writing is used to mediate various
>
> activities. (558)

Helping students recognize that writing is not a means to an end, rather, a valuable tool that with its universal value could be used to create, shape, and transmit content and context contingent material. Writing, in this focus, is alive, not static, and is continuously being be re-invented based on context, content, and audience.

IV. Offer pedagogical training for instructors with no pedagogical background

Through this project, I have been able to see beyond the borders of a classroom and into new spaces of teaching and learning. The experience of observing Mr. Pool in his classroom helped me see how dedicated and invested some instructors can be and how important that is to their students' overall progress. Because instructors should have strong expertise in their

pedagogical areas, I argue that in order to know how to navigate the classroom, as well as provide personalized learning for students, pedagogical knowledge is absolutely necessary. Although Mr. Pool's background was not in teaching or education, the department for which he teaches provides a pedagogy course online where instructors could learn to be better teachers. He stated that he was taking the course along with other colleagues and had learned to apply certain techniques to his classroom practice. He noted the importance of having teaching knowledge and how it was necessary for instructors to be properly trained.

Instructors, as knowledgeable classroom guides, should apply their expertise accordingly in order to teach students to become more effective writers by designing lessons or activities that promote writing skills, for example. Sadly, at the university level, it is common practice to hire adjuncts or graduate students (many with no teaching experience) to teach first year composition courses for students who are just transitioning from high school. Unfortunately, not all instructors are equipped with the pedagogical knowledge to design appropriate lessons and help students in their transition from high school writing to college writing. Some instructors aren't prepared or properly trained to teach, and it could most certainly affect student progress as students learn to become accustomed to college writing. Regarding the importance of pedagogy and teaching, Bettinger and Long (2010) assert that "by specializing in teaching or being concurrently employed, adjuncts could enhance learning experiences" (p. 598). In having a teaching background and experience, instructors could be better equipped in the classroom and be able to create lessons and assignments that target specific knowledge and skills as well as support student knowledge. Instructors need to know how to help students, especially students who have just transitioned to college. Lessons need to reflect pedagogies that promote student centered learning and help break students out of containment and more as emerging writers.

96

Limitations

The focus of this study was rhetorical containment and the ways in which it may or may not manifest in the college composition classroom. Data collection for this study consisted of interviews with instructor and students as well as student questionnaires and classroom observations. Two courses were originally chosen for this study, however, only one course was able to remain as the main source of data. Two first year composition classes, perhaps more, would have been optimal for gathering richer data. Interviews with both instructor and student participants could have also been designed in different ways. Questions and responses were a major component of the data collection process as they helped provide significant insight into student writing processes. Instead of asking close ended questions that require only a yes or no response, interview questions could have been formulated in an open ended format so as to gather more rich, in-depth feedback from instructor and students alike. Open ended questions would have contributed to a deeper, more meaningful conversation that could have uncovered many more hidden factors that could have expanded into other connections in regards to containment. The questionnaires designed for student responses could have included different questions to gain more insight into students' writing processes as opposed to perceptions on a single assignment. Also, questionnaires in connection to other assignments could have been applied. Additionally, these responses could have also served as writing samples to analyze in order to support any evidence of containment. Another factor that influenced data collection was the sample size of students who participated in the study. Students were aware of the importance of their participation, yet there was a major difficulty in having students show up to the scheduled interviews they signed up for themselves. The beginning of the semester only saw four students come in for their interviews while the end of the semester only saw one student

participant. Perhaps timing influenced the latter interviews as they were conducted close to final exams for the students. It would have also been more beneficial to the research to track student progress through the semester. Those students who participated in the beginning of semester interview could have been asked to participate in the second, end of semester student interview—this would have also solved the problem of not having enough students participate and could have provided a comparison of student progress. Finally, because this project mentions the high school environment as a major space of learning in regards to writing as well as the secondary to post-secondary transition, data could have included high school students and teachers as participants. Further research is necessary as more participant involvement and contribution would have made for richer data that could have been analyzed for any other connections and additional theories.

Implications for Future Research

This study offers insight into the ways that containment manifests in the first year composition classroom as well as the multiple perceptions of writing that transitioning students bring with them to the college composition classroom. An analysis of interviews, narratives, and instructor pedagogy helped construct multiple perceptions of writing and containment. However, the data collected from this study might also prove beneficial in additional areas of future research.

A focus on pedagogical practices and teacher education programs might be beneficial in determining and attempting to further understand students' experiences in writing. This study has clearly presented student narratives that discuss how the significance of teaching practices has affected their perceptions of what writing is and should be. Through an analysis of teacher preparation programs, we can determine the ways in which teachers use the content they have

learned in ways that positively promote student learning. Further, looking at pedagogical practices in the classroom might help to understand how teachers themselves are subject to containment through the limitations that are placed upon them by systems of power.

Continuing with the theme of quality of education, I think it might also be important to address the issue of why some students excel at writing while others do not. If all students are receiving the same content in the same ways, then why are there significant differences in writing skills and progress? Moreover, could this possibly also be an issue of access? Could this also be a result of school location and the ways in which the quality of teaching varies depending on affluent areas versus less affluent areas?

Finally, it might prove beneficial to look into the importance of writing for students in fields such as STEM who might feel that writing is not necessary for them to learn. With more students going into such fields, the practice of writing and composition courses seem to devalue in comparison to their science and math counterparts. The fact that many students enter the first year composition classroom with underlying presumptions that writing is not a necessary skill for them to learn may tend to affect the way a student develops as a writer, if at all. Further, where do students learn these ideologies? Could this also be classified as rhetorical containment? If this is the case, then we must take into consideration the direction of first year composition programs and the ways in which first year composition can better serve students in all fields.

Final Remarks

This project began with a multitude of questions that I asked myself as both a former high school English teacher and a current first year composition university instructor. Although both of my experiences have brought different bits of knowledge, there were some questions that

99

remained the same: Why are some students more fluent writers than others? Is there such a thing as a "good" writer? How can we teach students to value writing?

I learned that writing is a personal experience constructed by a multitude of memories that stay with us for good or ill. Just like our human experiences, writing is fluid, mutable, and ever shifting. Writing breathes and loops and never follows a straight path. Writing is difficult, yet simple, foreign, yet innate. Writing is love, hate, and everything in between. And, most importantly, everyone needs to know how to write—no exceptions.

In looking for containment, I found that I, too, had been contained within my own perceptions. In my interactions with the student volunteers, I found that everyone holds the potential for growth. This project allowed me to meet students who had once been afraid of writing became more confident as the semester progressed. I spoke with writers who were once only focused on grammar or suffered from writer's block who became more creative with their work.

I learned about writing through various voices—the students of the *Linus Lab* and Mr. Pool. I discovered various interpretations of writing and of teaching writing as well. I also re-discovered my passion for teaching and writing.

Perhaps this brought forth more questions that may branch out in opportunities for future research. But, it is my hope that this project offers just a little more clarity and provides a significant connection to the value and importance—as well as the beauty—of writing.

REFERENCES

Ambert, A., Adler, P.A., Adler, P., and Detzner, D. (1995) "Understanding and Evaluating Qualitative Research." *Journal of Marriage and Family.* Vol. 57, No. 4. P. 879-893.

Anson, C.M. (2008). "Closed Systems and Standardized Writing Tests." *College Composition and Communication.* Vol. 60, No. 1. p. 113-128.

Bartholomae, D. (2008). " Inventing the University." *The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing*. Ed. Glenn & Goldwaite. 6th. Ed. 2008. 382-391.

Bettinger, E.P., and Long, B.T., (2010). Does Cheaper Mean Better? The Impact of Using Adjunct Instructors on Student Outcomes. The Review of Economics and Statistics, August 2010, 92(3): 598–613.

Bowden, D. (1993). "The Limits of Containment: Text-as-Container in Composition Studies." *College Composition and Communication,* Vol. 44, No. 3. p. 364-379.

Burkhalter, B. (2000). "Pathways to Success: Bridging the Gap Between High School and College Composition." *Research and Writing in Developmental Education.* Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 113-117.

Charmaz, K. (1996). The Search for Meanings—Grounded Theory. Smith, J.A., Harré, R., & Van Langenhove, L. (Eds.), *Rethinking Methods in Psychology.* (p. 27-49). London: Sage Publications.

Corkery, C. (2005). Literacy Narratives and Confidence Building in the Writing Classroom. *Journal of Basic Writing*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 2005. p. 48-67.

Cremin, T., Goouch, K., Blakemore, L., Goff, E., and Macdonald, R., (2006). Connecting Drama and Writing: Seizing the Moment to Write. *Research In Drama in Education*, 11(3) pp.

101

273–291.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). "Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches." 3rd ed. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Donham, J. and Rehmke, D. (2016). "High School to College Transition: Sharing Research with Teachers." *Teacher Librarian.* Vol. 44. No. 2. 13-17.

Elbow, P. (1968). "A Method for Teaching Writing." *College English.* Vol. 30, No. 2., 115-125.

Fanetti, S., Bushrow, K.M., & DeWeese, D.L. (2010). "Closing the Gap between High School Writing Instruction and College Writing Expectations." *The English Journal.* Vol. 99, No. 4. p. 77-83.

Fetterman, D. M. (1998)."Ethnography: Step by Step." Thousand Oaks, CA.: SAGE.

Freire, P. (2000). "Pedagogy of the Oppressed." (30th anniversary ed.).New York: Continuum.

Gaillet, L. L. (2004). "Writing Program Redesign: Learning from Ethnographic Inquiry, Civic Rhetoric, and the History of Rhetorical Education." *Ethnography Unbound.* Ed. Stephen Gilbert Brown and Sidney I. Dobrin. State University of New York Press: Albany. 99-111.

Goldblatt, E. (2017). "Don't Call It Expressivism: Legacies of a 'Tacit Tradition.'" *NCTE.* Vol. 68, No. 3. Feb. 2017.

Greene, M. (1995). "Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change." San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Holley, K., Colyar, J. (2012) "Under Construction: How Narrative Elements Shape Qualitative Research." *Theory Into Practice.* Vol. 51, No. 2. P. 114-121.

Horner, B. (2004). "Critical Ethnography, Ethics, and Work: Rearticulating Labor."

Ethnography Unbound. Ed. Stephen Gilbert Brown and Sidney I. Dobrin. State

University of New York Press: Albany. 13-34.

Keller, C. (2004). "Unsituating the Subject: 'Locating' Composition and Ethnography in

Mobile Worlds." *Ethnography Unbound.* Ed. Stephen Gilbert Brown and Sidney

I. Dobrin. State University of New York Press: Albany. 201-218.

Kohn, A. (2000). "The Case Against Standardized Testing: Raising the Scores, Ruining the

Schools. Pearson Education: Canada.

Kolb, A. Y., Kolb, D. A. "Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing Experiential

Learning in Higher Education." *Academy of Management Learning & Education.* Jun.

2005, Vol. 4, No. 2. P. 193-212.

Kutz. E., Roskelly, H. (1991). "An Unquiet Pedagogy." Boyton/Cook, Portsmouth, NH.

Lesnick, A. "Odd Questions, Strange Texts, and Other People." *Writing Based Teaching:*

Essential Practices and Enduring Questions. Ed. Teresa Vilardi and Mary Chang. State

University of New York Press: Albany, 2009. 71-94.

Mc Comiskey, B. (2000). "Teaching Composition as a Social Process." University Press.

Colorado.

Morse, J.M., Barrett, M.,Mayan, M., Olson, K., Spiers, J. (2002)."Verification Strategies

for Establishing Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research." *International*

Journal of Qualitative Methods. Vol 1, No. 2.

Murray, D. (1972). "Teach Writing as a Process Not Product." *The Leaflet.* November.

11-15.

Nunez Rodriguez, N. et al. (2017)."Building Understanding of High School Students' Transition

to College." *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.* Vol.

29. No.2. 402-411.

Patterson, J.D., Duer, D. (2006). "High School Teaching and College Expectations in Writing

and Reading." *The English Journal.* Vol. 95, No. 3, pp. 81-87.

Popen, S. (2002). "Democratic Pedagogy and the Discourse of Containment."
Anthropology & Education Quarterly. Vol. 33, No. 3. p. 383-394.

Richmond, K.J. "Repositioning Emotions in Composition Studies." *Composition Studies.* Vol.
30. No. 1. Spring 2002. p. 67-82.

Reeves, J. (2010). "Teacher Learning by Script." *Language Teaching Research.* Vol.14. No. (3).
p. 241-258.

Sallee, M., Flood, J. (2012). "Using Qualitative Research to Bridge Research, Policy, and
Practice. *Theory Into Practice.* Vol. 51, No. 2. p. 137-144.

Schunk, D. H. (2003). " Self-efficacy for reading and writing: Influence of modeling, goal
setting, and self evaluation." Reading and Writing Quarterly, 19, 159-172.

Stevens, S. M. "Debating Ecology: Ethnographic Writing that 'Makes a Difference.'
Ethnography Unbound. Ed. Stephen Gilbert Brown and Sidney I. Dobrin. State
University of New York Press: Albany, 2004. 157-180.

Tie, Y.C., Birks, M., and Francis, K. (2019). Grounded Theory Research: A Design Framework
for Novice Researchers. SAGE Open Medicine. Vol. 7. p.1–8.

The University of Texas-El Paso. (2021). *About UTEP.* Retrieved from
https://www.utep.edu/about/index.html.

Venezia, A. and Jaeger, L. (2013). "Transitions from High School to College." *The Future of
Children.* Vol. 23. No. 1. 117-132.

Von, O. R. (1983). "A Whack on the Side of the Head: How to Unlock Your Mind for
Innovation." New York, NY: Warner Books.

Whitehead, T.L. (2005). "Basic Classical Ethnographic Research Methods." *Cultural
Ecology of Health and Change.* July, 2005.

Wiley, M. (2000). "The Popularity of Formulaic Writing (and Why We Need to Resist).

    Teaching Writing in the Twenty-First Century. September, 2000.

Wolfswinkel, J.F., Furtmueller, E., and Wilderom, C. P. M. (2011). Using Ground Theory as a

    Method for Rigorously Reviewing Literature. European Journal of Information System.

    p. 1-11.

APPENDIX A

Pre-Semester Instructor Interview

Sept. 2018/ Fall Semester

1. How many 1301 classes are you teaching this semester?

3 classes

2. How long have you been teaching 1301?

5 ½ years…6 years total

3. Talk a little about your teaching backgrounds and experience.

I worked as an undergraduate writing tutor at the university writing center. I received my MA and was hired as a full time lecturer.

4. As far as writing, what have been your own experiences? Good/bad memories of writing? As students or as teachers?

My grandmother was a high school teacher who read to me and my brothers. She instilled an early love of stories and literacy. My father always loved to read, so I was always pretty comfortable with writing.

5. Overall, how would you define writing? Is it a concept? A process? A necessary evil to know and learn? Etc.?

It's definitely an important element to know and something I'm hoping to be more attuned to. We need to make it easy and be teaching to be analytical about how writing is constructed… students hate writing because they haven't had agency and are asked to produce writing on demand for imagined audiences

6. How do you promote an overall acceptance of writing (positive perception of writing) in your classes while still honoring student agency?

Not making them realize that resistance is futile, but not a component they have to dread. Making it easy for them and teaching students to be analytical about how writing is constructed. As far as agency, students hate writing because they haven't had agency and are asked to produce writing on demand for imagined audiences.

7. How do you gauge student writing? How do you discern between labeling written product as effective versus ineffective?

I feel like we're in a program that emphasizes rubrics. It's difficult to sometimes gauge that. One thing, I think, if it seems like they're able to actively engage in the material in a meaningful way makes sense. I believe in embracing inherently subjective writing. Mostly just the focus and the concept of student active engagement and imagination. Active engagement is what I most value and what I most look for and taking an idea and making it their own, as well as an adherence to genre conventions, etc.

8. What are your expecting your students' writing skills to be like this semester?

I think students do have certain expectations of the first year composition course, while still envisioning this sense of what it was like in high school. It's important to teach them how to write effectively for this university community.

9. What is most important to you to teach about writing to your students?

Providing validation to student writing is extremely important. Some students have learned to believe these labels that have been placed on them by their teachers that they just don't question it anymore.

10. How do you encourage your students who have lost confidence in their writing or who hate writing overall?

Students need to be encouraged and need to know that they are doing a good job. Giving them agency and ownership of their work, I think helps students gain that confidence again.

11. Do you feel your students come to your class prepared to meet the requirements of the first year composition classroom/college writing? Why or why not?

I think some do, while others not so much. I think this is where we have to learn to identify where students are at. In the first year composition classroom, it is important to engage students and have them become a part of their own learning process.

12. What, in your opinion, would you need to be done in order to close the writing gap for first year composition students?

Ideally, I would move less towards rubric based assessments to a more revision based strategy where we can focus on personalized feedback. Emphasizing connections deeply and consistently as the overriding theme of the course is the way in which students need to connect to what they are practicing in the classroom. Individual feedback is important. Students don't get that in thigh school.

13. How do you, in your own classes, promote student growth and evolution as writers?

Trying to empower them through knowing that they are responsible for their ideas and writing.

14. Regarding the assignments designed for 1301, do you think these promote student growth as writers?

I think these assignments help with critical thinking and promote student engagement as well as the social aspects of writing and rhetoric.

15. Finally, what about writing do you want students to know and how do you incorporate this into your pedagogy?

That students need to know how to write, even if they land in a field where they don't write, they will be consuming other people's writing. We should identify meaningful connection between rich subject matter and the things students are interested in such as that if a student is interested in physics, they can communicate that in their own writing.

APPENDIX B

Beginning of Semester Student Interviews

"Bobby"

1. What is your classification?

Freshman

2. Is this your first semester at the university?

Yes, ma'am

3. What do you think of when you hear the word "writing?"

It's like, creatively, like, when you just sit down and write everything down on a paper.

4. What is the best and worst memory of writing you can think of?

The best memory I would have was when I was younger and just write stories that I would show my parents. The worst memory of writing was when I was editor of my school paper and it was frustrating to read every single sentence and see that some people could not make correct sentences because they were simple mistakes that we're taught almost all our lives to avoid.

5. How did you learn how to write? How were you taught?

I guess when I would listen to my parents read I would follow along in my books and stuff.

6. What kind of writer do you consider yourself?

More of a creative, like, when I write I don't really do drafts, I write what I have and, like, decide what it is that I have to make longer or shorter.

7. What kind of writing did you do in high school?

More of a creative, like, when I write I don't really do drafts, I write what I have and, like, decide what it is that I have to make longer or shorter.

8. What do you remember most about writing in high school?

I remember it being very strict. Something that this class (Mr. Pool's) has taught me was that it wasn't the content that mattered, but, like, the quality of it. High school writing was always very strict and it wasn't the content that mattered. That was kind of frustrating because I can't just sit down and write what pops up in my mind, but I have to think about each and every individual sentence I have to write.

9. What kind of writing do you think you'll be doing in 1301?

Probably more research based, not so much like stories or fiction.

10. What differences do you see in the way writing was taught in high school versus how it is taught in college?

I guess in high school it was more what teachers wanted us to do and here it is about your own interests and what you want to learn about and research.

11. Do you think you've changed as a writer from high school to college? How so?

I think I've learned more and I'm still learning. I do hope that I've gotten a bit better.

12. Do you think that what you learned in high school prepared you for what you will write about in 1301?

I think it gave me the tools but not exactly prepared because 1301 is more about getting away from what we learned in high school. In high school they teach you that you need to use this grammatical sense, that you need to use this kind of format, but from what I've learned so far in RWS is that you don't need to but you can if you want to.

13. What message would you give to high school students about college writing?

To read and research and not focus so much on grammar.

"Annie"

1. What is your classification?

Freshman.

2. Is this your first semester at the university?

Yes.

3. What do you think of when you hear the word "writing?"

Like, expressing yourself through words. It can be something, like an expression and the way you feel.

4. What is the best and worst memory of writing you can think of?

The worst memory is writer's block when you have an essay due and you don't know what to write about. Having the pressure and not knowing how to control it and being stuck on words

and you know what you want to say but you just can't put it in words. I think that's, like, the worst thing. I think I just ask for advice and try to read things that relate to it and get an idea of the topic. The best memory is getting to feel like when you know you're writing something good. Like when you're "oh, yeah, this is really good writing," like that feeling, that's the best feeling.

5. How did you learn how to write? How were you taught?

Overall, just like in school. My freshman year, I was really bad at writing. My teacher taught me how to make it flow and not use too many words like "and" and all those other short kind of words.

6. What kind of writer do you consider yourself?

I'm not the best, but not the worst. I guess just decent. I know how write but there's some struggles here and there, like when you get writer's block.

7. What kind of writing did you do in high school?

Basic writing like reports and prompts. Also lots of literature writing.

8. What do you remember most about writing in high school?

If I asked questions teachers usually just said "Ok, but get this [assignment] done."

9. What kind of writing do you think you'll be doing in 1301?

Probably a lot of report writing, I think.

10. What differences do you see in the way writing was taught in high school versus how it is taught in college?

I think here we do more reading and research. But reading and trying to find connections [to the topic] will help me with that. I think not having something to relate to is pretty hard because it puts you in a tough situation and you're just stuck.

11. Do you think you've changed as a writer from high school to college? How so?

I don't know but I think I'm still learning.

12. Do you think that what you learned in high school prepared you for what you will write about in 1301?

I hope so. And that we can have more of a choice on what to write.

13. What message would you give to high school students about college writing?

To pay attention and talk to your professors when you need help. Everything's about writing, not like in high school. If you don't learn anything in high school, it's not gonna help you come prepared here. It's gonna be really hard.

<u>"Jenny"</u>

1. What is your classification?

Freshman

2. Is this your first semester at the university?

Yes

3. What do you think of when you hear the word "writing?"

I don't know. I never thought of myself as a good writer. In AP English, my teacher would always give me low grades.

4. What is the best and worst memory of writing you can think of?

Getting papers back from my teachers and knowing I wasn't gonna get a good grade. My best memory was when I was in kindergarten when a writer came to my school and had this picture drawing challenge with a paragraph to talk about the drawing. I remember I got first place. And a reading club here at the university that I used to come to. The worst was not passing my AP test.

5. How did you learn how to write? How were you taught?

I think it started in elementary school when I began writing stories. But, I never had one teacher that told me how to. It was almost like they just brushed on it and moved on.

6. What kind of writer do you consider yourself?

When I write, I'm like, "yeah, this is really good" and then I get [a paper] back, and then it's like, just kidding, I guess not. Pretty bad, kind of average.

7. What kind of writing did you do in high school?

Well, my junior year, the teacher focused on the making of the paragraph. Like, do this and structure it like this. In my senior year, it was more analyzing.

8. What do you remember most about writing in high school?

It was all very structured writing we had to do. We had to follow specific formats.

9. What kind of writing do you think you'll be doing in 1301?

More research based. Maybe, like, literature and poetry.

10. What differences do you see in the way writing was taught in high school versus how it is taught in college?

Maybe the teachers. I think here they help you more. At least for me.

11. Do you think you've changed as a writer from high school to college? How so?

I think I'm changing and getting better. I'm not so afraid of getting bad grades.

12. Do you think that what you learned in high school prepared you for what you will write about in 1301?

I think [college writing] is a higher level of writing. In some ways, high school helped me, but I think the writing format changes.

13. What message would you give to high school students about college writing?

To try to learn everything you can so you can get better at writing.

"Nancy"

1. What is your classification?

First semester.

2. Is this your first semester at the university?

Yes.

3. What do you think of when you hear the word "writing?"

I want to say creativity and imagination.

4. What is the best and worst memory of writing you can think of?

I remember in elementary school we would have these little writing competitions and those were fun because we just made up our own little things. In high school, we'd always have these prompts to go after and we would have to copy down just research and it was overwhelming. That's all we did was prompts and bookwork. It was really dull.

5. How did you learn how to write? How were you taught?

When I was little, I would just work on Word Documents and type random things. I used to read a lot so my imagination was flowing. I always wrote snippets.

6. What kind of writer do you consider yourself?

I don't write as much creatively as I used to. I work better with free writing.

7. What kind of writing did you do in high school?

We had to write a lot of essays. It was exhausting.

8. What do you remember most about writing in high school?

We had to follow so many rules when we wrote anything. It was all about following exactly what the teacher told us.

9. What kind of writing do you think you'll be doing in 1301?

I don't know yet, but I hope I get better.

10. What differences do you see in the way writing was taught in high school versus how it is taught in college?

Here I can write about what really interests me versus something I don't know about.

11. Do you think you've changed as a writer from high school to college? How so?

I haven't changed yet since I'm a 'baby' here, but I think that over time I will…

12. Do you think that what you learned in high school prepared you for what you will write about in 1301?

I hope so.

13. What message would you give to high school students about college writing?

Read. Read. And pay attention to your professors.

APPENDIX C

Student consent form

<div align="center">

University Institutional Review Board

Research Information Sheet

</div>

Protocol Title: Writing Inside and Outside the Rhetoric of Containment: An Analysis of Pedagogical Writing Strategies in Secondary and Post-Secondary Education

Principal Investigator: Brenda R. Gallardo, M.A.T.

UTEP : English

Sponsor: Not applicable

Introduction

You are being invited to take part voluntarily in the research project described below. Before agreeing to take part in this research study, it is important that you read the consent form that describes the study.

You are being invited to participate because you are transitioning from high school to your first semester and currently enrolled in first year composition..

Why is this study being done?

You have been asked to take part in a research study that will analyze your writing strategies and how you apply those in your writing for the first year composition classroom.

If you agree to participate, your involvement will follow your work in first year composition through the Fall 2018 semester.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1.) Complete short anonymous questionnaires/surveys about writing assignments, your work in first year composition, and overall attitudes about writing strategies and processes. These short questionnaires/surveys will be handed out and collected during class.

2.) For those volunteering for interviews, I will conduct on-campus interviews twice during the semester and your identity and information will remain anonymous. You may choose to participate in one or both interviews.

Risks and Benefits

This research may help us to understand the way students write and apply strategies that they have been taught in previous environments.

What other options are there?

There will be no penalties involved if you choose not to participate. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your grades in this course.

If you agree to take part, you have the right to skip any questions or stop at any time.

Will I be paid to participate in this study? What are my costs?

You will not be paid.

What about confidentiality and my personal information?

All surveys, questionnaires, and interviews will remain anonymous. To accomplish this, you will be assigned a pseudonym to protect your identity.

Your part in this study is confidential. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study. All records will be handled solely by the researcher and will remain as part of personal data to be analyzed by the researcher alone. Your information will not be shared with any third parties—including your first year composition instructor—and will be used for research purposes only.

The results of this research study may be presented at meetings or in publications; however, your identity will not be disclosed in those presentations.

All records will be handled and analyzed solely by the researcher. All audio conversations and written documentation will be stored by researcher.

Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions or concerns, or if you have a research-related problem you may email your inquiries to me at brgallardo@miners.utep.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (915-747-7693) or irb.orsp@utep.edu.

Authorization Statement

I have read each page of this form about the study (or it was read to me). I know that being in this study is voluntary and I choose to participate. I will get a copy of this consent form.

I agree to participate in this research project through the completion of anonymous surveys and questionnaires given to me by the researcher. I may also volunteer for one-on-one interviews with the researcher, to be conducted during the Fall 2018 semester.

_____   _____
                Printed Name   Date

_____
                Signature

APPENDIX D

Beginning of Semester questionnaires prompting student responses about writing methods/strategies applied to the Discourse Community Ethnography assignment.

<u>Reflection Questions</u>

RWS first year composition   Classification/Major:

_____

Instructor: _____   Assignment: _____

These questions are aimed at discovering your process as a writer. Keeping in mind the writing assignment you just completed, please consider the following questions:

_____

Did you apply what you learned in high school to complete this assignment?

How would you describe your writing process for this assignment?

Did you consider your writing effective for this assignment? Why or why not?

APPENDIX E

Student Final Questionnaires

A Final Reflection.

You've made it to the end of the semester! Now, thinking about the work you have done in first year composition this semester, answer the following questions:

Did you meet your writing goals this semester? Why or why not?

What did you learn about writing that you didn't know before?

Did your writing process change? If so, how?

What advice would you give to future first year composition students about the writing they will do in this course? How would you tell them to prepare?

APPENDIX F

End of the semester interview with student participant.

<u>"Millie"</u>

1. Thinking about the writing you did this semester in 1301, do you think you learned more about writing?

Definitely. My writing just got so much better. And the I learned the most from the brainstorming, strategies, structuring my ideas.

2. What did you learn about writing in 1301?

I guess just how to be more efficient with my writing and my strategies.

3. How does what you learned in 1301 compare to what you learned in high school?

This class is the more efficient and nicer sister of the other class. It's essentially the same thing, but we're applying what we're learning. The professor here isn't just giving us a block, like, Intro, Body, Conclusion. He's showing us process, methods, and it's just better.

4. How do you think 1301 helped you become a stronger writer?

I've seen my improvement. We don't do a lot of essays, but the ones I have done are solid.

5. Now that you have taken 1301, how do you think your high school writing and your college writing connect?

1301 is the better lesson. It's more useful.

6. Thinking about the phrase "basics of writing," what do you think this means? What are "basics of writing" to you?

Structuring a sentence and making sure that you're able to organize thoughts. Like, spelling and grammar.

7. How would you compare or describe yourself as a writer at the beginning of the semester versus now? What has changed?

I think I'm pretty good at writing. I'm getting there. The more reading, the more essays I do makes me better. It's practice too.

8. As far as the writing you did in 1301, was there anything you think you needed to learn more about this semester? Or did not learn enough about?

Well, the professor covered all essentials. He went over basic requirements.

9. What about the instructor did you feel contributed to your growth as a writer? Did that play a role in your development as a writer?

He [Mr. Pool] definitely played a great role. He's thorough, open and his lessons are good. The more professors care, the better I do, it's the best. In high school, writing is prompt based. Here, the professor isn't just giving us a block of writing like body, conclusion, etc.. My professor definitely played a role in my development as a writer. I think I'm pretty good at writing now, but I'll get better soon. The more the professors care, the better I do.

CURRICULUM VITA

Brenda R. Gallardo, M.A.T
Ph.D. candidate/Rhetoric and Composition
University of Texas-El Paso
brgallardo@utep.edu

Brenda R. Gallardo is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Texas-El Paso in the Rhetoric and Composition doctoral program. Her research focuses on writing pedagogy and rhetorical containment within the secondary to post-secondary writing process. She holds a Master's degree in Teaching English from the University of Texas-El Paso and has taught English at the secondary level. She is certified to teach English/Language Arts/Reading 8-12 and has a Bachelor's in English/ Sec. Education. She currently teaches first year composition at the University of Texas-El Paso.

After having taught high school English, Gallardo began to teach at the post-secondary level after receiving her Master's degree. Her teaching experience includes El Paso Community College, where she taught under the department of Continuing Education and the El Paso Independent School District. While enrolled in the Rhetoric and Composition doctoral program, she worked as a writing consultant at the university writing center where she held writing consultations with students from the undergraduate level up to a doctoral level. She provided valuable feedback and revised and edited various written products for a variety of students at all levels and majors.

In 2015, Gallardo began to teach first year composition assisting and guiding students through projects and assignments in RWS first year composition & 1302. Additionally, Gallardo has lectured at the graduate level at the University of Texas-El Paso where she functioned as guest lecturer from October-December 2017. She served as a doctoral consultant for newly enrolled doctoral and masters students working on their future research projects in the Rhetoric and Composition program.

Besides her teaching experience, Gallardo has also served as a student grant writer/writing consultant for the non-profit organization *Books are Gems*. She collaborated in seeking funding opportunities and writing grants for the organization which is dedicated to promoting literacy through the distribution of free literary materials to children and educators.

Gallardo also holds a Teaching Online Academy (TOA) certification from the Center of Instructional Design at the University of Texas-El Paso and is fluent in English and Spanish.