

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Casie Janelle Fedukovich entitled "Definitions of Labor: A Study of Working-Class Graduate Student Writing Instructors." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.

Michael L. Keene, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Kirsten Benson

William Hardwig

Mary Jo Reiff

Trena Paulus

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges
Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

Definitions of Labor: A Study of Working-Class Graduate Student Writing Instructors

A Dissertation Presented for
the Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Casie Janelle Fedukovich
May 2011

Copyright © 2011 by Casie Janelle Fedukovich

All Rights Reserved

Abstract

"Definitions of Labor: A Study of Working-Class Graduate Student Writing Instructors" presents six narratives of self-identified working-class graduate student writing instructors. Broadly, it explores their individual definitions of class and the pedagogical import of these definitions. Chapter One introduces the topic through radical reflexivity, as the researcher queries her own positioning in relationship to the working-class identity, before moving to detail methods and methodologies. Chapter Two provides a literature review beginning with early scholarship on Impostership Studies and moving through single-authored and collected working-class academic autobiographies. Chapters Three through Eight present the individual narratives of the participants. These interpretive chapters are informed by a narrative approach, as they story participant experience while also employing inductive analysis to recognize recurrent themes. The six body chapters first detail each writing instructor's personal articulations of self-selected class status. Then they move to explore this identification's role in structuring pedagogical philosophies and practices. Each of the six case study chapters opens with a collaborative ethnopoem distilled from transcripts and revised by the participants. Chapter Nine explores divergent and common themes between cases. First, the chapter describes four broad areas of divergence among cases: regional differences, labor types and history, family orientation, and political ideologies. These divergences inform the provenance of each instructor's specific class identification and pedagogies. Next, the chapter details four areas of similarities in class identification among narratives: connections between physicality and class identification; reflective and reactive processes of "embodied teaching"; being "of use" as an ethical imperative; and rejection of "academic" as a title and identity. Finally, Chapter Nine explores four areas of pedagogical practice among the six instructors: student interaction and proximity; use of community models based on "small-town life"; attention to writing processes; and an imperative for transparent teaching and "demystifying" academia for first-year students. Chapter Ten presents implications for this research, including its contribution to a philosophy of affective pedagogies and directions for future work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction and Description.....	1
Chapter 2: Context and Conversations	27
Chapter 3: Anne-Marie.....	48
Chapter 4: Daniel.....	75
Chapter 5: Rick.....	95
Chapter 6: Tabitha	121
Chapter 7: Paul.....	151
Chapter 8: Will	182
Chapter 9: Patterns and Meanings	208
Chapter 10: Implications for Practice, Research, and Philosophy	232
List of References.....	246
Appendices	258
VITA.....	265

Chapter 1: Introduction and Description

Reflexivity at the Root

My father is a retired heavy-machinery mechanic, and my mother raised three children on his working-man's wages. They live in the coal fields of Southern West Virginia. I am the only child of the three to leave the neighborhood where I grew up.

My journey through higher education has been more difficult than some, easier than others. First, as a scholarship kid who "return[ed] home one summer to discover the bewildering silence, facing [her] parents" (Rodriguez, 1982, p. 5), then as a graduate teaching assistant, then as a teaching associate, I now find myself preparing to take on the social weight a doctorate provides. When I first entered college in 1998, I faced uneasy negotiations between work-life and family-life even though, or maybe especially because, I lived at home some semesters and always worked a full-time job. Further, my undergraduate years forced me to consider how things might have been different if I came from a family with money or prestige or a history of education beyond high school.

Within the academy, I am an ambitious young academic working to publish and teach. This persona is my tweed, my gateway into a community I consider hegemonic. Outside this collection of professors and fellow students, all donning their own tweeds, I am defined most completely by my academic pursuits. As the daughter and granddaughter of coal miners, railroad workers, and heavy machinery mechanics, my daily routine of reading, writing, and grading presents the image of a different kind of "work," a labor that seems to be non-labor-intensive. Especially as I position myself as a teacher of first-year writing and a doctoral candidate, I can't help but recall my father's physical deterioration at the hands of greedy corporations, his body just another tool, or my grandfather's long

struggle with the United Mine Workers' Association following the Matewan Massacre. It is this awkward stance—one foot in the coal fields and one in the academy—that informs my teaching in the university, particularly my teaching in the first-year writing classroom, as I work to make myself aware of and responsive to the social and political import of Standard American English and the white-collar preparation demanded by the university structure.

This tweed is drag. Like Michelle Gibson, in “Bar Dyke: A Cocktail Waitress Teaches Writing,” I put on the performative garb of the English instructor—which includes at least three pair of conservative gray pants, two leather bags, and one *Harbrace Handbook*. To come to academia from a background which teaches suspicion as the proper response to education was to fracture my identity.

In the twelve years between 1998 and 2010, I worked through my undergraduate education, where I am ashamed to admit my shame at my family's status, and then spent two years in and out of odd jobs between West Virginia and Ohio. It wasn't until my second year in graduate school, in 2005, that I was able to reconceptualize my background in terms of its richness and depth, and it was then that I began to reflect on the influence of memory and background in my scholarly life. Why should visiting strip mines with my father or eavesdropping on choked conversations about how we couldn't afford my mother's medicine immediately shuttle me into the does-not-belong column? This move from assumed deficit to not only acceptance but pride in my experiences made me feel lonely, especially as I worked through the myriad of jolts and jostles that attended the transition into graduate study.

This Study

Description

My motivation for the present study is rooted in these sometimes contradictory feelings of pride and loneliness and a conversation with a colleague in 2008. James, a non-traditional second-year master's student, and I were enrolled in a course exploring feminist approaches to teaching first-year composition. We had read Gibson, Marinara, and Meem's (2003) "Bi, Butch, and Bar Dyke: Pedagogical Performances of Class, Gender, and Sexuality," and my response, "White-Trash Writing Teacher," had caught James's attention. "Me too," he told me in the plaza, far away from classmates and professors. "I thought I was the only one." He narrated a teaching life full of doubt and anxiety, a remove from his aggressive student persona. Alongside this anxiety, however, he detailed a stance reliant on resourcefulness, a sense of perspective, and dignity. Teaching writing wasn't hanging drywall, so it was a pretty good gig.

The purpose of this study is to begin to address these class performances in terms of first-year writing pedagogies. "Definitions of Labor" presents the narratives of six advanced graduate students who are also teachers of first-year writing and who have identified themselves as working class. These six instructors represent four geographical regions and a range of labor backgrounds, from construction to adult-care services. The study site is Alum State University, a large, research-oriented land-grant institution in the Southeast.

Pilot Study

The present study grew out of a pilot study conducted the same semester that James and I were enrolled in Feminism and Pedagogy. Two of the six interviewees in "Definitions of Labor" also participated in the pilot, "Disturbances at the Source: Working-Class Writing

Instructors.” A majority (10 of 12) of the pilot-study interviewees echoed my own experiences with the confusing, complex interplay of class and teaching, though we all came to our pedagogies through different channels. These 10 instructors still professed themselves working class and insisted that while the nature of their labor was decidedly white collar, they took up ideologies and pedagogies associated with blue-collar work, such as a valuation of physical labor and an emphasis on workers’ rights. In contrast, 2 interviewees in the pilot study claimed that their access to educational opportunities marked them as distinctly middle- to upper-class, even if their pay grade did not.

“Disturbances at the Source” found that class considerations—both past experiences and dialogical relationships with peers, professors, and students—structured the first-year writing teachers’ class personas. Three recurring themes emerged among the 12 cases: 1) an emphasis on producing a classroom community; 2) discomfort with the assumed “high-culture” import of academia; and 3) the embodied concerns of “flying without a net,” of living, often on poverty wages, without financial support from family.

Further, these instructors queried their potentially negative impact on student lives and psyches. Some instructors agonized over assigning low grades to students on scholarship or to students who maintained full-time jobs, having once been in those positions themselves. As such, and as the data in this pilot study showed, these teachers creatively utilized their own working-class backgrounds to reframe the teaching of writing through community models which resisted long-standing “high culture” curriculum by using popular culture texts.

Supported by these preliminary findings in 2008—both the consistency across narratives and the participants’ enthusiasm about the topic—I gained IRB approval for the current project, “Definitions of Labor,” in early 2010.

Participants in the Current Study

James’s request to discuss his class background in the plaza, away from our department, cued issues of confidentiality and sensitivity. As Lindquist (2004) notes, “There is something about the act of claiming working-class experience that pisses people off” (p. 187). Though she goes on to assert that staking this claim often bothers other working-class people the most—suggesting that “working class” is an identity with multiple and personal definitions, definitions which cue claims of entitlement—James’s insistence on privacy suggests that claiming working class presents other risks. The participants self-selected through an invitation I sent through our departmental list-serv. This volunteerism came with assurances that their stories would remain confidential. The six graduate students in this study have all chosen to appear anonymously, and I have coded their hometowns and, in the cases where it may make identification possible, their courses of study and other particularities. As I address in individual chapters, their narratives of class identification often implicated unseemly classroom behavior by esteemed professors and uncomfortable encounters with fellow graduate students.

These graduate student writing instructors are all pursuing doctorates and have taught college-level writing for at least one year. They range in age from 27 to 35, four males and two females. The racial makeup of our department is homogenous—students and professors of color, in total, number fewer than five—and all of the study participants

are white. My familiarity with the participants ranged from close acquaintances to friendly strangers. I detail their individual backgrounds below.

Anne-Marie is 29 and participated in the pilot study in 2008. She identifies the rural Midwest as her home and has been teaching first-year composition for five years. At the time of our interviews, she was in her fourth year of doctoral study. Her fields of study focus on historical texts, from paleontology to Medieval Studies, though she also expresses interest in the pedagogical uses of graphic novels.

Daniel identifies rural, northeast Appalachia as his home and is in his fourth year of doctoral work. He is 37, has been teaching composition for five years, and cites mid-century American poetry as his primary area of academic interest.

Rick, the youngest participant, is 27. He grew up in a small, rural town in the Midwest and has been teaching first-year writing for two years. His disciplinary interests are varied, focusing primarily on creative writing, narrative theories in technology, and composition. His teaching has been departmentally recognized as innovative and effective. Rick also participated in the pilot study in 2008, and at the time of these interviews, he was in his first year of doctoral study.

Tabitha, 30, is from New England. She is a third-year PhD, has been teaching first-year writing for three years, and cites Medieval and Renaissance literature as her major fields of study. She also expresses interest in composition studies and has volunteered to lead a number of departmental in-service meetings on best teaching practices.

Paul is the only participant to identify explicitly with a sub/urban background, and he considers the Northeast his home. He is in his third year of PhD study and has explored a range of scholarly interests, including twentieth-century American literature, drama, and

rhetoric and composition. He is 31 and has been teaching first-year composition for five years.

Will is also from the rural Midwest, and chose to pursue both his master's and doctorate at Alum because of its access to rural areas. He is 28 and has been teaching first-year composition for three years. His scholarly interests fall firmly in the field of literature, specifically American, and the impact of technology on quality of life. Will is in the second year of his doctoral program.

My statistics mirror those of my participants: At the time of our interviews, I was 29 years old and had been teaching first-year composition for five years. Like Daniel, I identify rural Appalachia as my home, though I am South Central Appalachia and he is Northern. My academic work has ranged from poetry and poetics to technical and professional writing to composition and rhetoric. During the semester we met, I also served as Assistant Director of Composition, an administrative position awarded annually to an advanced graduate student in our department.

Because James finished his master's degree and moved to private-sector employment, he does not appear among the participants, though he has served as an outside reader and offered constant support.

Methods

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted in the spring of 2010. In three, one-hour, semi-structured individual interviews and one focus group, the six participants and I discussed a range of topics related to their past and present work lives, how they envision their future work lives, and their pedagogical philosophies. Interview protocols were created based on

phenomenological questioning (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990) and interactive interview techniques. These phenomenological questions began with broad inquiries into participants' teaching and working lives, with the primary interview content always returning to the question, "What is it like being a college-level writing instructor who self-identifies as working class?" At the end of each interview, I asked participants if they'd like to add any questions to the next protocol, and in this way, I worked to address the pedagogical issues participants felt were important.

At the beginning of our first of the three interviews, I asked each participant to complete a brief questionnaire (see Appendix C) which collected demographic information such as hometown, age, years teaching, and academic interests. This survey also asked participants to rate, from "most strongly influenced by class identification" to "least influenced by class identification," the following six areas of pedagogical concern: interactions with students in conferences, assignment creation, interactions with students in class, course content, interactions with professors, and grading. This questionnaire was not intended to quantify experience. Instead, I used it as an artifact to jumpstart discussion and build rapport.

Narrative as a Method

Narrative methods structure my primary approach to inquiry and data display. Broadly defined, narrative offers "an approach to qualitative research that is both a product and a method ... a study of stories or narrative or descriptions of a series of events that accounts for human experiences" (Creswell, 2007, p. 234,). Because I asked my participants to narrate their teaching experiences from a spectrum of stances (as self-described members of the working class, as doctoral students, as instructors of first-year writing), I felt that

restorying their experiences via narrative methods presented the best approach to explore their situated truths and descriptions of events.

Narrative methods and methodologies are widely used in educational research. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) note, “education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other’s stories” (p. 2). This recasting of the classroom as stage calls forth considerations of the scripts both teachers and students take up as they work to make sense of their experiences. And by casting educational settings as generative sites of storied interplay, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) reframe pedagogical interactions as creative acts. Asking teachers to narrate their acts of pedagogical creativity begins to explore how they see themselves as actors and agents, how they perceive their students’ roles, and how they work to incorporate (and sometimes resist) the scene of the college-writing classroom.

These narratives are politically and socially charged, and this research study takes into account these often high stakes. I consider Anderson and Jack’s (1991) advice to “listen in stereo,” though their research situation contends with the dynamics created by women interviewing women. Their acknowledgement of silence and guardedness, however, affects my study:

Oral interviews are particularly valuable for uncovering women’s perspectives.

Anthropologists have observed how the expression of women’s unique experience as women is often muted, particularly in any situation where women’s interests and experiences are at variance with those of men. A woman’s discussion of her life may combine two separate, often conflicting, perspectives: one framed in concepts and values that reflect men’s dominant position in the culture, and one informed by the

more immediate realities of a woman's personal experience...To hear women's perspectives accurately, we have to learn to listen in stereo, receiving both the dominant and muted channels clearly and tuning into them carefully to understand the relationship between them. (p. 11)

I wish to replace their essentialized conceptions of gendered communication with considerations of class, likewise essentialized but useful in framing participant/researcher dynamics. Because I am a working-class and a writing teacher myself, I can—at least in definition—empathize with the some of the narrative moments expressed by my interviewees. And because I am also, concurrently, a member of the class of “academic,” I can “tune in” to both the “dominant and muted” signals occurring in interviews. I take away Anderson and Jack's (1991) assertion that people of recognized similar backgrounds—specifically culturally “othered” backgrounds—may guardedly share personal narratives but may feel some measure of comfort with others of similar demographics, even if the participants arrive at their definitions by variable means. Next, I explore this practice of empathetic listening via narrative methods and interactive interviewing.

The Narrative Interview

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) propose the unstructured interview as the basis for narrative inquiry data collection. My data collection process followed their outline in this emphasis of recursive meaning making, dialogue, and participant-generated data collection methods. They advise the following process for gathering materials for narrative studies: “Interviews are conducted between researcher and participant, transcripts are made, the meetings are made available for further discussion, and they become part of the ongoing narrative record” (p. 5). My study follows this model, as the participants and I, in addition

to meeting individually three times for formal recorded interviews, talked informally one-on-one without the digital recorder and also participated in casual group discussions (in the cases of the three interviewees who had self-disclosed to one another that they were participating). These informal discussions happened spontaneously in hallways and classrooms, in the campus library and in passing in the copy room. Though none of these informal encounters were recorded or coded, they still generated threads in the fabric of the individual narratives, as the topics we chatted about casually made their ways into our formal, recorded, semi-structured interviews.

Here I note that my process deviates from Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) in my use of semi-structured protocols instead of unstructured interviews. The IRB process at Alum State requires approved protocol before each round of interviews, and as such, I submitted three sets of interview questions to correspond with each of our three formal, recorded interviews. (See Appendix B.) Protocol questions for our first interview were generated from phenomenological questioning via van Manen (1990), as I worked to ask questions which prompted participants to give "description[s] of the lived-through quality of lived experience and description[s] of meaning of the expressions of lived experience" (p. 25). Second- and third-round protocol included participant-generated questions, with discussions always returning to the broad inquiry, "What is it like to be a graduate student from the working class who teaches writing?"

We also engaged in the process of visual representation as a narrative inquiry method. At the beginning of our second round of recorded interviews, I asked each participant to sketch out his or her ideal classroom arrangement, from desks and chairs to windows and doorways, and to juxtapose this ideal with their lived teaching experiences.

These sketches were added to data files and coded alongside the transcripts. Johnson (2004) argues, “aspects of visual language can be seen to disrupt the stability of the verbal narrative structure and its consequential resolution” (p. 429). The classroom sketches gave us not only a starting point for the second interview but also provided a venue through which the writing instructors could visualize, revise, and narrate their classroom personas.

Interactive Interviewing

Connelly and Clandinin’s (1990) recursive model relies on an interview design grounded in egalitarianism and collegiality. To this end, I take up Ellis, Kiesinger, and Tillman-Healey’s (1997) definition of interactive interviewing as a “collaborative communication process, occurring between researchers and respondents” (p. 121). For these researchers—as for me—interview situations “involve the sharing of personal and social experiences of *both* respondents and researchers, who tell (and sometimes write) their stories into the context of a developing relationship.” This dynamic involves a commitment of time, both in the formal interview setting and outside of it, in informal, unplanned interactions, and an attention by both participants and researchers to the affective dimensions of the research situation. In our three formal interviews, as well as informal interactions, I shared my experiences as a working-class graduate student writing instructor with the participants. Our conversations at times ventured in to areas where we shared deep emotional responses, explained feelings of celebration and trauma, and commiserated about departmental particulars or teaching strategies.

Interpretive scholars like Ellis, et al. (1997), whose work is usually located in the social sciences, recognize “as important the relationship between respondent and researcher in terms of their similarities and/or differences in gender, social class, race and

ethnicity” (p. 123). Like Anderson and Jack (1991), these researchers work to describe the dynamics of the research situation when specific identity markers make up the basis of the research question or become otherwise salient through interviews. Though essentialized, our shared identification as working class and interest in discussing these experiences forged a recognized connection between the six participants and myself, which improved rapport and fostered the goals of interactive interviewing.

Beyond Individual Interview Data

Three participants voluntarily submitted additional data in the forms of course documentation—email evaluations from students, syllabi, and assignments. While helpful for understanding the individual instructors’ pedagogies, these supporting documents were not coded in any formal way. I chose not to code these documents for two reasons: 1) submission was strictly voluntary, so I collected inconsistent examples across participants; and 2) coding of these documents would move this study away from interview-based narrative and into ethnography. I did, however, accept any documentation any participant wished to share in order to better understand their pedagogies and ask informed questions in subsequent interviews.

Further, because I wanted the focus to remain firmly on the instructors’ narratives of their pedagogies, and because of an aggressive timeline, I did not engage in participant observation, though I recognize that watching the teachers *in media res* would provide valuable data in terms of classroom issues of identity performance and student feedback.

We also met once as a focus group, after the completion of the individual interviews. Presence at this focus group was not compulsory—in order to maintain participant confidentiality—but five of six of the interviewees attended. (Will had to attend individual

student conferences that day.) The dynamic created by shared discussion offered insights into storylines that hadn't surfaced in our individual interviews. This meeting was digitally recorded and transcribed and the transcripts added to the data file.

The three individual interviews and focus group were digitally recorded and then transcribed using software that reduced the rate of speech for more accurate transcription. To clarify narratives and enrich the data files, I member checked the finished transcripts. I think it is important to note that I transcribed the interviews myself, as I find it crucial to both primary thematic coding and in building trust with the participants. When I mentioned that I would transcribe the data myself—and that, truly, no one would have access to the raw data but me—each interviewee responded with gratitude and thanks. One interviewee stated that to have someone listen to her so intently as to transcribe every word made her feel important, like her experiences impacted the study. Indeed, they did.

Methodologies

My self-identification as a working-class graduate student who teaches writing directly informs my choice of a postcritical methodological framework (Noblit, Flores, and Murillo, 2004) and analytic induction (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Narrative methodological approaches (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) do not seek to make researcher-generated connections across narratives. While taking narrative structures as its primary source of data organization and display, I recognize a tension between data collection methods and display and my methodologies, which seek to make broad connections across narratives.

The interviewees and I share similar statuses in our home department. We teach the same classes, attend the same workshops, and take classes from many of the same professors. We've experienced the same roadblocks in our degree program—not enough of

the right kind of classes, for example, or navigating the language requirement—and we are committed to teaching our first-year composition classes through the same curricular models—a focus on rhetoric and argument in 101 and a focus on research methods in 102. With so many points of similarity, it felt cross-purposeful to consider our interviews through what seemed to be oppressive critical theoretical models that emphasized deterministic patterns of behavior and false consciousness, such as Marxism and Feminist Materialism.

In querying my discomfort with stating a theoretical paradigm, I found that this anxiety was borne directly from my relationship with academia: I've always been uncomfortable with projects which promote the status of one person by detailing the lack of sociopolitical consciousness of others. Ehrenreich's *Nickled and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (2008) projects a kind of overly empathetic, too earnest ethos that marks her work as insincere. Her enthusiasm to "get [her] hands dirty, [to] get off the bench and plunge into the everyday chaos of nature" was supported by her comfortably stocked bank account and the knowledge that a phone call home could rescue her from her working-class plight (p. 3-4). Though her first-person account contributes to a body of knowledge on working-class lives, her approach—working undercover, taking minimum-wage jobs that could have supported someone in real need, fronting her working-class background as a *carte blanche* pass to each site—creates an unethical research situation. While she does capture (and seem shocked by) moments of insight which suggest critical awareness among her working-class participants, Ehrenreich's (2008) research *on* the working class is grossly one-sided. She doesn't resituate her findings or engagement in the field to create

the kinds of reciprocal relationships present in other examples of fieldwork *with* working-class participants, such as Cushman's *The Struggle and the Tools* (1998).

Against Critical Models

"Definitions of Labor" first rejects critical and broad-brush Marxist and Feminist paradigms, as these models rely on an assumption of false consciousness on the part of the research participant and thus saddle the researcher with the responsibility of bringing them to enlightenment. The critical theory model presupposes that, if those who labor unawares could only *see* the frameworks of power at play, they can and will resist them. As Horkheimer (1982) notes, critical theory seeks "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" (p. 244). A firm foundationalist, Horkheimer argues that "philosophy—as a theoretical undertaking oriented toward the general, the 'essential'—is capable of giving particular studies animating impulses" (1993, p. 9). I contend that the current study engages in a philosophy of the particular, the local, and the situated, and moves away from both predictive philosophical structures and the intent to liberate an enslaved demographic. Both moves intend to recognize the agency and opportunity for resistance present in and for each study participant.

A Postcritical Paradigm: Personal and Political Research

Cushman's (1998) work, coded as taking on an "activist" methodology, "begins with the assumption that individuals have many complex forms of linguistic agency nurtured in subversive ideologies" (p. 24). Further, she notes, "[s]ystemic oppression... isn't the totalizing or erasing experience scholars assume it to be for the 'disenfranchised'" (p. 3). "Definitions of Labor" follows this ideological and methodological paradigm by taking up a postcritical approach in recognition of the political consciousness and potential for

resistance among the participants. Like *The Struggle and the Tools* (1998), “Definitions of Labor” recognizes that participants’

language tools—as well as their values attendant upon these tools—complicate the notion that overarching power structures are simply reproduced, carbon copy, over and over again. Social structures, we learn, are not bloodless, unyielding, monolithic forces of oppression and domination, but instead are continually remade, fissured, and manipulated in everyday interactions. (p. 3)

A postcritical system of thought accommodates these nuances between systemic oppression and opportunities for resistance while honoring the moment-to-moment generative power of the participants’ class identifications.

The postcritical paradigm, as argued by Polanyi in 1958, began with Augustine’s *nisi credideritis non intelligitis*, most often translated to mean “Unless you will have believed, you will not understand.” Polyani does not deny the possibility for objectivity in research. Instead, he connects subjectivity with the personal to offer a correlative to impersonal social theories based on the general: a system of thought which relies on presuppositions and belief, one which recognizes the importance of life and individual thought on research design and conduct.

Polyani’s work focuses primarily on the tension between empiricism and subjectivity, on the fictive image of the disimpassioned researcher creating infallible and disinterested theoretical maps. Drawing from Kant and other modernist philosophers, Polyani’s “art of knowing” (p. 1) is made relevant in current iterations of field work through his elevation of the personal, situated, dialogic knowledges of both researcher and participant. His approach contends with the risks inherent in staking an epistemology, the

politics of knowing, and the cultural weight of decision making in power-laden relationships. Objectivity, he argues, is a figment, and an undesirable one at that.

I take up this idea of knowledge as an art, a craft, a *techne* through which individuals generate meaning and assign importance to events through their localized experiences. In this schema, the participant's voice is most important, as it becomes the vehicle of sense-making and storytelling. In this valuation of particularized participant narrative, the work of Noblit, Flores, and Murillo's *Postcritical Ethnography: Reinscribing Critique* (2004) offers the most comprehensive definition of postcritical theory for this study. Though "Definitions of Labor" presents neither ethnography's field-time engagement nor the elements of Geertz's "thick description" (1973), Noblit, et al.'s paradigm provides equally useful guidelines for conducting shorter-termed studies with fewer data points.

Noblit, et al. (2004) present four areas of focus for postcritical ethnography, which they define as the "marriage" of interpretive ethnography and critical theory: "positionality, reflexivity, objectivity, and representation" (p. 21). In this definition, postcritical methods and methodologies do not reject critical theory wholesale. Instead, they offer revisions to critical theoretical paradigms to include considerations of Polanyi's invested researcher and concerns with the ethics of research processes and products.

By extrapolating these four areas—positionality, reflexivity, objectivity, and representation—Noblit, Murillo, and Flores (2004) produce an outline that at once limits the control of the researcher and elevates the status of those researched. While they recognize that a truly egalitarian relationship cannot ever be realized, they encourage researchers to work toward considering these four elements as interactive with their participants, site, and personal ideologies.

Further, Noblit, Murillo, and Flores (2004) emphasize the dialogic dimensions of postcritical work, writing, “Postcritical ethnographies in an important sense are not designed but enacted or produced as moral activity” (p. 24). The emphasis on emergent and responsive methods foregrounds the performative “enactment” of research studies and cues Connelly and Clandinin’s description of teachers and learners as characters acting against the backdrop of accepted scenes. In this way, postcritical research relies on interaction between participant and researcher, rather than staunch adherence to a rigid design planned by the researcher alone. This give-and-take stance implicates a system of ethics that values participant feedback and researcher history as important to research design. Advocacy, then, can still be a goal of a postcritical study, but its approach relies on dialogue, transparency in methods and methodologies (including analysis), and an acknowledgment of the researcher’s always-present power. Empowerment and emancipation are excerpted as primary goals of postcritical research; instead, these projects take on community building via open dialogue and the promotion of understanding different ways of life as their research imperatives.

The close-in nature of postcritical research demands vigilance from both researcher and participant in upholding standards of responsibility and reflexivity. Noblit, Flores, and Murillo (2004) continue: “Postcritical ethnographers ... must assume they exist within a critical discourse that in part makes them responsible for the world they are producing when they interpret and critique” (p. 24). The enactment of a postcritical study thus implicates radical reflexivity on the part of the researcher, a process defined by Pollner (1991) as “an unsettling, an insecurity regarding basic assumptions, discourse, and practices used in describing reality” (p. 370). By reflecting on personal relationships with

participants, the research site, data collection, and analysis, the researcher thus acknowledges that her final document—the deconstruction, reconstruction, and distillation of transcripts, analytic memos, and document analysis—always serves a research purpose and is always situated within her own presuppositions. Pollner’s (1991) “insecurity” describes well this process of recursive questioning and negotiation of relationships.

Gunzenhauser (2004) frames the shift between critical and postcritical methods as the addition of promises. Critical ethnography takes up analyses which “give voice, uncover power, identify agency, and connect analysis to cultural critique” (p. 77). Postcritical ethnography builds on these stated promises and augments the researcher’s ethical obligations to her participants by adding two additional mandates: to practice self-reflexivity (p. 84) and to refuse participant exploitation (p. 89).

Further, postcritical ethnographies seek to disrupt notions about the disimpassioned research report by incorporating literary styles such as poetry, drama, and images. This craft-based move supports Noblit, Flores, and Murillo’s (2004) emphasis on moral positioning by rejecting the idea of researcher-as-ventriloquist to instead promote dialogic and poetic forms. Here, Connelly and Clandinin’s (1990) data collection methods overlap with postcritical ethnography to create an approach that incorporates generic considerations of creative nonfiction with the ethical considerations of action research. In focusing on the storytelling aspects of the project while also looking for similarities and meaningful divergences, I hope to work with the participants to produce a study that is rich in experience and helpful in contributing to a philosophy of composition teaching.

Data Analysis

Coding

Keeping in mind Gunzenhauser's (2004) promises and the postcritical mandates for reflexivity and equality, this project follows an inductive analytic approach. Transcripts were coded using methods outlined by Saldana (2009, p. 77), methods similar to Glaser and Strauss's (1967) constant comparison. Saldana writes, "coding is a heuristic (from the Greek, meaning 'to discover')—an exploratory problem-solving technique without specific formulas to follow" (p. 8). Coding is also reflexive and cyclical, as each pass through the data "further manages, filters, highlights, and focuses on the salient features of the qualitative data record for generating categories, themes, and concepts, grasping meaning, and/or building theory." I followed this reflexive process and worked across narratives to make connections between recurring themes, divergent experiences, and places where contradictions and paradoxes existed. Saldana considers these patterns across data sets "natural and deliberate," arguing that patterns arise because "there are mostly repetitive patterns of action and consistency in human affairs [and that] one of the coder's primary goals is to find these repetitive patterns of actions and consistencies in human affairs as documented in the data" (p. 5). I detail these cross-narrative patterns in Chapter 9.

Saldana's (2009) cyclical process of coding recalls Glaser and Strauss's Constant Comparison (1967) method, a heuristic that supported the construction of grounded theory. While the present narratives don't seek to replicate the goals of grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss's methods do offer a concise outline for recognizing codes in data. Using this outline, I worked to compare the ways similar experiences (teaching a research-based paper, meeting one-on-one with a difficult student) were described across all six

narratives. These similarities are tracked (in Chapter 9), not in order to build a coherent theory of working-class writing instructors, but to explore the narrative choices, nuances in approach, and shifts in pedagogies across stories.

Data Analysis

Coding, as noted in Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p. 26) and Saldana (2009, p. 7-8), offers a first layer of analysis, but should not be conflated with an analytic approach. Coding for particular repeated phrases, ideas, or movements while leaving behind others initiates a recursive process of choice and deletion. I marked preliminary codes during transcription by noting recurring themes both in text and in analytic memos as outlined by Glesne (1999, p. 52) and Burns and Grove (2005, p. 550). These codes consisted of both researcher-generated Sociologically Constructed Codes (SCCs; Ulin, Robinson, and Tolley, 2004) such as “pedagogical approaches” and “relationships with students” and participant-generated In-Vivo codes. These latter codes were most interesting to me, as I found that the six participants, across narratives, sometimes framed their experiences in almost-verbatim language.

I first used a block-and-file approach (Grbich, 2007, p. 33) to identify codes in context. Using a word processing program, I highlighted chunks of data in different colors, with each color representing a different recurring theme or contradiction. As I began “attaching meaning to elements in [the] data,” I “discover[ed] classes of things, persons, and events, and detect[ed] properties that characterize[d] things, persons, and events [to support]... classification” (Burns and Grove, 2005, p. 548). This process of “data reduction,” while phrased in positivist and post-positivist terms, demanded reflexivity and informal member checking (see Lather, 1986, on face validity), as I worked and reworked

classifications by asking participants, in subsequent interviews and informal conversations, to clarify definitions and descriptions. I then grouped these initial codes/classifications in to broader analytic themes. The process of “encoding” the data worked recursively as new themes emerged as I wrote (Saldana, 2009). Writing, then, became another “method of inquiry” (Richardson and St. Pierre, 1992, p. 959).

In taking up coding as an “interpretive act” (Saldana, 2009), I approached theme creation inductively. Specifically, using a copy-and-paste function, I moved the coded blocks of highlighted data (ranging from phrases to whole paragraphs) into conceptual outlines labeled with possible themes (Grbich, 2007, p. 35). In this way, I visually arranged data and could track patterns within and among narratives. Wengraf (2001) terms this process “nesting,” and he cautions qualitative researchers to “be aware of the broadbrush/finebrush approaches to coding,” encouraging qualitative researchers to better balance granular data points with wider-reaching themes. “Fine codes,” he points out, “nestle within broader codes,” and both work together to create cogent biographical narratives (p. 227; for more on methods in biographical narrative research, see Chamberlayne, Bornat, and Wengraf, 2000).

Positionality and Reflexivity Methods

I recognize that my familiarity with the participants and research setting may cause unexpected problems with coding and analysis. By engaging in radical reflexivity (Leary, Minichiello, and Kottler, 2009) and stating my intricate and overlapping relationships with both participants and site, I hope to engage in self-aware analysis and data display.

I pursued self-awareness in data collection, analysis, and display through two methods: member checking and analytic memoing. Because this study did not triangulate

data through participant-observer methods or consistent document collection, these two reflexive methods were necessary to ensure ethical, trustworthy analysis.

Raw transcripts were member checked formally through individual participant review. Informal member checking was conducted in the focus group and in unscheduled conversations with the participants throughout the data collection process. Lather (1986) posits this “face validity” as “much more integral to the process of establishing data credibility” than triangulation (p. 191). Guba and Lincoln (1981) consider the member check as the “backbone of satisfying the truth-value criterion” (p. 110). While the postcritical paradigm which frames this project refuses positivist and postpositivist constructions of truth and validity, I recognize the recursivity offered by consistent, prolonged member checking. This recursivity enriches the data and supports Noblit, Flores, and Murillo’s (2004) image of the invested researcher while also “complicat[ing] the notion that overarching power structures are simply reproduced, carbon copy, over and over again” by presenting opportunities for counternarrative and correction to raw transcript data (Cushman, 1998, p. 3).

Analytic memos provided a second method of reflexivity. These memos—created after each individual interview and throughout the analytic process—helped frame my positionality as I planned protocol, transcribed interviews, and worked through coding. I drew from research on Writing-to-Learn models (Murray, 1984; Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005; Wolf, 1999; Zinsser, 1988) and research-centered memoing (Burns and Grove, 2005, p. 550; Glesne 1999, p. 52; Glesne and Peshkin, 1992; Ellis and Bocher, 2000; Maxwell, 1996, 2005; Spradley, 1979; Watt, 2007). Ellis and Bochner (2000) claim writing as a method of inquiry, as through analytic memos and research journals, offers “a personal tale

of what went on in the backstage of doing research” (p. 741). This elaboration on the “backstage” processes of collection and analysis led to the recognition of three distinct identity claims I worked to negotiate during the course of this study:

As a graduate student in the same department: My peer status—in age, in employment, in educational progress—with the research study participants invokes a range of considerations in terms of research ethics. I have known two of the participants socially for three years, taken coursework with three of them, and have casually interacted with all six in departmental gatherings and shared spaces. Further, the interviews were conducted in our university’s first-year composition office, a space I shared as Assistant Director of Composition. All the interviewees were familiar with this office as they likely met with the Composition Director to discuss course evaluations and other teaching matters. Comfort with the research site and participants could, as Back notes, “run the risk of the researcher’s judgment being clouded and duped through over-familiarity” (2004, p. 274). However, he takes familiarity as a boon in qualitative research, as long as it is tempered with “critical judgment” through “evaluation, deconstruction, and analysis.”

Minichiello and Kottler (2009) echo this approach, insisting that familiarity with both site and participants is “not necessarily a weakness, but rather a strength of the approach, particularly if the researcher engages in rigorous self-reflection and careful analysis” (p. 8). As detailed, I worked to incorporate these methods of self-reflection and analysis by member checking during the interviews and post-transcription and by creating analytic memos.

As a member of the Composition Office staff: Our department annually awards the position of Assistant Director of Composition to an advanced graduate student. This position

requires in-class evaluation of graduate-student teaching, and I worked with both the Associate Director of Composition and the Director of Composition to ensure that, at the time of interviews, I would not be responsible for formally evaluating the teaching of any of the six participants. I acknowledge, though, that my role as Assistant Director (and my proximity to evaluative bodies) may have constrained their responses in terms of pedagogies, though I worked to control for this dynamic by thoroughly reviewing our Informed Consent agreement (see Appendix A); by emphasizing the confidentiality of our discussions, especially noting that I would transcribe the interviews myself; and by using pseudonyms for each participant.

As a poet: I hold an MA in poetry writing, and my manuscript “Living With Curious Pain” details my family’s work history in the mines of West Virginia. As a poet, I feel that I will be uniquely suited to reading the participants’ narratives for captivating phrases and compelling images, as well as being able to craft a rich and persuasive research report.

Chapter Two provides additional context to situate the interactive interviews before moving to detail relevant scholarship in two areas: Impostership studies and working-class academic autobiographies. I then argue that these two bodies of knowledge fail to account for the experiences of working-class graduate students by focusing, instead, on tales of deficit from already-vetted members of the academy. Chapter Two closes with a discussion of the rhetorical structure of the individual narratives and a review of the concluding chapters.

Chapter 2: Context and Conversations

Fitting In

Anne-Marie opened the door and peeked down the hall. Suddenly, we were conspirators instead of research colleagues. “Just checking to see who’s around,” she whispered. Our department is spatially concentrated—most of the English professors and graduate students at Alum State congregate on the 10th floor—and anyone walking by can hear our conversation, even behind closed doors. The atmosphere wouldn’t be out of place in a small town, where news about you could reach home before you do. Sitting back down, she took on the air of coiled energy.

Anne-Marie’s discretion, she argued, wasn’t because she’s ashamed of her background. Instead, she explained that she preferred to foreground her academic achievements and outside-the-department interests to her working-class identity. Further, like most of the participants, she used our interviews to criticize a few of her professors—some very well published professors—and to speak against departmental politics and relationships. In an ever-shrinking academic job market, the last move a graduate student should make is to publically criticize her home department or major professors. We realized, in that first meeting, that our discussions could get us branded unfavorably: as chronic complainers, gossipers, or high-maintenance grad students. Anne-Marie’s furtive look down the hall—preface to a narrative about a high-ranking professor’s “bashing” of conservative ideals in class—brought the stakes of our work into focus.

“Let’s face it,” Anne-Marie continued after ensuring a clear hallway, “this is an environment that’s dominated by people from urban backgrounds. It’s dominated by people from definitely upper-middle class to upper-class, probably people whose families

come from white-collar backgrounds, and I don't fit in." As the interview unspooled, Anne-Marie narrated her journey from the oilfields of the rural Midwest to the halls of academia, but it wasn't always a journey of laboring to fit in. Instead, her story, and the stories of the five other participants, framed working-class identity in terms of pride, utility, and nostalgia. This is not to say that the six interviewees skirted issues of inequality, disenfranchisement, or feelings of adequacy; instead, each participant narrated a life of contradiction and paradox, fraught with inconsistencies and the tug between the optimism of education and the socioeconomic frameworks laid by their sometimes pessimistic or fatalistic notions about their backgrounds. For every tale of need, a tale of sufficiency and self-respect came forth.

From IP to Autobiography: Studies of and by Working-Class Academics

The Imposter Phenomenon

Victor Villanueva's (1993) outsider-become-insider autobiography *Bootstraps* mirrors Anne-Marie's thoughts: "I didn't know what I was getting into, but knew that I was getting into something not intended for the likes of me" (p. xv). Villanueva's tale of the Hispanic-American professional, the "conquered other" who critiques domination from the inside, speaks against Pollyannish American doctrine that places self-reliance and unwavering fortitude above class, race, and ethnic barriers (p. 35).

Villanueva's richly detailed struggle participates in decades-old discussions on the psychological effects of moving into the professional sphere. His recognition as outsider recalls early work into Impostership studies. The "Imposter Phenomenon," a term coined in 1978 by Clance and Imes, described an internal state of "intellectual phoniness" experienced by professional women (p. 1). With the intention of finding patterns of

responses and then developing a working definition of the “imposter phenomenon,” Clance and Imes (1978) interviewed 150 professional women—both academic and private sector—to conclude that these high-achieving women work to “find innumerable means of negating any external evidence that contradicts their belief that they are, in reality, unintelligent” (p. 1). Clance and Imes (1978) cite two origins for these feelings of “intellectual phoniness” in high-achieving women, both rooted deeply in histories of psychoanalysis: a woman suffering from the first type of impostership find provenance in familial comparisons; that is, her intellectual performance is measured against a “sibling or close relative who [has] been designated as the ‘intelligent’ member of the family” (p. 3). This type of imposter thus “thinks her family may be correct, secretly doubts her intellect, and begins to wonder if she has gained her high marks through sensitivity to teachers’ expectations, social skills, and feminine charms.”

The second origin of this phenomenon implicates her early experiences with praise and expectations: “The family conveys to the girl that she is superior in every way—intellect, personality, appearance, and talents. There is nothing that she cannot do if she wants to, and she can do it with ease” (p. 3). Academic disappointments, lack of positive feedback in school, and negative peer assessments soon interrupt this paradigm of “perfection with ease,” and the afflicted woman enters a cycle of self-doubt and anxiety. Imposters, Clance and Imes (1978) argue, deterministically replicate these behaviors, even after the boon of consciousness-raising groups and weekly therapy sessions. They are, in effect, always searching for parental approval, a claim so thoroughly tied into misogynistic Freudian analysis that it becomes reductive to the point of pastiche. For example, though Clance and Imes (1978) focus on IP as a distinctly female affliction, they do acknowledge

that those men who “appear to be more in touch with their ‘feminine’ qualities” are more susceptible to IP than traditionally “masculine” men (p. 1). They support this claim by acknowledging the precarious social positioning of high-achieving women, specifically the assumption that one cannot be both feminine (read: non-assertive, non-threatening) and inherently intelligent and ambitious.

Clance and Imes’s (1978) study is rooted firmly in the early years of the second-wave feminist movement—some of their respondents participated in the newly established consciousness-raising groups—and thus took up the social and cultural structures of the time. Further, the researchers culled participants from rosters of women who were actively involved in psychotherapeutic methods, presenting a confounding factor and already self-selected population. Unfortunately, then, while illuminating the effects of internalized social expectations, their study also worked to reify these practices and rob agency from the participants. The most beneficial consequences of this research rest in the creation preliminary scholarly definition for “imposter phenomenon”—“an internal experience of intellectual phoniness” (p. 1)—a definition that subsequent research pushed against, expanded, and made more complex.

Harvey (1981) and Clance (1985), quantified these experiences through “IP Scales” which measured “a) fear of failure; b) attribution of success to luck, error, or charm; c) the desire to stand out; d) the feeling of having given others a false impression; and e) the discounting of recognition from others” (Langford and Clance, 1993, p. 495-6). This move to quantify experience via psychometrics created a method for data collection that allowed researchers to measure feelings of “phoniness” against other metrics like GPA, income, and age.

While Clance and Imes (1978) do not situate their research participants as women in academia, it should be noted that only 22 of the 150 participants worked outside of the academic sphere. Thus, when the open admissions policies of the 1960s and 70s resulted in populations of working-class college students, Clance and Imes's (1978) work found reverberations. By the mid-1980s, studies began to surface which connected "intellectual phoniness" and the internal and external constraints of cultural expectations of academic achievement (Gravios, 2007, p. 2).

Harvey's (1981) and Clance's (1985) scales were taken up by later researchers in order to explore the occurrence of IP in faculty men and, later, in undergraduate students. In "The Imposter Phenomenon: Feeling Phony" (1985) Topping and Kimmel argue, in opposition to Clance and Imes (1978), that the Imposter Phenomenon presents most strongly in high-achieving male university faculty. This move to fully restrict populations to the academic sphere would influence multiple subsequent studies.

King and Cooley's (1995) research on 127 undergraduate students is representative of these large-scale academia-bound studies. The researchers argue that a salient connection exists "between familial achievement expectations and feelings of impostership" as measured on Clance's IP scale (p. 308). In every case, the origins of these internal struggles—what King and Cooley term "intellectual inauthenticity" (p. 304)—point to family structures as primary in determining how someone takes up aspirations and achievements. By affirming Clance and Imes's (1978) findings that the Imposter Phenomenon originates in feelings of inadequacy based on family interactions, King and Cooley (1995) present a study without the misogynistic overtones of psychoanalysis and with the supplement of quantifiable data beyond the self-assessment scale.

Here, I note some similarities between these previous studies: first, they relied on highly contextualized definitions (and self-definitions) of concepts like “achievement” and “success,” though King and Cooley (1995) worked across cases to quantify success using high-school GPAs; second, each study deployed the language of deficit and inadequacy, as participants were asked to rate responses to questions like the following: “I’m afraid people important to me may find out that I am not as capable as they think I am” (Clance, 1985); finally, each study was grounded in the field of psychology and thus relied on psychometrics as a method of interpretation. This final point made the Imposter Phenomenon an issue rooted in the individual, instead of a factor borne of systemic cultural expectations and performances.

More recent work in Impostership studies takes Topping and Kimmel’s (1985) and King, and Cooley’s (1995) focus on higher education as a site while working to consider how the cultural norms of those sites support IP. In a 2005 article, Zorn argues that the social stratification of academe supports and even creates anew—in previously unaffected scholars—the Imposter Phenomenon. She cites five factors that contribute to the pervasiveness of IP in graduate study and beyond: “Aggressive competitiveness; Disciplinary nationalism (highly specialized fields that don’t value interdisciplinary work); Scholarly isolation; Valuing product over process; and Lack of mentoring” (“Academic Culture Feeds,” 2005, NP). Zorn continues to cite a lack of productive mentorship opportunities for graduate students as a contributing factor to the lack of attrition she connection to IP. Graduate students, specifically in the humanities, fail to finish their advanced degrees because they feel like intellectual phonies.

The implications of such research are twofold: first, these studies seek to compartmentalize and make linear a process that is both reflexive and contradictory; second, Impostership studies work to emphasize and reify a culture of inadequacy related to under-represented demographics in professional fields.

Qualitative, first-person narratives of Impostership in academia began to complicate the previously straightforward phenomenon proposed by Clance and Imes (1978) and later research. The 1980s and 1990s produced a number of collected and single-authored autobiographies which dealt with the often antagonistic relationship between the values of middle-class academia and instructors from working-class backgrounds (Ryan and Sackrey, 1984; Rose, 1990; Zandy, 1990, 1995; Tokarczyk and Fay, 1993; Villanueva, 1993; Brodkey, 1994; Dews and Law, 1995; Shepard, McMillian, and Tate, 1998). Poised between their working-class pasts and secure middle-class futures, these academics would necessarily suffer from the Imposter Syndrome, a phenomenon marked by an overwhelming fear of being outed as a fraud.

These qualitative accounts of working-class academics push against Harvey's (1981) and Clance's (1985) reductive IP scales by offering gradations of experience that defy Likert scale metrics. Ryan and Sackrey's *Strangers in Paradise* (1984) introduced a narrative structure to the collapsed schematics to make more complex the iterations of contradiction and privilege experienced by working-class academics, while still relying on the phenomenon as an organizing principle. The 24 professors interviewed by Ryan and Sackrey (1985) offer experiences ranging from social anxiety to fear of evaluation by their colleagues, all posited in terms of the authors' three major themes: Dual Estrangement, Class Conflict, and the Imposter Phenomenon. The focus settled firmly on deficit, with

narratives focused on conflicts and identity trauma produced by living in “different worlds.”

Against this methodological tradition of acknowledged anxiety, the complex narratives found in *Working-Class Women in the Academy* (Tokarczyk and Fay, 1993) and *This Fine Place So Far from Home* (Dews and Law, 1995) present lived experiences that recast the storyline for working-class academics and research with and by this demographic. And with this move to make fully qualitative what Clance and her colleagues had quantified came tighter foci on the specific iterations and consequences of broad-brush “syndromes” like the Imposter Phenomenon. However, even with the acknowledgement of the more complex frameworks invoked by class and the academy—the tensions between home cultures and the culture of the academy—many of the articles in these collections cannot escape the bounds of the deficit model. But unlike Clance’s rating model (1985), application of the Imposter Syndrome in these collections recognizes its dynamism and sociopolitical import.

The Composition Classroom as a Site of Study

Tokarczyk and Fay’s focus in *Working-Class Women in the Academy* (1993) contends with literature departments because, they argue, “literature departments ... have been both particularly beset by class structures and particularly concerned with the issue of voice” (p. 6). The tone of the collection is one of struggle, of coming to the academy through the barriers of crystallized gendered and classed social structures. Most of the articles detail the anxiety of negotiation and fear at being “found out.” Donna Langston relates, “I usually feel safest teaching and doing research ... I often feel unsafe or have a sense of not

belonging in meetings, committees, and socials” (1993, p. 72). The ideas of oppression and marginality run deep through the collection.

Other narratives of Impostership surface through critiques of the class-boundedness of the first-year writing classroom and the social expectations held about those who teach college composition. These collections, such as *Composition and Resistance* (Hurlbert and Blitz, 1991), achieve two goals: 1) they particularize the study of Impostership to the first-year writing classroom; and 2) they implicate the teaching of writing as both an ethical imperative and an ideological “contact zone” (via Pratt, 1991). Zebroski and Mack (1991) take up the Imposter Phenomenon as they have witnessed it in the writing classroom, a space that, they assert, offers unique negotiation for students and instructor alike. The latter is expected to ratify appropriate language use for the former, sometimes against working-class home-language practices. All students, not only those from the working class, are asked “under a great deal of pressure[,] to pass—to talk and write like we do—to become, so the myth goes, one of us” (p. 160). This complex interplay of values cues, they write, a blanket deference by students to the power structures of the classroom and the implicit primacy of Standard American English and literary culture.

In analysis directly descended from Clance and Imes, Zebroski writes, “working-class students end up praising their teachers for their good grades while faulting themselves for their bad grades. In both situations, the students give the power of legitimization over to the institution” (p. 156). Important here is the application of the Imposter Phenomenon—a totalizing construct at best—to the writing classroom. This handing over of legitimization becomes a prevalent theme throughout work with and by

working-class academics, though the first-year classroom draws differences into relief as it serves a gatekeeping function into the rest of the academic community.

Further, Nancy Mack argues that, “even more so than instructors in other disciplines, composition teachers certify which students are acceptable to the academy. Our job is to sort out those students who do not meet the university’s standards from those who do. Somewhere along the line, equality and meritocracy get all mixed up” (p. 154). Mack and Zebroski’s dialogue on the role of class status in the first-year writing classroom begins to bring to the fore some of the major concerns of my project. What is it, specifically, that makes first-year composition so “middle class” (Bloom, p. 1996)? And how do instructors from the working class navigate its interpersonal exchanges?

Studies focusing on the first-year writing classroom as a site of resistance begin to address the unique context of teacher/student interplay in this venue. Books such as *Composition and Resistance* (Hurlbert and Blitz, 1991) and *Dangerous Writing* (Scott, 2009) descend directly from Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) in their goals to reframe literacy as emancipatory and the writing classroom as a site where working-class bodies could gain (as yet unpracticed) agency. This focus on critical pedagogies opens dialogue on class consideration. However, as Lindquist (2004) argues, “Paradoxically, in the professional literature on pedagogy within composition studies, class has been simultaneously everywhere and nowhere” (p. 189). Studies of the emotional and pedagogical implications of class—from both teacher and student standpoints—are implicated yet not fully called out. The critiques of composition-as-status-quo in *Composition and Resistance* (Hurlbert and Blitz, 1991), for example, offer ideas on affective dimensions submerged by layers of critical pedagogies and first-person accounts. The six

participants all teach first-year writing at a large university, and this complexity framed their pedagogies and personas as writing instructors. Every undergraduate student accepted to the university must complete a two-class first-year composition sequence, minus those students who carry in AP credit, dual enrollment credit, or score high enough on the ACT to qualify for honors English. Through their labor—as it is lived daily—these six participants contribute to a discipline that is as dynamic as it is contentious. As a discipline first promoted for the education of elite men at schools like Harvard, through the open-admissions movements and the “social turn,” the composition classroom has held variegated distinctions as an authority on taste (through the cultivation of reading literature and writing about it), as an operationalized promoter of class values (through stringent attendance standards of Standard American English; Bloom, 1996), and as a site of productive, discourse-community building “contact zones” (Pratt, 1991). Along with the small class sizes, this contentious history helps frame the labor experiences of the six participants to make the composition classroom a site poised to draw socioeconomic differences into relief.

The history of composition as a field comes relatively late. In 1987, it was still considered an “emerging field” (North) and a field variously charged with imparting skills, teaching critical thinking, or culling remedial students from the herd. North’s book helped reify composition’s status as a preparatory course, a course without content, and detailed the overwhelming belief in the academy that first-year composition did not constitute a serious English course. Further, the emphasis on teacher lore over more theoretically, research-based methodologies created an unsubstantiated set of axioms from which novice teachers could work. This anxious history—composition’s status as a purely skills-based

course, even as student-centered pedagogy became a primary methodology—weights this project and the participants’ operation within the discipline of English studies.

The teaching—and learning—of writing has long been held up as a privileged arena; from the early Greek *Progymnasmata* through Roger Ascham’s “best learned men” (1570), writing instruction held court among only those who were literate and could afford the time away from labor. This move to hold up the labor of the mind necessarily works against labor of the body, especially for students who both historically and corporeally identify with a working-class lifestyle.

I feel the composition classroom offers a unique lens through which we can view performances and definitions of class for four reasons: 1) their small class sizes, at this university capped at 23; 2) an emphasis on one-on-one interactions between teachers and students, contracted through mandatory individual conferences; and 3) the encouragement of critical thinking and group discussion; and 4) the emphasis on consideration of college writing as a “middle-class enterprise” (Bloom, 1996). By focusing research on the composition classroom, I work to answer my major research question: In what ways, if at all, are the pedagogies of working-class graduate student writing instructors affected by their class identifications?

Graduate Students in the Gap

These edited collections and first-person autobiographies do complicate the notion of the Imposter Phenomenon among academics, a move against Clance and Imes’s reduction, yet they grossly overlook the experiences of novices in the academy. Their narratives present, for the most part, the stories of already-vetted members of the academy, such as professors and lecturers. Only one chapter in *Working-Class Women in the*

Academy—Suzanne Sowinska’s “Yer Own Motha Wouldna Reckanized Ya: Surviving an Apprenticeship in the ‘Knowledge Factory’” (1993)—contends with experiences particular to graduate students. And these experiences *are* particular. Sowinska describes her acculturation into academia as a process rich with too many assumptions; her middle-class colleagues accept as standard what she must learn from scratch. Sowinska writes, of the female working-class graduate student: “generally her ascension through the ranks of academia is assumed to be an unproblematic acquisition of the written, verbal, and cultural skills needed to perform well in a university setting” (p. 149). This introduction to the academy from “the other side of the tracks” is rich with contradiction and struggle, and this transition, she argues, is both definitional and performative:

everyone knows a ‘woman of letters,’ which is what it seems, as a graduate student in the English Department, I am in training to become, is not someone who grew up in ‘the projects,’ a trailer court, a split level exactly like all the rest on the block, in subsidized housing, or otherwise on the ‘wrong side of the tracks.’ Rather, the image of the female scholar, whose ‘job’ it is to pass her cultural knowledge of literary texts from one generation of students to the next, is one of refinement: she exudes an elegance of manners and intellect particular to that class of well-educated women to which she belongs. (p. 148)

Graduate students, Sowinska thus posits, haven’t yet earned the credentials held by lecturers—many part-time lecturers already hold doctorates—and are thereby marked as novices, even if their financial situations and semester-by-semester job placement opportunities are more stable. This identity as outsider is compounded by identification with communities like those she described as working class.

Shortly after the publication of these autobiographies, Aisenberg and Harrington (1988) released their critical narrative ethnography, *Women of Academe: Imposters in the Sacred Grove*, the only major qualitative study to focus on working-class graduate students. The contribution made by Aisenberg and Harrington (1988) is no doubt valuable to the field of class studies in academia, as they take up a narrative method and display. However, their focus only crystallizes Clance and Imes's deficit model. Aisenberg and Harrington (1988) posit that female graduate students from working-class backgrounds fall into patterns of behaviors and relationships that mimic the "marriage plot," and thus work to create deep, lasting relationships with their older, male professors and mentors. This reliance on the Imposter Phenomenon and its gendered performance as integral to working-class academic narratives is sloppy at best and, as much of the previous literature focusing on Impostorship, even the title denotes deficit. A working-class background was one more thing to get over, move past. A successful professor would replace her working-class values, whatever influence that phrase carried, with the middle-class values and traditions of the academy.

Much of this previous research is bound by its own confounding factors. The focus on working-class graduate student women works to support the notion that *only* disenfranchised students may suffer feelings of displacement or anxiety when entering graduate school (or, broadly, any professional field). Graduate study, regardless of a student's socioeconomic background, can bring about feelings of disequilibrium and self-doubt as students work to gain entry into a field thick with specialized language and social patterns. Immersion in a new academic community, even if that community mirrors the values held at home and in past educational experiences, may seem strange, off-putting, or

even hostile. The work load, to be sure, is experienced as uncomfortable by students of diverse backgrounds.

Purpose of this study

As I approach this research project, I take Raymond Mazurek's prompt to heart: "The stories of class have failed us, children of the working class, both the Horatio Alger and Marxist stories. The stories of work and class must be reimagined and retold" (p. 250). While previous collections written by working-class academics enrich discussion on class status in the university and acknowledge the many problems facing working-class academics, they commit three major errors: 1) they foreground teaching narratives through anxiety, fear, and impostership felt by the academics, which constructs a body of experience that values deficit over celebration of background; 2) they focus primarily, as Tokarczyk and Fay note, on literature departments, leaving compositionists to wonder where their stories fit, especially as composition is construed as both "the lowliest course" housed in the English Department (Swearingen, 2006) and a "middle-class enterprise" (Bloom, 1996); and 3) they detail the lives of those academics who have already "made it," at least in terms of credentials. The struggles and celebrations of graduate students are all but invisible.

This study contributes to these conversations on the role of affective class experiences in teaching, specifically in the first-year writing classroom. Impostership studies, such as those by Clance and Imes (1978), Topping and Kimmel (1985), and King and Cooley (1995), worked to quantify experiences by professionals who feel a sense of "intellectual phoniness" brought on by family and social expectations. While Topping and Kimmel (1985) and King and Cooley (1995) focused on high education, they also sought

quantifiable data to support Clance and Imes's psychometric IP scale. Later research studies, such as Long, Jenkins, and Bracken's "Imposters in the *Sacred Grove*" (2002), addressed feelings of impostership among female graduate students, arguing that these women sought to replicate "pseudo-marriages" through relationships with older, male professors. Each study assumes a deficit model.

First-person narratives presented by Tokarczyk and Fay and Dews and Law worked to complicate these quantified stories and particularize them to the academy. However, their collections left out the narratives of novice graduate student instructors and, while offering multiple points of view on class and pedagogy, the first-person accounts elide differences between working-class experiences. Research on how class status affects the perceptions and pedagogical practices of graduate students who teach first-year writing is intended to provide new understandings the affective dimensions of class identification, the perceived goals of the first-year writing classroom, and the pedagogical approaches utilized to meet these goals. This study, in seeking to address these gaps, uses postcritical and narrative approaches to begin to describe the varied pedagogies of six graduate student writing instructors.

Rhetorical Structure

Since I utilize a narrative approach and display, I wish to make my participants' words the centerpiece of my study. To this end, I have divided the body chapters (Chapters 3 through 8) by participant, instead of grouping the experiences of the six participants into theme-based chapters. Further, I look to mixed-genre works as Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands/La Frontera* and Victor Villanueva's *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color* to disrupt assumptions about academic media and the display of data. In this

consideration, I utilize a more literary style throughout, taking advantage of the natural rhythms of language and allowing those rhythms to emerge in analysis (Prendergrast, Leggo, and Sameshima, 2009).

Specifically, I open each chapter with an ethnopoem (Gee, 1985; Glesne, 1997; Richardson, 1992a, 1992b, 1993, 1994, 1997; Walsh, 2006; Butler-Kisber, 2002). I distilled these poems from each participant's transcript after the initial draft of the study had been written. By writing the poems in reflection of the entire manuscript, I hoped to capture the tone of the individual narratives and particular rhythms of each interviewee's storytelling style. These poems underwent the same member-checking process as the rest of the document, and I found that participants showed especial interest in moving or repeating lines, deleting phrases, and reorganizing stanzas.

In "The Phenomenon of Poetry in Research," Prendergrast notes that incorporating poetics into a social-science based study can heighten the researcher's awareness of ethical concerns, prevalent themes, and bias. She writes, "[t]he process is reflexive in that the researcher is interconnected with the researched, that the researcher's own affective response to the process informs it" (p. xxiii). Because of these affective concerns—and because our topic of study centered so strongly on visceral experiences—I feel that these introductory ethnopoems stand themselves as snippets of analysis and contribute to the narrative arc of the study.

I explore each instructor's story as an individual chapter. Instead of thematically grouping narratives into three or four large, theme-based chapters, which I found elided regional and sociopolitical differences, I choose instead to make space for each story, each life narrative, at times shifting, at times contradictory. Instead of snapshots, these chapters

should be read dynamically, as readers work to loop the different and sometimes paradoxical threads of each participant's story while also connecting meaningful similarities between lives.

I worked for internal chapter consistency by dividing each narrative into four broad movements drawn from recurring themes: an overview of the participant and his or her context, Definitions of Class, Use and Embodiment, and Pedagogies. Within each movement, however, the variable trajectories of experience demanded flexibility, and these themes often fracture to account for the nuances of lived experience and description. These “taxonomic codes” (Saldana, 2009, p. 14) are explored both within the individual chapters and in cross-narrative detail in Chapter 9.

The theme of “Definitions of Class,” that is, the ways each participant worked up his or her conditions for membership, split into three discrete definitions: economic (hourly versus salaried work; annual income); ideological (beliefs and values as being particular to class); and experiential (labor types, lived experiences, including geographically bound features). As DeGenaro (2007) writes, “Like other identifications, working class is a rhetorical construction—a situated, shifting, socially and discursively constructed marker” (p. 387). The multiplicity of definitions of class—the very qualifications of membership—changes not only between participants but also within individual narratives.

A second theme, “Use and Embodiment,” emerged as participants related two versions of their ideas on “usefulness” and being “good for something”: Inside the Academy and Outside the Academy. Within this theme, three participants (Anne-Marie, Chapter 3; Daniel, Chapter 4; Rick, Chapter 5) identified a subtheme connecting use value with geography and ecological literacies. I have coded this recurrence as “Connection to the

Land.” Only Will (Chapter 8) did not relate experiences that resonated with the themes of use and usefulness, though he did connect landscape considerations with access to certain kinds of labor.

Within the third major theme, “Pedagogies,” three subthemes emerged: Pedagogies of Ethics, Pedagogies of Empathy, and Moves to Demystify Academia. Again, these experiences did not present consistently across narratives, but I worked to make their notation clear across stories. Five of six participants (Anne-Marie, Chapter 3; Rick, Chapter 5; Tabitha, Chapter 6; and Paul, Chapter 7) narrated pedagogies that implicated ethical and empathetic stances. This move to make “transparent” the workings of the first-year writing classroom—variously performed through grading rubrics and admission of the “arbitrariness” of protocol like assignment length and deadlines, as well as instructors’ acknowledgement of their own writing weaknesses—is detailed in Chapter 9 via Ethics of Care (Gilligan, 1984; Noddings, 1982) models which connect the participants’ labor and educational histories with their first-year composition pedagogies that honor and support students’ personal and academic growth by making less mysterious to students the processes of the course. These occurrences have been coded as “demystification” and “transparency,” with a mind toward instructors’ moves to make the institutionalized expectations of first-year composition accessible—and in some cases, revisable—to students.

I work to make these cross-narrative connections more clear in Chapter 9, “Patterns and Meanings.” Though each participant self-selected for this study and each self-identifies as working class, each stakes this claim in very different ways. I begin by detailing divergences between cases within four areas: Regional identification, labor types and

history, family orientation, and political ideologies. The six stories presented in this study span thousands of miles and decades, even centuries, from rural agrarianism to urban industrialism and various points in-between.

Chapter 9 then moves to explore similarities among the six narratives. I tracked four broad movements across the six narratives: Embodiment and Labor, Being “of Use,” Resistance to Academia, and Pedagogies, which I fragmented into three subthemes: Community Models, Attention to Process and Pedagogies of Ethics and Empathy. In their words, they describe histories of labor and the import of these histories into the first-year writing classroom in 2010.

Chapter 10, “Implications for Practice, Research, and Philosophy,” details possible directions for teacher training and composition pedagogies, research for and by working-class academics, and applications to identity philosophies surrounding affective models of teaching and impostership studies. I also detail directions for future research, including addressing the confounding factors of rurality and class status and the dearth of minority voices in composition studies.

“Definitions of Labor” provides readers with six discrete experiences, yet these narratives can be taken together as a survey on the implications of class status in teaching first-year writing. For novice instructors of college writing, these narratives offer templates for ethical praxis and innovative pedagogies and, perhaps for working-class teachers, a place to stand. For writing program administrators, “Definitions of Labor” provides an example of the invisible diversity of teachers-in-training and the richness of graduate student life pre-academia. For departmental gatekeepers, this data presents an example of the resourcefulness and commitment of graduate students from non-educational

backgrounds. I recall Mazurek's (1995) prompt: "The stories of class have failed us, children of the working class, both the Horatio Alger and Marxist stories. The stories of work and class must be reimagined and retold" (p. 250). By making available these individual stories of pedagogical innovation and class connection, I hope to complicate extant narratives on the affective dimensions of teaching writing working class and provide a counterpoint to the autobiographies and studies which focus on deficit-heavy analysis of already-vetted members of the academy.

Chapter 3: Anne-Marie

There's an assumption that if you're smarter,
you're somehow better.
Smart doesn't help anything.
Smart is not a virtue.
God gives you smart. You just happen to have it.
Smart doesn't mean you're good, smart doesn't mean you work hard,
smart doesn't mean you're going to cure cancer.
Smart is not a virtue.
There are so many things that I think are so much more important to being human,
like mercy.
A phrase that I'm pretty familiar with is "Oil Field Trash."
I would say that I spent my childhood
on the knife's edge. I fell up.
My siblings fell down.
And they're clawing, slowly clawing, their way back up.
I was explaining this to Dr. Blakely, and he said,
 Okay, Anne-Marie,
 just forgive me,
 but your family sounds like white trash.
I feel like I'm walking down the middle of a split-rail fence.
I don't come home covered in tar when I get done with work.
I don't empty bedpans. And I never will, because I am in this,
this privileged elitist sphere where I am paid to think for a living, and write,
and that has nothing to do with my family's existence at all.
Academia pushed me, so I pushed back.

Anne-Marie came to the Southeast from Wyoming, and this Western aesthetic structures much of her lifestyle. She's most comfortable, she told me, in wide-open places where she feels she can roam without boundaries. The decision to enter graduate study is, as we talked about, a mismatch with this almost instinctive urge. Anne-Marie is in her fourth year of doctoral study, focusing on studying for field exams while also devoting hours a week to different social justice causes. She also tutors in the campus writing center, a job she says she enjoys because she gets to focus on one piece of writing and one student per session. In the semester we interviewed, this appointment in the writing center had given her a course release, so she wasn't teaching first-year writing. She was, however,

surrounded by the texts produced in many composition classes and able to meet one-on-one with many first-year writing students.

Anne-Marie insisted on emphasizing the line “Smart is not a virtue” in her poem because, she argued, the sense in graduate school is one of entitlement by intelligence, with little regard to work ethic. Anne-Marie has been a part of this project since 2008, when she volunteered for the pilot study. In our first interview for the new study, I asked if she still identifies as working class, even as her daily life puts her in contact with international scholars who study the cultural importance of 14th century fish ponds, a far cry from her family’s life in Wyoming. “My father’s retired,” she tells me, “and my mother’s the sole income provider in the family now. ... She’s making less than me.” Anne-Marie and I hold the same graduate teaching assistantship, so I know that the monthly wage hovers around \$1,100, post-tax.

Definitions of Class

Anne-Marie explains that, in Wyoming, most families struggle to get by, so a working-class student wouldn’t necessarily stand out. Locally, there was no heavy stigma attached to her family’s careers—her father was a roustabout in nearby oilfields and her mother worked as an elementary school teacher. However, in her move to a large university in Wyoming, her class status became a defining factor. Her background identification thus crystallized in this larger, more diverse population: “A lot of it I think was actually a reaction to getting into the academic sphere. I never had to identify as working class or white collar or blue collar or anything like that when I was in high school.” This identity has changed with Anne-Marie’s life choices, and our interviews presented four areas of definition of class for her: economic, experiential, ideological, and dialectical. I will

explore each area in turn, with particular attention to the last area, as this dialectical definition of class status is one which ran through all six interviews.

Economically Bound: “In Wyoming, No One Makes a Ton of Money”

Though Anne-Marie is quick to say that blue-collar labor and white-collar labor can’t be defined economically—that the “Tekkers and Greasemonkeys” who graduate from the vocational/technical program in diesel engine repair in her hometown make upwards of \$70,000 a year—she does identify one important factor in determining blue-collar work: wage labor. Hourly labor, she asserts, cues blue-collar work while salaried individuals are more often construed as white collar. While these definitions float between the terms working class—more of an identity category—and blue collar—more of a demographic category—her economic definition settles on a few points: class can be defined through modes of wage earning and divisions between skilled and unskilled labor, though the “Greasemonkeys,” with their years of training and high relative salaries, seem to contradict this model.

In Wyoming, she tells me, the poverty level is low, even though “no one makes a ton of money.” She cites low cost of living and self-sufficiency—the value of doing for oneself, instead of paying for services like car maintenance—as the reasons why so many families can subsist and even thrive on lower-than-national-average incomes. It’s the Wyoming ranchers who define aristocracy there, in this Western culture that values land and the creatures who live on it. “The ranchers define our existence,” she relates, detailing a family who owned several thousand acres and many head of cattle. The remainder of the population seems to conform to a class system where those in the middle or towards the top don’t differ much from those at the bottom:

I mean, you might make fun of the kid that lives in the trailer park, which also drives me nuts, but the trailer park is right next to your house, and in reality, your house isn't too much better than the trailer park. And you all go to the exact same school and you all have to shop at the same place. So when it comes down to it, those social differences are there, but you don't really notice them as much, which in itself can be a bit of a problem, because sometimes you think that the social problems aren't there.

But the example of the "Grease-monkeys" confounds this definition. In Wyoming life, with affordable food and housing, a technician making \$70,000, while still drawing considerably less than a rancher, would be able to comfortably support his or her family. Instead, it is their experience—the kind of work they do—that defines them as working class, much like Anne-Marie's father.

Experientially Bound: "Motiveless Wandering" and the Oil Field

Anne-Marie states, "My social status is mostly defined by my father, who was a pumper for Texaco." His job was dangerous, she tells me, and he routinely worked with dynamite and spent hard hours in the field servicing equipment. This labor now defines Anne-Marie's class status, even as she works toward a doctorate. Pumpers, she tells me, "are the guys that run around and fix the pumps, maintain the rigs, do the light equipment and heavy equipment welding that are needed for different things, they ... take care of the pipelines, kind of like being a mechanic, a plumber, a welder." He worked with his hands, and even if he had made a wage closer to the Ranchers, because of the nature of the work—the dirtiness of it and physical demands and danger—she considers Oil Pumping a solidly blue-collar job. The slur "Oil Field Trash" charged one narrative, the story of a casually

thrown comment by an undergraduate professor who worked to “pigeonhole,” in her terms, Anne-Marie into an identity that was defined by manual labor and which cued financial need.

This experiential definition of class, however, is not entirely negative. In fact, the relation of the awkward and hurtful conversation with this undergraduate professor comprised a small part of one interview. Overwhelmingly, Anne-Marie cites positive experiences—hunting game close to home, working with her father on oil-field machinery, and “motiveless wandering” among the hills and prairies—as most thoroughly defining her working-class status. In comparing herself to what she perceives to be the experiences of her graduate student colleagues, she tells me: “I spent my childhood not learning how to play the violin. I spent my childhood up to my elbows in antelope guts every fall when we went hunting.” Here, she pinpoints an activity she feels is solidly upper-class, playing the violin, and pits it against her own experience hunting with her family to determine that her experience is different from, but not inadequate to, her classmates. Further, one richly detailed memory of working with her father helped establish a firm sense of her connection to manual labor and her valuation of her father’s working-man identity. I’ll quote it at length because I feel it gives a deeply felt sense of Anne-Marie’s self-identification:

The pumps have these spring-loaded timers on them that they use to monitor the output of the wells, these giant clocks about this big, and real expensive, they’re a few thousand dollars apiece, and it’s just like an old fashioned windup watch, except they’re enormous and they’re full of thousands of gears. And when they get dusty out in the oilfields, they gum up and quit. Well, they had a whole box of them, I remember one night, they were just going to throw out. ‘Cause while they’re

gummed we can't fix them. My dad brought them home, and I can remember him pulling apart the back and having all the gears laid out on the towel and this thing, and he was using a q-tip and alcohol, just to clean the inside of the gears one by one by one, and then he sat me down, and he showed me how to do it. And so it was like being a watch maker, with all the different parts out. And he explained to me how it worked, and what this particular piece of machinery does, and particularly how much it cost. And what it was made of. And put it back together, and sure enough, it worked.

This type of father/daughter experience certainly isn't contained to those students who profess a working-class background. However, Anne-Marie's experience with her father's career is mired with conflicting experiences: anger at comments like the one from her professor, pride at the surgeon-like skill it takes to rebuild complicated machinery. This memory, related with enthusiasm and affection, taken in toto with her other experiences growing up as a Roustabout's daughter and her detailing of the dangers of his work, helps draw it as one based in her self-identification and selection as working class.

An interesting note about Anne-Marie's definition of class: access to services like healthcare or education surfaced only briefly as reifying characteristics. While economic definitions and life experiences certainly heavily influence her identification as working class—and, because of quantifiable demographics like wage (hourly versus salary) and career types (in her estimation, and as Rose, 1984, argues skilled versus unskilled), the qualitative aspects of her identification also supported her self-definition. Here, Anne-Marie drew on what she considered specifically working-class ideologies, such as self-sufficiency and involvement in the “wider world” as foundational to her definition.

Ideologically Bound: “The Ivory Fish Tank”

Like economic and experiential definitions, ideological definitions cannot be fully separated from dialectical definitions. In some cases, the participants defined themselves against what they perceived they were not. The instance of Anne-Marie’s repetition of “wider world” helps make this ideological and dialectical relationship clear. Academics live in what Anne-Marie called “the ivory fish tank,” a rarified space where they ponder theoretical foundations, study intricate ideas, and hold palavers about important documents. The great failure, she notes, is action:

That sense of analyzing the rest of the world in order to kind of pin it down like a beetle on a card. That’s the way I feel like a lot of academics actually interact with the wider world. It’s [that] they don’t want to understand it to do anything useful with it. They want to dissect it, and dissection is what you do with a cadaver. You pull it apart so you know how it works so it doesn’t scare you anymore, so you don’t have to interact with it anymore. You understand the way it works, so that kind of absolves you of responsibility for actually participating in it. That’s what it feels like sometimes.

She’s optimistic, however, as she experiences academics who radicalize their scholarship to “be useful.” This schism between theory and practice defined all six participants’ views on their place in academia and emerged as an area of hope for Anne-Marie: “I get a lot of hope, though, when I look at some academics when the whole point of them being here is to interact with that wider world as an academic. Those that are politically active in things that are important to them. Those that work with the larger community.” Interaction with the “wider world,” participation in “larger communities,” and

an obligation to service can all exist in academia, she argues, but they're not the norm. In fact, her illustration of the "ivory fishbowl," an image that both constrains the action of her definition of academic and also politicizes it, redraws the university as a stifling space. Here, Anne-Marie plays on the accepted "Ivory Tower" metaphor for the academic sphere to construct an image that puts her at the center of speculation, as captive, as contained within invisible-but-impenetrable walls.

Taken alone, this identification of the academic world as narrow and of some academics as out of touch cannot cue working-class status. However, since Anne-Marie so closely defines action and usefulness—a sort of pragmatics of academics—as valuable assets growing up working-class, and then cites a dearth of these values in academia, I reason that action and usefulness are both ideological values that work to define her own working-class status.

This ideological definition sometimes bordered on elitism for Anne-Marie, and she recognized the conundrum of considering her upbringing as somehow better than her colleagues' assumed middle-class experiences. She relates an instance where she admitted to considering a student who lived in a trailer park as "real people." "That kid knows what life is like," she told me. This elevation of working-class and blue-collar experience as more grounded in the visceral demands of life struck Anne-Marie as contradictory to her own philosophy that "a human is a human is a human": "There is nothing morally superior to my family's background that makes them better than someone else. Working class isn't any better than being white collar. It's just different." While, on the one hand, she asserts that spending time hunting with her father gave her a different paradigm from which to work, she sometimes valorizes her Wyoming, oil field background for instilling in her a sense of

utility and pragmatism and sometimes draws the conclusion that both sets of experiences—defined as “working-class” and “everyone else”—add to the dynamics of academia. These feelings are both contradictory and sound, as they define an identity that is neither stable nor linear.

Connection to Land: Space to Roam

An important constituent of Anne-Marie’s identity—and interestingly, the identities of five of the six participants—is a recognized connection to landscapes and geography. Four of six wish to return to their home states, or close to them, when they finish the doctorate. The theme of Wyoming landscapes, Western culture, and the joy of “motiveless wandering” outside permeated Anne-Marie’s interviews and cannot—should not—be extricated from her identification as working class. While this discussion may conflate rural values with class values, Anne-Marie connected the two areas of identification, as her father’s career depended on the land and what it could produce in the form of oil. Further, one of her academic interests is paleontology, an area that melds the landscape she loves with the identity she’s working to negotiate. In fact, the professor whom she identifies as her role model acts as such because of his connection to place:

The head of our honor's program in Laramie, was from, he wasn't from the same town I was from, but his aunt lived in Black Branch, and he spent summers there. He'd go run around in the same hills I'd ran around in college as a Paleotechnician, digging up dinosaur bones.... and he was sweet and cultured and funny and understood an urbane wit... He and [his wife] were like my favorite role models, because on the one hand, he totally identified himself as a Wyoming person, as somebody who came from this background, was not ashamed of it, was very proud

of his upbringing, and yet at the same time, had synthesized an academic lifestyle as an English professor, as, These things are important, not just to the academy, but to all of us, you know, like, I'm a Wyoming person too.

In this narrative, the professor who serves as Anne-Marie's guide to the possibilities of an academic persona also strongly identifies with the same landscape to which she's so connected. I asked her about his class background, if his family had labored in the same ways hers had, but she didn't know. And interestingly, in this relationship, one that was so formative to Anne-Marie's template of identity, class didn't matter. It was more important that he was "a Wyoming person" and could be "at peace with that synthesis" of landscape and the realm of academia.

As Anne-Marie's economic definition of class suggests, land is important in her self-definition. After all, it was the Ranchers who helped define her status growing up. They owned large swaths of land, but cultivated it with livestock, and allowed it to perform its ecological function. She seems to identify urban living with the detached, ivory fishbowl attitudes of some academics, saying that, "I thought everybody identified with their land, and it never occurred to me that some people don't have land. You know, not like land that you own, but land that you walk." It wasn't until meeting people who had moved residences many times—as is common in an academic lifestyle, where early jobs can last be as brief as a semester, sometimes extending to a year, or in the case of tenure-track appointments, three to six years—and identified with more urban lifestyles that Anne-Marie started to define herself strongly as a "Wyoming person." This identification with rurality may not be class based, as I have strongly stated; however, It was pervasive enough in our conversations that I felt it important to include. I asked Anne-Marie to work to delineate

her class and regional identities: How much of Wyoming creeps into her self-identity? How much of growing up the daughter of a pumper? Where does one end and the next begin? The process, I found, was more recursive and complex than that. She asserted: "It's funny how much my class identification and my region are tied, because in a lot of ways, the class values that I have are very common within the region, and so if you try to take a scalpel and divide the two, it's just not going to work." Thus class and region intertwine; to excise one from the other is not only futile but it poses a dangerous assumption of stability and corollary relationships between places, ideas, and actions.

Anne-Marie tells me that, if she weren't in academics, working on Medieval and Latin texts, she'd want to work in forestry, possibly for the Bureau of Land Management, a career that ties her visceral connection to place with job satisfaction. "I spent a lot of time on wild, motiveless wandering as a kid, and, in a lot of ways, the land that I grew up with really does end up being a part of my character. And when I'm away from that land, it's rough." Here, Anne-Marie contrasts "motiveless wandering" with her current academic schedule, one she defines as a "hurricane" that controls most aspects of her daily life. Her duties as a student taking comprehensive exams, as a tutor in the campus writing center, as a teacher preparing classes for the next semester, and as a scholar working on larger projects infiltrate all areas of her life. Every move must have a motive, a directed goal. This constant push of to-do stands in stark relief to her memory of "motiveless wandering" in the hills and prairies of Wyoming.

Use and Embodiment

Utility and Academics: An Import of Skills

Discussing future employment is one area of inquiry that consistently caused Anne-Marie, and a few of the other participants, to relate narratives of anxiety. As she reflected on her choice to enter a doctoral program in Medieval studies, she often mused about the application of her study to the “wider world.” Her sister works in the health care field as a nurse, and her brother has recently reentered college to study geology, a discipline with careers amenable to fieldwork. With her background in dinosaur-bone digging—a job she worked as an undergraduate and before graduate school—and with her family’s emphasis on hands-on work—her father’s labor in the oil fields and her mother’s teaching—the schism between mindwork and handwork causes her to question the applicability and usefulness of her career choice. This emphasis on the pragmatics of work arose through all six participants’ interviews, though in very different ways. In Anne-Marie’s case, her work in academics sometimes causes her to pause and ask, “What do we do for a trade? What skills do I have to import? And that sometimes gets troublesome, because there are days when I want to throw this career under the bus, just let it go and do something else. But what am I good for?”

What am I good for? Out of context, this question could cue issues of esteem; however, Anne-Marie did not present narratives of confidence crises. She didn’t question her ability to secure an academic job in an ever-tightening market. In fact, her detailing of her course load and training, and how it has prepared her best for Research 1 University work and not teaching, signals that she feels prepared to be competitive for lucrative positions in larger, well-funded universities.

Instead, Anne-Marie's question: "But what am I good for?" centers on her definition of work, what constitutes labor, and how that labor gets imported into the "wider world." She identifies this feeling as distinctly dialogic, an interaction between her experiences with work and the experiences of some of her colleagues, who she feels have lived experiences which implicate white-collar or middle-class values:

Because when I interact with a lot of the other students here, those that don't come from say specifically laboring class or working class backgrounds, they don't question whether or not what they do here has value. Whether it's hard work or labor. If they call it a career. If it's a trade. Because what they do is hard for a living, darn it, and if it's difficult, that must make it labor. That's not the way that I was raised. I was raised that your labor should be useful. And use has a different definition for me...

Her colleagues' confidence in the usefulness of their work causes Anne-Marie to reflect on her own status within the academic sphere and the impact of her studies. Here, by cueing her family values—"that's not the way I was raised"—she indicates a long-held and deeply felt system of ethics related to labor and its outcomes. "Labor should be useful," she tells me. Her sister ministers to sick patients and was recently fired from a job at a retirement home for standing up for her patients who couldn't speak. Her brother has worked a myriad of jobs, including roadside maintenance. Her dad rebuilt intricate pieces of machinery. Her mother worked with special needs children. Anne-Marie's work in literature yields less tangible products for a more narrow audience: "Who's really going to care about the legend of St. Christopher in the Beowulf manuscript? There are days I feel like that. And I feel like maybe I should be doing something more useful."

But there are areas where Anne-Marie feels useful in academia. Her interaction with students, both in her own classroom and as a tutor in the campus writing center, makes up Anne-Marie's definition of useful labor. These jobs directly impact the lives of others and require Anne-Marie to spend many hours laboring over deliverable products on which her audience relies: "I provide something that's important to students. They're here to get an education, to take it out into the wider world, or to find out what it is they want to do, or fall in love with this community and find out they want to be an academic, and being able to write, to communicate with their professors, to be able to follow those mores of the academic work and figure out how to operate within it, that's useful for them." Here, she has connected students' and her university's expectations of her performance with what she is able to provide. The repetition of "wider world" again stands to configure the academic sphere as so totally removed from "reality" as to constitute a system that requires acculturation, its own language, and training for novices.

Dialect and Linguistic Resistance

However, a dialectical relationship defined through linguistic practice, through the very speech Anne-Marie uses when she feels her working-class background is being interrogated or devalued, came to the surface as we talked. "I can cuss a blue streak like a cowboy. If I'm not careful, I slip into some pretty atrocious bad English," she related, though this confession was weighted not with shame or anxiety, but with pride. When talking to her mother on the phone, she admits to "slipping into [her] Montana accent," a change so drastic that people around her know who's on the other end of the line. Further, a few incidents in graduate classes have caused Anne-Marie to reflect on her intentional use of her non-standard dialect. Moving to college forced Anne-Marie's identity-via-class

negotiations into play, but graduate school caused her to reflect on the ways her class background could be rhetorically utilized, both as a teacher and a scholar of Medieval literature and Latin.

One memory brought up particularly anxious feelings through the interview. A professor had used class time to “bash Republicans,” in her words, and as she identifies with some Conservative values (though this identity, she’s quick to note, like most others, is in flux) and as her family members also consider themselves to hold these Conservative ideals, Anne-Marie felt uncomfortable. Even though neither the students nor the professor knew about Anne-Marie’s political affiliation or private beliefs on important issues (war, abortion, financial responsibility), she felt silenced and reacted linguistically: “Throughout class, I never once addressed specifically what he said, but I sounded like a hick Canuck the entire time. I don’t know why, but it feels like sometimes that this identity is something I use to push back against things that bother me.” In citing “this identity,” Anne-Marie clarifies that she means her working-class, blue-collar, rural background. She continued, “I switched into my Montana accent, and my bad grammar and the whole nine yards, and I never once addressed his comment, but I was making it very clear that I did not belong to this group.” And this push back causes her to feel separated from both her peers and professors, even as she works to define herself within the academic sphere.

The use of her non-standard dialect in the classroom is thus “[a] disassociation. I’m not of you, which is a load of crap, because I am, I’m an academic. I’m becoming an intellectual whether I want to call myself one or not.” The identity politics here are messy and tough to navigate, however a few points surface as important: Anne-Marie’s move cued assumptions of non-standard speakers, inviting class judgments from her colleagues,

yet Anne-Marie, who is recognized as one of the most productive graduate students in the department, upset their expectations of her performance of “academic.” Her linguistic counterargument (performing rural Wyoming, showing anger) was intended to meet their argument of accepted behavior in the graduate classroom (in this case, the assumption that no one in the room would be offended by Republican bashing).

This linguistic resistance works to define Anne-Marie’s class status dialectically: she intends to cue her status in the classroom by defining what she is not, which, in this case, is a graduate student who always speaks Standard English, always agrees with the professor, and feels comfortable denigrating other demographics in an educational setting. What is interesting to note about Anne-Marie’s dialectical performance of class is that her iteration is the only one of the six to relate a performance as a student in a classroom; the other participants cited class performances as most relevant in their teaching classrooms. This difference is attributed, I believe, to Anne-Marie’s focus on tutoring in the campus writing center, a scheduling choice that sometimes takes her out of the classroom in favor of one-on-one interactions with students.

Pedagogies

Methods of Empowerment

Teaching is “where [Anne-Marie] feels useful,” and this pragmatic approach to academics trickles down to her pedagogies in many forms, from the way she structures her classroom to her grading techniques to her approach to one-on-one interactions with students. Though she works to acclimate students to the demands of college writing—and in a number of ways, to the broad demands of college, from time management to work flow to collaborating ethically—she recognizes that the service she’s being paid to sell isn’t

always met with willing buyers. She tells me, “writing seems to be such an elitist activity for a lot of students. They’re like, Oh, I’m not a writer, I can’t write.” By tying the act of writing to elitism and making it a prohibitive activity, Anne-Marie signals her own biases against middle-classism and the bounds of academic activity. She works in her classroom to make these biases first visible to students and second, irrelevant. She teaches writing as

a skill, just like any other skill, and it can be developed. For a lot of them, figuring out how to explain themselves to other people and put it down on paper and have confidence in that is very empowering, and just encouraging students who have a hostile attitude towards academia. Telling them, that’s okay, and secondly, this institution exists for you. You can get value out of this. And we’re not trying to change you.

Much has been written on the perceived devaluation of the first-year composition course as a blanket “skills” course, as a class without content, a simple toolbox course with no value in itself, beyond its application to other classes. But here, Anne-Marie does not insist that first-year composition is a skills class. Instead, she’s arguing to her students that writing is less about talent, more about work ethic, that a student who enters her class—regardless of that students’ socioeconomic background—can gain proficiency and confidence in writing. However, she does assert that learning different modes of writing is not the same as “learning to ride a bike or drive a car or use Excel,” since these processes can follow a more linear approach. Instead, she asserts that a blanket skills-based pedagogy, one that addresses a classroom instead of discrete learners, is out of place in the first-year writing classroom.

To clarify her teaching philosophy, Anne-Marie adds, “I find my students are highly individual in the way they approach writing, and because of that I feel like it would be best if I could teach writing as a highly individualistic enterprise.” This attention to individualism and its application to the writing classroom may seem obvious—of course instructors who are keyed in to their students’ specific needs are better able to address those needs—but it is a point that often becomes elided or assumed to be addressed through the two mandatory individual conferences this university requires of all first-year composition students.

Empathetic Pedagogies

Anne-Marie called working-class students by name in this individualized approach to teaching, saying, “I guess you’d call them at-risk or vulnerable. It’s hard to know how to adapt my classroom, how much leeway to give them unless I know what’s going on at home, unless they keep me informed: ‘Hey, I work full time.’” She told me, with an overtone of regret, that she lost more students to work schedules every semester. Their work schedules, coupled with family obligations and their other classes, often meant that first-year composition—a class which assigns an NC to failing students, a grade that does not impact a student’s GPA—became the course that working students would give up on, while they funneled their sparse energy into classes without the NC option. This stance of adaptation and accommodation undergirds Anne-Marie’s empathic pedagogy.

As such, the act of teaching writing is an activist move for Anne-Marie, and she frames her teaching philosophy in empowerment. Her class background informs this activism, as she draws from personal experiences with disenfranchisement. Anne-Marie’s awkward positioning as a student—made to feel unprepared and different from her

peers—has helped her better identify with the students in her writing classroom, especially those students who she felt had little confidence in their writing skills.

In terms of her grading structures, for example, Anne-Marie's sensitivity to perceptions of class greatly impacted the inherent power dynamics implicated in the learning environment: "What I tell my students is that it's not about getting it textbook right or wrong, because I actually hate those terms anyway, but it's about how well or how clearly you express yourself." As we explored this idea of prescriptive versus descriptive grading, Anne-Marie connects her background—and feelings of powerlessness and anxiety as a student herself—to her teaching philosophy. She continued, illustrating her point with the story of a student who had consistently used in his writing a non-standard, "ungrammatical" language marker:

So if they make the mistake nine times, I treat that as one mistake, or if they ... basically if they write with an accent, I refuse, I absolutely refuse to grade down for that. Which may get me in trouble later. [laughs] So I guess it's just because of the power relationship between me and my students. I've been in that situation where what I what I'm interested in and what I have to say are not necessarily valued if they step outside of the mainstream of academia, and so that's one place where I feel very conscious of that when I approach my own students.

This statement assumes that a student from a working-class background might deploy a non-standard dialect and is, of course, reductive. However, Anne-Marie's background includes teaching at a coastal Carolina institution which served a number of speakers of Gullah (also called Sea Island Creole), an English-based language which draws heavily from African and Caribbean sources and, according to linguists, is so isolated that it will likely

disappear. Her experienced deploying her own non-standard dialect and holding views often counter to the values of the departments in which she's worked—such as some of her politically conservative beliefs—has made her more aware of and careful with her students' language(s) and world views. This philosophy trickles down to the very marks she makes on student papers. Instead of crowding the margins with corrections, she prefers a long narrative comments, which she feels “stand in” for the loss of individualized teaching some of her students may perceive: “I feel like I have to write these volumes and volumes of detailed comments my students never read and, to try and give them that and most of them don't read them.” Though she's realistic about the student uptake of her narrative comments, her motivation to create a dialogue in the margins, rather than to exact punitive measures through prescriptivist/current-traditional methods, indicates her investment in a student-centered, humanist pedagogy. This pedagogy is traced, via her narratives about her own unsatisfying undergraduate experience, to her marginalization as a working-class, “white trash” student.

Demystification and Transparency: Academic as an Approach

All of these rhetorical moves work together to demystify the academic sphere. Anne-Marie cited a number of instances where she has worked to redefine the term “academic” in her first-year composition classroom, a term that most academics and students alike take as fairly stable. She identifies this push against the sense of the academic sphere as prohibitive as directly and purposefully connected to her class identification: “I am very sensitive to my students who are working full time, who are working full time in jobs that a lot of times they feel ashamed of, and because of that, I feel very adamant about fostering personal relationships with them. And to show them first of

all that academic does not have to mean class oriented.” Because Anne-Marie has experienced shame at her family’s employment, she feels empathy towards students in similar situations, and this empathy incite a desire to “foster personal relationships” with each student to best meet their needs. She works to provide a sense of safety and comfort denied to her in her own experience as a student from a working-class background.

By making her rhetorical maneuvers transparent and by insisting on accessibility of both content and skill for all students in her classroom, Anne-Marie works to redefine the idea of college educated as a marker of class. She continued, “I constantly tell my students that ‘academic’ is not a class, it’s an approach. It’s not a social identification. It’s a way of thinking about the world.” In this “way of thinking about the world,” she cited critical thinking, progressive debate, and ethical source gathering. Further, this recognition of the “mainstream” values of academia sets Anne-Marie up to produce a curricular counterargument, her independent, resistant pedagogy that includes popular culture references, such as an exploration of the cultural implications of the *Twilight* vampire series by Stephanie Meyer and outside-the-box assignments like the transcription and analysis of Civil War letters. She summed up her teaching philosophy with a simple yet powerful student-centered statement: “Can I do my rhetorical teaching goals with the kinds of materials that they want to cover? Usually the answer is yes.”

But she does hold reservations about her approach, reservations that suggested anxiety about insisting to her students that any person, from any background and with any range of skills, could be successful in college. Though she insists that “academic is not a class,” she follows up this statement by saying,

[that] is only half true, because let's face it, in academia, a lot of times, it's a social class, but that's not how I want them to approach it. I try to make them realize that academia is everybody coming together from every group, and kind of putting those voices together, not, necessarily trying to absorb the academic perspective and just regurgitate it back, that you're supposed to actually contribute and change the course of discourse. And the big thing for me also is to realize people and ethical obligations that one has to them, to writing...

This paragraph implicates a number of rhetorical moves. First, Anne-Marie wishes to absolve her students, specifically those who may feel "shame" of their class statuses or family's background, of anxiety, though this posturing towards equality within the academic sphere may be a fiction. But what comes across most strongly, and the aspect of her teaching philosophy that structures most of her assignments and interactions with students, is this recognition of the ethics of writing, which Anne-Marie argues have been shuttled aside in favor of accepted tropes like the rhetorical triangle, the close reading of high literature, or the empty-exigency research paper.

One aspect Anne-Marie works to make accessible to her students in the bounds of academic research. She says she struggles against their beliefs that, to be "academic," a paper must contend with elements of high culture. She laments that her first-year students are often a tough audience when it comes to bringing in non-traditional texts, like graphic novels or articles about taste testing dog food: "There's a set expectation of a certain basically a certain class level, the sorts of things that you're supposed to be interested in..." She argues that her students often expect her to teach "fine literature, high literature, things that meet a certain class expectation or aesthetic" and are surprised at the openness

of topics for inquiry. She tells them “that academics are interested in everything” and leaves room for student interest and investment.

A Pedagogy of Ethics: Upsetting Student Expectations

This struggle against student expectations of the first-year classroom is, for Anne-Marie, rooted in class: “it’s like they all come in with the sense of what an academic looks like and what they’re supposed to parrot when they get in here. I don’t know if you call that Inventing the University in kind of a weird way or what, but we give off the image that it has to do with middle-class to working-class background, we’re not interested, if it’s not urbane, we’re not interested.” Here, “we” implicates the university structure at large, and some instructors of first-year classes who, she argues, makes it very hard to reach, for example, working-class students who already feel that their lived experience does not provide adequate ground for academic inquiry. Her response to this creation of university values is to engage in what I coded as “pedagogies of ethics.” These teaching methods were, as enriched by her narratives, based in feelings of moral obligation and goodwill toward her students. She described a teaching philosophy bound in her own experiences as a working-class college student, one who felt left out and derided by professors and peers. Her pedagogies are thus bound in her belief of the instrumental value of higher education, and her methods reflect these ideologies.

One specific assignment best illustrates Anne-Marie’s pedagogy of ethics. She works to teach writing and its products, not as an author/text relationship, but as a “human relationship, that there is an actual honest-to-goodness human being who is interested in what you have to say on the other side.” She argues that the rhetorical triangle, as it is accepted in first-year composition, with a speaker comprising one side, audience and text

the other two, tends to favor the author's interaction with her product over her care and concern for her audience:

Normally, we teach that nice little rhetorical triangle that has, you know, you, your reader, and your text. Or we usually call it the audience, because we don't like to think of people actually doing things. They're just kind of out there. And you know, we try to kind of reinforce that, but that's where we end up focusing a lot of times in composition, we end up focusing on the text. It's not so much you connecting to your reader, it's you producing a text.

This intimate author/text relationship tends to leave out deep consideration of audience need, she argues, and so she works to counter this tendency for students to write as if they are in a vacuum by focusing on collaborative learning groups among peers who hold contending beliefs. By working together on a controversial topic—she cited gay marriage as one—students have “to actually talk to each other, and realize that they're, you're all writers in the same room doing the same thing, but also to use each other as audiences, sounding boards, and actually have somebody push back.” Having a real audience, one that is sitting maybe three feet away, “it changes [the students'] rhetoric.” These changes often cause students to rely on more persuasive techniques, and less on stereotypes and the kinds of broad generalizations that occur throughout first-year writing. This point echoes theories posited by Lunsford and Ede in “Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked”: they, like Anne-Marie, identify a need for a composition pedagogy that values the complex interplay among genre, text, audience, and rhetor, an interplay not accommodated by either author-centered or audience-centered models.

This audience awareness translates to their written product, as Anne-Marie finds that students invested in considering a hard-to-win-over audience are forced to avoid generalizations. In other scenarios where the audience is left blank—a symptom of teacher-as-audience and an empty exigency for most students—students often resort to extreme rhetorical tactics: “a lot of times, since they don’t see a person on the other side, their rhetoric is just inflammatory, when you get to the position paper. It’s not about proving why your argument is the best and trying to bring people along. It’s about trying to crush the opposition.” Anne-Marie utilizes collaborative work to spur students to approach their arguments more thoughtfully and to consider the reactions of the “other side,” now made tangible in the opinions and approaches of their classmates. Though the sincerity and authenticity of students working in groups is an obvious consideration here—how can we expect a pro-gay-marriage first-year student and an anti-gay-marriage student to engage in productive dialogue?—the practice is less concerned with authentic, linear feeling, since Anne-Marie professes a classroom that works against assumptions that beliefs must always fall on the extreme ends of a continuum that values only pro/con. Instead, she argues that these student interactions provide valuable practice, even though it feels risky, for students who may shuttle aside empathy when writing their own arguments.

Empathy and Ethics: Situated Teaching

Anne-Marie does not usually disclose her class status to her first-year writing classes, though she does tell students who are from working-class backgrounds in individual conferences. She feels that it is important to offer students a counterargument to the assumed privilege of those operating within the academy: “I think [my background] gives me a point of sympathy and pick them out and demonstrate for them that this world

had value for them.” Further, she cites as one academic imperative the need to restructure what the academy can and should do in terms of application to local communities. This town/gown dichotomy, posited first in 1921 (Seybolt) and covered extensively by Bender (1988), may lead the activist charge to make the work of the academy more “useful” and relevant to both students’ lives and the immediate context: “I think if there are more of us speaking up against it on things that bother us about the way that the university as an institution interacts with the wider community, or uses those analytical powers and research to objectify the wider community, that would be good.”

Finally, Anne-Marie’s background influences the way she sees her students and the paths they’ve chosen for themselves in college. Though some instructors locate the first-year writing curriculum heavily in the arena of theoretical knowledge and horizon-expanding—teaching, for example, “high culture” texts like literature and high theory—Anne-Marie cited her family’s work lives as motivation to consider her students’ specific needs for college writing and to honor these needs by honoring the students’ previous knowledge and lived experiences. Many of her colleagues, she relates, hold biases against students from what they consider less theoretical fields of study; her sister, in her nursing education, has experienced such bias. Anne-Marie posits, “I suppose one thing I wish more instructors, more professors would do would be to see and understand that students being here is that they’re trying to get something and get out and get something else. You know? It’s nice that we want to expand their horizons when they’re here and all of that, but that a student in your English class who wants to become a nurse has value, and that your English class can have import and use for her when she becomes a nurse. That engineering students in your classroom are not a pain in the butt, they’re an opportunity. That when

you get a scowling, angry, hate-filled 18 year old from Saginaw, Michigan, who wants nothing to do with your class, that he has something important that he wants from you, and you have the opportunity to give it. And that's a college education, that's a way out." An interesting contrast surfaces when Anne-Marie presents her composition class as a "way out" for this disenfranchised student against her own urge to return to the West.

Anne-Marie's story, she emphasizes, is not a hope narrative. It's not a bootstraps tale. She didn't highlight pedagogies of rugged individualism, though she described these ideologies as structuring her worldview. Instead, Anne-Marie noted her cultural privilege and acknowledged that the way she witnessed work will always undergird her relationship with academia. She did not present a story of "leaving behind," but one of returning: to the landscapes she loves and the communities that comfort her. Her early experiences with being called "oil-field trash" and ambivalence toward the "ivory fish tank" of academia continue to structure her studies and her career goals. As she notes, blue- and pink-collar careers provide experiences that, at times, trump her heavily text-based and often isolating work in Medieval studies. This honor for blue-collar work and the "real people" of the working class places her students' lived experiences at the fore of her teaching philosophies and prompts her to incorporate innovative forms of resistance—dialectical, pedagogical—in her first-year classroom.

Chapter 4: Daniel

My mother's a member of the postal workers' union.
My father's a member of, though the steelmills closed,
and the mines have been closed for a long time, he's still a member of the UMWA
and the United Steelworkers. My great grandfather, a union organizer.
It was in the 20s. He came over from Italy,
had a facility with language, spoke numerous languages,
which enabled him to better organize.
But he was a miner himself. He wasn't, you know... He was a miner himself.
The Klan would come over. On the hillside above the immigrant houses,
they would burn crosses.
The immigrants were all fairly tough Europeans who
just lived through World War I and were coal miners,
so they'd go over on the other hillside, burn wagon wheels and big wreaths.
And then my great grandfather bought the farm they used to burn crosses on,
I think, out of spite. That's where I grew up.
In some ways, I'm a very angry person.
I'm very angry about the situation, the economic situation where I'm from.
The population lost, the decline, the seeming indifference
to mainstream America, it frustrates me.
But what's the point of taking that into a classroom? None.
There's no point. I'm not here to start any sort of revolution.
I'm here to introduce kids who would
otherwise never encounter interesting ideas like the ones in Freud or Nietzsche.
I'm still foolish enough to think that there's a value in literature,
economically. Even culturally.
After the first 20 or 25 years of life, and you're constantly at the bottom, looking up,
financially, I said to myself, why do I want to be part of it?
That was part of why I started studying English in the first place.
I think if you're working class, you've grown up seeing people,
learning to like the taste of shit because they have to eat a lot of it.
Academia's no different.
And if you can do it: be born rich. That helps.
I know how to plant things and grow things. We depended on that economically.
I know how to plant food, harvest food, grow food,
when to do it, how to do it.
I know how to kill and dress animals, which is a big one.
I know how to sew,
I know how to cook.
I had to learn to do all these very basic things
that most human beings used to know.

Like all of the participants, Daniel presented often paradoxical narratives of his feelings and experiences growing up working class and importing this identity—or choosing not to import this identity—into his life in academia. He notes this dualism as a constant negotiation between the optimism offered through teaching, specifically literature and rhetoric, and the pessimism, an “intrinsic sense of resentment” brought about from growing up working class. The relationship isn’t as linear, however, as it might seem. Though he expressed “anger” towards some of his experiences brought about by his family’s legacy of labor, his connection to the land, a forced relationship based on economic need, came up as a source of both pride and serenity. Like Anne-Marie (Chapter 3), Rick (Chapter 5), and Will (Chapter 8), Daniel recognizes an attachment to the land that borders on pastoral.

The knowledge that he can opt out of most forms of consumerism through these skills seemed to bring out a comfort that he didn’t express with living on the grid. This utility influenced his pedagogies, though in contrast to other instructors, he emphasized critical thinking processes over genre and skill import. When taken in toto with Daniel’s rejection of capitalist culture, especially as it exists in hyper-consumerist America, this pedagogical choice seems to support an implicit goal for his students to first critique and then change—perhaps on a purely personal scale—their participation in Capitalist America.

After finishing his doctorate, Daniel wishes to return to his homeplace, rural Pennsylvania, to teach. He’s eschewed working for a Research 1 university in a sentiment that ran through most of the participants’ interviews. He’s focused on teaching and wants to work in the Pennsylvania state school system because, he tells me, “I believe that people

who don't necessarily have the money to pay for a private school or pay for a big school, that they have the chance to pay reasonable amount and get an education." He makes it clear that his class identification, specifically the ways he's witnessed labor and performed labor, defines his goals for the doctorate and beyond. First, I will detail Daniel's criteria for working class status, drawn from both sociopolitical philosophy and personal experience, and then I will present his teaching philosophies and strategies.

Definitions of Class

Daniel began our second interview by telling me, "Where I am, where I am in life, has everything to do with my background. I don't doubt that for a second. I really don't." His self-identification with working-class experience came across strongly; he never questioned his own relationship to this status, and he situated his own definitions of class firmly within two of the three areas of definition: experience and economics. Though Daniel mentioned ideological factors that contributed to his self-identification—such as the importance of doing for oneself—he didn't land firmly on a set of specifically working-class ideologies, as some of the other participants did. Further, he strongly identified a framework of dialectical identification, which ran behind his definitions by experience and economics, to flesh out his stance.

Experientially and Economically Bound: "Someone Standing Over You"

Daniel's articulations of class as both experientially and economically bound are so thickly interwoven that they cannot coherently be teased apart. His definition of class first focused on types of labor, specifically hourly-wage workers versus salaried workers, and on experiential criteria. He relates, "I think if you ever worked wage labor and you had a terrible job, yeah, you've been working class. I'm not saying it has to be manufacturing

because it's vanishing rapidly. But even if you work at McDonalds, you work at Pilot, work the register, it's still, even if you don't do that your whole life, you still have a pretty good chunk of working class experience at some point." This working-class experience seems to translate fairly clearly to one's identification as working class. That is to say that specific types of labor—in Daniel's case, a resume that ran the gambit from Christmas-tree trimmer to aide in a facility for developmentally disabled adults to work in food service—worked in concert with his family's history of labor—miners and steel mill workers, primarily—to solidify his identification. If a job is dangerous, painful, or offered the risk of injury, he considered it working class.

Daniel also defined his status economically, but not centered, as I expected, in terms of access. Instead, he talked at length about the constraints of hourly-wage jobs and the impact of hierarchical labor—worker/manager type relationships—as helping define class status. Regulations, management, and protocol, he told me, are good indicators of a working-class job: "You always have somebody standing over you when you work for a wage. Always. A supervisor. [...] If a medical doctor, if they're not such a good doctor, maybe it never comes back to bother them. [...] But if you're not very good at putting lug nuts onto a tire to secure the rim, it doesn't take very long for your mistakes to come out." White-collar jobs offer more autonomy and less supervision, as well as greater job security, as those workers in blue-collar jobs—and, I postulate, those workers who self-identify as working class—are treated as expendable labor. When a worker's input is reduced to physical labor, with the intellectual labor devalued or taken for granted, that worker becomes a replaceable part of the machine. This easy exchange of one cog for another marks blue-collar workers and working-class lifestyles; Daniel cited this relationship

between workers and their work as an important component of his self-identification as working class.

One of Daniel's jobs, clerking in a patent office, offered a case for complexity in this job/status relationship. Though he questioned if this particular position qualified as "working class," he referenced the daily hours worked and the pay structure as two important factors for considering its status. Here, Daniel highlights one of the goals of this project: to throw into question these sometimes-crystallized definitions of labor and laborers. He narrated a typical day at his office: "I'd get up at 7:00 and I'd go to work, and I'd be at work at my desk until 6:00 something, 7:00 at night, and I'd get home after traffic between 8 and 9, so it was a twelve hour day. [...] It was long and miserable and it was the worst job I ever had [...] I don't know if I would call it working class, but it was wage labor. It was hourly wages." While the manner of labor caused Daniel to question its firm placement within the white-collar sector, the long hours and drudgery felt like factory work to him. He said he felt both overwhelmed and uninvested in his work, another marker, perhaps taken with the hierarchical structure of the job, of a working-class job and another component of his self-identification as working class.

Ideologically Bound: "Doing for Yourself"

While experiential and economic factors worked most strongly to define Daniel's self-identification as working class, he also cited ideological differences between his own belief system and middle-class values. At the heart of this ideological matrix is his firm belief that his working-class background instilled in him a desire to be able to "do for yourself." His patent-office job was headquartered in a large, urban area where he lived for four years. The skills he learned growing up on a farm in rural Pennsylvania were made

obsolete by the acres of concrete and endless supply of all-night grocery stores. This access to cheap yet plentiful food and the round-the-clock service industry stood in stark relief to his connection to the land, an ancillary aspect that worked in tandem with his stated value of self-reliance: “I think part of my working-class sensibility comes with doing for yourself. Not paying people to do things. You know? But when you live in a city, you have to learn to pay people to do things. You have to.”

Use and Embodiment

The Land and the Body: Being Useful in Post-Industrial America

This valuation of self-reliance is further informed by Daniel’s family history in farming and his own worldview about human’s relationship to nature. A connection to the land as the provider of necessities rose to the top of our conversations and echoed, at least in sentiment, the beliefs of Anne-Marie, Rick, and Will. However, each participant identifies a different provenance for these connections, and Daniel’s connection centers on agricultural sustainability and operating off the grid. He told me,

It drives me crazy that I don’t have a garden. It drives me nuts. I have pots. And I’ll have a small plot, because we rent a house at the moment, but there’s really not a lot of space, and it drives me crazy. I don’t like buying my produce at the store all the time. And that seems like such a minor point, but at the same time, it’s so intrinsic to how I grew up, and it goes back a good 6,000 years of agricultural practice, and it’s changed over time, and there’s always variances, but it’s that last step I think where human beings become something else and stop becoming as embodied in their physical selves.

Here, Daniel makes an interesting connection between self-sufficiency and embodiment: as humans grew to rely on second parties for their daily needs—food, transportation, housing, clothing—they moved from physical work to mental work. This point of view certainly centers on a history of agriculturalism—a stance that could be shuffled off as pastoral in sense of exceptionalism—but it so profoundly structures his world view and cues other rhetorical moves, like the embodiment of labor, even industrial labor, while also offering a matrix of values from which he interacts with others. By reviewing briefly Daniel’s family history and the definition of labor based in this history, I postulate that it is this physicality and connection to the land that frames his narrative.

Daniel’s grandfather emigrated from Italy in the 1920s and worked as a coal miner and labor organizer. His father worked first in the mines and then, when they closed, moved to the steel mill. His mother worked at the post office. His family maintained a history of union organizing and membership, and Daniel credits the eight-hour workday as the most important achievement of the unions. The hourly structure allowed workers to have eight hours for rest and eight free hours devoted to other lifestyle activities, like being involved with their families and community. The jobs held by his family were primarily hourly wage jobs with built-in oversight and a strong management structure, as were most of the jobs Daniel himself has held. These experiences work dialectally to form the foundation for Daniel’s self-identification and for his operationalized definition of working class. Wage laborers are dichotomously defined by salaried workers, whose importance to their organizations is reflected in their pay structure, though there are some instances where salaried workers, because they work many hours per week, earn less per hour worked than wage laborers.

Secondly, workers with little direct oversight—like doctors, he suggests, or teachers at the university level—provide a counter to those workers whose actions are dictated by a direct manager who constrains that laborer’s physical engagement and time, such as determining breaks and hours spent at the workplace. Finally, wage laborers who fall towards the bottom of the hierarchy are often treated as disposable, dispensable, and unimportant to the company in any felt, humanistic way. Physicality, the very embodiment of labor, structures these relationships. In every case, Daniel identifies workers in blue-collar jobs as being more physically present and held accountable for their labor. Self-identification as working class thus implicates Daniel in this embodiment:

Being working class, you’re always, at least I was always, well aware of physicality, the physicality of the world. You have to be if you have any sort of job that requires any kind of manual labor. You’re well aware of the physicality of the universe. And as you leave that, as you go up the class ladder, it becomes less and less involved. You’re less involved with the physicality, because you get farther away from it, it doesn’t matter as much. If you’re a successful academic, how are you involved with the physical world as much? You aren’t. It’s mental process, your work is mental. I’m not demeaning it, I’m not saying it’s not worth doing, but it’s a very different interaction with the physical world.

It is this corporeal involvement that structures Daniel’s attitudes toward most of what we talked about in the interviews: his personal labor history, his family’s history, his relationship to Capitalist America, his future desires in academia, and his current pedagogical philosophies and practices. These relationships, and their emotional connections to his life, offer counterarguments to Daniel’s uptake of his working-class

identity and the decisions he makes in the first-year writing classroom. Next, I detail these philosophies and practices.

Pedagogies

A Focus on Critical Inquiry

Daniel frames his pedagogical philosophy, informed by his political ideologies and commitments, differently than the five of the other participants. Where others—like Tabitha and Anne-Marie—see the first-year composition classroom as a place where students learn templates for writing that can transfer into more advanced coursework or the job market, Daniel’s articulated teaching philosophy centers on offering students opportunities to access challenging concepts, read important works of literature, and hone their global and local writing skills. Here, I am making a distinction between instructors who incorporate or even emphasize writing templates, like resumes or statements of purpose, which might transfer to private-sector work, with instructors who place critical thinking and the production of humanities-styled essays at the fore of their classroom practices. The idea of “exposure” to “great ideas” undergirds Daniel’s teaching philosophy: “If you’re here to be trained to do a job, academia’s becoming just another kind of trade school, then exposure doesn’t matter so much. But if you still hold that an education should enrich the person, or it should better the world by making it realize itself more fully, exposure’s a very important part.” Daniel recognizes two very different kinds of first-year writing classrooms that, he argues, have divergent implications for students’ relationships to capitalism.

This emphasis on exposure to philosophy, literature, and dialectical thinking—including teaching highly theoretical works by writers like Freud and Nietzsche—informs

Daniel's classroom practices, from his daily interactions with students to grading. He tells me that he uses the numerical key included with a widely used writing handbook to illustrate for students that their errors have identifiable solutions. This embrace of a prescriptivist grammar, while not unique by itself, is framed by Daniel's class identification and his experiences as an instructor at this university. He relates, "I want to make sure first and foremost they have some sort of basic notion of how to put together an effective sentence, an effective paragraph, an effective collection of paragraphs to make an essay, and I find that in my experience I've noticed that it can be kind of dictated by class, depending on, you know, the economics of high school." As a state school with a number of scholarship opportunities for at-risk students, this university works hard to bring in students whose educational background might otherwise prevent them from attending college.

Further, each first-year student must take first-year composition, except those students who have placed out due to ACT scores or who have scored at least a 4 on the Advanced Placement Test in English. Daniel's own working-class identification is thus implicated in his teaching as he recognizes that some of his students may hold similar experiences. He does recognize that his own education in Pennsylvania was exceptional by current standards: "I was exposed to a lot of stuff just growing up that I know other people weren't. Growing up I heard 8 or 9 languages spoken regularly. I heard Italian every day because my mother's family, but I also, it was very common and at least once a week to hear Polish, to hear German, to hear Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Russian, Slovakian. [...] That was time and place specific and it's gone because the older people died off, and their kids moved away because of the outmigration, but I can't expose [my students] to that kind of

thing, but exposure to ideas I think is very important.” This exposure to languages—and here I will recall the importance of language to Daniel’s grandfather’s union organizing—becomes an interesting trope through which Daniel works to frame his past, present, and future. And since he can’t give his student the same multicultural immersion that he experienced, he provides cultural and political immersion in ideas, presented through texts and discussion.

A Demanding Classroom: “Exposure” and Relevance

This exposure occurs through an embodiment of ideas, a concept that at first felt contradictory, but which I’ve come to understand as a sort of performance of academia and, simultaneously, the creation of a classroom where Daniel’s students can try out challenging concepts, vet one another’s ethos, and practice progressive discourse. Though the classrooms in which he teaches rarely offer the opportunity, he prefers a circle of desks so that students can face each other as peers and colleagues. This face-to-face interaction demands responsibility for discussion from each student, since no one can retreat to the Siberian back row (Shor, 1996). By holding students accountable through physical visibility, Daniel encourages them to participate, to contribute to the classroom community. He tells me, “I find that the more they think their ideas matter, the more engaged they are. They’ve been lectured at for 12, 13 years for the most part, a lot of them. Some of them will never care. They’re here to get a job, get a degree and get a job. Really, I talk about this at the beginning of the semester with them. I ask them why they’re here, especially 101, and a vast majority of them say they want a degree and a job, which kind of really challenges a lot of the traditional assumptions of what education is for.” With the acknowledgement of a purpose for college beyond employment, Daniel signals a stance firmly rooted in the

humanities, where instrumental knowledge is often bracketed as less rigorous than a “life of the mind” focused on philosophical and theoretical concerns. By citing his teaching philosophy as possibly divergent from some of his peers who work to meet the very specific needs of students who seek a college degree for employment purposes, Daniel sets up a dichotomy where he reframes his first-year writing classroom as intellectually rigorous in a way that rejects college as preparation for work. In his classroom, he asserts, he does not strive to prepare students to participate in the disempowering and disengaged role of worker, and his working-class experiences informs this pedagogical decision.

Like Anne-Marie, Daniel is careful to avoid presenting an image of the college instructor who is out to change the minds and hearts of his students, even if his pedagogies seek sociopolitical emancipation for his students. In the first week of class, he addresses this assumption held by some students, that the liberalism of the academy directly contradicts their privately held beliefs and that their instructors, as emissaries of the university, are charged with providing ideological conformity. This rejection of homogeneity isn’t specifically classbound, perhaps, but it is compelling to note that none of the participants held the belief that the purpose of a college education is to liberalize the youth of America, a stance loudly touted by anti-intellectuals. But though each participant felt similarly, each came to the rejection of politicizing the classroom in a different way, and Daniel’s rejection of the academic mill stems directly from his sensitivity to class and his focus on “exposure.”

“I Don’t Care What You Think”: An Evidence-Based Approach

By offering his students the opportunity to query important philosophical ideas in class and by first absolving them of the fear of blanket liberalism or extreme relativism, he

opens the door for students to deeply explore their own beliefs without feeling the pressure to change them or the antagonism against what they perceive to be his values. He situates this rhetorical move with the controversial statement, “I tell them that I don’t care what they think.” He goes on, after a pause, to clarify: “I tell them that, yes, I do care what they think, but I’m not going to convince [them] to think one way or another, and that kind of gives them, I hope it gives them [permission to] follow their own thoughts. I don’t care what you think. I care about how well you argue it. That’s what it comes down to.”

His focus on critical thinking and prescriptivist writing practices, he tells me, instead of either liberalism or job training, allows students to first question their place in the American capitalist structure and then choose to opt out of it, as he wishes to do. He details this complex relationship between his personal ideologies and his teaching: “I am very, very set against teaching any sort of ethics or any sort of political ideology in the classroom. [...] I have a real problem with American liberalism because it is very classed.” His pedagogy seems to rely on a philosophy of critical engagement—critical in the sense that it does ask students to question power relationships—to help students see these sociopolitical structures at work in their lives. At the same time, however, Daniel is quick to note that character education is not a part of his philosophy.

Two Contradictions

However, Daniel’s classroom practices do at times contradict his philosophy of critical engagement. Or, if not contradict, perhaps they cue his recognition of the labor futures of his students work to complicate his relationship as a mediator of academic mores. He contextualizes his grading: “I really try very hard to make them see that what they’re doing isn’t just busy work, it’s not just a requirement to fill, not matter what job,

this is something else I talk about, no matter what profession they choose to pursue, they're going to have to write, they're going to have to know how to put together words." Here, Daniel makes a move more closely united with a pragmatic classroom that focuses on transferable skills, but instead of utilizing common writing templates, he uses the essay format to instruct his students in developing a writer's voice and attention to basic expectations of good writing, such as sentence variety and organization.

A second contradiction arose when Daniel described some of his pedagogical strategies as paternalistic, a move away from the self-reliance he cited as foundational to his sense of self. He details his one-on-one student conferences as "the most paternalistic thing" he does all semester, since he usually works to avoid overtaking students' work with his own ideas and since he tries to structure his classroom as a place where students are held to high standards of engagement: "I enjoy... letting someone make a discovery for themselves, setting up the situation so that if they sit and they take seriously the assignments and read the stuff and think about it, then there's this little doorway into a new world that opens for them, and I think that it's very important." This student-centered model first rejects banking notions (Freiere, 1970) before moving to implicate self-sufficiency and heightened responsibility in the first-year writing classroom. But these individualized conferences tend to counter that rejection of hand-holding as Daniel both times them and conducts them to prevent students from delaying their writing or to help revise a not-well-thought-out thesis before the student invests too much time:

I give them a week to think of things to bring to conferences, if they haven't thought of anything before that week, then they have to come to that conference, sit down, and we have to talk about what they're going to do for that paper. So it really, it's a

paternalistic way to force them to work on their paper. It is paternalistic. You know, I want them to have to sit there and think about their paper, so that they actually get started, instead of waiting until Sunday before it's due on Monday.

Recalling the earlier modes of embodiment present in Daniel's classroom, such as the valuation of the circled-desks model, this use of a "paternalistic" method of student involvement demands that both student and instructor move from text to a more embodied form of literacy. He supports this paternalism by acknowledging that students do maintain the power to unplug from the class—mentally and physically—but that "sometimes a little shove" towards productivity "isn't all bad." This "shove" becomes embodied through individual conferences.

Embodied Labor: The Instructor as Physical Laborer

Further, when discussions take place face-to-face, instead of by proxy through student text and teacher comments, Daniel cues his experience of physicality in labor. He remarks that teaching, and student interaction writ large, run through his teaching philosophy and is bolstered by his class identification. It's as he told me, with teaching, "your physical presence is required. It's not just text." Daniel's labor history and the history of his family offer a paradigm through which he structures his attitudes about teaching: in the working world, one must show up for his shift. It is his physical presence that counts as work, and it is his lack of physical engagement that can get him fired. Presence is thus held in high regard as an embodied form of academic work.

Teaching is the work academics can observe in *media res*. Absent student bodies are counted and often penalized. Absent teacher bodies offer cause for confusion among students and contingency plans among administrators. Broken down to the basic form of

bodies interacting with bodies—though the demand of the work are often cerebral—Daniel’s teaching methods embrace this notion of labor-as-embodied, a counterargument to the oft-cited stereotype of the absent-minded professor who spends much of his time, like Aristophanes’s philosophers, with his head in the clouds.

Daniel’s classroom, and his teaching philosophy, suggests a dualism between cerebral involvement—his emphasis on exposure to important ideas—and embodiment—his emphasis on the importance of individual conferences and the notion that his classroom teaching is the most important facet of the process. This dualism isn’t necessarily contradictory; instead, by operating through the organizing principal of ethical action, which I detail next, Daniel’s classroom practices emerge as focused on challenging students to tussle at length with complex ideas and to stake a claim in the realm of academics, with this claim bolstered by confidence in their content and form. Through these methods, his class works to professionalize students in ways that are counter to the labor demanded by many private-sector jobs.

Optimism as a Guiding Ethic

Daniel’s interest in teaching stems from a sense of commitment and a sense of optimism. Teaching at the college level “really is an ethical obligation.” He tells me, “I’ve always wanted to teach. I’ve wanted to teach at the university level. I appreciate having the option to let people fail themselves if that’s what they want to do. I’ve never taught high school, but I’ve known, I have friends who are grade school and high school teachers, and one of the things they always complain about is how they are encouraged to pass people through. And the problem with that is whoever gets them, if I do that in 101, whoever gets them in 102, is like, Why are you here? And I really don’t want that on my conscience.

Academia is the last hope for my conscience.” By inserting himself into the academic conversation as an instructor, he provides a felt service; students, he feels, are “passed through” primary and secondary educational structures, with little regard to their actual retention or ability to complete the required work. He thus recognizes what he considers an educational gap, a gap he is qualified to fill. This point, this gap, is where his emphasis on “exposure” and his attitudes on self-reliance become most salient. For an instructor who feels that many students have received only cursory educational opportunities—he cites the metrics of standardized testing here—the fact that he likes the process of “let[ting] people fail if they want to,” while it sounds harsh, cues his beliefs on “doing for yourself,” and helps clarify what he feels is an ethical imperative. Students, he thinks, may not be receiving the quality of education they need to operate as thinking citizens; he offers them this lens by focusing on critical thinking in his classroom.

This point is not groundbreaking. It’s a philosophy held by a number of first-year composition instructors. However, I argue that Daniel’s class identification frames these pedagogies and elevates them from methodology to pedagogical imperative. As he mentioned in one interview, his political beliefs reject free-market enterprise. He relates, “Ten years ago, I’d be slammed for that if I said that in public. After the mortgage meltdown and you saw what absolute free market foibles there were, maybe not so much. Which might be why some academics are starting to cultivate their own working class bona fides.” Here, Daniel places his pedagogies in time and space: because so many families were affected by the recession beginning in 2007, and because discussion of the dangers of big business rose to the top of 30-second newsbreaks, he is able to freely articulate his misgivings about a Capitalist-run government. The current economic crisis and its

aftershocks have made their way into college classrooms, even if instructors don't address them. Because of this interesting temporal situation, Daniel's critical-thinking-focused pedagogy of ethics may reach a student audience that's different than the one he taught only a few years ago.

Performing Neutral: Why Horatio Alger Won't be Taught

Daniel rarely invokes his working-class status in the classroom. He states, "I'm here to introduce kids who would otherwise never encounter interesting ideas like the ones in Freud or Nietzsche. My background as far as directly influencing what I talk about or what I say, it doesn't play that much of a role." This choice to deemphasize his class status, he argues, is rooted in a critical distance that he must maintain to teach from a paradigm of ethics. Avoiding talk about his own identification has "helped [him] to not really care, in a good way." He clarifies this statement: "If I have a room full of kids from middle-class suburbia, and we read something that's highly critical of that—Slapstick makes fun of kind of middle-class America quite thoroughly, and they were offended by it. I'm capable of leading a discussion because I'm not offended by it. I'm not constantly criticizing why it's wrong or why it's bad. I can look at it a little more objectively." This acknowledgment of critical distance is important to his teaching—he can't invite divergent responses from students if he is emotionally entrenched in his own experience—but it also contradicts some of his teaching strategies.

He notes that, for a number of years, he taught versions of the Horatio Alger, rags-to-riches story. He says, "They loved it. I got so sick of them loving it, and I took it out of my syllabus." This curricular change, he details, was brought about by a direct interaction with his own experiences in Capitalist America, and his frustration with wholesale trust in

bootstraps ideologies: “They responded to that reading more than anything else we read that semester. And I just got so tired of the incessant unending positivity, that I just couldn’t do it anymore.” Because he identifies many of his students as holding these middle-class values, this “unending positivity” towards and acceptance of the American-Dream tale contradicts his own labor history:

I’ve known literally thousands of people who have worked very hard, they were all coal miners, and they worked very hard. No one ever said, I want to have an easy, good, wealthy life. I’m going to be a coal miner. Nobody has ever said that. And then, they win that miserable bloody war they fought, and unionized and fought for a century, and it disappears in five years, and it’s gone. So any hard work, any type of self-valuation—the class consciousness they raised of themselves to want to unionize—[the attention to] a job that killed people, doesn’t really matter. It’s meaningless. It becomes meaningless very quickly, so meh meh. Hard work [doesn’t] always [pay off].

Because hard work, in his estimation, does not equate with success, his students’ optimism fueled the curricular change, perhaps in his quest for “exposure” to divergent ideas. Because he’s witnessed and performed labor—sometimes dangerous, injury-inducing labor—without the fame and comfort promised by Horatio Alger tales, he is sensitive to this overwhelming acceptance of the American Dream.

Like Anne-Marie, Daniel refuses to claim his story as a bootstraps tale. His political ideologies determine that he frames his place in academia as a process of elimination: The jobs of his past left him feeling disenfranchised and disengaged. His acknowledgement of the privileged position of graduate study—and his drive to return to Pennsylvania to teach

at a public university—provide a foundation for a pedagogy of critical empowerment. His profession of a neutral classroom, free of overt political messaging, works against his foregrounding of the critical inquiry and class, as he seeks to equip students to first query and then change inequitable power structures.

Chapter 5: Rick

I grew up with parents who wore tee shirt and jeans to work
or a flannel and jeans,
and to me, that's what you do when you go to work.
When I teach, that's what I wear.
It's my work clothes. But it's also what I'm most comfortable in.
I want my students to understand
that I'm casual. I'm there to work with them, not work above them.
In the factory, if the suits come around, you gotta be on your best behavior.
But your supervisor is probably dressed like you in a lot of ways,
or they're going to wear the exact same thing.
I wear a tee shirt, jeans, and a hat to class. I understand the value of presentation,
but at the same time, I feel like I dress up for funerals and weddings,
and on occasion, when I go out with my wife and she wants to look nice.

I feel like I have something to prove, I guess. I come from a small town,
a small undergrad, not well known, you know, I'm not from Stanford.
When I think of blue collar, I think of factory work, farm work, manual labor, service labor,
anybody from the Comcast guy to somebody working
at Energizer Battery factory to Farmer Bob.
My first job I got when I was in fifth grade, mowing yards. My brother and I. My dad helped.
He had the riding mower. We did the pushing.
But we got to keep our money, and you know, we hoarded that money
like it was nothing else, because we didn't get an allowance.
My parents wouldn't let me buy a Nintendo. I ended up buying an electric guitar.

At Kawasaki, I was in die-casting. A motor came out of the die cast,
down the line, and I filed it and then put it in a little bin.
And that was all I did all day, and that was more miserable than I think ever ever,
I mean it was the most monotonous, boring work I'd ever done in my life,
and if anything made me want to stay in school, it was probably doing that.
But I realized that this was the kind of stuff my parents had done for 20 years.
Now my parents own a convenience store. It's the cultural center of Holston.
You know, people come in and talk and gossip and share stories
and talk about what happened on Saturday night,
and did you hear about this and did you hear about this,
and it's like the defining place of the community.
This semester, in my composition class, we started out the first day
introducing each other, and right from the very beginning
there they were creating bonds, community.

Rick came to the Southeast from the Midwest. He's in his first year of doctoral study, but he completed his master's degree at the same institution, so he's been working within this university for three years. This time in the Southeast, he says, has only strengthened his resolve to return home, back to Missouri, to be closer to his family and begin a family of his own. He's married, and his wife teaches first grade. He holds an undergraduate degree in art, and he focused on fiction writing in his master's program. Now, he's still writing fiction—centering primarily on life in the Midwest—but he's also identified rhetoric, specifically rhetorical and cultural treatments of video games, and first-year composition as scholarly interests.

This diversity in scholarship becomes more clear when viewed through his teaching practices and academic work: he advises students to work toward narratives in their academic essay writing; he assigns highly theoretical articles on remediation in gaming, asking students to synthesize and analyze both difficult concepts and the language of high theory; he collaboratively conducts qualitative research on how first-year composition instructors utilize the workshop model, usually a tool present in creative writing classrooms, in composition; and he works diligently on his fiction novel set in the Midwest. His teaching has been recognized by prestigious departmental awards, and his reputation is one of innovation in the classroom, dedication to his work, and approachability by students and peers alike. In talking about his role in the first-year writing classroom, Rick related a story similar to some of the other participants; yet through the filter of agriculturism and self-identified Midwestern values, Rick's articulated pedagogies and his self-identification of working class offered unique variations on the themes of working-class identification and teaching first-year composition.

Definitions of Class

Rick's self-definitions of class centered on two primary areas: experiential and economic. He stated his identification clearly: "The reasons why I'd say [I am working class] is because of my background and because of all the ways I have seen work and done work in the past." Through our interviews, he related the types of labor he's done in the past: construction, fence building, landscaping, and, more recently, serving as a resident director in a college dorm and working as a junior high art instructor. I argue that it is Rick's connection to manual labor, the physical, mental, and aesthetic draws of working with your hands, to recall his earlier statement, that most strongly colors his self-identification.

Experientially and Economically Bound: "On the Floor with the Workers"

This emphasis on service labor, specifically manual labor, comprised much of our discussion of working-class definitions. He identified both purchase power and job responsibilities as working together to form a working-class identity: "I think to some degree I would originally say that it has to do with socioeconomical status. When I think of blue collar, I think of factory work, farm work, manual labor, service, labor. I mean anybody from the Comcast guy to somebody working at Energizer Battery factory to Farmer Bob." In this first iteration, Rick's definition stirs up a few contradictions, which he addresses: "I think that you share some kind of middle-class, lower-class background based upon on what they make per year or whatever, but ... I think you can probably be socioeconomically above that tax bracket or whatever you want to call it, and still be working class." He continues to detail this complicated relationship between labor and status: "[if you are] somebody who is maybe a salaried person making \$200,000 a year but is on the floor with

the workers, they're also doing the work in a lot of ways, [and] I would probably consider that person working class."

To imply that a person may earn \$200,000 annually, quadruple the 2007 median U.S. income of just over \$50,000, yet still claim working-class status is a definition that Rick shared with Daniel, who related the story of a friend who worked in information technology and earned well above \$100,000, but who labored 70 to 80 hours a week. In both cases, these men are identifying working class as a category with flexible bounds, as a marker that relies on a matrix of possibilities and actions. But Rick's iteration of working class is unique as it is based on his work history in factories, where workers towards the top of the hierarchy may earn more money but may also be charged with doing the same kinds of jobs, "on the floor," with the lower-paid laborers.

This definition illustrates the cornerstone of Rick's narrative: class is intrinsically tied to the kinds of work done, regardless of income. And his family's history is long located in the factories in Holston, Missouri: "My parents worked at Energizer for 20 some years each, most of my family on my mother's side either worked at or works at Energizer or Kawasaki Motor company or NSK, which I think they do ball bearings and stuff. Or Moog Automotive, so there's four factories, or McCleag Chain, so five factories. So it's a big factory, small town." Here, the types of work done in Holston define the community.

Injury: Physical Markers and Affinity Groups

One area of definition-by-labor identified by Rick is the potential for injury. Those who identify as working class often hold jobs with higher than average possibilities for danger. He defines on-the-job injuries as both sudden and traumatic, and related, "I don't think I've ever had a real big work injury, so... I've never lost a thumb or anything like that."

An injury for a laborer in a blue-collar job may entail loss of limb or another catastrophic and life-changing event. The physical demands of this kind of labor stay on the body, affect the laborer for many years after the initial trauma: “There’s a lot of potential for burns and stuff when I was working at Kawasaki. This die-cast aluminum part would come out of the machine really, really hot, so you’d have to handle it with gloves and ... clean out the flash material and stuff. I did get quite a few burns for that, probably have some scars actually on this arm.” In comparison to the dangers inherent in jobs like factory work or construction—Rick told me that he once fell off a roof—the academic sphere stands in contrast as employment without serious physical consequence. He literally laughed off the potential for traumatic injury as an academic: “Those kinds of things I don’t have to worry about in the classroom, I think, unless like an overhead projector falls on you.” This potential for sudden and life-altering injury thus experientially defined his self-identification as working class.

Rick further recognizes affinity through labor and background. When talking about relationships with other graduate students in our department, Rick stated that he feels more connected to students from similar backgrounds, “guys that came from, I think in their cases, they’re suburban, but they’re still working class, their parents were working class people, so those [are the] people I identify with and have created friendships with, more so than other students.” Identification with the matrix of values cued by claiming a working-class status—rural or urban—thus works through Rick’s interpersonal relationships. How a colleague’s parents have labored—and in turn, how that colleague himself has labored—establishes bonds between classmates.

Ideologically Bound: Community and Labor Ties

Like any smaller town built around an industry—university towns, mining towns—the populace of Holston is comprised of people who have worked in the major employers or whose families have worked there. The community is intrinsically shaped by its residents. As such, Rick’s identification with rural areas and small towns works with his labor-and-economic based definitions to posit ideological characteristics of his working-class experience. I note here, however, that to tease apart Rick’s identification with rural and small-town values and his status as working class is an impossible task.

In our interviews, these ideological aspects—from the importance of family and community to the purity and satisfaction of manual labor—were tightly wound through narratives of the ways Rick has done labor or witnessed labor being done. Certainly, a graduate student who identifies as upper-class (in whatever way, economically, experientially) may hold values similar to Rick’s. However, the importance of these articulations ran through his narrative, as he clearly connected labor to landscape to community. I explore three major ideological definitions: small-town values (i.e., community building); work ethic; and financial concerns. I discuss the aspect of small-town values first and in greater detail because it is the aspect that frames the remaining two.

Small-Town Values

Rick told me that his parents have since quit factory work and established a small shop in his hometown. Because the population of Holston hovers under 600, this shop has become the “cultural center” of the town. And because of its size, each citizen knows his neighbor. Each resident plays a role. Differences are thus made more obvious: “I guess, if you’re different in a small town, it feels like you’re ostracized, whether that be different

because you make a lot of money or sexual preferences or race or even your stance within the community, if for example, you're the mayor or something, which the mayor in Holston, Missouri, is not that big of a responsibility, but you know, they wear it with pride... Because there's so few people that are around that everybody kind of just feeds off of the stories of everybody else." Here, Rick connected small-town life with social class—those families who make more money would stand out as different—and small-town values with work ethic—the mayor of a town of 600 may not hold many responsibilities, but the title is one that the community views as important.

Rick's experience in Holston drove his decision to attend a small undergraduate college, because he "felt much more comfortable going to someplace where I could feel like I could know most people." The value of an intimate academic community mirrors Rick's lived experience. Ideologically, he connects the values he associates with growing up in Holston—knowing his neighbors, taking pride in responsibility—with his own academic life.

Rick did bring up one aspect of his identification that sometimes troubles him, and it's a concern borne by the intersection of small-town community values and the perception of those who work in academics. Visiting home creates in Rick a recognized dualism that is made more prominent by the small community. He told me, "Every time I go back, I feel like I'm, because people know what I'm doing, they have their own opinions of what I should be like. Now the phrase 'educated idiot' used to come up a lot when I was a kid. And my uncles would always talk about these guys who were supervisors or people they worked with or bosses or whatever and they were these 'educated idiots,' and that is what I don't want to be. I don't want to seem like or act like or the way I talk or whatever,

people will think that I feel like I know everything when I don't." Rick connects his community's expectations of him as an academic with his status as someone from Holston, someone who grew up there and who holds many of the same values as they do. The term "educated idiot" is, of course, a politically charged title that Rick works to avoid. Unlike some of the supervisors—maybe those who earn \$200,000 and work on the factory floor—he wishes to avoid being different in this space where difference—economic, educational—is noted.

Whereas his community might expect him to be more distant based on his choice of career, Rick articulates a shapeshifting that conforms to their expectations of a resident of Holston. In detailing this shapeshifting, which takes places both in the community and in the tighter sphere of his family, Rick connects class expectations and values to his current place in the academy. Stated another way, the term "educated idiot" implies that one may attain high levels of learning without learning much useful, and that this education may simply make him more removed from the values that are important to a community. Flagrant offenses include speaking differently, putting on airs, or claiming superior knowledge. It's as one story from Rick's past, a conversation with his mother, illustrates: "She'll say something, and I'll say, what do you mean by that? And then something, I don't know if it's about my tone or the way, and she'll say, you make me feel stupid. And that's not what I meant, I just wanted to know what you meant by that. And I don't know where it comes from. I don't know if it's because I got all these other things that I'm, structures and – isms I have in my head that I've learned. If I had gone another way, if I hadn't gone to college, I probably wouldn't have asked her that question or something, right?" Rick articulates a sometimes painful, always illuminating navigation of assumptions and

expectations of his community. By engaging in critical questioning, Rick violated one of the dictates he outlined: claiming superior knowledge. Again, however, while this point may not be isolated to those who claim working-class status, Rick's identification of his community and family as solidly working class, and his move to connect the values of these groups with their expectations of him make a compelling argument for class operating as the superstructure in prompting his shapeshifting.

Work Ethic and Financial Consideration

Rick further detailed ideological definitions of his working class status by connecting the values of his community and family in terms of work ethic and financial consideration. These two ideas cannot be separated. Often, in working-class families, laborers are paid hourly or piecewise. Earning power thus directly correlates with hours spent on the job or the number of pieces produced. Rick narrated a history of work that began with he was very young, around 12, mowing lawns with his brother and father. His second job, building fence, also involved his family: I built fence for the summers during, basically from my freshman [year] ... even after college. I was helping my dad. He had a side fencing business, but we started out working for another guy doing vinyl fence. So we'd go along the property, dig the holes, put the fence in, fill it with cement. My brother always ran the cement mixer. I always ran the wheelbarrow back and forth, that kind of thing." He also worked at the Kawasaki plant which employed much of Holston, and it was this factory job that solidified Rick's commitment to pursuing a career in academics and which influences his currently scholarly interests:

The summer I worked [for Kawasaki] I was in die-casting. Basically what happened was a motor came out of the die cast down the line, and I filed it and then put it in a

little bin. And that was all I did all day, and that was more miserable than I think ever ever, I mean it was the most monotonous, boring work I'd ever done in my life, and if anything made me want to stay in school, it was probably doing that. But also the same time I realized that this was the kind of stuff my parents had done for 20 years, so for, while that has value in an end product, and in a monetary product because you get paid for it, I guess, the work, and maybe this is why I like studying games too, I don't know, cause there's this weird line in games between work and play.

Rick's memory of the factory floor does not devalue the importance of his family's work. He recognizes that, while the labor itself was alienating and dangerous, it also yielded an important dividend: a wage which translated to support for the family. Rick expressed an appreciation for his parents' work ethic while implying that they provided a model for him to follow as he developed his own relationship with labor. However, their lessons in labor pushed him away from the factory floor and towards a job where he could find engagement and fulfillment beyond a paycheck.

Dress and Play

Rick defines his own working-class status through three areas: economics, experience, and ideology. Each aspect operates as a binary, though our interviews made clear that first claiming working-class status and then importing it to the academic realm presents a far more complex relationship than a binary might suggest. However, he worked to define his own status by first defining what he is not.

Rick offered a story that illustrates his dialectical engagement through all four domains: linguistic, curricular, dress, and proximity to students. As the collaborative poem

details, Rick teaches his English 101 and 102 classes in a tee-shirt, jeans, and a hat. Dressing up is equated with ceremonial posturing, “for funerals and weddings” or when his wife “wants to look nice.” He finds it important to work beside, rather than above the students, and cites the small class size, first-year composition classes are capped at 23, as his palette for community building. Further, like Paul, Rick feels like his background could mark him unfavorably—“I’m not from Stanford,” Rick related, assuming that his educational background would out him as inadequately prepared. However, this acknowledgement of anxiety is countered with his linguistic decision to perform Holston, Missouri; his curricular decision to reinforce classroom community—a value he takes from his small-town, rural, working-class background; his decision to dress casually—a value he takes from watching his parents labor; and his proximity to students, illustrated through his valuation of laboring alongside them in the classroom.

Use and Embodiment

A Work/Play Dialectic

In these different narratives of work, from his time building fences to his time in the factory, Rick pieced together a story shot through with ethical implications. Hard work is a given, and his realization of the effects of his parents’ labor provided a benchmark from which he still operates. Working in tandem with this experiential history of work is Rick’s learned relationship between labor and earnings. Rick remembered making quite a bit of money as a child, mowing lawns with his younger brother. He said they mowed between 19 and 25 yards, and “it was a constant job, because most of the yards are not real small in farm communities, so there was one yard that we did that would take us twelve hours to mow, and we got paid by the hour. So, and it was like \$5 an hour, which felt like a lot of

money.” In this memory, Rick’s learned work ethic is clear, and he detailed how he managed the earnings: “We got to keep our money, and we hoarded that money like it was nothing else, because we didn’t get an allowance. My parents made us value, or wanted to make us value, the dollar as early as possible.” By relating a childhood experience where he connected his physical labor, earning money, and experiencing purchasing power, Rick draws a line between his family’s work history and his own relationship with work. This connection relies on both work ethic and the financial concerns of labor in its import to his current life.

These definitions of working class—experiential, economic, and ideological—make their ways into his life as an academic, specifically into his role teaching first-year composition. His connection to his homeplace, sense of community, dedication to his work, and sense of obligation to his students all undergird his teaching philosophies and practices.

Pedagogies

Teaching Philosophies: A Matter of Community

Rick frames both his teaching philosophy and plans in the academy in terms of the desire to return to a small, teaching-focused school like the ones he attended as an undergraduate student. The benefits of such an environment were multiple for him: “It’s such a small campus that there were teachers that everybody wanted to take because they knew they would get something very important out of it, and they’d come to it with a different kind of mentality, maybe.” When compared to larger universities, such as the one at which Rick teaches now, where each semester offers over a hundred different sections of first-year English taught by upwards of 80 instructors, his emphasis on reputation stands

out clearly. In a smaller setting, with fewer teachers, students would be encouraged to take a particular professor for his or her strengths, and this engagement before class even begins would affect that semester's teaching and learning.

Rick's teaching philosophy is directly informed by his self-identification as working class—a definition that centers in many ways on connection to his landscapes and interpersonal relationships. I first explore Rick's feelings about constructing his classroom as a community akin to his hometown before moving to discuss the importation of his feelings about labor and ethical obligations to his students.

Each of Rick's interviews presented new insights into just how strongly he works to replicate small-town relationships in his classroom. Only a few minutes into our first conversation, in reference to how he structures his classroom, he related, "I just like the idea of a community, I guess. And for me it's more important that my students are, feel engaged with the course because of the interactions that go on within the course, rather than necessarily always the course content or what they're doing." But while many instructors profess pedagogies that center on collaborative learning activities and building classroom community, Rick's articulation of his motivations behind these strategies connected his class status with his classroom practices: "This semester we started out the first day just going around introducing each other, and then I just had them get in groups and talk about what they enjoy about video games, and right from the very beginning there they were creating bonds." This mention of bonds invokes a sense of trust. Rick works from the first day of class to involve students in one another's lives by offering opportunities to interact in informal, low-risk ways, like the conversations about video games he references. The students learn about each other, find common grounds, and begin forming a social

network that, he hopes, leads to the big payoff at the end of the semester: a month-long series of workshop of the final paper based strongly on creative writing models Rick has encountered in the past in his own coursework. These workshops demand that each student make him or herself vulnerable—the entire class reads each student’s work, and time is allotted to review each student’s paper—to the community. By initiating trust-building activities on the first day, even if those activities are as informal as sharing recent gaming conquests and defeats, Rick acknowledges the importance of these one-on-one relationships.

Demystifying Academia: A Matter of Approach

Even Rick’s choice of course content—studying the rhetoric of video games—echoes some of his feelings about growing up in Holston, Missouri, a town of about 600 where each person played a role. In regards to the topic of gaming, he told me, “I feel like that that kind of subculture, culture, gamer culture, is related to the idea of community, which is why I find it attractive. And which is why students I think find it attractive, because they have value within that culture.” Rick’s attention to community values and the value of community members defines his entire teaching persona: his goal, as he stated, is less about asking students to connect with his idea of academic discourse or the isolated niches it produces. Instead, he asks students to first identify a receptive audience—their classmates—who hold similar values. He then structures each classroom activity to support that community building and maintenance, so that a possibly disparate group of 23 students unites through experience and interest.

Roles in the Community: Pedagogies of Humor and Care

His ideal classroom, he told me, is one where students sit in a circle. Four of the six participants cited a preference for the circled-desk configuration. It is a room arrangement which many instructors choose, in English as well as other disciplines, class identifications aside. However, Rick's emphasis on community reframes this sometimes-derided Elbowian choice as a conscious move towards promoting responsibility and defining each student's role in the classroom community. However, he indicates—again, like the other participants—that campus space considerations rarely allow him the opportunity to engage in the teaching circle. Instead, his classroom usually features long, immovable tables that force students to face forward, cutting off their eye contact with others while reinforcing the hierarchy of the teacher at the front of the room.

This unspoken valuation of his authority runs counter to Rick's professed egalitarian philosophies. To work to complicate this student-teacher relationship, he introduces humor in the classroom, often opening each meeting with a video or an anecdote about his own gaming life. He said, "I usually start off the class with a joke or some kind of funny thing. Usually it's a personal anecdote that relates to what I'm talking about. Sometimes it includes my wife, playing games. I like to tell stories of her playing Mario Kart, and Guitar Hero, and how she's better than I am at those kinds of things." This effacement of ego and resultant complication of teacher-as-sage, Rick noted, works to make his students more comfortable, more engaged with class. It also works to make them see his role as one open to error and weakness. Further, he admits to his students that he earned low grades on his first undergraduate English papers, a point he didn't question at the time because "when I was a student, I thought that my professors knew everything and

did everything right the first time.” He told me that it took several years to understand that his teachers were fallible: “I don’t think I really figured that out until I was a junior or senior, and by that time, when you start making connections of your own, you can kind of catch your teachers making mistakes.” Rick notes a set of strategies that work to humanize him to his students—admitting defeat when playing video games with his wife (even though his position is one of expertise in the field), admitting to poor grades in the same kind of class his students are taking—and through these admissions, he models trust.

By relating scenarios that, for a number of graduate students, might feel embarrassing, Rick shows his students that he trusts them to withhold judgment and, by proxy, presents an empathic persona. This empathy cues a pedagogy of both comfort and care. This care, I argue, directly connects to Rick’s experience growing up in a small town where he felt supported and comfortable.

Rick chose a smaller institution for his undergraduate education, seeking to replicate this community feel, and that experience helps define who he wishes to be in the classroom: “I know when I went to my small school, there were teachers there that everybody said, Oh, you have to take this teacher because he’s going to change your life or whatever. And I don’t know how that works here, partly because I wasn’t at a big school, but it’s such a small campus that there were teachers that everybody wanted to take because they knew they would get something very important out of it, and they’d come to it with a different kind of mentality, maybe.” The emphasis here on students talking to one another to gain the most valuable classroom experience cannot be discounted simply because Rick teaches at an institution of 26,000. The attraction of a smaller campus directly informs his decision to return to a similar academic setting; however, his organization of

first-year composition, with its small class size and his attention to trust building, complicates this relationship: he wishes to allow students in his class the same kinds of opportunities for networking and human connection that he felt campus-wide as an undergraduate and community-wide as a resident of Holston.

In naming his role in this classroom community, Rick's deep connection to the lateral classroom came through: "I try to be like the guy that gets people together on a Saturday night. Literally, in some ways. I got [together] a little discussion board where they can play games together on Xbox live, so in the literal way some of them actually do that on Saturday night. I've even played [Xbox] with some of my students on a Saturday night." He worked to clarify this role so that the intricacies of the relationships were highlighted. It wasn't that Rick sought the approval of his students as a peer, which may be a concern with this type of egalitarian pedagogy.

Respect for his role in the classroom extends beyond his mutual interest in gaming and game culture, into his concern with structuring and presenting opportunities for students to practice their rhetorical arts and crafts without fear of humiliation. He further defined his position in the classroom: "[I would be] some kind of organizer-type person. Maybe that goes back to the Saturday night thing. Organizer, but... and I mean, I do feel like there are people in the community that are genuinely helpful and knowledgeable and are able to share that knowledge in the community. So maybe that type of person, too. You know, within your neighbor network." In addition to his role as a student in his own class—he stated that he learns as much from his students' work as they learn in the classroom—Rick positions himself as the helpful neighbor, the fellow citizen who unifies the group and also provides guidance.

Embodied Teaching: Individualized Learning through Workshops

This community-based teaching model is further embodied through Rick's one-one-one and group interaction with his students. Though he laments that his teaching spaces don't allow much in the way of circle-making, he does strive to know about his students' lives outside his classroom to better teach them in it. As a first-year doctoral student, Rick teaches one section of first-year composition each semester. In comparison to his master's degree teaching load of 2:2, Rick feels that this reduced course load allows him to employ more individualized teaching strategies and alter the arc of the course to meet the students' stated needs. Rick also emphasized the importance of knowing about his students to ascertain when they struggle: "So there are specific students who I know have been frustrated for whatever reason, and I can tell in class they're frustrated with something, and I'd say, Hey, why don't we meet so I can clarify this, and they've been really open to that." Rick detailed a process delicately cued in to both verbal and nonverbal cues, a process that relies on his acumen and engagement with individual students and close attention to the emotional environment of the classroom.

Rick's course assignments offer another aspect of his teaching that's directly related to his identification as working class. First, as mentioned, he structures his semester so that the last month of class, a full four weeks, is devoted to in-class workshopping of student papers. This attention to process ensures that students will gain valuable practice in drafting for an audience; however, he also holds to portfolio grading. No paper grade, he asserted, is final until the end of the semester. Students are invited to revise and resubmit their work with the benefits of both peer and instructor feedback. This emphasis on process, he noted, is borne directly from his own experiences with low grades in English: "I

got Ds on my first paper that I couldn't take away, you know what I mean? So after that, I was trying to look for ways to get my paper better before I turned it in, rather than after, but then also stuck with the bad grades." Here, Rick articulated an experience where he felt that his learning and writing process led to punitive damages; that is to say that, while the low grade on the first paper helped him better write the later ones, the lack of an option to revise meant that this learning experience was based in punishment.

Rick's revision policy—that a student may revise any of their major work through the end of the semester—makes material his teaching philosophy based in trust. With his marginal comments and the knowledge they acquire throughout the semester, Rick's students know that he will evaluate their last drafts as their best drafts. It is important to note that Rick does not average revision grades with the original score. Instead, he told me, he hopes students feel motivated enough by the open policy to thoroughly engage with their writing products as artifacts in process.

This strategy connects to Rick's articulated ethical obligation to his students, a move that he frames as a derivative of his undergraduate experience: "I didn't have a chance. I got bad grades on my first papers, I couldn't dig myself out of it, so I didn't do so hot in the first class I took. So that's also the reason why I want [them] to do [revisions]... and I feel like I'm obligated to at least allow them to kind of work through that process."

The Labor of the First-Year Writing Classroom: Community Ethics

This attention to revision does mean that students have the opportunity to write more than is expected or required in a first-year composition class. He feels that the parsing of labor is effective and said that he reduces the amount of smaller assignments to give students the time to revise. He stated discomfort with the idea of what many students

consider “busy work,” or, as he described it, assignments that have no clear connection to the larger goals of the class: “I just hate work for the idea of just work, you know? I think that’s why I choose video games to teach.” The invocation of the idea of work, its detriments, and its rewards recalls his narrative about mowing lawns with his brother; they put in the labor and took away a monetary reward. There, he learned of the intimate relationship between labor and capital. By eschewing “busy work,” he models for his students that when they labor for him through lower-risk assignment, the work pays dividends by preparing them for higher-risk assignments as the two are closely aligned.

This idea of labor is further complicated through an examination of his course content: video games, a topic he admitted causes some confusion among students who think that their first-year composition class will contend with video-game playing, not the study of the rhetorical artifacts created by and for gaming. He clearly articulated his decision to teach rhetoric via gaming: “[There is] this weird line in games between work and play. And a lot of stuff you do in games is work, but it’s also learning and play. So, for me, I try to create my classes around that distinction of what is work, what is play, how do we feel like we’re playing when really we’re working? And how do we create fun around the stuff we do.” Creating play from work invokes Rick’s time in the Kawasaki factory, where he would

have these games I would play with myself and the guy next to me. I would race him to try to finish my stuff before him. Each time that I got finished, I wouldn’t say anything, but in my head, I was [happy with winning]. ... Or mowing, you’d start doing these designs with the mower ... so, I was trying to create some kind of way, of either a competitive or fun way to make the time go faster while I was doing the

kind of manual labor or work that was there for a purpose, but not something that I was really interested in doing.

Because factory work was, in Rick's terms, the "worst, most monotonous work" he had ever done, he understands the psychic toll of unfulfilling labor. And because the first-year composition class, due to its strong emphasis on writing, may be construed by some students as equally unfulfilling, Rick works to make his course goals enjoyable and relevant to students' lives outside of the classroom.

Cueing Community Roles: Dress as a Dialectical Performance

To reinforce the community ideals he professes and to embody the goals of a lateral classroom, Rick also sends his students cues through his dress. Though modes of dress did not surface as relevant in every interview, Rick indicated that, for him, what to wear as the teacher on record was directly influenced by his family work history and his own labor past. For him, it is important to "work beside, not above" his students, and this delicate positioning is reflected in his decision to dress casually in the classroom. Rick's self-identification as being both working class and from a small town—and his move to articulate these identity markers to his students—both verbally and in the way he dresses—is worth quoting at length:

I tell them up front in class, the first thing I say is, I'm Rick, I'm from Holston, Missouri, I'm from a small town. ... My [high school] class size was 24, just to kind of let them know that my identity as a professor is important to myself ... for them to know who I am, because I feel like ... even in that statement, [it] says something about how I grew up with parents who wore tee shirts and jeans to work or a flannel and jeans to work and to me, that's what you do when you go to work. And

for me when I go to teach, that's what I wear. It's my work clothes. But it's also what I'm most comfortable in. ... So that's kind of what I want my students to understand, is that I'm casual, but this is kind of how I show myself in the classroom. I'm there to work with them, not work above them.

By analogy, he connects his role in the classroom—and the interaction of this role with the students—with his time in the factory, a rich move that clarified both his teaching philosophy and his invocation of his working-class self-identification in these philosophies: "If, you know, in the factory, if the suits come around, then that's, you know, you gotta be on your best behavior. Your supervisor is probably ... a lot more like the way you dress in a lot of ways, or they're going to wear the exact same thing. You know, at Kawasaki, everybody wore the exact same thing, and so, except for when the suit comes around... [Students] probably perceive me, at the very least, stereotypically, and if I can turn that on its head, then I think that's important for how they view small town people, depending on where they're from." Rick noted that students' expectations of professors' dress and classroom personas could hamstring him into an uncomfortable role.

However, instead of fulfilling these expectations—and here, Rick posits that students expect professors to dress and speak “formally” and to claim access to “higher culture” backgrounds—Rick complicates that stereotype by wearing jeans and a tee-shirt, the same clothing his parents wore when laboring in a factory, and by citing a small-town background. This embodied identification accomplishes a number of things: first, it creates a dichotomy whereby Rick appears to be more closely aligned with students than with other, more “formal” professors. This identification works in tandem with the course topic of video games to both engage and interest. Second, Rick’s self-identification as coming

from a small-town, blue-collar background serves as a marker for possibility: He sees this presentation as, like his role within his dream institution, an ethical obligation: “So if [students] are from a small town, then they can say, Oh, that's cool. If they're from a big city but think of small town as hicks, then they will think of, you know, Maybe this guy's gonna be a hick, maybe not.” His pedagogical performance both contradicts and redefines his role as a college-level instructor while working to reinforce his students’ trust in him as a community leader. His material identification thus cues his role as a facilitator, instead of the prescriptivist judge that many first-year writing students fear.

Rick’s narrative pulls together a number of interesting and intersecting points. Our interviews were laced with references to a sense of community borne from a small-town childhood. He works to replicate the positive aspects of this community, like trust in others and knowing people by name, in his first-year writing classroom. As such, he presented a teaching philosophy centered on ethical obligation to others. Further, a family history of agriculturalism and connection to manual labor colors his present-day decisions, from his teaching methods and methodologies to his desires for the future to his academic interests. Rick unequivocally considers himself working class, with his parameters of status focused strongly on experience, with echoes of ideological aspects—such as a valuation of the “purity” of manual labor—and economic concerns—such as purchasing power. Behind all three areas—experiential, ideological, and economic—ran a strong dialectical identification: Rick worked at his self-definition of working class by defining his experiences against the perceived lives of others.

Rick’s connection to the Midwest presented the heart of his narrative. It was through these recollections that we delved into some of the most pertinent aspects of his

teaching and scholarly life. One particular excerpt poetically ascribed this confluence of feelings—home and away—and quoting it at length helps establish Rick’s ethos and connection to the land, his past, his future, and his teaching:

Let’s say I go back to the Midwest [when I finish my degree]. I’ve always got a group in my hometown anyway, or when I’m with my brother, I always have a group of people that usually have manual labor tasks to do. I feel like that’s something I really want to be involved in, and that kind of smaller community with a smaller campus, that kind of community involvement and whether it’s community-service-type stuff or someday I have kids and they have their own little lawn service or whatever it might be. I feel like those are definite values I want to pass down. And you can do that in other places too. But that’s definitely how I see the working-class lessons come out through the community and through possibly kids and that kind of thing.

Here, Rick connects a myriad of ideas: his affiliation with his family and the landscape, his perception of his role in the institution where he might teach, his plans for community involvement, and his strong feelings towards “passing down” the values associated with manual labor and giving back to one’s community. This idea of hands-on work, work that one can see and feel in the body, offered a framing device for all of our talks. Laying fence—as his father did through his own company—stands in relief in both labor and payoff to, for example, conducting and writing up a long-term research project or composing a seminar paper for a class. Rick distinguishes these often-opposed practices through the concept of pride in one’s work and feelings of completion:

I mean, to some degree, it’s just about seeing accomplishment, so whenever we build fence, you’d start and there’d be this line, right, dad would put a string line,

and this is where we gotta be by the end of the day, and when you got there, there's a definite feeling of accomplishment. And it's physical as well as mental as well as aesthetic. Because when I was done, you'd have this kind of really kind of beautiful white fence that would be going up the hill or something. And in those kinds of things, we're all always, they gave me some kind of motivation to keep finishing the job or keep doing that thing just because it looked good and we were doing it, and it was our name: [last name] fencing. So those types of things were always motivating for me too. And I feel like that kind of motivation is what I also, that kind of pride in work is what I also want to pass along too. Students, my family, future family, hopefully, those types of things. (emphasis mine)

Rick connects the feelings he had while laying fence with his dad to his motivation to work, and this work ethic makes its way into Rick's journey through his doctorate and his goals for life afterwards. I do feel that it's important to note that Rick, like the other participants, emphatically stated a desire to work at a teaching university, rather than a Research 1 institution, when he finishes his degree. The smaller sizes of some teaching colleges, as well as their availability close to his hometown, appeals to Rick, who sees himself best utilized in the classroom. His past experiences and identification with working-class ideologies makes him well suited to reach students from similar backgrounds. His ideal teaching situation would place him within a smaller faculty, on a smaller, more rural campus, with more individualized classes and smaller student-to-teacher ratios. This decision to focus post-doctoral employment on a teaching institution, like many of the aspects we touched on in interviews, is not unique to working-class graduate students. Many doctoral candidates feel strongly about teaching and about their

impact in a more personalized setting. What makes Rick's decision an important one to query is his identification of his background as a frame centered on ethical obligation:

I feel like if I teach at these kinds of smaller [colleges], even if it's a community college or a junior college, I'll be really happy knowing that some of those students probably are in the same situation that I was. And if I can be that kind of reinforcement in any way, as a teacher, and give them something to kind of feel like that they are making a difference, at least within themselves, they are gaining knowledge about a topic, or understanding something about the world that they didn't understand before, then that's kind of important to me.

He marks what he perceives to be the defining difference between scholars focused on research and those focused on teaching: "And a Research 1 institution is more focused on what you do [as a scholar]. I just don't think I'd enjoy that as much as being there with the students in the classroom."

This identification with teaching-as-ethical-work and its provenance in Rick's working-class background frame his story as one of community building and flourishing, one of rites of passage as he ushers first-year students through composition in ways that support and honor their prior experiences while helping them form discourse communities.

Chapter 6: Tabitha

I almost identify as more immigrant class as straight blue collar, technically my dad as a college degree, a master's degree, my mother then got a master's degree after I was born, but they very much had a mentality that getting an education was about getting a job, and that's one of my big struggles: I have an engineering degree when I would not have chosen that.

I tell my students you might think that you're not going to be English majors. Doesn't matter. But if you're a manager of a company and need to send out a memo, you need to be able to write. When I was an engineer, and we had to turn in reports, some of them, the engineers, could not write. I believe so strongly in our program. I think that what we do is phenomenal. Especially with all of the politicians and newspapers and their parents and preachers shoving things down their throats, becoming aware of the tactics people use, starting to separate information from authority, not just taking information as true or it should be true. It's just one of the most important things in life you can give a kid, those tools. But beyond: we have this opportunity where we create a space where we get them to think and get them excited.

I did go to boarding school: I went for free to an institution which cost \$13,000-14,000 a year for a day student, \$25,000 or \$26,000 a year for a boarding student. I worked as a housekeeper there. I washed the laundry for all these rich girls who I also went to school with. It was during the summer so people didn't see it. I was highly touted as the strongest student to ever come through the school, and the next week I pulled off mattress covers and brought them to the laundry mat. My first job was actually babysitting 40 hours a week for two summers, I was 13. We were poor. I was 13 and 14, and I got paid \$126 a week, \$3 an hour, but my dad didn't have a job, and it brought money in. My parents didn't use us to support them, but they were happy someone was bringing money in. They put it in a bank account for me. At 15 I had a year off, and 16 I started working at Burger King, and my dad was always like, it's really important to have these kinds of jobs, because when you get to get above them, you'll always see the people as people.

Tabitha's narrative began with her hesitation to identify as working class. She participated in the pilot study in the winter of 2008 and had expressed the same misgivings then about her right to claim working-class status. As the first line of her poem details, she identifies with an "immigrant class" more fully than "straight blue collar." Complicating her family's access to education—a move that Tabitha makes to cue attainment as a marker for class status—is her own educational background. She attended a prestigious boarding school in Connecticut, an experience that, without doubt, brings up images of wealth and comfort. However, she noted, she attended this college-prep school on scholarship and worked summers at the institution to offset some of the costs.

This tension between elite schooling and working-class or blue-collar identification runs throughout our interviews as Tabitha and I traversed her family history, her own labor past, and her current class identification—the first time, she said, that she's really felt the right to claim to be working class. "I think I self-selected," she explained, "as working class because my parents had so much the ideology of a lot of what would be tied to a working-class [life], as far as education. Probably not in other areas as much." Tabitha detailed, and as I explore later, an educational past focused on employability, stability, and sustainability. The intrinsic goals of schooling were, for her, directly connected to her ability to earn a wage after it was completed. This instrumental focus, as she noted, implicates working-class ideologies.

Definitions of Class

Working Class is Not Immigrant Class: A Complex Definition

But Tabitha's story began much earlier than her boarding school years, with her family's immigration to America from Greece and Ireland. Her paternal Greek descendants

“got here late 19th century, after my great grandpa fought in World War I. He was from a small town in Illinois ... He came back and he got a little plate commemorating that he fought in World War I, and then the KKK burned down his ice cream shop, and ran him out of town. So then they went back to Long Island. That immigrant mentality has stayed in part because of the persecution or the being treated as immigrants stayed that long.” Her maternal grandparents sailed from Ireland, only to meet “Irish Need Not Apply” signs and growing intolerance towards immigrants.

Tabitha continued to detail her mother’s family’s struggle to survive in this new land: “That that stigma stayed with us with generations, and her father went to college and got a degree and yet he still had to work three jobs cause he couldn't make any money, and then the Depression, the whole family really suffered ... There's no money for anyone to do anything in that family, and so her brothers went into the military to get an education, and she was not expected to ever get an education, just to work, and so she got her college degree after I was born, when she finally could.” This family history of persecution and violence, labor with no reward, and struggle against insurmountable national forces has worked to shape Tabitha’s own worldview, as it has been filtered through both sides—her mother and father—and almost 200 years of financial uncertainty: “There's no provision in either family for kids to do well, or [for the feeling that] we're finally here and safe.” Because her family has struggled for so long, her parents, she related, insisted on education for employment’s sake; Tabitha holds an undergraduate degree in Engineering, a long disciplinary journey from her current interests of first-year composition and medieval studies.

Her family settled in Connecticut, a move she admits makes it harder for them to succeed financially since the state has one of the highest cost-of-living indexes in the nation. Tabitha identified both Connecticut and Illinois as home states, and she told me that her future as an academic focuses more on working at a small, teaching-centered school than returning to either of those states. She is entering the fourth year of her doctoral program, and in those years, she has identified a passion for teaching, a connection that's garnered her much departmental attention through award nominations and invitations to serve on many teaching-focused committees and workshops.

Tabitha cited her boarding school education as one experience that prompts her connection to the classroom—as I will detail later, her one-on-one interaction with her high school teachers now informs her own teaching person—but it is her self-identification as working class that drives her two-part scholarly interests. While, on the one hand, she dives into medieval texts and makes contextual and philosophical associations between these antique authors and their artifacts, on the other hand, she is made present and embodied through her work in the first-year composition classroom. Because, she says, she was pushed so unwillingly into Engineering, a field for which she holds aptitude but little interest, she has focused her doctoral studies on specializations that feel, to her, to hold very little practical weight.

Within medieval studies, she enjoys researching the role of humor in texts. This decision was directly guided by what she considers a lack of real-world application. However, she noted that the appeal of teaching for her lies in its ethical ramifications: she can give students the opportunity to investigate new and challenging ideas and to practice new literacies. This two-sided coin—on one side, the narrowness of studying humor in

600-year-old texts, and on the other, the practicality and marketability of being a good teacher—defined many of our conversations.

To work to understand Tabitha's pedagogies and philosophies, I present a detailed exploration of her sometimes contradictory views on class, as well as her own misgivings about claiming working-class status, and her articulations of the effects of this identification on her teaching. These definitions of class are intricately connected, so much so that to separate them is confusing and offers a false sense of compartmentalization. Instead, I present Tabitha's definitions of class, as they are both experientially and economically detailed and further framed through the invocation of her family's "immigrant mentality."

Experientially and Economically Bound: "For Us, There Wasn't That Freedom"

Tabitha, like the other participants, self-selected for this study, though she admitted doing so with misgivings. Because, as noted, her parents both hold degrees and she was educated at a boarding school, Tabitha feels ambivalent about her right to claim this status and the assumptions others may make when she makes this claim. This hesitation cues her valuation of experience in defining working-class status; because she experienced an educational background that was prohibitively expensive—even though she attended boarding school on scholarship—and because her parents both hold college degrees, she wondered aloud about her right to identify with a status that often signal lack of access and educational struggle. However, she lands on economic concerns and the role of education in securing a stable financial future to work out her self-definition:

In our family, money is never guaranteed. We're not from wealth. We aren't wealth.

My parents are fine. They've worked hard for what they have, but every year is

shaky, so that means... when their kids go to college, they don't feel comfortable saying, Oh do what you want. Find yourself. I think that's a privilege you get when you come from at least an upper, middle class, so kids can become art majors or history majors, and then kind of float around Europe for awhile. It's just kind of that ability to coast, whereas for us there was not that freedom.

Tabitha related a narrative uncommon now: a scenario where children who have left for college are assumed to be independent and are then responsible, at 18 years old, for their own success or failure. Her story is rich with the idea of self-sufficiency, an ideology which surfaced throughout our interviews and which undergirds all American Dream tales, and which contradicts Daniel's (Chapter 4) position on the genre. She continued, "We were not allowed to go home when we finished school. They were not going to take care of us. They maybe couldn't as well, so even though they were comfortable, there wasn't any kind of flexibility or room for generosity with that, so a lot of education had to be about you [getting] a job." With this paradigm in mind, Tabitha laid out her multivalenced self-identification as working class: her own discomfort with the classification came from her experiences, while her economic and ideological background places her firmly, in her estimation, within the working class.

And while Tabitha's current iterations of class hold forth from generations of struggle, her claim has been fully realized only since entering graduate study and has become particularly relevant in the last two years: "I probably more identify as working class than I ever have before, because I am so poor, and being not married ... and just living off the stipend... I own a house in a poor area of town, so I feel like for the first time in my life, or since the first time since before I went to high school, I'm actually living in the

socioeconomic class I should be living in.” Because she attended boarding school—albeit, on scholarship—she experienced the same cultural and political movements as her middle- and upper-class-non-scholarship peers: “I feel like in high school, because of the scholarships and stuff, I got moved up to another economic class, and a number of other kids were as well, but and it kind of leveled out the playing field when I was there, because I was smart, as opposed to just pure economics, but I got to start moving with the more upper class.” Her undergraduate education at Northwestern, one of the best Engineering schools in the country, and her life in suburban Illinois offered the same mix of class allegiance: “you get to be in these really nice neighborhoods, but you're not necessarily paying a lot, [and] [e]ven though I personally wasn't making a lot of money and chose not to and chose to do poor things, like I kind of could still move with the upper crust.” Here, Tabitha recognized a schism between classes and the ease with which she could move in “upper crust” circles because of her boarding-school past.

However, these lifestyle cues—living in nicer neighborhoods, attending expensive schools, socializing with the “upper crust”—felt false to her, in the same way that her current living situation feels more true to her actual life and background. These details helped illustrate Tabitha’s self-definition of working class as primarily economic and ideological: she could move easily in upper-class circles because of her experiences, yet her financial means and work ethic presented differences between her world view and that of her peers’. To clarify, while Tabitha shared experiences with her boarding school and undergraduate colleagues, her family’s past, their ideologies, and her own work experiences solidified her working-class identification.

Ideologically Bound: Emphasis on Independence

An idea of flying without a net—the valuation of pure self-sufficiency—framed Tabitha’s broad social definition of working class, as well as providing the foundation for her own self-identification. Interestingly and consistent with her experience, Tabitha defined working-class status economically and ideologically. Economically, she stated, people who can claim working-class status are those who “literally have to work, and they have to work every year if they’re going to make it.” Here, I pause to note that Tabitha’s definition of working-class as a life of constant labor (in comparison with lifestyles that afford months, even years, of leisure time) could be attributed to her upbringing in New England or her interaction with very wealthy students in boarding school. Nevertheless, her definition relies on a sense of being “on the brink,” an experience her family, she said, has lived for decades. She detailed this precariousness through the trope of accumulated wealth and compulsory labor, a paradigm that insinuates both breathless need and hard-scrabble work. Those in the working-class, she asserted,

don't have the luxury of ... trust funds. They might, but I'm saying overall, working-class people don't have trust funds or great amounts of savings or stock options or things like that to rely on, and [they are] people who actually have to work year in and year out. At retirement, they can stop working; they've saved up for that. Or maybe not, maybe they have to keep working part time. So to me that's the difference between the people who are fine if they need to change jobs or something falls through for them economically, [and] the people who really don't have that safety net for them.

Reverberations of this definition run deep throughout Tabitha’s narrative. Her family is still “unsettled” and because of their emphasis on independence, she strongly

identified as having no familial financial safety net. The focus for a person who identifies as working class, in Tabitha's approximation, is daily work with the understanding that work is the activity around which life gathers. Even in retirement, she asserted, those who identify as working class get no rest: many must work far past 65 to afford basic needs like medicine and food.

Here, like many of the other participants, Tabitha cues the material and corporeal connections to class. Underlying Tabitha's economic definition of working class is the assumption that these kinds of job don't pay well, or, at the very least, don't pay a sufficient wage to allow for savings and retirement. Unlike Rick's definition—where a farmer may earn \$200,000 annually but still claim working-class status because of his job—Tabitha's social definition suggests lower-than-living-wage earning, or at least wage earning that is unable to support the chosen lifestyle. This economic definition is a direct offshoot of Tabitha's personal experience, as she identified past jobs—like babysitting and food service—that did pay insufficient wages.

Empathy is Class Bound: An Ideology of Dis/Engagement

Tabitha complicates this economic definition of class by introducing an ideological matrix centered on empathy. She identified a schism in perceptions of reality between those who identify as working class and those who don't. In particular, the working class is forced, by the urgent nature of their work and the need for immediate results, to focus on present, embodied actions. Because their lives are structured around work—and here, Tabitha seems to settle on more physical types of labor—their attention centers on the material. In contrast, she elaborated, “people with the safety net and the money are much more interested in this abstract universe. The world's kind of a generous place, and they

have a very soft side of humanity, and if we could just help everyone and get them to where we are... people are really good deep down, and that kind of politic.” Tabitha asserted that theoretical musings are a luxury afforded to those who aren’t concerned with immediate need, whose attentions aren’t consumed by physical labor or financial necessity.

And while academics may still suffer financially—a look at the current pay for adjuncts in the humanities confirms this need—they still hold positions which demand their mental labor, a different set of demands than a job which requires a physical commitment. Further, because of this time allocated to the abstract, members of the middle- and upper-class are able to distance themselves from the workings of the world outside the academy, a world of laborers and struggle and need and injury. To them, Tabitha asserts, the “world is a kind and generous place” and “people are really good deep down.” In comparison, Tabitha’s ideological definition of working class seems to stem from experience: those who toil have seen the way Capitalist America works at its very core. They have been the alienated laborers referenced by Marxists; ironically, Tabitha notes, many of these Marx scholars, at least in her experience, have yet to experience alienating labor.

Material Needs: “Finally Working Class”

This recognition of the material constraints presented by financial need dogs Tabitha now, as she works to make ends meet on a graduate student stipend of just over \$1,100 a month. Her background, however, makes need visible to her, and she acknowledged that, though she lives in an old house in a lower-income part of town, she has opportunities denied to her neighbors, who are struggling in the current economic downturn. Unlike many of her neighbors, Tabitha’s current financial need is a result of a

conscious decision to pursue an advanced degree, and not the result of a job layoff, family illness, or other out-of-her-control factor. With this admission, Tabitha signals a matrix of feelings directly implicative of her identification: satisfaction in finally feeling “at home” in her economic reckoning, even though she struggles, and gratitude in her freedom of movement.

At the same time, however, Tabitha recognizes the fragility of her financial situation in a way that, perhaps, a graduate student from a more economically stable—or less self-sufficient—family structure might not. She stated, “I chose to go to grad school. Oh yeah, I turned down that management job, so my friends are getting new cars and new houses. And I have an old house which needs a lot of work, and I have a really old car which I can hardly afford to fix, and then with my neighbors, who I get to see are really struggling, especially with this recession, I feel the impact of it, and I'm not above it, I'm not any better off than they are, and I won't be unless I get a teaching job on the far side of it. So I feel more than ever [that] I identify with it on a very purely economic, economic opportunity, how solid am I in this recession, will I be able to pay off my student loans, will I be able to support myself kind of way.” Unlike many of her middle-and-upper-class peers, she related, her family does not have the financial means to support her if her aspirations don't pan out. She is on her own, and her choice to attend graduate school and enter the academic marketplace is one she alone will have to financially support.

Use and Embodiment

Doghouses and Dark Sides

Tabitha further enriched her ideological definition through the element of use and usefulness. People who identify as working class, because of their limited finances, must by

necessity be able to do “basic” tasks that the middle- and upper-class generally pay someone else—someone in a blue-collar position, usually—to do. Tabitha detailed what she considered a lack of practical usefulness among those outside the working class and “people who often see the real dark side of humanity and deal with it and they kind of know things in a very practical [way], skill wise, how to fix their own cars and houses cause they have to because they can't just hire somebody to do it.” In this statement, Tabitha presents two important components: knowing the “dark side of humanity” and “knowing things in a very practical way.” This classed way of knowing suggests an operationalized political matrix that helps determine a person’s relationship with herself and the outside world.

And because those in the working class have often labored under oppressive power structures, have often taken up labor that is unsatisfying and dangerous, and have, in many cases, seen their labor not pay off long-term, Tabitha suggests that these people are less likely to idealize human relationships. The “dark side” of humanity is present in their everyday lives and dictates their body’s movement, as well as their social movement. Further, they must arm themselves with skills that those in the middle- and upper-class may view as obsolete: after all, why would one choose to service his own car while service shops are available? In reality, Tabitha suggested, these working-class citizens must become jacks-and-jills-of-many-trades in order to operate within their wage structure.

But this sense of usefulness takes a valued role in Tabitha’s narrative. She told me, “I mean I know sometimes with the working class there's often a suspicion with educated people in general and how educated people try to like seem like they're so much better than working-class people and like [to] pull the wool over our eyes [with] all the terms and things that they use, and at the end of the day, I think it's pretty clear that educated people

are no better than working-class people. They're actually often not as wise, often too lost in their books and don't know how to do basic things like fix their car or build a dog house." While paying someone to build a dog house, for example, is certainly an easier and less labor-intensive route, building a dog house connects the laborer with his environment. Abstractions are not present in dog-house building. One doesn't get lost in terminology, and there's no need to debate the ontological uses of a dog house. This statement on self-worth holds the center of Tabitha's self and social definition of working-class status: Education does not equal class. Experience can be performed, as she learned through boarding school, but hands-on work—a physical connection to the product of labor—is equally as important as theoretical, cerebral labor.

Mysticism and Language: Class-Bound Charms and Confusions

I will note, also, her implication of mysticism through language here, or the ability of academics, in particular, to "pull the wool" over everyone else's eyes (via Burke, 1962, *Grammar of Motives*). This recognition of academese, which she cues through the phrase "all the terms they use" undergirds Tabitha's relationship with her place in the academic sphere: she stated that she does not self-identify as an academic because

I don't care about some of the stuff that you're supposed to care about if you're an academic, and partially because I just still feel like I haven't put in some of the things that I probably should put in to be seriously considered by academics as a peer, so for instance, I have not published a paper. I'm going to try this year, but really, I would just really like to get one paper published and be done, instead of being like, I can't wait to become known in my field, and I have all of this great Foucault research

to share, it's just not my game, that on some level, I guess I feel caught between two worlds.

Tabitha acknowledges a dualism that's become prevalent in working-class studies, specifically those autobiographies by working-class academics. However, Tabitha's dualism does not stem, it appears, from feelings of being an imposter within the university, but from a desire to fit in with her working-class friends. She recognized that her extensive education makes her different from, say, many of her church friends, and she works to minimize these differences. She stated:

I do know a lot more than a lot of people, and sometimes when it slips out, I forget how it appears, and I actually am also constantly thinking about very big things. So, sometimes it's like I don't necessarily fit in a group that's just talking about marriage or local concerns, because that's all I know. And there's a lot of ways in which some of the things I am most interested in I can't talk with a lot of people about... some of my more abstract thinking. I do have to kind of keep [it] for this arena, or sometimes just working it out in the classroom is where I have the most fun kind of trying to pull the kids into it, because they're more open to it, but I can't let that part of me go a lot of times like at church. Or [in] my neighborhood probably as well, [there] would be the same kind of [confusion].

What's interesting to note about this extensive excerpt is Tabitha's lack of concern with fitting in within the university. She never worried about being able to perform within the academy, since her boarding school background has supplied her with "pedigree" and the references she needs to gain respect among her fellow academics. Instead, Tabitha is concerned about alienating her friends who generally, she said, identify as working class.

Because of her background, she understands that conversations about abstract topics may appear elitist or off-putting, and she remarked that she saves those kinds of conversations for the classroom, where she has “the most fun trying to pull the kids into it.”

Tabitha’s definitions of working class stem directly from her family’s ideological leanings—their “immigrant mentality”—and from their struggles to become financially sound and settled. These ideologies created in Tabitha an intense desire to follow her educational path, even if that path does not guarantee financial stability, and a strong sense of self-reliance. Though she questions her self-definition because of her boarding school and undergraduate experiences, her valuation of economic need—defined through work without a “safety net”—and her framing of labor as useful defines her class positioning. Because her worldview is one which holds practicality as important and because her background has equipped her with sensitivity to the physical demands of working-class labor, she structures her first-year writing classroom as a sort of interstitial area where hands-on and theoretical meet. It is to her pedagogical philosophies and practice that I turn.

Pedagogies

“That’s the Guiding Light”

Tabitha identifies first as a teacher, and it was through talking about her teaching that she became the most excited: “I think the one thing in my life that really makes sense at this point is that I really love teaching. ... I’ve just been frustrated for so many years of my life, with other people telling me what to do ... and [then] I find something that I’m really good at, and I’m doing well at it, so for me that’s the guiding light for the next couple of years.” Tabitha described her relationship with teaching first-year composition as one of

joy and fulfillment. As the excerpt details, she frames teaching as her guiding principal as she finishes her doctorate. This statement echoed the other five participants, who all identified themselves first as teachers, then as students and scholars.

First-Year Composition: Labor both Dialogic and Embodied

Tabitha's teaching has been recognized on the department level through teaching award nominations and invitations to serve on teaching-focused committees. As the beginning of this chapter describes, she is fully involved in many aspects of first-year composition, and she admitted to "put[ting] so much more energy into it than probably [she] need[s] to," but that her time in the classroom is "when [she] come[s] alive and find[s] a reward." Tabitha describes a teaching persona that's enthusiastic and engaged. Since she finds satisfaction in teaching first-year writing, she tends to labor intensively in preparation, sometimes waking up during the night, she related, to note an idea for the next day's class.

This deep engagement is not limited, of course, to teaching assistants who profess working-class status; however, Tabitha's philosophies, I assert, are directly connected to her history of labor performed and witnessed, as well as her family's immigrant status. Her classroom teaching relies on a dialogic process whereby she consistently works to pick up on the subtle cues of her students and alters her lessons accordingly. She works, in effect, to make the concepts of the class accessible to all students, not only those who have been groomed to succeed in school. She told me, "I fundamentally think that students are constantly dependent on you and reacting off you and reacting off how you are in front of the classroom. So if you're nervous, they're nervous. ... But if you act elite or proper or distant, then they're very much reacting off of that as well, and they will take everything in

your class, I think, based on that.” This embodied teaching philosophy relies on Tabitha’s close attention to the ecology of her classroom, much like Rick, from subtle body language cues to verbalizations, and works from the assumption that students play an important role in the arc of class activities. Her teaching is both reactive and embodied in this way, as she recognizes that performing the Sage-on-a-Stage may prevent some students from participating in class. This acknowledgement of the social ramification of the performance of “academic” also recalls her negotiation of interpersonal relationships with her church friends. There, she utilizes the same reactive, dialogic stance to avoid presenting herself as aloof or elitist.

Here, it may be easy to shuttle aside Tabitha’s dialogic teaching as student-centered via Elbow (*Writing Without Teachers*, 1998). Many graduate students and professors alike hold such a teaching philosophy. However, Tabitha’s own work history and identification makes her particularly sensitive to shutting down students from working-class backgrounds, not because she herself was shut down, but because of her awareness of working-class stereotypes about the “overeducated,” to recall her statement about the mystifying uses of academese. She recognized and named a number of kinds of students she observed in her classroom: There were the “overachiever[s]. Not always, but often, they’re kids that are suburban, upper-middle class, well groomed, good clothes, high achievers, straight As, want As, looking at professional ambitious careers of some sort”

These students, she argued, are “easy to reach, you can also entertain them that way. They also can be reached by that. But there’s a way that they’re often primed to learn things, and learn abstract things, and to kind of follow you where you go. Probably their parents have been professionals or intellectuals. I have a number of kids who kind of fit

that mold, they'll come and tell me, Oh, my parents are real history buffs. So they're kind of primed for this already." She paused: "Those aren't the kids I'm worried about." Here, Tabitha pulls from her own class knowledge and classed worldview in assuming that her students' preparation to learn is also classed. Class, then, on the other side of the desk, may factor into how students learn, a claim bolstered by the work of researchers such as Lareau (*Home Advantage*, 2000; *Unequal Childhoods*, 2003). Perhaps Tabitha's intimate relationship with work informs this empathic philosophy.

The working-class and blue-collar students, she asserted, "are not really sure why they're in college, but it's a good-thing-to-do kind of thing, and you can't grab them. That's really the goal for me. It's like, How do I get that kid who's there and I have this potential to maybe make them think about a couple more things in life, but how do I reach them?" (81-4). She acknowledged that this uncertainty about the goals of higher education may not always be a classed move, "upper-middle class kids can also party. Lower middle class kids can be achievers, but a lot of times, there seems to be... the way they self-identify would be to go to a more street, more slang, more improper way of being. They really relax how they are, as opposed to trying to appear very proper."

The "Proper" Class for College: Empathy in Practice

The potential for learning is not class bound, she asserted, yet her students' performance in the classroom may be connected to their upbringing, their labor history, and their family's relationship to work. Here, I will connect Tabitha's dialogic relationship to the students in her classroom with her definition of working-class status: the act of pondering abstractions—critical thinking, she seems to argue—is available only to those people who have the time and energy to devote to it. People who work physically

demanding jobs or who are primarily concerned with providing for their families give up this luxury in place of the embodied demands of capitalism. As such, she works to make her classroom a space where students from the working class can safely engage with difficult theoretical concepts, even if many of those students are working outside of school or devote hours to athletics. This demographic of student—the student/athlete—is one Tabitha expressed deep concern about reaching, as they often, but not always, have been coaxed into athletics because of scholarship opportunities or promises of financial stability after college: These students, she told me, often come from backgrounds which, regardless of class, don't emphasize academics:

You can tell their parents aren't intellectuals. A couple of them are hockey players. I know one of them specifically, he's actually a very good writer, but his father drives him too hard in hockey, and that's what he has to do and succeed in so he has a harder time getting everything else done. And there's a way in which even though he's very bright, he's not someone who's walking around thinking about Shakespeare in his free time, and his family doesn't either... And that's kind of, I guess that's the group I kept thinking about and referring to. They're thinking about sports and things associated with sports, partying and drinking, with their friends most of the time, and that's what they're comfortable talking about. They're not sitting in a room talking about Shakespeare because they come from a world where that is okay.

Tabitha, in this example, connects what the students value with their parents' aspirations and frames both in terms of the perceived class identification of these students.

"Intellectuals," in this schema, are people who feel comfortable discussing literature, a

classed activity in embodied terms, while parents who emphasize sports over academics are likely to be engaged more physically with the world. We return to the abstract-knowledge-as-a-middle-to-upper-class-luxury matrix that places embodied ways of knowing at the doorstep of the working class.

Tabitha has recognized that these students from working-class backgrounds tend to eschew the performance of academia, instead “really relax[ing] how they are, as opposed to trying to appear very proper.” These students “go to a more street, more slang, more improper way of being” in the classroom, she noted. Tabitha’s narrative suggests that “proper,” to her, is code for “acceptable in an academic sphere,” and the use of “street” and “slang” as antonyms suggests that “proper” could stand in for “Standard American English.” It’s not that Tabitha is deriding these students for performing non-standard academic identities in the academic sphere; instead, she’s working to set up a dichotomy between what the students expect in the classroom and the reality of the learning environment.

To this end, Tabitha enacts her own “impropriety” to upset her students’ expectations of her role in the classroom and possibly their stereotypes about how college instructors should sound. She detailed, “There’s an intentionality that I will use flame words or occasionally a curse word or things that like that kind of expresses what I know they’re thinking or what I would have thought in their time, at their point in life, and really kind of connecting it.” Here, Tabitha works to speak as she feels her students might, especially her students who might identify with working-class backgrounds, to embody her egalitarian and empathetic teaching philosophies.

Demystification: Learning the Game through Collaboration

She attributes these successes to her focus on classroom community, a commitment to demystify the academic realm, and her ability to efface her ego to promote a sense of equality. The words “relaxed” and “comfortable” ran frequently throughout her description of her students’ experiences in class, as she detailed on student’s experience: “one student specifically said, all their professors take themselves too seriously, and at the end of the day, we come to your class and just relax.” For students to use words like “relax” to describe their first-year writing class stood out as anomalous. Most students, even the good writers, identify this class as an anxious one, as the standards of college writing may differ in many ways from their secondary educational experience. Tabitha continued, “And that’s usually the big words, relaxed, comfortable, and yet they feel like they learn a lot, and from my evaluations, one thing I want to make sure I include it is that they feel they learn a lot, not just from me, but from class discussion, so I want to make sure I keep that important point because I do think if I make myself central, and [if I act like], Oh, they love me, they won’t learn as much as if I keep opening that up for class discussion, a relaxed environment where they feel comfortable contributing.” Tabitha articulated a commitment to making her students’ ideas the focal point of class and to allowing them to voice their expertise and embody their value to the classroom community.

This community building is practiced through Tabitha’s consistent use of collaborative learning groups and her emphasis on talking to students one-on-one. By having students work together, she wishes to draw out their unique worldviews and areas of expertise. In that way, each first-year writer gains value within the group, a move that recalls Rick’s pedagogies. And that group dynamic, she told me, she learned as an

engineering student forced to work with other students on hands-on projects. She learned both teamwork and professionalization, she said, through these group activities, and she works to make them as relevant to her students as they were to her: “I talk to them about how important it is for them to be able to present their ideas, especially going into the workplace one day, if you can do this, if you can summarize your thoughts and have it come out in a clear way and appear confident, you will shoot ahead in management, if that's where you're trying to go.” Though Tabitha’s pedagogy did not emphasize pragmatic templating—like resumes or business letters—in the same way that other participants did, with this kind of group work presentation, she connects their lives after college with their work in her classroom, thereby making it relevant to many of her students.

This philosophy behind collaborative learning cues one of Tabitha’s most strongly held stances: that first-year students are not empty vessels and that our job as educators is not a case of filling in the blanks (Friere, 1976). She explained this view by detailing what she feels many first-year writing instructors identify as their responsibility to students: “I think one of the things I really fight for in my teaching is I think they get a lot more than we give them credit for, and I think we always treat them like blank slates, but [if] we get the right things written on the slate or wind them up by the proper dial, then we’ve done our job.” In this case, Tabitha had brought to our interview replies to an optional email survey she sent to each student. Surprisingly, the feedback wasn’t fully positive. A few students criticized the pace of the class, the relevancy of readings, and the application of a few of the assignments to their overall education.

Tabitha admitted to enjoying the critical feedback more than the praise, as it offered insight into better teaching practices. She continued, “I love it when I get this kind of

feedback, and [I'm] just like, You guys are so bright, and I think we underestimate you guys so much, and we just freak you out all the time about making sure you do things the right way." By reacting to her informal evaluations in this way, Tabitha implicates a descriptivist, student-centered philosophy.

Grading Practices and "Strategic Empathy"

One practice Tabitha feels contributes to this anxiety among first-year writing students implicates grading practices. Tabitha's philosophy is made clear through her practice, as this extended excerpt describes:

I never get to the point where I teach them [to] cut out unnecessary words or shorten it down. I do a little bit with active and passive voice, but I don't focus on it, and this is what I said in my response to them: I really feel like if we could take off as many roadblocks as we can for you guys for how you can express yourself, and let you actually write about what you're actually interested in, and help you express yourself, everything else will follow from there. I feel like once they get their confidence up, they'll be like, Hey, I want to clean up the rest of this. But if we're always just: And then you have to do this, and then you have to do that, and then you have to do that.... We put so many roadblocks in place that they get freaked out. And then they get a ton of points off for grammar errors, and then it becomes something they dread rather than something they can be kind of excited about.

I want to call attention to the use of "proper" in that first line, as it's a word that occurred throughout our interviews to describe the ways of being inside the college classroom. As discussed, I feel that "proper," for Tabitha, means "Standard American English," and here, she's rejecting the notion of teaching SAE as a paramount form. In her grading practices,

she chooses instead to focus on issues of comprehensibility, and her critical comments tended to land, she told me, on issues of logic and support, rather than surface errors. It is interesting and important to note that she frames SAE as “proper” and yet performs “improper” in the classroom to better connect culturally with her students.

Tabitha’s methods border on expressivism in their valuation of content over form. However, she does not fully reject the formal demands of writing. Instead, she backgrounds them while at the same time moving her students’ ideas to the fore. In that way, she feels that students become more invested in their work; this investment, in turn, will lead to engagement with the assignments and a desire among students to submit the best possible written products.

Connecting Linguistically, Culturally: Upsetting Expectations through Transparency

Tabitha’s growing comfort in her teaching persona supports this stance on grading. She described an arc familiar to anyone who has taught: the first few years are chaotic at best as the new teacher works out who she wishes to be in the classroom. Issues of authority and responsibility determine this persona, as does the teacher’s background in education; that is, being a boarding school student on scholarship has directly affected Tabitha’s current teaching persona. She cited relaxation as her best improvement over the last academic year, saying “I think relaxing more and more is good. I don’t like standing up there and telling a lot of stories about myself, but being very transparent is another thing that I’m doing more and more.” This commitment to opening up the college classroom rendered a persona that held authority without holding all the answers, one which performed intellectual without performing elitist.

To reject this assumed elitism, she consciously works to connect, not only linguistically, but also culturally with her students. She detailed, “[I tell my students that] I love this comedienne. Or I told them, I really don’t like Shakespeare. I’m not teaching this class because I love Shakespeare. ... That kind of transparency. So then I feel like it can open up a lot of kids who have always felt before like this is what an English teacher says, or this is the right answer or whatever I’ve supposed to give. And making fun of myself and playing around with that kind of transparency or relaxed attitude can open up the classroom so they feel like they can join in.” Here, to Tabitha, “transparency” means presenting her students with an image of an academic who enjoys popular culture, like they might, and who, at times, may use “improper” or “slang” English.

Transparency also means calling attention to the power structures that guide her teaching and making those boundaries visible to her students. She stated, “[about] the whole page length thing, I’ll say, Yeah, part of this is BS. Part of this is that I have to assign so many pages a semester and this is part of my requirements, but part of it is that I really believe in this, and so I’m very real with my students about where requirements are and then where what I believe is, and so they know that it’s not all I’m just trumping up someone else’s game as if it’s all right. ... I’m trying to make the game more transparent for them.” This acknowledgement of academics as a “game” presented throughout a number of the interviews and formed an important part of Tabitha’s identification as a teacher and as a graduate student charged with playing her own game. She continued, detailing how she explained academic success to her students: “Yes, at some level, this all required, and this is part of how school is and you just have to go through the hoops, but there is something that I’m also passionate about on top of that, so hopefully they can see that distinction between

what I'm being told to say versus what I actually believe and what I'm excited about what's going on." She cited this transparency, this move to make the power structures of academia apparent and negotiable for her students as "the biggest way [her class identification] influences her teaching."

Efficiency as a Goal: Making it "Easy" to Learn

Tabitha also, in concord with her willingness to perform non-standard and demystify the academic sphere, explained that she structures her first-year writing class through what she described as a "bullet point" method: "I don't dwell on things that I don't think are that important or need to be elaborated but need to be hit, and then they can ask questions or come back later, but that kind of enthusiasm, quick talking, excitement I think is what helps engage them." This approach is an offshoot of her time in engineering and her own identification as someone who values efficiency. In this way, Tabitha works to make her first-year composition class both accessible and manageable in terms of time and effort.

One final way Tabitha identified her teaching as influenced by her class identification came through her approach to the information she presented in class. Here, I will recall the schism between embodiment, class, and the luxury of abstract thought. While contending with terms theoretically is certainly not a practice bound by class, Tabitha's point is taken to heart: students who are pushed to physical and mental capacity because of outside work schedules or sports commitments may engage with her class on a surface level.

To that end, and with honest recognition, she works to make her class accessible and productive for students from both working-class backgrounds, where educational preparation may not be supported, and also middle- to upper-class backgrounds, where

educational preparation may be supported. She said, “I really try to structure my class so there’s the structured clear element, take away, if they just need that: What do I need to get a good grade? What is the point of today? What is the point of this paper? What is the point of what you’re teaching me? I always try to make sure that that’s there, but then I throw in these other questions, other abstract levels, that I know not everyone will get or walk away thinking about, but some kids might.” This semester, she told me, one of her classes was populated primarily by students who identified as athletes and who came from backgrounds where she felt academics, as a way of thinking or being, wasn’t supported. These students, as detailed, spent hours outside of class in practice and at games, with detriment to their studies. The class identification of these students is irrelevant; it is Tabitha’s approach to teaching these students—her emphasis on making sure that each one felt that her class provided a clear “take away” point and that each class meeting supported an overall goal—that is important here.

She continued to detail her revelation that the students that seemed most disengaged because of their backgrounds and schedules had latched on to the more abstract concepts covered in class. She said, “What I was surprised at in all this is that many more kids were tracking that the second level than I thought were. I knew a couple were. I knew some of my really bright kids who had already come to see me in conferences, and I had seen in their papers that they were getting it, but I didn’t know that more of the kids than I might have thought were just hanging out at the first level and cruising along were really starting to get sparked at that second level.” Tabitha’s “first level,” she clarified, signaled the basic material concerns of class—paper length, topic, and assignment completion. The “second level” cued the abstract, theoretical concerns of class, the

concerns she might assume these students may eschew as unnecessary to success.

Composition as a Middle Ground, Not Middle Class, Enterprise

Tabitha frames these philosophies clearly: “With my teaching, I’m working really hard to hit the average student and average class background as opposed to kids from prep reading, intellectual, kinds of [backgrounds]. And there’s an intentionality to how I teach to kind of reach that middle ground.” This “middle ground,” she says, encompasses a range of students, not only those from class backgrounds which may have made them less prepared for the rigors of college work. Instead, her methods assume that the students hold very little interest in theoretical knowledge and, as such, she structures her class activities geared toward entertainment, to engage those students who might otherwise tune out. She described her pedagogies as “organic,” an offshoot of the dialogic, reactive classroom she works to establish. She also recognized that, from the outside, this approach to teaching—an emphasis on entertainment, an inductive approach reliant almost wholly on student input and interaction—might seem irresponsible.

She described her approach against the other kinds of teaching practices she has experienced at our institution: “I know that there’s probably at least two if not three kind of teachers in our department, one kind would be a very organized, very clear about the objectives for English [study] and for what my class is and for what they need to do to write a good paper and things like that. And my much more organic approach might not, they might be like, well it’s fun, but are they really getting everything they need?” She goes on to defend these choices, which put student engagement at the fore of her philosophy: “And I feel like they get what I think is important, but I can see someone thinking I’m not giving every single thing they think is important.” Tabitha presented a concern with how her

teaching is viewed from outside the classroom, yet she asserted that her students are engaging with concepts at deep levels and are producing complex, thoughtful, well-written papers. Like her dialogic teaching style, she bases her entire teaching approach on the underlife of the classroom: “I think there’s a lot more intangibles and subtle things, if you’re just looking for overt things, like you’d think, Oh she just has fun and that’s easy, but she doesn’t teach them.” On the contrary, her English 102 course, the second course in the two-course first-year writing sequence, is organized around the themes of legends and history. Her students routinely engaged with topics ranging from the sociopolitical implication of legendary figures—why, she asked them, do legends become so important in times of war or suffering?—and the gendered presentation of legends—so many are men, and the few female legends are cast as attractive victims of circumstance.

Tabitha’s students produced historiographic studies of figures ranging from Alexander the Great to Davy Crockett, and even her less-prepared writers, she told me, enjoyed the vibrancy of the topic and the freedom to research a historical figure of their choosing. As noted, Tabitha has been departmentally recognized for her teaching, and her evaluations are, year to year, much higher than average.

Tabitha wanted to end our interviews with a clarification and caveat: “I feel like I have to be careful to say, lower class doesn’t mean that therefore education has to be practical or therefore it’s gonna be harder to engage them. ... there might have been some [upper-class] kids who’ve always had it easy who might be harder to engage.” Because her background and class identification is, itself, so contentious, Tabitha carefully rejects deterministic pedagogies and philosophies. That is to say that, because she grew up a scholarship student at a prohibitively expensive boarding school, yet also identifies with

the janitorial workers who service the laundry for her wealthy classmates, Tabitha is able to cast class in thoughtful, complex terms, avoiding blanket assumptions about students' preparedness as related to their family's labor and financial backgrounds. Her experiences make her empathic; her pedagogies mirror this care.

Tabitha's narrative implicates a story of fitting-in, not in terms of her seeking her ideal lifestyle, but instead a process of trial and error where she experienced different kinds of labor, like Daniel (Chapter 4), before deciding to pursue academics. This movement through labor types and experiences supports her decision to make her first-year writing classroom student responsive in her emphasis on transparency.

Chapter 7: Paul

It wasn't about being ashamed of working.
It's important to sort of put my cards on the table: Here's where my commitments lie.
I taught at 8 o'clock in the morning.
To get off work, go home, take a shower, then go teach
kids at a private school,
everything was foregrounding the fact that I wasn't one of that community.
Going to class, checking to see if I got the dirt out of my fingernails.
I don't think that's the case now.

Working class, it has an ethos to it, and that sticks with you a little bit more.
And it wasn't about being ashamed of working.
I think of people who are basically dictated to,
the boss tells you to do something, and you do it.
Well I'm doing better now cause now I'm teaching as opposed to driving a forklift,
but at the same token, I might say,
What, there's nothing wrong with working with your hands,
that's the real work, it's physical labor.
Work with your hands, build something.
For me, it's not about being ashamed. I'm not.
But what are the stakes in that sort of identification?

Occasionally a student will tell me, I'm working, I work third shift, I have this job,
and I will tell them about my own background,
to show them, yeah, this can be done.
I know it's difficult. I understand it.
I will generally accommodate their needs, because I had a few teachers who did that for me.
Uncomfortable moments, the discomfort came purely from me,
but one of them was partly one of the teacher's faults:

I was an undergrad. It was one of the teachers I had for an 8 o'clock class.
And I said, you know, just so you know, I'm driving about 50 miles from my job
which sometimes ends at 5 in the morning, sometimes 6,
sometimes it goes to 7. And if it's 7, it's going to be very hard for me to make it to
class.

And he said, Paul, you know, none of my other students are doing this.
Then there were a couple times in class when students would be inattentive
or sleeping or you know, the point where you want to yell at them, he would say,
what's wrong with you guys? Look at Paul. He's driving 50 miles to be here.

Sort of an unintentional mark.
You know, I just think it's different classes of work. I wouldn't try to prioritize them.
I think they're both valid and necessary.
It wasn't ever about being ashamed of working.

Paul grew up in Ohio and attended a few colleges, including a community college, before finishing his undergraduate degree. He identifies his background as primarily urban, though his family does hold roots in Appalachia. This mix of rural Scotch-Irish heritage, enclave urban dwelling, and a family history in factories supports Paul's identification as working class. This status, however, is in flux, and his interviews suggested an obligation to the title that he wasn't willing to make. (Here, his ambivalence with the term echoes Tabitha's similar rejection; however, I note that the two instructors came to this rejection in very different ways.) Paul cited a discomfort in claiming himself working class, though he has worked at manual-labor jobs, like loading the bellies of airplanes, though he identifies his background as thoroughly "non-academic," and though he delayed entry to college out of high school in order to work and save money. This discomfort came through as he articulated his life before graduate school and his current career aspirations, as he compared his labor history—and its working-class bounds—with his status in the academy. Here, Paul throws into doubt the concept of the working-class academic, a tension we circled in our interviews as a likely cultural impossibility:

Why I'm uncomfortable with the idea of working-class academic... [is] because I think of the people I used to work with who, if the company closes down at the airport, they're screwed. Obviously there are problems if the university reduces its funding. I might lose my job. But there are other schools. There's a greater flexibility. ... My discomfort in saying, yes, I'm a working-class academic is ... if I hurt myself, if I fall down the stairs leaving here and I break my arm, it's not the worst inconvenience in the world for me to teach with a broken arm. My relationship with my job isn't such that if this were to go away and I had to find another job, my life

would be shattered. It would be tough, but my hesitance with the term is always, not that there's anything wrong with working class, not that there's anything wrong with academia, but when I think of that, I don't know if I have the right to call myself that in the same way that they do.

Paul's narrative, as the other five, began decades ago. His family has settled in Ohio, where he received his bachelor's and master's degrees, but they hold roots in rural Virginia, "and so there's certain aspects of my life that are informed by the fact that my family's Appalachian, even though I'm not. Sort of an Ohioan of Appalachian extraction. Of Scotch-Irish extraction." This identification with rurality and Appalachian culture runs through Paul's story, though he identifies as primarily urban. Where other participants, like Anne-Marie, Daniel, and Rick, strongly correlated rural places with working-class life—especially as the landscape dictated the labor their families did—Paul's story began in a suburb: "it wasn't the best neighborhood, but it wasn't a terrible one either. There weren't roving gangs or anything like that. The worst that would happen is two people would get into a fistfight, and people would talk about that for a week." Paul related a childhood which echoed Rick's, where community gossip provided the foundation for many relationships and where community mores were held as ethical standards. Because, he told me, families usually lived within blocks of one another, they remained tight-knit and clannish, very much a small town operating independently just outside a roving urban center. This connection to place and to the people that comprised it frames Paul's identity politics.

Families gathered in enclave communities offer support and strongly influence lifestyle choices of those in the community. Paul remembers that few children lived in his neighborhood, so he spent "a lot of time sitting on old people's porches." Paul notes that his

tendency towards the formal and discomfort with interacting with his students as peers may stem from this childhood spent with adults. While I will detail Paul's stance on formality in the first-year writing classroom in the section on pedagogies, I would like to mention here that this exposure to grown-up dialogue and the workings of life seem to overarch Paul's entire narrative.

As Paul described his childhood landscape, he described an image of a working-class community that offered lessons in how labor was done, in how one labors, and in the consequences of that labor: "I'd say it was a pretty solid blue-collar type neighborhood that I grew up in. A lot of the fathers worked in factories or were retired from factories. Moms had jobs and did different things. My mom worked in the school." Both Paul's father and grandfather worked in local factories. His grandfather retired from the automobile plant in the city, and his father, before developing Parkinson's Disease, worked at a plant which produced flexible packaging, like fast-food convenience wrappers.

Paul narrated his father's illness as a having at least a measure of good timing. Like Daniel's and Rick's backgrounds, Paul's story invokes the trope of the closed factory: the shuttered doors and windows that signaled the end to wage earning for its employees. These closings can devastate working-class families, but Paul's father's illness saved him from being fired: "He was just going on disability as the factory was closing, and so they were able to fast-track for social security because he couldn't work. He has a pretty bad case of it, and it was good because he was able to have some security at the same time he was also, at the time, 45 or something like that, he wasn't 50 yet. And he was spared what happened to a lot of his coworkers, which [was] trying to find manufacturing or other sort of manual labor jobs. A lot of them ended up working at the shipping company that I

worked for, and eventually they lost that job too.” Paul worked at a large shipping company for a number of years, one six-month period overlapped with his first year of master’s study, and that company later closed. Here, he nods to the lack of mobility indicative of working-class jobs, and a point to which he returns in supporting his refusal to the status now.

While his father avoided being fired and changing careers, those people who have worked only blue-collar, manual-labor jobs are limited by the local offerings. And since Paul’s community holds family values as a core component—evidenced by the development and maintenance of the enclave community—these workers are forced to choose between unstable employment and being close to kin.

Paul’s hesitance and articulation of the demographic and ideological interactions experienced by some members of the working class who enter academia holds, for me, the heart of this project: just as working-class academic autobiographies troubled the notion of the imposter and offered a space for these voices in the middle-class academy, Paul’s stance, especially as it picks up the threads of the other five interviews, complicates that relationship. Though Paul is ambivalent about his “right” to claim himself both academic and working class, he does claim a working-class ideology and imports these ideologies into his teaching philosophies.

Paul’s discomfort with the term working class—with claiming that term for himself—does not, however, signal discomfort with his labor past or family history. “It was not about being ashamed of working,” he asserted, and even though he described his first year of master’s study and teaching as a tumultuous dance between working air freight and

working on his studies, he still insisted on an ideological equality between manual labor, blue-collar, or working-class jobs, and jobs like his current one in the university:

I don't think either one is better or worse. , I suppose maybe my initial tendencies would be to say, Well, I'm doing better things now because now I'm teaching as opposed to driving a forklift, but at the same token, I might have the same reactionary thing and say, What? There's nothing wrong with working with your hands. That's the real work. It's physical labor. I just think it's different. It's different classes of work. I wouldn't try to prioritize them. I think they're both valid and necessary.

These iterations of identity framed our discussions: ethical self-identification, a valuation of honesty with students and colleagues, a concern for authenticity, and reflective performance of authority. At the root of these iterations, Paul cited an intimate relationship with physical labor and the personal relationships it helps to build, including basic visceral concerns of physical trust and more macro concerns with community building and maintenance. He directly connected his working-class background—what we termed “working-class sensibilities,” and not working-class identification—to his current classroom persona throughout our interviews. First, I explore Paul’s definition of what constitutes working-class status before turning to his classroom philosophies and practices.

Definitions of Class

Paul’s definitions of class focused primarily on experiences with labor, specifically collaborative labor with the potential for injury, and on the ideological import of this kind of labor. His economic definitions of working class, as much of the literature on the

definition affirms, is “fuzzy and imprecise,” though he does work to connect economic constraints with job mobility and access. Further, Paul’s ideological definitions of class are informed by his economic definitions through the rubric of “class resentment,” an experience he described as fleeting but deeply felt, a feeling that he reflectively frames now in terms of ethics.

As I will detail, Paul’s background in air freight, as it bumped temporally against his first year teaching at the university level, stands as a vibrant example of identity negotiation. As he details this at times awkward, at times triumphant move away from hands-on labor and into academe, Paul narrated a time in his life that now prompts his discomfort with currently claiming the title “working class.”

Experientially Bound: Witnessing and Working

Thus Paul’s definition of working-class status relies on experience more strongly than either economics or ideology. Class status is based on the type of work one does, including issues of job security and injury. This experiential definition also illuminates why he feels discomfort at claiming the status now: “Everybody in my family background, in addition to my own personal work background, you know, had done that sort of manual labor, work with your hands, build something, things like that, and that's what, to me, working class is. And so now that I'm not doing that anymore... I'm comfortable talking about it in terms of my background. I don't know if I'm comfortable claiming it as my ... current status.” When compared to his current workdays spent reading, teaching, tutoring, and grading, Paul’s history of labor—and the history of labor he had witnessed—stands in stark contrast. He can’t really hurt himself teaching, he related; the injury potential

accompanying graduate study pales in comparison to packing 70 pound boxes into the bellies of airplanes or loading rolling pallets with parcels.

Labor and Injury

Laborers in working-class jobs often sustain injuries yet return to work, often against medical orders. Paul detailed the story of a co-worker who, because of financial need and lack of job mobility, had to continue driving forklifts and loading boxes: This friend “severely broke his hand at one point. He worked two jobs, and at the other job, he broke his hand. It was in a splint for several months. And realistically, and according to all safety regulations, he shouldn’t have been allowed to work, but he had to work because that was the only way that he could afford to live. It was the only way he could afford to pay for his kids’ food and that sort of thing, and that to me is when I think of working-class, when I think of blue collar.” If Paul were to, for example, break his hand, he could still teach and read and, though admittedly more slowly, type. Here, I wish to note a difference of class and accommodation: while Paul may be afforded days to cancel his first-year composition course if he is unwell or hurt, and while the university will provide for him working accommodations like transcriptionist software, door-to-door rides across campus, or student assistants, these kinds of accommodations are rare, if present at all, in blue-collar labor environments.

Paul suggested that blue-collar labor, and the working-class workers who do it, are expected to work through their pain and injury because so much of their job relies on muscle memory and not individual response. He detailed an occasion where, as a doctoral student, he arrived to the campus writing center to tutor, even though he had a sore throat and had lost his voice. “You can’t talk,” the writing center director advised him, “so you

shouldn't be teaching." However, if he were still driving a forklift and working air freight, he would have been expected to push through the discomfort: "at the other jobs, [If you] can't talk, lost your voice, that just means that you can't talk to anybody. Get on the forklift." The recognition of working through pain and the potential for serious injury structures Paul's definition of the kind of labor that makes up blue-collar work.

Danger and Trust: A Working-Class Experience

However, Paul did not describe working air freight as a bad job or a dangerous job that he's glad to have escaped. In fact, his story was surprising in its nostalgia of the labor he's done and the relationships he fostered through it. Because driving a forklift and loading freight requires team work, each laborer's safety is intrinsically connected to the attention and engagement of his co-workers. Said another way, the injury potential of the job is lessened by a network of trusted comrades charged with keeping one another safe in the job. In one memorable excerpt, Paul explained the intricate processes behind loading air freight:

It is part of the crew relationship because the person on the ground determines how quickly stuff comes up and spaces, and so you do have to trust the person you're working with because they're pretty strict weight limits on what can go in the belly of an airplane. If it's more than 70 pounds, it cannot go up there, because it's unsafe. You think of people that are loading it, you've got people on their knees, and the compartment may be 25 feet long, so you got somebody on their knees and you got a 50 pound box, the person who 's on the other end of the thing, 25 feet away, that's where you hurt yourself.

Paul described a series of unspoken movements, coordinated person to person through hours of working together and learning where each person liked to catch boxes: “the few times I got a chance to work with somebody I had worked with earlier, everything was right back into it. You knew exactly if you’re throwing boxes to somebody, you knew where they liked to catch it, cause people have different, some people like high, some people like middle, some people like low. I hadn’t seen some of these guys in two years, but instantly, Oh yeah, he likes it mid-range. Got it.” He called the process “muscle memory,” an involuntary response by the body that’s done the movement many times over. This muscle memory kept Paul—and his co-workers—safe. And these relationships were strengthened through the trust required of each laborer by each laborer. Compared to the often competitive world of academics, and the isolating processes of reading and writing, Paul’s lament for the camaraderie of air freight handling suggests that he drew from the job more than a set of transferable manual-labor skills. Instead, he learned deeply about relationships based through work and trust.

Paul defined this type of labor as egalitarian at its core, a startling finding for me as I considered the hierarchical relationships implicated in factory labor and other blue-collar enterprises. He did assert that working-class laborers usually work under strict oversight, often answering to a number of supervisors: “When I think of working class,” he told me, “I think of people who are basically dictated to. The boss tells you to do something, and you do it... that’s maybe the extreme center, but you know, there’s only so much you can do when the boss tells you do to something.” Here, Paul designates working-class jobs as featuring a lack of autonomy among the lowest-rung workers, suggesting a relationship to power that disenfranchises all but the top-rung managers. However, and in contrast, he

richly described the interpersonal connections he made while working in air freight, a job that relied, as discussed, on physical trust and mutual respect:

There's a type of camaraderie that comes with that sort of work, that physical, that, Hey, can you help me here... you know, six people trying to push a cargo container on a roller ball mat with some of the balls missing so it doesn't want to roll. There's something about that, and I think it has to do with the physical nature of the work. The clear objective. Get this box in this container. The clear objective and then just having, having a crew and even though the last couple years I worked in air freight, I was a senior in college about to go into a master's degree program or working on a PhD, there's something about, you never feel, it's weird, you don't feel inadequate and you don't feel better than anybody. There's no, Well, I'm educated; I don't need to do this. You're in the crew.

His recognition of the crew as being more important than individual concerns of its members is striking in its equality. Though, as he mentioned, he was finishing one degree and beginning a master's, and though some of the forklift drivers may have been functionally illiterate, they were equals, peers in this arena where each kept the other safe and where the labor of one relied on the engagement of another. These forklift drivers, he told me, were "virtuosos" with their machines, no small feat considering the size of the forklift and the small spaces in which they must operate. He remembered being awed by their skill, though "[t]hey were literally the guys that would sign their checks with an X. But that didn't matter, because they had that thing that they did better than anybody else. And it was great to watch them, and you appreciated it because, as part of the crew, their skill made everybody's job easier." Here, in this warehouse full of boxes, each worker played a

distinct role, and the machine of labor relied on each role. Paul reminisced about these bonds, and highlighted the fact that so much of his current work is either competitive or isolated.

Economically Bound: “Fuzzy and Imprecise”

Paul’s connection to manual labor is intimate. His time in these kinds of jobs, as well as his family’s blue-collar history, work to shape his broader social definition of what counts as working class. Put simply, those laborers charged with hands-on, manual-labor jobs qualify as working class, as well as any worker whose job exposes him to the daily danger of sudden and traumatic injury. And Paul is quick to note that class status cannot be cleanly reduced to pure economics. Though “no one would argue that making \$15,000 a year qualifies you as middle class,” the line between middle and working class remains negotiable for Paul, as he asserted that working-class status is defined primarily by the type of job one does but also, as in the case of his co-worker with the crushed hand, the imperative to labor. That his friend could not afford to miss a week of work lends much to the credence of the job’s designation.

Paul’s definition of working class, he admitted, is “fuzzy and imprecise,” more of an approximation of circumstances than a solid checklist of attributes. While wage earning does impact working-class status, he told me, “it’s not even so much a question of... economic brackets or anything like that. Somebody can be, can do manual labor but be very wealthy about it, so I mean, are they working class? Are they not?” Here, what’s surprising is not Paul’s fuzziness of definition; in fact, this project asserts, and the findings suggest, that the term working class is too broad, multivalenced, temporally and geographically situated, and personal to be pinned down. What is surprising about Paul’s self-questioning

is the fact that his schema accommodates a manual laborer who may also be wealthy. In that way, that a blue-collar worker may afford upper-class material items, Paul demonstrated his firm commitment to an experiential definition of class status. And unlike some of the other participants who highlighted access through economics as an overarching factor of working-class status, even if it wasn't the primary aspect, Paul only briefly mentioned it, implicating economic concerns through situations such as the friend who couldn't afford to miss work, and through a few related memories of the class resentment he felt as a master's student teaching at a private institution.

Ideologically Bound: "A Fair Amount of Class Resentment"

Paul described this class resentment as a process he worked through early in his academic life, as he detailed the month when his air freight job overlapped with his work as a first-year master's student and teaching assistant in a first-year writing classroom. He described the "bitterness" of feeling like an outsider in an area he felt he should have been comfortable:

It wasn't even just that first month when I was also working [air freight] and it was tiring, but the fact that I realized that these were kids who were paying more to go to this school than I made in a year. And it's not their fault, you know, and that's something it took me awhile to realize, because I think for probably that first semester, maybe even semester and a half, there was a fair amount of class resentment, partly because antipathy towards the wealthy, but the fact that, and I think there was, I think, a sort of kneejerk sort of immature bitterness about it. Like I knew that the two years I was there plus the one semester there was only one student that I had or knew of, and there must have been more, but there was only

one student that I ever had that had actually come from the Stephenson public schools.... I know there had to have been more. There couldn't just have been one. But there was only one. And it was weird because it was the school that I got my bachelor's degree from, and it's the school that's in my hometown, and it took me a long time to get over that sort of bitter sense of being an outsider in a place that I should have been an insider. This is my alma mater. It's in my hometown. Why is my sort of experience here, educational or background, why is it so unique?

I quote this part of his narrative at length because it clearly and emphatically details Paul's identity negotiations as a burgeoning academic teaching mostly well-to-do students. And while his interviews don't explicitly call out economics as a determining factor in his definition of working-class status—either for himself or socially—this deeply felt resentment he described and his process of acknowledging economic difference and decision making in terms of education cues a layer of financial concern at the heart of his story. That he worked driving a forklift and loading airplanes at the same time that he taught first-year composition to students at a private school forced a negotiation of his beliefs about access to education and who belongs in the university.

Use and Embodiment

“You Do Your Work”: Articulating a Working-Class Sensibility

This visceral connection with his co-workers, the potential for injury, and his reflective move through his working-class identity all support Paul's ideological definitions of working-class status while experientially defining his status as embodied. It is as he repeated throughout all three interviews: “You do your work.” He described this ethic in terms of his transition to graduate study, and that one month where he juggled both

working on an advanced degree and driving 100 miles, round trip, to the airport to load freight: “Because that sort of mindset was so fresh in my mind, it was just you go to work. That’s what you do. Whether it’s going to class, or going to teach, I mean it’s work. You go do your work. I think that’s sort of insulated me from some of the, Why do we have to do this? thing, because I had this sort of work model in mind. It was like, Well, no. I’m doing something that I haven’t done before. I need to learn it. So no, the professor isn’t insulting my intelligence by handholding and saying, Hey, you need to go learn this basic research method. Because, it’s a transition. It’s doing something new, so yes you do need it. Deal with it.” Here, Paul illustrated this division between himself and his classmates by explaining that he accepted the increased work load of graduate study as part of the job he was hired to do. Some of his peers, however, were unused to aggressive schedules and the pressures of learning new tasks quickly, so they felt uncomfortable with these new responsibilities.

While being overwhelmed is, for certain, a common complaint among new students in any field, at any stage in their education, Paul’s acknowledgment that his working-class experiences better prepared him for graduate study is unique. What Paul is asserting here is intriguing: his working-class background, the ideology to “do your work,” carried through his graduate study and informed (and still informs) his approach to scholarship. In the next section, I connect this approach to labor with Paul’s teaching philosophies and classroom practices.

These three iterations of working-class status—experiential, economic, and ideological—help frame Paul’s self-selection as a member of this demographic, albeit one with reservations about his right to claim that status. They also work in concert to inform Paul’s classroom persona, one he told me he’s been reflectively negotiating since he began

teaching four years ago. This teaching persona echoes Paul's childhood in suburban Ohio, his experiences in an enclave community, and his connections to manual labor, as he presents a teaching philosophy and practices that strives for honesty, trust, authority, and authenticity.

Pedagogies

Teaching Students to See the Seams

As mentioned, while Paul taught his first semester of classes at a large private university, he also maintained a job working air freight in a town 50 miles away. This appointment sparked a negotiation of identity for him, as he had finished his undergraduate degree on scholarship at the same university. He identified the students there as primarily financially privileged:

I don't think I would feel comfortable at this point saying that I have sort of a built in inferiority complex, but I know when I started teaching, I did. I was incredibly insecure, because when I started teaching, I was teaching at [a university in Ohio], which is a private school, and even though I got my bachelor's degree from there, I still knew just how much these kids were paying to go to school, which meant how much their parents had, and so the first month I was teaching, I was still working my third-shift job.

The private school students, he related, wouldn't have to think about dirt under their fingernails. After all, they paid more in tuition than he made in a year. This economic disparity threw Paul into a crisis of resentment. While he felt antipathy towards his wealthier students, he said that he grew to recognize that this resentment was misplaced: "I think the move is seeing, going from seeing rich kids or something like that rather than

seeing them and their parents as somehow screwing you over. Saying, you know what, it's just different, and without question, unequal, but not unequal by anyone's design. These kids' parents clearly didn't start out saying, Hey, how can I screw people over. It's how can I provide what's best for my kids." Because it bumped so closely in time and space against his working-class labor, this early teaching experience is integral to understanding Paul's self-identification as working class and to understanding his current classroom methods and methodologies.

A Forced Negotiation: The First Day of "Class"

Paul's first teaching experience in the private college classroom drew stark comparisons between his educational background—which we are here closely connecting to class status—and the educational backgrounds of his students. He detailed the Stephenson Public Schools as underperforming and underequipped. And interactions with his students in the first-year writing classroom, as a brand-new teacher, drew out these feelings: I "realiz[ed] that, wow, [Stephenson] isn't a good school, and it wasn't just [that] this school didn't have money. ... There weren't books stacked in the gymnasium molding or anything like that. It got the job done. But also realizing that part of the thing was that there were facilities issues, there were issues with teachers, and there was just a ton of really bad students." Because Paul grew up in a blue-collar suburb in Ohio, a community comprised of mostly factory workers, and because his educational opportunities, by his reckoning, were limited, his role as authority in the college classroom became troublesome for him to assume.

He described a situation whereby he struggled to identify with the lifestyles his students lived and their access to critical aspects of education, like new textbooks and

rigorous standards and qualified teachers. It was, as he poignantly narrated, a different world:

I think it was the first day I taught, the first class I taught, I said something about the papers we'll write are 2 to 3 pages, then 3 to 4, and then 3 to 4, and the last one is 5 to 7. And I said, Oh I realize for a lot of you, that's really surprising. That's the longest thing you'll have written. And all of them looked at me like I had stopped speaking English, and finally one of my students said, You know, at my school, we'd write 10-to-15-page papers as the senior capstone assignment. And that was one of those moments of realizing, Hey, wait a minute. This is completely different from my background, because my background, before I started college, the last paper I had written had been in 8th grade. So it's like, good God. What world is this?

At this time, Paul was also driving 50 miles each way to work the overnight shift at the airport, loading boxes. He would come to class exhausted sometimes, worried about getting the dirt out of his fingernails so that, it seems, his students wouldn't know about this part of his life. The tone of this part of Paul's narrative is not, however, one of shame or fear at being found out. Instead, he described a period in his early academic identity where he reflectively navigated a new identity alongside the one he had always known. In his job in air freight, he held a measure of expertise. The other workers knew him, and he formed a strong workplace connection with these other people who were responsible for his daily safety. Stepping into the classroom for the first time presented Paul with a new role and a new experience; in air freight, he was one of the crew, no more important than the next guy. In the classroom, though, he was the person-in-charge, the instructor-on-record responsible for evaluation. He recalled arriving at the classroom to teach on the first day:

I remember the first day I taught, and I had worked the night before, and I remember going in there and I had a manila folder with the syllabi and I had a coffee cup, and just that feeling when there's like a group of students standing outside the classroom. This was like the performance of, I am in charge. They all looked, Oh that must be the teacher. Yes! Not that I was, you know, bow before me or anything like that, but just that sort of, Okay, these little trappings. Everybody has folders, but the fact that I was holding one at that point, and holding a coffee cup immediately is like, Oh wow, I do get to have some authority. I do get to be in charge, and it was even better because I was teaching at 8 o'clock in the morning, and the way the rooms worked at [this university], they were supposed to automatically unlock, but the first day of class, obviously they weren't, but they gave us key fobs, these little electronic key fobs. The lock was over the door, and you held the fob up to it, and it beep beep beeped. The light turned green and the door unlocked, and I had to do that, I had to put down my coffee cup and beep beep beep. And immediately they were just like, Gasp! From the students. And I was like, Okay. Cool.

This artifact of authority helped Paul perform instructor when he felt uncomfortable with that role. And here I pause to note that I recognize that this experience—the first-day jitters of a new TA—is anything but unique. However, I argue that Paul's workplace experience and family history of work lend the first-day jitters a new element, as he detailed his choices to perform "formal" for his students in order to visually cue his authority in the classroom. Of course, wearing a suit to teach on the first day is, just as the experience, a common rhetorical move by many new teachers. (And, in my experience, many experienced teachers as well.) But Paul's drastic change in environment, loading

boxes into the bellies of airplanes at night and teaching university-level classes first thing in the morning, does, I feel, constitute a unique experience that still influences his teaching persona and his approach to student interaction.

Now an established member of our department, Paul still professes a more formal teaching approach than many of his colleagues, one that relies on his “obvious” role of the instructor of record. When compared to Rick’s approach to teaching, Paul feels most comfortable looking like, sounding like, and behaving like “the teacher in charge,” as this excerpt illustrates:

I have a certain idea about what the relationship in a classroom should be between teachers and students, and the teacher, I think, should be apparently different than their students. Not just the fact that they’re older. I just sort of have old-school, I think, ideas about the power relationship between teachers and students. I liked that when I was a student, and even as a grad student, I like the fact of knowing that there’s somebody who’s demonstrably in charge and demonstrably knows more and acts like they know more.

Here, I connect Paul’s initial feelings of not-belonging with his stance on what a teacher should look like. He supports the general expectation of academic performance through his classroom persona; however, he rejects the sage-on-a-stage model by characterizing himself as a moderator over a lecturer. In one word, Paul describes his pedagogical style: “I think the one that I try to be, with varying degrees of success, is I try to be a facilitator. Whether it’s facilitating group work, conversations within the group.” However, an interesting complication and contradiction arises when Paul describes how his sense of

formality—which he notes he has been relaxing for the past few years—affects his students.

Here, Paul demonstrates a dialogical approach to teaching that echoes many of the other participants: he works to recognize that his approach to the first-year writing classroom directly affects how his students' view the class and its content. As such, he recognizes that this more formal approach, while giving students a sense of comfort in its obviousness, may also inhibit their participation in class discussion. He explained the process as both reactive and reflective, saying, "you know I think it's one of those things that sort of snowballs. I think I come across as fairly formal from the beginning of the class, so they think they have to be formal." This formality, he postulated, may lead to student silence.

Paul voiced frustration with the silent-classroom experience, an issue for any teacher who wishes to highlight class discussion, and a particularly pertinent situation for a teacher who presents himself as both the person-in-charge and also as a discussion facilitator. He depicted his response to the silent classroom as a move to fill the space with talk—"when there's not the give-and-take situation, my sort of fall back response is what I did when I started teaching, which is, Okay, here's a lecture!"—a strategy of many instructors across disciplines. However, it is Paul's recognition of the dialogical relationship his stance produces, as well as his ever-evolving sense of authority, that makes this response unique. He continued, "Their discomfort feeds my discomfort." It seems that Paul connects his sense of formality performed with his students' lack of response, a schism between his goals for the class (as facilitator) and his comfort at the front of the room. Because they feel compelled to match his formality and may become uncomfortable with

speaking out in class, Paul responds with talk—a practice he recognizes as possibly fueling his students’ silence—and discomfort.

The reactivity stands in contrast to Paul’s comfortable, sometimes-unspoken interaction with co-workers in the airport. His negotiation of apparent student disengagement, cued through silence, may force Paul to respond with an impromptu lecture as the “obvious” person-in-charge. His sense of control of the situation may, I argue, be informed by his working-class background in his history of give-and-take work; when one team member loading freight can’t pull his or her weight, someone else must take up the slack.

However, the differences between the two relationships is marked: though he has gained expertise in the field of first-year composition and had four years of teaching experience to reference, the work relationship—a relationship based on labor—with his students is, when compared to his work in air freight, radically less intuitive. It is not that Paul feels that he is an ineffective teacher, but that he has identified that his current work environment offers less appealing, perhaps, challenges than his previous work. And, to Paul, teaching first-year composition is, like loading airplanes, simply another job, albeit one that he usually enjoys and at which he excels.

Work Habits and Attitudes: Drawing from Experience

I will recall an earlier discussion of Paul’s connection of his work habits with his approach to facing challenges in the classroom and his refusal to idealize either his own role or the roles of his students: “I still like the idea of having this place where everybody can come learn stuff. But the longer that I’m in it, the more I think it’s influenced by my perception, [the way] always saw my other jobs, which is, Okay, [this job is] nice. I like it.

It's indoors. It doesn't require a lot of heavy lifting, but at the end of the day, it's a job. And this sort of taking away some of that romantic notion of it and going, you know, you had a bad day. Suck it up. Get ready to go in the next day. Because if you don't, then you're not going to be able to do anything." Paul's labor history has given him perspective on his teaching and on the challenges he faces in the classroom. He refuses to dwell on a bad teaching day, in his example, one where students remained silent and refused participation.

By holding to a reactive, dialogical stance, he is able to first query the possible causes of these bad days and then, drawing from his work history and established work patterns, he is able to move past these disruptions. Many teachers, we discussed off record, tend to internalize ineffective assignments or negative student responses in a way that inhibits their teaching or their own scholarship. His mantra to "do your work" provides him with a schema through which he can troubleshoot issues and efficiently move past them.

Artifacts of Teaching: Cueing Authority through Formality

For Paul, the move from his eight-year stint in air freight to the first day teaching undergraduates at a private university required him to pull in cultural cues that he knew students would respect: "I need something to make it clear that I'm in charge here, because I don't feel like I'm in charge here. If it's a key fob, if it's a lectern, if it's a gradebook. Something. I've got a physical artifact that I can point to and say, See, I've got a lectern here. I must be the teacher." In his first year of teaching, Paul said that he relied on the power of the lectern to command respect because "it's hard to feel like the teacher in charge of everything when you're coming from work." He is, however, aware that his students now may read him as "stiff" or "overly formal." And he acknowledges that he plays into students' expectations of what an English instructor might look like and sound like by presenting a

traditional image: Paul sometimes wears suits to class, often carries a leather case, and, as I will detail, prefers a classroom setup that puts him at the front of the room.

Besides issues of comfort, that performance of “professor” hinges on Paul’s sense of obligation to his students. He feels that, by dressing informally, as many of his peers do, he promotes a vision of the first-year writing classroom that seems unfairly egalitarian and would compromise his rigor in grading and the high standards he sets for his students. He told me, “It would be too much [to dress and act more casually]. I think it would feel like a put on. ... It would be too much of a sort of forced, Hey guys, I’m just laid-back, [but] I’m not that laid back.” To dress casually—as one Rick indicated he did to better relate to his students, especially as the semester passed—undermines Paul’s stake in the process of evaluation and, to him, feels deceitful.

Further, where most of the other participants in this study indicated use of the circle classroom to facilitate discussion and signal equality, Paul stated that he didn’t care for the circle of desks, preferring, instead, to stand at the front and make himself the visible authority figure. “I like being the person at the front of the room,” he said, “I find it oddly comforting. The best one is when the desk has like a little lectern on it. I never use them. I don’t move it and [say], Let’s talk. But when there’s one there, I kind of like leaning on it. It’s this sort of item of authority.” While Paul admitted that, with time in the classroom, he’s become more comfortable with moving away from these artifacts, he does still prefer to utilize their power to identify him as the one “in charge.” This comfort with the visible markers of classroom authority work with and against Paul’s philosophy of facilitation. He feels that students will be comforted by his obvious authority at the front of the room. This

comfort should allow them to engage in higher levels of critical discourse with the assumption that Paul's expertise—made visible—will provide guidance and safety.

This performance of authority also supports Paul's goals for pedagogical transparency. Where his colleagues in this study—with the exception of Daniel—worked to promote a lateral, de-centered classroom through assignments like full-class workshops and portfolio grading, Paul calls this approach into question as inauthentic. He stated, "I think it's a way of masking hierarchy. Somebody's got the gradebook. Somebody's in charge. Even if we talk about the classroom as we want to have this community of learners, that's great, but at the end of the day ... [w]e can all be friendly maybe, not be all friends, but even if we can all be friendly with one another, I'm still the one who's in charge." The act of identification was as important, maybe more important, to Paul as to his students, and this careful, intentional deployment of the rhetorical artifacts of education comforted him as a new teacher and continues to shape his current teaching persona. Honesty moves to the fore here, as Paul connects his role as instructor with a set of implicit obligations to his students.

Demystification and Transparency: Learning as Gameplay

For students to follow his lead, Paul feels that he must present a formal stance. This formal stance, however, subverts the assumptions of students to present a pedagogy of transparency and an acknowledgement of the power structures that guide teaching and evaluation. While Paul appears to mirror the concerns of the university, he professes an approach that allows students to question the university's goals for their undergraduate education. This concern with authenticity and honesty directly, he indicated, stem from his labor experiences and the trust he maintained with his co-workers. This sense of

authenticity ran throughout Paul's narrative. He felt he couldn't invoke his working-class background the first-year composition classroom because of he would feel as if here were "trying to make some sort of claim to authenticity" with the experience. Further, he feels that dressing more like his students and less like the person-in-charge would signal a similarly inauthentic stance, as both his attitudes towards the college classroom and his practices draw him as more formalistic and traditional.

But despite this preference for a traditionalist persona, Paul turns the responsibility of much of the class's direction over to students, who he is careful to term "colleagues," and not "classmates." Paul works to craft a classroom based in collegiality and mutual respect, the antithesis of the agonistic style his formal approach may suggest to students and a suggestion of a student-centered classroom. In this way, though Paul supports the academy's image, he counters the assumption of student disengagement and the banking model. Stated another way, Paul works to put students in charge of their own education, fosters critical thought, and promotes conversation, rather than making them passive receivers of foundational knowledge. He promotes this student engagement through a few methods, most notably by assigning a large, multi-media collaborative learning project he called "Living-Learning Communities." Students produced websites detailing a set of courses of their own design, complete with course descriptions, photos, and user information. This assignment capped Paul's teaching unit focusing on entering the academic discourse community and required that students take on authoritative voices as they rhetorically position themselves as the creators and promoters of these living-learning communities.

Pedagogy of Ethics: A Two-Part Model

A two-part ethic drives Paul to introduce his students in this way to this academic discourse community: First, he knows first-hand the affective power of teamwork, and the assignment requires that students parse out tasks and support one another in a common goal. Second, Paul's teaching philosophy centers on making the first-year writing classroom accessible through a careful and consistent demystification of the academic sphere. I note, at this juncture, that the contradiction between Paul's professed formality—that is, looking like the kind of professor he expects students to expect—and his goals to make college work transparent provide an interesting finding. It's as if, through the accepted package of obvious-person-in-charge, Paul has determined that students will follow his lead more readily and will, perhaps, follow where he leads in terms of making visible the power structures that dictate success at the university.

Paul's pedagogical narrative, like so many of the other participants, focused intensely on this idea of transparency and demystification. Paul explained that, as a new teacher he would “couch [his] assignments in the context of ... course objectives” to lead his students through each task by relating it to his outlined goals for the course as a whole. He said he felt more secure pointing to the objective as an inalienable aspect of the first-year composition classroom, an immutable standard supported by each assignment. But as he's grown more confident in his teaching and in his academic persona, he described an approach that made apparent the structures behind the course objectives, thus demonstrating for students that these benchmarks are arbitrary, temporary, and represent a rhetorical response to a situation usually crafted by administrators. While he said that he follows the first-year composition guidelines at our university, he also works to support

these guidelines through showing his support for their mandates, in a sentiment that echoes almost verbatim, Tabitha's view:

I feel more comfortable in saying, this is the assignment that we're going to do, ... [and] yes it meets certain objectives, but it's also something that I put together because I'm interested in it, and here's why I'm interested in it, as opposed to, This is a piece of writing that you will do, and therefore you will—the usual 101, 102 spiel—This will make you a good college level writer. Well, it might. It might help. But it's also, there's part of it comes from the objective of the class, part of it comes from my own particular interest and commitments.

Paul is able to reflect his support for the first-year composition structure at his university while also making it clear to students that the requirements for the course—nuts-and-bolts concerns like page requirements, types of assignments, and research goals—come pre-packaged for him.

Detailing Transparency: A Matter of Morals

Paul's two-pronged pedagogy of ethics—a pedagogy borne of from teamwork and demystification—pulls from his working-class background, specifically his experiences working in air freight. The second element of that structure, his commitment to making the college classroom accessible to all students, is further informed by his background as a student from a “non-academic” family. This commitment to transparency shows up in both his classroom persona and his assignments, through his scaffolding of the steps leading up to submission, and into his formal grading. Grading presented one aspect of his teaching that Paul, unlike, for example, Anne-Marie, did not explicitly connect to his working-class background.

Where some of the other participants in this study felt strongly that they should focus on ideas over surface errors, and reward positive improvements, Paul instead focused in his explanation of grading on making the process understandable and as uncomplicated as he could for his students. He distributed a rubric with each assignment, outlining his expectations and the resultant grades. This move towards making his grading processes more obvious and, in this case, tangible in the form of a checklist, recalls his obligation to honesty and fairness: “I think the more I let them know about my thought processes, the things that I think are important, the more they’re going to be able to write to that audience, and that’s something that we do in first-year comp anyway is try to get them to think about the audience, and so the clearer picture they can have about where I’m coming from, I think, the better.” Many first-year writers complain about the subjectivity of grading—that instructors hold varying standards for success—and this complaint is, in many ways, a valid one. By providing his students with a clearly outlined rubric, and by vocalizing to them his approach to grading, he removes much of the anxiety plaguing the first-year writer. In this way, he echoes much of Tabitha’s approach to teaching as he tries to make apparent the points he holds important. Students are thus given a list of tasks for which they are held accountable. By talking about the process of structuring his assignments with his students, he makes minute what could be mysterious.

These moves, I argue, are influenced directly from his own entry into the academic sphere as a student from a “non-academic” background and the learning curve he experienced in his first year of study, as well as his working-class labor experiences. By asserting to students that the assignments, besides meeting departmental goals, reflect his own interests, he models for him engaged scholarship. He can thus be someone who is

responsible for crafting particular assignments to meet his students' needs based on his experiences, rather than a robotic proxy for the university structure. This push for transparency seems to draw Paul and his students on the same side, with the university power system, as the guardian of the rule structure, on the other side.

The Goals of Transparency: Working Together to Play the Game

Paul clearly works to make the academic sphere more accessible to his students who, since his university is a state-sponsored school, may attract students from backgrounds similar to his own. His desire to demystify the workings of the institution culminate in his assertion that, while he'd like for his students to walk away with more developed critical thinking skills and with the imperative to write beyond requirements, he would also be satisfied with showing them the seams of their institutionally crafted college experience, as he gives them the proper tools to navigate their stay at the university. He detailed this process as "learning the game": "I also think I'd be just as happy if it was their learning to play the game of academic writing, which is a skill, and they need to do it. So if that's because I have been a great teacher to them, that's great. If it's because they've learned to give me what I want, I'm okay with that too." He frames this "learning the game" approach as audience analysis: in his class, students should learn to produce the kinds of texts that any professor in any discipline might want. College study is thus reduced to a system of meeting expectations, without regard to the Enlightenment ideals that structure many humanities courses.

Paul's story echoes tales about defending ideals and upholding ethics in the face of conflict. He framed his history in airfreight with nostalgia, noting the disembodied nature of the academy. Working against this disembodiment is Paul's embodied performance of

“professor” in order to assure students that they will be aptly guided through their first-year composition experience. By training students in a discourse community model, supported by his collaborative living-learning communities, Paul’s pedagogies suggest that his philosophies are bound in his definition of use: students must feel supported in their work in composition to take up these discourses and apply them across their university courses and beyond.

Chapter 8: Will

I've come from that position of the scholarship boy student to the authority:
I've shaken it more and more as I've gotten to know everybody better around here,
but there's always still a little of it in the back of my mind.
My father was a roofer, a carpenter, and mechanic. All self-employed,
which fuels my individualistic-pursuit-type ideal, I guess.
I still feel pastoral in some ways.
Cedar Falls/Waterloo together is probably the fifth or sixth biggest city in the state,
but we're five miles out of it. It feels like isolation—if you have to walk, it's isolation.
If you're in a car, it's 10 minutes.
It always still seems kind of like, I'm not saying any pure or anything like that,
because I know a lot of people back home that have a lot of problems related to the
economy or, you know, meth is pretty prevalent, but at the same time it does have a kind of
certain aura of simplicity around it because you know the pigs aren't going anywhere,
the corn field's not going anywhere. It's just not going to make you rich either.

Sometime during our getting-to-know-you period,
I tell my students about my background from a geographical and a little bit of a class
position,
because I come from not just a small town, like a very small town.
My town used to have signs on each end of town in the 90s.
It said Banner, Iowa. Population: 27. Next 9 exits for the 9 driveways.
I feel like I'm always on the outside looking in on a lot of cultural stuff that way,
although I've been living in cities for quite a while. So I try to use that as the outsider's
perspective, and as a way to get into my perspective, being in a different culture in the
south. None of the houses in Banner are real huge. It's a little working-class community.
And a lot of that has contributed to my sensibility when I was a student.
I definitely do try to bring up the issues of the working or the poor.
I self-identify that way a little bit. I wouldn't say I go real explicitly,
but I think my students do have a little bit of an understanding
that I'm coming from not exactly a privileged idea, too.
I think it's one of those things that humanizes me for them,
because I think some do have this idea of the English person being, still, like the knuckle-
rapping older lady that comes from a more cultured position, and I'd say that isn't always
true,
I'm not unwilling to shapeshift, I guess, but
I gotta be me. It's not so much that I'm trying to be standoffish or different all the time,
but I guess I haven't learned the behavior of switching as well
as some people have, since I haven't had to.

I love working in the realm of the mind and literature and rhetoric. But I remember pretty
vividly thinking that I decided to do this when I was like 13 or 14.
It was like, man, I don't want to work on a hot roof.
I don't want to work someplace where
someone could drop a bundle of shingles on me by accident.

Will came to the Southeast from Iowa in 2006. Like both Daniel and Rick, he strongly identified with an agricultural background and noted that this background—in addition to his class identification—colored the way he sees himself and his place in the world. He chose this university in the southeast for a number of reasons, including its access to rural areas: “People have the connection to the land, agriculture, nature, that seems important.” Will is entering his third year of doctoral study, looking forward to taking his comprehensive exams, and has plans to revise a seminar paper for publication. His academic focus is literature, specifically 19th century American literature and naturalism. He explained his scholarly focus as directly influenced by his upbringing as he “[tries] to investigate issues of class at times when they weren’t messed around with so much in literature, at least in American literature. So, [class has] always naturally incorporated itself into [his] literary focus.”

He considers himself more of a “hermit” than other graduate students, and he postulated that “[the other students] would kind of put me in that studious-but-not-hungry category.” Will’s place in the ecology of the department is, according to him, strange. While he has been a student at this university, in this department, for four years—he received his master’s degree here—he feels distanced from the social network of graduate students. He told me, “I always feel like I’m still trying to do the best I can, and get on things and stay on top of things.” Though Will works hard and is recognized as a well-read student with much to add to his courses, he worries that this work, because it is not visible to others, may be considered as a lack of attention. He continued to detail this separation: “I still haven’t been that person who likes to go to every meeting and wants to do every group and every reading. I do the Americanist reading group when I have time right now, and that’s about

it.” Will wondered aloud if his peers considered him to be not as committed to the program, his teaching, or his scholarship because of his absence at events. This worry that his peers might consider him “not hungry” or at least “not as hungry” to succeed was surprising, yet it cued adherence to a belief that work must be both visible and obvious to count. Will’s approach to his scholarship and teaching, as I will detail later, both stem directly from the ways he has seen work done in the past.

An Apprentice of a Different Trade: Learning at Home

Will’s father, as he told me, was a roofer, carpenter, and mechanic. He detailed his father’s work history as a move to establish himself independently, avoiding the need to be employed by a company: “My dad was a self-employed guy. He learned his skills randomly from his friend’s dad and went out in the world and worked for awhile and came back and started his life at home, and it seems like unless you’re in a very fortunate situation where you have some very specialized skills, kind of off the grid as far as the education thing, a lot of people either are roped in the illusion that school’s the only way you can do it, or they didn’t get the chance to do that.” Here, Will’s insistence that education isn’t the only path to success is a point that works to inform the rest of his narrative.

Will considers his father “very fortunate” to have developed sets of skills that were both marketable and which led to him becoming self-employed. Throughout our interviews, Will gestured toward this a benchmark of self-reliance as one of his framing experiences. Formal schooling is thus cast as an alternative for those people who lack these specialized skills and, as he notes, as an option for those people who feel that “school’s the only way you can do it.” He continued,

And it seems, for a lot of people, school is great. School is the way to get an engineering job or educate yourself in a lot of different ways, but it seems like we're tracked a lot more. It's tougher, whether you're working construction, you're probably working for a contractor right now instead of striking out and starting a place on your own unless you're really good and have the right resources.

The jump from stating that formal schooling isn't the only avenue for career success or happiness to the current economic climate suggests that Will's schema for understanding work hinges on the viability of the skilled tradesman establishing a business. Self-reliance, here proxied through self-employment, has thus become harder to achieve.

But even if the economic climate opened more profitable spaces for the self-employed tradesman, Will asserted that this kind of hands-on work, the work he witnessed his family doing, isn't for him. And at an early age, Will knew that these careers didn't fit his life plan. He detailed this realization as a move made against watching his father reshingle a roof: "I remember pretty vividly thinking that when I decided to do this when I was 13 or 14. It was like, man, I don't want to work on a hot roof. I don't want to work someplace where someone could drop a bundle of shingles on you on accident or something like that." Because Will illustrated his early career aspirations as a decision to move away from his family's work, I assumed, incorrectly, that his entry into the academic sphere constituted a rejection of this working-class lifestyle and its inherent dangers. He corrected me by noting that he had taught himself to read very early and had always held a facility for language: "I just have always been nuts for books," he asserted. Avoidance of injury wasn't "the sole reason" for not following his father's line of work or a similar path. He explained that he

holds the same kind of tactile knowledge that his father utilized in his work, but he has applied it to areas like information technology.

Will worked with computers for much of his undergraduate education and connected his early experiences laboring with his father to his approach to computers. Here, though, Will recognized the divide between self-employment in a trade such as carpentry and pursuing a career in academics: "I've got a little mechanical knowledge from working with my dad. I could go that way," he told me, suggesting that working a trade could offer a viable career option, "but I've chosen to stick with the castles in the air... for the moment anyway." But more important to Will's current iterations of labor is his recognition of his father's career path, regardless of his actual labor life.

Will related that his father had grown up on a farm, had learned the ins and outs of the machines by necessity: "He did that all his youth, so that mechanical stuff moved to construction. He [fixed] the cars and worked on tractors and stuff like that himself. And then moved on up. I guess I took that from him, just a different direction, because the stuff I was interested in at a very young age, I went and ran with too." Will's connection to his father isn't through similar job histories, but through a recognition and almost- fearless acting on of desire. Both men identified at an early age that they held preternatural skills in different areas. They worked to see those skills to use, the father through self-employment and the son through education. Neither job path is more important, more prestigious, or more difficult than the other.

Will's identification with his father helped detail his definitions of working-class status, both as he holds it personally and as he works to define it broadly and sociologically.

In the next section, I explore Will's definitions of working class before then interrogating how he applies these definitions to his role in the classroom.

Definitions of Class

Rooted in Rurality

Like four of the five other participants, Will identified his background as primarily rural, although he stated that he has lived in cities for awhile now, at least since leaving for college at 18 years old. While it is impossible to tease apart Will's identification as rural and his identification as working class, I do wish to note that, in his estimation, the two are the same. He told me, "Iowa in general, it's a place where a lot of people probably are going to self-identify as working class because it's not that rich of a state in general." Here, Will moves to argue that his geographic reckoning overlaps with his class identity so much that they cannot be separated. As such, he began to outline a definition of working-class status rooted in economic concerns and inequality. Further, Will detailed a definition of working class that relies on hands-on labor and rural experiences. Finally, Will called on ideological patterns he has noted as a person who self-identifies as working class; these ideological patterns focus on recognizing and utilizing talents early in life to build a sustainable, satisfying career.

Economically Bound: "Up the Ladder a Little Bit"

Will's self-identification as working class began in the small town of Banner, where, he notes, most of the residents identified as blue collar and working class. Will still considers himself working class, even as a doctoral candidate, because he is "poor." This acknowledgement of the economic bounds of class status formed the basis for both his self-definition and his broader, sociological definition of working class. He described his goals

to work in academia as a thoughtful effort to make life more financially comfortable for himself while also engaging in satisfying labor. He related, "I think part of the reason I always wanted to [go in to academics] was to maybe try to move up the ladder a little bit, to get up to semi-respectable middle-class position." Here, Will recognizes that his job in academia may hold more social cache than some of the jobs held by his family, yet he was quick to correct the notion that he's looking to surpass a given working-class baseline: "It's not like I've tried to shape my persona to try to be somewhat of a higher-class position either. Maybe the weird way to think about is maybe I just want some of the comforts and the opportunities you get from not quite being broke-ass poor and working on a farm." Instead of citing the types of jobs held as the markers of class status, Will connects the earning potential of those jobs with the "comforts and opportunities" granted by a job like a professorship, where the physical labor, at least, is very limited and the earning potential both greater and less contingent on out-of-his-control elements like market costs and weather patterns.

Will described his current working-class status as solid, as his monthly stipend keeps him just afloat. He detailed his current status thus, "I don't have a ton of money, and I am constantly striving to kind of keep my head above water, just in the middle of getting by." This "getting by" maybe isn't a new situation for Will, as the description of being "broke-ass poor and working on a farm" suggests, but neither is it a source of anger or resentment. His description of both his life in Iowa and here at the university centered on the experiences he's been afforded, rather than the ones he may have lost because of his financial reckoning.

One tough transition, Will noted, was his move from home to college, as it occurred only a few weeks after the death of his father, who died after having a heart attack while laying shingles. Will expressed the transition to college life as both emotionally difficult—as it would be after losing a parent—and as a new beginning. This entry into this phase of his life sounds like the first year of college for many students—rife with uncertainty and new experiences—however, his father’s death and his family’s inability to support him financially dictated many of his experiences in that first year.

While Will described a transition to college that acknowledged his financial independence from his parents, his father’s sudden death prompted a reconsideration of this status. He recognized that college students from working-class backgrounds often don’t experience this transition in the same way as their middle-to-upper-class peers: “[it] made the economic motivation even stronger, just another one of these cases where, it’s not like you expect your parents to support you through everything especially if you identify yourself as being from a working-class background.” Will remembered that this urge to succeed in college was made stronger by the recognition that his family couldn’t afford to foot the bill for his mistakes or lack of focus. His father’s death only added to this sense of urgency, as Will recounted the feelings of “knowing that you don’t even have the additional safety net of both your parents to get through the rough times, [it] is definitely something that motivates you to try to succeed.” Besides the emotional toll of the unexpected death, Will’s family also experienced the loss of a wage earner. However, Will did not present this time as more stressful than any other student’s. In fact, he marked this first year of college as “pretty fantastic” in the opportunities it offered him. While he recognized that his family life had undergone a dramatic change, he also recognized that

being on his own and responsible for himself both emotionally and financially, a move that “motivated [him] to start over.”

It is impossible—and unnecessary—to fully separate Will’s economic definitions of working-class status from the experiential ones. In his economic definition, Will acknowledges that his home town, because of its removal from major centers of commerce and the types of income potential it offered, identified as largely working class, and he then moved to cite part of the working-class experiences as flying without a financial safety net (much like Tabitha). Here, because no one in Iowa, he said, makes very much money, much of the rural parts of the state fall into his designation of working class. Further, because the children of these families understand that money is often short, they understand that their families—unlike possibly some of their more financially stable or well-off peers—cannot afford to both support those away at college and those left at home. This economic definition seems to be connected closely to the types of work done, though the relationship is not linear nor is it clearly defined.

Experientially Bound: “A Certain Aura of Simplicity”

Will’s hometown of Banner boasted fewer than 30 people, a fact that pervaded our discussion of class. This small town atmosphere, combined with Will’s recognition that much of the area was considered working class, formed the basis for his childhood experience. He described Banner as being removed from major centers of commerce, even though it is located only five miles outside a mid-sized university city. The population of Banner works primarily in the town, at one of its few businesses. He told me, “[the] Meat Locker is the only business that’s still there, still functioning. At its peak, in the 50s there was a grocery store, two gas stations, [and] the Meat Locker.” Though the small town is so

close to a larger, more urbanized area, Will described it as “pastoral,” because “five miles out of it, it feels like isolation; if you have to walk, it’s isolation. If you’re in a car, it’s 10 minutes.” This sense of rurality influenced Will’s path, as he saw both the beauty of the land alongside the scarcity of its employment resources outside agriculturalism. And though Will has chosen to move away from Iowa to follow his educational path, he described a sense of this pastoralism that can’t be replicated in the increasingly more urban environments in which he’s chosen to live. While Banner is an “a weird mix of city and pastoral life” because of its access to a larger city, Will most closely connected with the land and how it shaped the lives of its residents, saying: “I don’t think I’ll ever lose that core identity of being a farm kid. When you grow up in a town of 27 people for your formative 18 years of life, it definitely gives you a little bit of an oddball perspective, your relationship to everyone else, even in your county and country and state.” It is this relationship with his surroundings, specifically his students and the academic sphere, we focused on in our interviews and which I detail in the section on pedagogies.

Will’s father, as mentioned, was a self-employed carpenter, roofer, and mechanic who learned these trades on the farm and through apprenticeships. Though these trades could earn a comfortable living, Will indicated that, beyond wages, his father’s work could be considered blue collar because of its trade aspect and because of his training. There seems to be an assumption here about the nature of hands-on work—carpentry, fixing cars, laying roof—and working-class status. The rest of Will’s family, he explained, held similar jobs, though primarily not jobs affiliated with specific vocational trades, which would suggest—like his dad’s path—the freedom to open up a self-supported business. He told me, “Mom’s a lunch lady. Grandparents, farmers. Bowling alley workers, bus drivers.” The

recognition of farming cues self-sufficiency, though the remainder of the labor he cites relies on institutional support to work. These are the types of jobs Will witnessed as labor.

These jobs were available because of the rurality of Banner, another experiential aspect that supported Will's definition of working-class status. Will noted that the landscape informed his identification as a member of this demographic in complex ways. First, he cited Iowa's most prevalent businesses as farming and meat packing, two areas of labor that, while necessary, don't pay very much. The landscape, while constraining the types of work that can be done—and thus constraining the earning potential of its inhabitants—also offered Will a pastoral perceptive which he imports to his current life in the southeast. He didn't go so far as to assert that rural living was more "pure" than urban, though he did recognize this tense division:

It always still seems kind of like, I'm not saying any pure or anything like that, because I know a lot of people back home that have a lot of problems related to the fact that the economy sucks or, you know, meth is pretty prevalent up there and all kinds of other stuff too but at the same time it does have a kind of certain aura of simplicity around it, because you know that pigs aren't going anywhere, the cornfield's not going anywhere. It's just not going to make you rich either.

In this excerpt, Will works to explain the simplicity of rural living. While he doesn't take it so far as to define a rural aesthetic, he does seem to detail a life where the experiences, while at times hard-scrabble, are at least predictable. There's a certain "simplicity" in the farming lifestyle, just as in the trades of carpentry and car repair. People will always need meat. People will always need their houses and cars fixed. Will noted this reliability in labor and lifestyle, in contrast with Paul's (Chapter 7) notion that working-

class jobs are unreliable, as primary to working-class experience. Will explained his decision to move from Iowa as “a chase to get oneself a decent job,” thus suggesting that, unless he wanted to do the kinds of work his family has done, moving away from the area was a necessity. Interestingly, though, he does not discount the possibility of returning to Iowa at the completion of his degree, to work at a smaller, teaching-focused college or university.

Ideologically Bound: “You Gotta Deal”

Will also noted ideological aspects to defining working class, and these ideals, while they can’t be measured or tracked like labor and earnings, offered insight into both his personal definition of the demographic and his broad sociological definition. Will’s working-class ideologically is rooted in a two-fold system that pulls from idealistic notions like “simplicity” while inculcating a recognition of inequality. The nod toward the “simplicity” of farm life, as it considers the struggle inherent in his existence, undergirds Will’s ideological definition of working class. The focus on labor defines this distinction as experiential; after all, it is the type of work Will’s family did that gives him evidence to his “pedigree.”

But the deployment of the idea of pastoralism, of the purity of a hard-won life on the plains of Iowa, does point to a way of life that predates industrialism and urban living. The ideologies suggested by reference to this lifestyle include such Americanisms as hard work, dedication, and resistance to outside forces meant to erode happiness. While Will didn’t seem to buy into these notions wholesale—much like Daniel’s total rejection of the Horatio Alger story—citing the simplicity involved in this kind of life is an interesting ideological footnote on a demographic that’s often focused on struggle. Will’s early Iowa experiences,

though he notes that no one aspires to be “broke-ass poor and living on a farm,” relies on the predictability of the labor, the predictability of the laborer, and the recognition that need is always a given.

Will’s ideological definition of working class also relies on a metacognitive move that those within the working class are not often cited as making. That is to say those who struggle aren’t illustrated as thinking deeply about their struggle because, as Will mentioned, life is often too busy and exhaustion too constant to philosophize about one’s status. He explained, working-class people “keep that awareness of both economic and social things because if you really are working class, you gotta deal with the day to day struggles of living. You gotta deal with that kind of stuff just on the level of, Alright, how am I going to have enough money to pay the gas bill and get groceries and stuff like that?” This concern with sustenance doesn’t leave much time or energy for postulating on class difference, he suggested, though working-class people are constantly made aware of their social positioning and lack of opportunity as they critically interrogate the lifestyles of others and assumptions about what constitute “the good life.”

Will described his self-identification as stemming from this awareness of economic discrepancy: “It’s kind of hard to disassociate yourself from the working class when that’s the pedigree, too, I guess.” And part of the ideological makeup of this pedigree is the investment in certain cultural events, ways of thinking, or mores. He continued to develop his working-class ideology in this way: “these [class] distinctions change the way that we think about culture, too. I mean, class positions change that, about how whether lionizing the opera versus lionizing folk songs or something like that is going to be something that might come directly out of your position, and about how they both are part of American

culture, but are serving very different interests in American culture.” By cueing the classed nature of culture—here describing himself as more interested, growing up, in comic books than in the Oxford Library—Will implicates a whole matrix of ideologies rooted in this reflective relationship between consumers and culture, one that he argues does little to support the working class; those people struggling just to make it are at all times aware of this struggle and cognizant of some of the power structures behind their labor. He explained that to be working class meant that one possesses a “[k]ind of a definite awareness of discrepancies of opportunity. Maybe an awareness of some of the ways that we’re shaped to have ideals that maybe don’t favor the working class all the time. Or ones that might purport to do so, [but] that are just there to kind of keep the working class happy rather than actually celebrate them.”

Will has noticed a trend in popular culture towards commodifying the working class—he noted the figure of Joe the Plumber in the 2008 Presidential elections as a stand-in for all working-class experience—and has determined that this public portrayal of crystallized working-class ideals serves to placate the very demographic to which it is intended to give voice. And it’s this critical reckoning that he cited as a strong motivator to continue his studies.

Pedagogies

Moves in Academia: Reasons for Reading and Teaching

For him, earning a doctorate was never about leaving behind his working-class lifestyle; instead “It’s been about being a working-class person that has the chance to understand their world maybe in a little bit of a different way.” He connects this desire with this teaching philosophies, saying, “I guess that’s part of what I try to teach as well too

because that's how I've been, a big part of what I've felt. That is the reason that I read literature and stuff like that too. [To] better understand people, better understand America, better understand the world, whether or interiorly or exteriorly." By recognizing that working-class status in American often arises out of legacies of inequality and by positioning himself to better understand these inequalities, Will signals a personal worldview that refuses a reductionist position of condescending advocacy while also recognizing what he considers positive aspects of the status. This search for understanding class status and its rise out of and effect on American culture creates a foundation for Will's teaching philosophy and practices, as he seeks to instill in his first-year writing students the ability to critically interrogate their surroundings.

Authenticity and Humor

Humor is foundational to Will's approach to teaching first-year composition, and it is on his "absurdist" stance that we focused in most of our interviews. "Sometimes, you gotta laugh," he said, "Especially with all the stuff that goes on, I mean, you gotta be able to laugh sometimes, otherwise you're going to be one of those people who are gnashing their teeth, like, Argh, this is all so terrible!" While Will never explicitly connected his use of humor in the classroom to his experiences growing up working class, this thread seemed to emerge through a number of narratives; first, Will described his mode of dress as a conscious effort to reject consumerism, and then he postulated that his students could probably ascertain his class status simply by the way he dressed.

Will told me, "dress for me is kind of a big deal." He described for me an approach to teaching that centered on his students perceiving him as approachable and, at the same time, made himself responsible for holding his authority in the classroom through his

display of knowledge. Will explained a self-conscious rejection of appearing formal in the classroom, taking the opposite stance as Paul. He said, “[I reject] the desire to kind of put yourself into the well-dressed, respect-me-both-due-to-my-looks-as-well-as-my-knowledge-as-well-as-everything-else in the classroom. For me, I do try to put it more just on the respect we have for an exchange [of] information, an exchange [of] ideas.” While refusing the trappings of consumer culture isn’t a trait unique to either graduate students or the working class, Will’s framing of this trend in popular culture does seem to be influenced by his background; he said, “My clothes are a little old, they’re not the best.” He describes his own wardrobe as one part necessity, one part personal style as he prefers to dress casually and frugally: “That’s my teaching uniform, having some decent pants, button-up shirt, still definitely not full on sweater vest and all that J. Crew apparel by any means, but partially it’s just because I’m cheap and I don’t like spending a lot on clothes, but I think a little bit of that identification probably could be picked up just by looking.” This two-part approach, first a rejection of the hyper-Capitalism of American culture and then a move to describe his appearance as visibly cueing working class, Will began to articulate a performance that takes in even the subtlest of messages.

This concern with the rhetorical messages of his teaching attire informs his pedagogy as he is “getting into ideas more about performativity and the mutable nature of our cultural ideas. [It] has been more fun for me to try to get kids think about their identities and how identities perform versus everyday life and how people create their identities through their writing, a lot of times.” Will’s teaching philosophy hinges on this concept of deep critical thinking, and he asks his students to follow the same interrogation into their own performances as he’s taken with his.

Will also told me that he explains some of his background to his students, citing the “9 exits for the next 9 driveways” anecdote as a geographical indicator of his experience. He explained that he chooses to tell his students about his small-town upbringing because it draws him as an “outsider” and “as a way to get into my perspective of being in a different culture in the south.” In this way, he sees sharing his background as an ice breaker and encouragement to students who may feel like outsiders themselves.

But Will was quick to note that he doesn’t talk much about his working-class identification; however, he noted that “I think my kids do have a little bit of an understanding that I’m coming from not exactly a privileged idea too.” Will consciously makes this move to identify with a culture outside of academia in order to upset his students’ expectations of who belongs in the sphere, as well as to invite those on the outside in: “I think it’s one of those things that humanizes me for them because I think some do have this idea of the English person being still like the knuckle-rapping older lady who comes from like a more cultured position, and I’d say that isn’t always true.” His experiences growing up in a small town, and some of his narratives about Banner, also work to make Will approachable to his students, as he crafts a persona that appears less intimidating and less judgmental.

Demystification: Culture Monopoly in the Academy

One strategy that many participants in this study shared is a use of popular culture artifacts as class texts. Will identified his own background as rooted in this “low culture,” saying, “I was interested in comic books and TV like a lot of other people.” The implication here seems to be that middle- and upper-class children spend less time invested in this cultural tableau, more time involved in “higher culture” activities. He described this use of

pop culture as a way to bridge complex ideas with his students: “I try to make the connection using low culture sometimes to get to them,” here, to engage them, “and then try to relate that to some of the ideas that we have explored in our so-called high culture.” He particularized this strategy, saying, “Thoreau is always one of my favorite crossover points because [nature is] something they’ve dealt with a little bit, but trying to make the connections about some of the things he’s thinking about in there to some of the stuff that we’ve done in movies, TV, stories, and stuff like that later on is always generally a fun day for me.” Here, Thoreau’s complex ideas about man’s relationship with nature are fleshed out via popular texts like the film and book *Into the Wild*. By framing literature in terms he feels his students can connect with, Will recognizes that many of them may enter college without the “high culture” markers some instructors may expect, and he works to make this transition less intimidating and more engaging by including current, popularized narratives similar to those they read about in their “high culture” texts.

Will’s incorporation of popular culture into his first-year writing classrooms serves to support his course content by complicating his own and his students’ relationships to class status. While many instructors choose to assign graphic novels or current popular films as course texts, Will’s choice of course content and his course goals are also informed by his self-identification as working class. He explained that his English 102, the second class in the two-class first-year-writing sequence, focuses more explicitly on the role of class in American society, though his English 101 does begin to lay the groundwork for such interrogations.

This semester, Will structured his English 101 course around the idea of “romance” and the romantic ideal. He detailed a few assignments that presented to his students the

concept of romance and love as classed emotions, commodified and cultured through advertising. Class discussion ranged from connections to the natural world—as evidenced by his work with Thoreau—to the sense of romance as love, as he asked students question the process behind “displaying your love through diamonds.” Though he professed a commitment to teaching students rhetoric thought stasis theory, a move that may suggest a less politicized curriculum, Will did detail his course goals for 101 as focused on critical thought and the writing process. He told me that his goals include

[g]etting into things like body image and stereotyping and thinking about how these kind of social images are created. ... it’s been really interesting for me to try to work with this stuff, because that’s something as a, just as who I am, it’s part of my working-class writing instructor or whatever I do, [to] try to get as much as it [in] about invention, writing. I do try to get them more aware of the influences that are trying to help shape them in the world too.

Will’s class identification thus influences his 101 course content as he encourages students to query their own stance in society as they begin to develop their writerly voices.

Interrogating Class in America: An FYC Goal

Will explained that, while his English 101 course focused on stasis theory, rhetorical analysis, and the writing process, he structured his course content for 102 to explicitly bring up issues of class in America, specifically from a historical standpoint. Will describes the second part to his first-year composition class as “not exactly Marxist,” although he does “try to get kids to have an understanding of class positions and our ideas and the way we shape those ideas.” In English 102, a technology-themed class, he asks students to look at the “the changing role of technology in American life and how it’s changed our economic

lives as well as just our daily cultural lives.” One early assignment asked students to imagine themselves as living on the frontier, around the mid-1700s. This writing prompt offered both a chance for students to engage creatively with the historical texts of the class and also to practice low-stakes writing.

Will told me, “You get different reflections of people’s class positions of what they choose for themselves. Half the black students put themselves as slaves... some of the richer kids will be like, Oh, I’d be in my house, and I’d probably still have to do some stuff, and it would be okay.” He begins the semester with an historical interrogation into how class structure is maintained, a move that puts students’ experiences, as the creative writing assignment does, at the fore of the class texts. Is it worth noting that Will’s creative imagining into the 1730s thoughtfully mirrors his own class background: “I’d definitely be one of Hamlin Garland’s oppressed farmers, I suppose. If you’re in Iowa, you’re not going to be there in 1730s, but 1830s or whatever, I’d be one of his beaten-down people on the main-travelled roads.” This deep engagement with his assignment suggests that it may ask students to begin to question their class status in a way that is temporally and spatially removed, thus making it a safe space to be critical.

Will excitedly detailed one student’s engagement with the topic of class and technology, a formal research project into William Gibson’s *Neuromancer*: “He got really into this idea about how it would change the class structure of society, how it would change economics just due to the fact that humanity is changing so much that our desires and needs might radically shift.” He added, “That was kind of fun.” This tripartite connection between Will’s class identification, his interest in the course content, and his student’s

interest in the topic all sync to create a learning environment where student experience is considered important and necessary.

Decentering: A Fight against Environment

Will's valuation of student experience also comes through in his decision to decenter his classroom. Unlike Paul, Will prefers to be just another member of a classroom circle, another student who—as I will recall—strives to dress more casually and present himself as fallible. Like all college-level instructors, Will fights the problem of variable classroom spaces. Rarely will an instructor be assigned the same room for two classes, much less two semesters. This ever-changing floor plan forces instructors of smaller classes—the FYC course is capped at 23—who don't teach in stadium-seated rooms to alter their discussion styles from semester to semester and sometimes from class to class on the same day. During the semester we interviewed, Will described having the worst space issues he has experienced since he began teaching, with his rooms filled with long, often immovable desks which force students not only in the middle of the square but also separate him from the ecosystem of the classroom by creating a barrier three-long-desks deep. This separation dramatically changes Will's approach to his classroom and creates a frustrating spatial mess that translates, at times, to the culture of the classroom. He told me, "I'd like to get immersed a little bit more and lose this jumbled thing that's going on right now." His ideal plan would be "immersion" within the workings of the classroom, a direct rejection of the teacher-at-the-front-of-the-room (and-barricaded-behind-desks) format he's experiencing now.

Will's ideal classroom, like most of the other participants, would rely on discussion circle, an oft-discussed and sometimes ridiculed (as falsely egalitarian) decentering methods. He explained his dream classroom arrangement:

If I had my own room where I could set it up, it would definitely be on the circular plan. If I had to drop back to go do tech stuff, I'd go back there and everything. It's my attitude too where it doesn't seem like there's that much separation between me and then sometimes, so I still try to have the position of authority but still kind of be in there with them. I don't particularly always like the wind-up thing, where like, I'm here, you are all this half of the room. Focus all your attention directly up here. Of course, I want them to pay attention. But I like it more of that communal area rather than kind of an us-versus-them look.

In this arrangement, Will displayed a clear refusal of the sage-on-a-stage model that would make him the person-in-charge. While he acknowledged that that "still tries to have the position of authority," he also described a scenario where no student is relegated to the back of the room and where students are encouraged to face one another during discussion. He explained this method as a response to experiencing college as a working-class student: the circle "does kind of get rid of that division of front row kids versus back row kids. Which, like I say, as a [scholarship] kid I always was a back row kid that talked like front row, but not most of them do that." Because he knows what it felt like to occupy the back row of a small classroom—the attendant judgments passed by both peers and instructors—Will seeks to upset this socially trained behavior in his students.

By asking students to form a circle, he agreed that the role they take on is one of egalitarian participant: "[To] say, alright, we're going to try a different desk, and that

doesn't mean that it's going to cause one to change their hierarchical position up front and back. You'd just be somewhere else." While I don't wish to belabor the point, I will argue that Will's careful attention to where his students sit, beyond his hope to "generate more conversation" with the face-to-face contact, shows a distinct ethic of care for the subtle daily emotional state of his students, especially those who might feel pressured to join the ranks of the Siberian back row (Shor, 1997) or who feel that they've been forced by past accomplishments and social training (see Bolker, 1979) into occupying one of the front-row seats. Further, by recognizing that a more traditional classroom arrangement—teacher at the front, students facing forward in rapt attention—forces students into positions of disenfranchisement, Will suggests a pedagogy that seeks to upset the expectations students hold about the college classroom and their role in it.

Teaching Working Class: Utilizing Comedy and Tragedy

"I've never really felt like I've gone explicitly out to establish myself in that position [as working class]" Will mused, "but it does color what I do, to my experiences and to my attitude." Though many of his classroom methods and methodologies are shared by instructors in other disciplines and at different points in their career, Will's consciousness of their provenance makes his pedagogies unique. As mentioned, he's not in academics to escape his family's legacy of labor; instead, he has contemplated moving back to Iowa after completing his degree. Instead, he narrated a background rooted in hard work, rurality, and the confidence to follow his gifts where they might lead. We talked at length about the dwindling need for college-level instructors and our likely salaries once we enter the job market. While recognizing that his career as a college professor may pay as much or less than his father made as a tradesman, he stated, "there isn't anywhere else I'd rather be,

personally.” Will’s story wasn’t one of explicit struggle, though he did relate times of loss and need, nor was it one that cast his working-class family as doing work less important than his own in the academy. The two spheres simply represent “[d]ifferent goals, different types of work, different people doing different things.” By avoiding evaluating each job as better than the other—academics as more prestigious or blue-collar work as more pure—Will outlined a worldview that relied on both experiences for its richness.

Further, by utilizing humor, Will rejects students’ expectations of the first-year writing classroom as stodgy, rule-driven, and uninviting. His classroom persona hinges on this comedy, as he narrates anecdotes about his life and “cracks jokes” at unresponsive students. Will explained that he utilized humor in his classes to “get them to pay attention in class every now and then,” yet this approach rises from a deeper-held lifeway that’s informed directly by his class identification. While his narrative oscillated between humorous (i.e., the nine driveways for the nine exits to Banner) and tragic (his father’s unexpected death just before he left for college), Will articulated a system of thought and action rooted in dramatics and absurdism: “Especially with all the stuff that goes on, I mean, you gotta be able to laugh sometimes, otherwise you’re going to be one of those people who are gnashing their teeth, like, Argh, this is all so terrible!” Just as Will-the-teacher notes that, though he brings humor into his first-year writing classroom, his students “still get the hammer, too,” Will-outside-the-classroom described a similar life philosophy. In fact, Will detailed a persona that makes little change between its performance inside the classroom and outside it. He defined how he viewed this suggestion of shapeshifting:

I do try to get the tiniest bit more serious [with my students], more than a tiny, a little bit more serious. I still have fun with it. I still definitely try to control the classroom. We're still working in my classroom on stuff we're supposed to be doing, but at the same time, it's not like I feel I switch my hats that much. I feel like I'm fairly real with the students. I never feel like I completely shell up, or 100 percent switch, but the difference between classroom me and me with my mom or whatever, I mean, this probably would get down to I don't feel like I have a whole lot of authority over her, I guess. [laughs] but at the same time, the way I interact with my students as people and even my family, I'd say, isn't way different for the most part. That's just kind of who I am, I guess.

This embrace of humor scaffolds Will's participation in the academy, as well as his interactions beyond it. Even with questions of the honorific, he's hesitant to invest too much importance in the title: "It's hard for me to be serious enough to want to be enough of a prig to introduce that into every single conversation you ever have with anyone." Instead, he told me, he's likely to only occasionally deploy the title of "Doctor" once it's earned, since to do otherwise would imbue him with an importance that he doesn't feel he holds in a system that he's identified as a game: "I don't feel like I've really changed that much for anyone, I guess, which maybe if I wanted to play the game better would be a better thing, but like I say, I'm me."

Will's narrative is the story of the wanderer. Like Tabitha (Chapter 6), Will narrated a tale of seeking to fit in by trying out different types of labor and settings. Growing up working class in rural Iowa created in Will the desire to sample experience and supports his pedagogies framed through critical inquiry. Humor offered a counterpoint to Will's

teaching methods, a style that works to upset student expectations of the college classroom, while his experiences as a scholarship kid informs his choice of a student-centered classroom where students don't get branded as back-row apathetic or front-row participatory.

Chapter 9: Patterns and Meanings

This chapter explores similarities and differences across the six discrete and very different narratives. Instead of seeking the totalizing frameworks indicated by theoretical paradigms, I recall Lather's (2003) argument that "openly ideological research" aims for "pattern and meaning, rather than for prediction and control" (p. 192; also Reinhartz, 1983). Thus, instead of contributing to a monolithic theory of working-class writing instructors, I intend for this section to enrich discussion and prompt inquiry.

This study foregrounds its data on the assumption of complexity. While the participants all self-identified as working class and as writing teachers, they presented very different narratives. While I don't wish to speculate as to the provenance of these differences, a maneuver that borders on sloppy reductionism, I do want to first draw forth some of the distinctions between cases. Then, with the assertion of incompleteness as a frame, I will outline some of the major common moves between cases. While this approach may seem like hedging, I feel, along with input from all six participants, that to make linear six complex lives is both unethical and problematic in terms of research findings. The narratives of these participants often presented internal contradictions, paradoxes, and retractions. These fragments and inconsistencies suggest two overarching points: 1) that claiming working-class status is a complex identity maneuver contingent on both immediate and historical context; and 2) that teaching personas accumulate across time. That is, though these first-year writing instructors verbalized moment-to-moment teaching decisions, these decisions were informed by decades—in some cases, centuries—of trauma, joy, and storytelling. My conscious move toward ambiguity and incompleteness echoes the tenants of a postcritical methodology as outlined in Chapter 2.

In this chapter, I first detail divergences between cases, as these differences often informed instructors' uptake of class both in and out of the first-year composition classroom. Then, I detail meaningful similarities; here, I do not intend to contribute to theories on class and pedagogy. Theory *building*, as described by Richardson and St. Pierre (1994), takes up discourses rooted in positivism and as a metaphor cues words like "structure, foundation, construction, deconstruction, framework, [and] grand" (p. 973; see also Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, for a clear explication of the role of metaphor in structuring thought). If this cross-case analysis must be considered through the frame of theory, I wish to consider, per Richardson and St. Pierre, changing the metaphor. These narratives may then postulate theory as mosaic. Each voice, multivalenced on its own, joins other voices to present a fragmented, refractive consideration of working-class writing teachers. These collections thus present the ideological, political, and corporeal considerations of teaching writing in a way that values diverse experiences.

Divergences: By Degree and Kind

One of my primary research purposes contends with the complexity of claiming working-class status. The six participants all self-identified as working class or blue collar, and each pointed to a background rooted in hands-on, often exploitative, labor. However, the provenance of each participant's identification differs in significant ways. Regional identification, labor types and history, family orientation, and political ideologies emerged as categories of difference among the six working-class writing instructors.

Regional Identification

The first and most important difference, as observed through both the transcript data and made evident by the focus group, is region. Identification with the industrial

working class implicates an entirely different set of values, experiences, and motivations than identification with the rural, agricultural working class; and the divisions deepen: rurality is not monolithic, thus rural, agricultural working class implicates different structures than other types of labor rooted in rurality, such as backgrounds invested in mining or factory work. Likewise, northern rurality differs from southern rurality, and though only one participant—Paul—identified fully with a sub/urban background; I argue that his urban working-class experience necessarily differs from other urban, working-class narratives because of the local nature of class identification.

Regional identification and notions of rurality provided confounding factors in this study. Though five of six participants identified with a rural background, they each drew forth different kinds of rural identifications. Anne-Marie's connection to the land seemed a factor apart from her identification as working class, a move she makes because of her father's work as an oil-field mechanic. However, she did cite her rugged individualism—an attitude more akin to a work ethic and life philosophy than an entrepreneurial cry, as it has been co-opted—as distinctly Western, distinctly Wyoming. Here, she overlaps her class identification with her geographic identification so closely that the two cannot be teased apart.

Likewise, Daniel's narrative conflates regional, landscape-based connections with his family's work history in the mines and steel mills of rural Pennsylvania. While his father could have completed the same labor in a metropolitan area—Pittsburgh, for example—Daniel draws forth his family's reliance on the land as a measure of subsistence and as an ideology, thus making the soil a player in his labor history. Without the food and additional income provided by the farm, he related, the family would have met financial straits;

further, this way of life represented a more elegant relationship, as they worked to be as far removed from consumer structures as they could manage. (The implication of wage labor, of course, complicates and contradicts this narrative while also providing a motivation for Daniel's urge to live off the grid.) It is also important to note that while rural Pennsylvania could, in many cases, be considered Midwestern, Daniel chose instead to invoke the term Industrial Appalachia.

Will espoused a connection to the land that featured elements common to both Rick and Daniel's lives. Will's childhood in Iowa created in him an attitude towards the landscape that presents an optimism—a pastoralism, in his words—like Rick's, yet his hometown's lack of commerce and his family's subsequent financial struggle, echoes Daniel's relationship to his small Pennsylvania community. The land thus offers Daniel hope in its promise of possibility and renewal, while the shuttered businesses and his family's blue-collar careers—mechanics, bowling alley workers—signal a disconnect with the land. He related a feeling of isolation similar to both Rick and Daniel, saying that, though his community was situated relatively close to a metropolitan area, it felt far removed from urban lifestyles.

Rick narrated an experience similar to Will's Midwestern identification in his emphasis on the virtues of small-town life and his insistence on recreating these social networks in his life and teaching. But while both Daniel and Rick gesture towards Midwestern tales, the details are radically different. Where Daniel's family labor history centers on exploitative labor models—and the mining industry, even with improvements, is among the most exploitative—Rick's family labor history seems to center on sole proprietorship. His father owned a fencing company and now his family owns and operates

the town's convenience store. Rick, to recall, earned money at a young age mowing lawns. His relationship with the region—and the land, by proxy—presents a more optimistic engagement than Daniel's experiences with unfair labor practices and closed factories. These differences matter greatly as they work to influence both men in their current positions as writing instructors.

Paul's regional identification differs from the other participants' in its suburban orientation. Growing up in a small, blue-collar neighborhood in Ohio, Paul narrated a background more connected with concrete landscapes than soil, more attuned to landmark buildings than with mountains or open fields. This identification is bolstered by his family's labor history in factories and his own work in air freight. A suburban location implicates access to different labor opportunities, and though factories exist in both rural and urban areas, Paul's strong identification with his work loading airplanes could have occurred only where he had access to an airport. Further, Paul's walkable neighborhood—he remembered sitting on the front stoops of older neighbors as a child, experiences which directly informed his identification as formal in the classroom—recalls both rural and urban kinship structures and relationship networks reliant on proximity.

Tabitha's regional identification offers perhaps the hardest case to clearly situate, as she narrated less of a connection to her landscape than the other five participants. However, Tabitha did assert that because she identifies as being from Connecticut, others assume her family's wealth. Further, though she related a family labor history rich with instability, bolstered by an "immigrant mentality" that prizes practical skills over academic musings, she also recognizes that her family's roots in Connecticut help to keep them financially "on the brink." The high cost of living, she noted, means that her family must

work harder to maintain even a lower-middle class status. In her story of class, the geography—in terms of demographics—has certainly affected her identification.

Regional identification thus emerged as a factor important to most—five of six—of the participants. This connection to the space and place influenced factors as far ranging as their post-PhD plans, their relationships with students from similar backgrounds, their definitions of class and use value, and their ideological stances toward issues such as the financial accessibility of higher education. By informing instructors’ teaching philosophies through the screen of landscape, the persistence of this common thread across lives suggests that physical spaces—and the labor histories of these physical spaces, which I will detail in the next section—impact day-to-day classroom activities in complex ways.

Labor Types and Histories

Here, I connect the six participant’s identification with region with differences in their labor types. As mentioned in Paul’s case, for example, his suburban locale gave rise to his work in air freight. Rick’s family’s roots in Missouri framed their work in fencing, and Daniel’s family’s rurality gave rise to their agriculturalism. Just as each participant calls a different region home, each participant also calls into being a unique history of labor. These variable histories, as detailed previously, inform their current iterations of self and being in the world. Anne-Marie’s memories of being called “oil-field trash” emerged as a turning point in her academic life. She narrated a split—then made physical by her metaphor of the “split-rail fence”—between her family’s lifestyle and her career path. Further, Anne-Marie’s brother and sister work in traditionally blue-collar (and, in the case of nursing, pink-collar) while she finishes her doctorate, prompting her to question the use value of her academic labor. She described a feeling of being outside the family structure before then moving to

question the applicability of her skill set in the “wider world.” These two moves, I argue, are directly informed by her family’s labor history.

Rick’s deeply felt ethics on work and dependability connect to the way he witnessed and conducted labor as a child. While building a fence along a ridgeline, for example, requires a different set of skills than college-level writing, Rick detailed a process nonetheless complex and satisfying. That his family moved from alienating factory work to sole proprietorship—establishing a convenience store he termed the “culture center of Holston”—marked for Rick a move into community-based relationship building, a point that permeates his community-based classroom. He detailed a moment of realization during his own stint on the factory line: the “miserable” work he had to complete for a summer was the same labor his parents had committed to full-time for the last 20 years. Moving through this labor scene strengthened, he argued, his resolve to succeed in higher education and reflects in his relationships with students from similar backgrounds.

Paul’s strong inclination towards formality in the classroom all draw from their corporeal labor histories. Likewise, Paul’s nostalgia for his work loading airplanes—the camaraderie built from physical trust, unspoken—stands in stark relief against his often disembodied, competitive life in academics. His pedagogies seek to move away from these disembodiments, as he encourages students to work collaboratively in living-learning communities.

Daniel’s family’s history in the mining culture of rural Pennsylvania distinguished his political and pedagogical ideologies from the other five participants. Daniel detailed a history of exploitative labor, subsistence, and dogged determination. He wishes to return to Pennsylvania and teach in a public university because, he argued, he feels strongly that

education should be made accessible to as many students as possible. Further, his labor in such variable landscapes as an adult-care home and a patent office conscribed his definition of acceptable work standards, a stance he connects to his family's history struggling against unfair work practices.

Will's vignettes of his family's labor life in rural Iowa—particularly the threads of narrative detailing his father's carpentry work—inform his pedagogies and aspirations. His father's decision to establish himself independently instead of working a company influences Will's opinions of labor ownership through academic publishing and fair work practices. Further, that Will's father could support his family through manual labor inscribed Will's position on vocationalism: one kind of work is never more valuable than another. By acknowledging economic trends that favor employee status over sole proprietorship, Will thus connected his family's labor history and his goals for teaching writing: while manual labor offers different rewards than academic work, a carpenter now will very likely work under the direction of an organization. His students, he argues, though perhaps not engaging in manual labor, must gain experience writing into these large-scale organizational discourses if they are to succeed.

Tabitha, in concert with the other participants, presented a clear connection between labor history and current practice. She described a family structure calcified through an "immigrant mentality" that valued instrumental education. Each generation "scrapes by," she said, with the intent for each successive generation to improve on the lifestyles of the previous. Pushed into an education in engineering, because of its assumed high pay grade and stability, Tabitha explained her doctoral studies as a push back: studying Medieval humor was, to her, a disciplinary focus without guaranteed—or perhaps

even probable—success, but it offered a body of literature and disciplinary practice she enjoys.

Though each of the six participants described pedagogies and philosophies informed by their family's labor histories, each came to these connections in very different ways. Daniel's vehement rejection of capitalism—and the trickle-down of this rejection to his composition classroom—is a value borne of his family's history in mining and his own work background. In contrast, Rick narrated a family work history rooted in personal investment as a contrast to the alienating labor demanded by line work. I argue that these labor histories inform each instructor's pedagogies and aspirations by offering both positive and negative examples of use value and job satisfaction. Because the participants cited a drive to "be useful"—a point I detail in the section on similarities—these histories where labor equated payoff (or exploitation) necessarily effect their opinions on their work as academics.

Family Orientation

Another difference that arose between cases involved each participant's family orientation. While most, five of six, described traditional family models, these models varied greatly in expectations and operations. Also, Will's experience featured a non-traditional family structure, at least insofar as his mother, after the death of his father when Will was 18, did not remarry and chose to single parent. This choice framed Will's experience as one which drew on extended family members and which brought forth financial concerns that Will described as motivating his drive to succeed in college and become economically comfortable, but not "middle class."

Anne-Marie described a family structure that was at times, in her opinion, too supportive of her siblings' life choices, so much as to incite financial dependence. This behavior, she noted, was more indicative of her family's working-class identification than its Western attitudes of individualism and "live and let live-ness." While the working class rally around struggling family, she told me, a Western-values-oriented family would claim struggle as clarifying and refuse help. The regional and class differences are, as I noted, impossible to tease apart; however, Anne-Marie's family's attitudes towards help and self-sufficiency does begin to signal these differences.

Rick's orientation towards his family structure undergirds his identification with a community-model classroom and his desire to return to the Midwest. He described a system of relationships where each person knows the next, and this proximity incited trustworthiness. His definition of family expanded to include much of his community, as he cited even casual social relationships as important to his sense of self and his attachment to his community. And Rick's detailing of helping with his father's business—and his father and mother's subsequent move into store ownership—inform Rick's identification with close—in proximity and emotionally—social relationships.

Daniel, Tabitha, and Paul presented narratives that backgrounded their family orientation, though none of them discounted the importance of witnessing labor to their class identification. Daniel's family orientation read as historical, not immediate, as he recalled centuries of exploitative labor practices and his family's role in the push for collective bargaining. Here, Daniel made broad connections between his grandfather's facility with language and his own placement within academia; the two men possess similar talents and seek to use them for generative goals. However, beyond referencing his

homeplace as a possible relocation, and his parent's farm as a source of sustainable crops, Daniel foregrounded his class identification historically. In comparison, Paul did reference his immediate family's labor as a site of his own class identification—a history of factory work and other kinds of manual labor forms his paradigm—but he chose not to elaborate on specific family orientations, except to note the persistence of a kinship system based on proximity. Finally, Tabitha's family's identification as immigrant class effaced her immediately family's labor practices; as such, she fleshed out her class identification through the framework of persistence via her family's "immigrant mentality." These observations do not assert that these participants reject or otherwise fail to recognize their family orientations as important to their current iterations of class. Instead, I wish to note, emphatically, that the backgrounding of these experiences suggest only that these three participants choose to orient their class identifications in ways different from the others.

Political Ideologies

These family orientations, along with the participants' labor histories and regions, work to inform their political worldviews. These political ideologies ranged from a stringent rejection of capitalist structures—Daniel, who noted the injustices borne from free market trade, especially injustices to workers—to narratives which read as apolitical, such as Rick's and Paul's. Because of Daniel's variable identification with politically framed ideologies, I wish to broad the term to include worldviews that implicate deeply held beliefs for public action.

Some of the participants cited deeply held sociopolitical ideologies that work to structure their class relationships—Daniel and Will, notably. These two participants specifically cite contention with the "Ideological State Apparatus" (Althusser, 1971) in their

recognition of the superstructures of Capitalism and its relationship to the university.

Daniel, for example, locates the provenance of his career choice on this rejection: “I want to be in academia because I want to remove myself as much as possible from hyper-capitalism.” He frames academe as a labor model that escapes the models he considers historically exploitative; the products of his labor, then, satisfy him both intellectually and morally as he removes his body from the make/sell/buy world of free enterprise. This move cues a sense of control, as Daniel acknowledged that his classroom escapes the bounds of a marketplace by his approach emphasizing critical thinking and the “broadening of horizons.”

Will, in a similar approach, designs his courses to look at “the evolution of American capitalism.” Unlike Daniel, Will’s entry into academia was not prompted by an urge to be removed from the structures of Capitalism; instead, Will cites a desire to share with students the history and development of ideas about class to, he asserts, then query their own class positionings in a more contextualized way. He works to achieve this goal through literary texts and through texts which interrogate American popular culture as one based on hyper-consumptive behavior.

While Daniel and Will draw from historical paradigms for their worldviews, the other three participants construct eclectic worldviews which sample ideologies from many parts of their lives. Tabitha’s worldview was strongly influenced by her identification with an “immigrant mentality” and her family’s insistence on an occupation that is both in demand and financially sustainable. Anne-Marie cited a Western point of view, one born of rugged individualism and a paradoxical, yet complementary, reliance on family, as the site of her working-class ideology. Rick implicated a system of ethics stemming from

obligation, expectation, and the recognized value of hard work. “It’s just about seeing accomplishment,” Rick told me, “so whenever we build fence, you’d start and there’d be this line, dad would put a string line, and this is where we gotta be by the end of the [day], and when you got there, there’s a definite feeling of accomplishment.” Here, Rick connects family obligation (his dad owned this fencing company) with his labor to impart a matrix of morals which, in the end, rendered a product that was both satisfying and labor-intensive: “It’s physical as well as mental as well as aesthetic. Because when I was done, you’d have this kind of really beautiful white fence that would be going up the hill.”

Similarities: Movement among Cases

I recognize that the participants in this study have self-identified as working class for variable reasons influenced by a complex matrix of associations: regional identification, labor history, family orientation, and political ideologies. They also share a number of features beyond the self-selected demographic of “working-class writing teacher”: histories of manual (blue-collar) labor, which gestures toward the embodied nature of work; the drive to “be of use”; ambivalence and even resistance to identification as an “academic”; and pedagogies which focus their energies on teaching writing through community models, process models, and pedagogies of ethics and empathy.

Embodiment and Labor

While it borders on totalizing, I do note that all six participants identified as either laboring at blue-collar jobs—Rick, Paul, Daniel, and Tabitha—or watching this labor completed—Will and Anne-Marie. This corporeal connection to work insinuated itself in many ways through their teaching and learning lives. From Will’s application of his inherited tactile capabilities and work ethic to Paul’s insistence that, regardless of

circumstances, the “work will get done,” each writing instructor borrowed aesthetics, habits, and ideologies from their exposure to blue-collar work. For example, Anne-Marie’s narrative of rebuilding gummed-up oil rig timers with her father as a graceful act imbued with humanity counterpointed her experience driving a van filled with 14th century fish-pond scholars. The former presented a “real,” plugged-in connection to work while the latter offered a tableau in how to be an academic. This performance, for Anne-Marie, felt false and pretentious. Rick’s experiences in the Kawasaki factory served two purposes: first, he lived, first hand, his parents daily labor which, secondly, prompted him to pursue a career path that featured less dangerous work. Daniel’s labor history, and the history of his family, offered many lessons on class difference, and he connected his ancestral connection to labor movements—through his grandfather’s persuasive speech—to his own facility with language and political ideologies. Tabitha also connected her family’s perpetual struggle with her own drive to complete a degree of mastery in something they might consider “less practical.” In her case, she presented her choice to pursue a doctorate as resistant to her family’s work history. In each case, the participants cited the physical demands of blue-collar labor—from on-the-job injury to exhaustion—and this connection to the body made itself visible in their current labor situations.

Embodied Teaching

Drawing from these histories, the participants noted in various ways how their current roles in the writing classroom became embodied. To this end, they often drew on legacies of labor to structure their pedagogical philosophies. Viscerally, every participant noted the affective demands of the college writing classroom, while four of them chose to orient their performance of instructor through dress: Paul, who chose to formalize his

appearance to be the “obvious” teacher on record; Rick, who wore a tee-shirt and jeans to work, because his parents’ labor history made this the uniform for “work”; Will, who cited both economic constraints and a rejection of hyper-capitalism as an impetus for his style of dress, a move he feels students can connect with his class background; and Tabitha, who told her students that for Halloween, she might dress up as a college professor, since it’s an identity far removed from her own.

Five of six participants cited embodiment as an organizing feature of their classrooms as they espoused a circled-desk model as promoting student engagement and signaling a lack of hierarchy. Only Paul stated that he “like[s] being the person at the front of the room” because he feels the acknowledgement of authority is both honest and effective. Further, Will, Anne-Marie, Rick, and Tabitha all noted—emphatically, I add—that physical proximity to students drove their pedagogies; that is, they worked in many ways to “know” students beyond the classroom to best serve their individualized needs. These four instructors cited individual conferences with students as one the most useful pedagogical tools they deploy. That is not to say that Daniel and Paul do not effectively utilize student conferences to best teach writing. In fact, Paul noted tutoring students in the writing center as an important factor in his development as an instructor. Daniel, I will recall, used student conferences in a way he termed “paternalistic,” to goad students to engage more explicitly in the writing process. Though all six instructors did engage students individually, I argue that their motivations for doing so remain different.

Being “of Use”

This drive toward practicality and pragmatism surfaced in various ways constrained by each participants’ experience with the land and, consequently, with labor. As Tabitha

noted, many middle-class people may not know how to build a dog house. Instead, they use their purchasing power to buy the services they cannot—or will not—complete. This practical, hands-on skill strikes her as one held by many working-class people; here, I read “build a dog house” as metonymically cueing any practical life skill. It is as Daniel noted: he can sew, grow crops, and cook. These skills have been made obsolete by Industrialism, yet he marks value in holding the knowledge to make it so he and his family can live off the grid. Likewise, Anne-Marie, Rick, and Will invoked images of agriculturalism and natural-world ways of knowing in asserting that these bases offer both a pure connection to the land, a gesture towards pastoralism and sublimity, and, in Rick’s case, another trade he can pursue. This usefulness also came into question in a few narratives—I will recall Anne-Marie’s question: But what am I good for?—as participants sometime struggled to make their academic pursuits relevant to their labor histories. For all six, teaching was cited as the practice they recognized as having the most usefulness in their academic lives, as it reached a broad audience with a clear and stated need. In comparison, research might be crafted for a very narrow audience and might hold little if any real-world implications.

Rejection of “Academic” as a Title and Identity

It is with this focus on teaching and rejection of the term “academic” that I will conclude this section. Daniel rejected the term “academic” for a few reasons, notably that the doctorate holds little “social cache” now and because the identification becomes all-consuming: “there’s a movement to where your occupation becomes a big part of who you are. And it never ends, and that’s the part that kind of, and that’s the part that bothers me the most about an academic life.” Anne-Marie, in comparison, fights with the title as she acknowledges that she is being groomed as a public intellectual while also rejecting much

of the culture of academia, such as the slavish adherence to popular ideas on what constitutes an academic persona. Tabitha, like Daniel, considers the honorific as just another title and admits to likely using it only in situations where a past inequality is present: “I think I would make the people who’ve pissed me off call me doctor.” Similarly, Will noted that “It’s hard for [him] to be serious enough to want to be enough of a prig to like introduce that into every single conversation [he] ever [has] with anyone.. Rick related a tense relationship with his work in the academy and the term academic; it stands, he told me, as a marker of his difference from his family and friends back home. As a job title, he is uncomfortable with the associations others may make of him. Paul’s rejection or acceptance of the identity of academic never surfaced as an explicit negotiation; however, he did question the viability of the term “working-class academic” for its implication to his current location in the working class. This acknowledgement of the slipperiness of the first term—working class—but not the second may signal Paul’s acceptance of term. His investment in formality and authenticity support this notion.

Attendant to the navigation of the identity category—or the descriptor, as Daniel may take up—of academic, is the participants’ common goal to focus on teaching and not research. Not one of the six expressed a life plan that included focus on their own scholarship. Daniel and Tabitha both rejected the notion of becoming a wildly successful academic as both unlikely and undesirable. To all six participants—and this point is one which I find has structured the trajectory of both the data collection and the representation—it is their teaching that best defines who they are in the academy. While each held close particular scholarly interests and expressed excitement at being paid to explore these interests, they also noted that they considered teaching their “real” work in

the academy, perhaps because it is embodied in the ways they have witnessed other types of labor.

From their ethical imperatives—such as Daniel’s and Will’s optimism in the university’s role—to Tabitha’s and Rick’s construction of classroom communities and Anne-Marie’s pedagogical intent to reach out to working-class students, each instructor implicated a distinctive philosophy and set of pedagogies to meet what they felt were the goals of the first-year writing classroom. It is to these pedagogies that I turn next.

Pedagogies: A Process of Telescoping

I chose not to subsume discussion of the participants’ pedagogies within the section on differences, though the six teachers clearly presented different teaching methods and methodologies. I can posit that all six instructors worked to recognize the importance of teaching language conventions in the university while also attending to students’ felt needs. Their teaching philosophies can best be summarized by Bizzell (1982), “I assent to most of the conventions of the academic discourse community and believe that students from other communities can benefit from learning about them and learning them. But perhaps we can break up the failure/deracination dilemma for students from communities at a distance from academe” (p. 100). It is this final thought, the move to “break up the failure/deracination dilemma for students” from underrepresented groups that resonates most completely with the pedagogies of the six instructors.

Pedagogies of Ethics and Empathy

Considerations of the ethics of teaching first-year writing emerged across all six narratives. Instructors variously described their stances as student centered and instructor centered, yet each of the participants supported these stances through a desire to approach

the classroom using a standard of ethics and empathy. For four of the participants—Rick, Anne-Marie, Will, and Paul—this stance arose from their experiences with disenfranchisement in some classroom at some time. For two participants—Tabitha and Daniel—concerns with the goals of undergraduate education (Tabitha in its instrumental function; Daniel in its ability to “broaden horizons”) conscribed their pedagogies.

In the next section, I detail three methods of classroom interaction and management framed by the participants as methods borne of ethical and empathetic imperatives: Community Models, Attention to Process in Writing, and a move variously described as “Demystification” and “Transparent Teaching.”

While the term “ethics of care” is inscribed through feminist language (Gilligan, 1982), I move away from gendered applications of the paradigm to explore the pedagogies of these six instructors as firmly rooted in their experiences with class. Recently, scholars of writing have taken up this framework to explore teachers’ interactions with students. White (2003) intensively interrogates the term “care,” arguing that for it to be a term productively taken up by literacy gatekeepers, it must first undergo rigorous definition. After reviewing Noddings (1984) groundbreaking *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Implications*, White determines that to employ an ethics of care in the English classroom exhibits three “essential aspects”: “relentless attentiveness to all students in their unique circumstances; faith that sees beyond their (and our) immediate reactions and responses; [and] a principled, ethical foundation to guide, guard, and support relationships with each student” (p. 325).

Further, Johannesen (1996) outlines an ethics of care, via Gilligan (1982), Noddings (1984), and Manning (1992), as “rooted in relationships, [focused on the] interdependence

of self and others, compassion and nurturance, and concrete responsibilities as an equal complement to the presently dominant ethic of justice rooted in individual autonomy, impartial rules, rights, and a logic of equality and fairness” (p. 239).

Porter’s (1993) redefinition of pedagogical ethics as “not a set of answers, but a mode of questioning and manner of positioning” best informs the present study in his acknowledgement of the nonlinear, postmodern self and its relationship to other selves (p. 218). This paradigm demands that instructors consider the fractured identities of their students in relationship to the learning environment; the current study reflects that process back on the instructor.

The following pedagogical methods support in various ways these definitions of “ethics of care,” with a particular focus on attentiveness to students’ embodied constraints, commitments by each instructor to support ongoing relationships with students, and the ongoing dance of positioning between both instructors and students moment-to-moment, in the classroom.

Community Models and Student Interaction

Three of six—Rick, Tabitha, Will, Paul—described their first-year writing classrooms via a community model that emphasized students’ individual roles in the overall health of the classroom ecosystem. Rick’s pedagogies are rooted most firmly in this model as he works from the first class meeting to establish between students a sense of trust and of individual value to the class. Tabitha and Will explained similar models, as they described philosophies that encouraged students to consider themselves experts in discourse and culture—both cited popular culture as offering a common ground from which to speak. Paul’s community model stands on the far end of the spectrum from Rick’s,

as its development is cumulative. His students gradually, through higher-risk collaborative work, form classroom communities with similar goals. This pedagogy is best illustrated through Paul's "living-learning community" assignment, where small groups of students are charged with developing and then promoting their own college classes.

Daniel and Anne-Marie both detailed pedagogies that, while not rejecting a community model, did focus instead on individualized student interaction. Daniel, whose class is rooted deeply in teaching students to conduct sophisticated critical interrogation, recognizes that his middle-class students, as an audience, constrain the texts he teaches and their reception. Further, he noted that he doesn't facilitate much collaborative learning, citing a lack of student engagement when they are charged with working in groups. It's much more effective, he related, to work with students one-on-one to check in with their understanding of a text or concept. Anne-Marie espoused a similar approach: while she recognizes the importance of student collaboration, she also noted a discomfort with facilitating these groups, as her experience suggests that students—as Daniel noted—often take collaborative learning environments as opportunities to socialize.

Attention to Process in Writing

Attention to process and product also helped make clear the pedagogical strategies of these four of six instructors. Rick's student-centered community model is supported grade-wise by a portfolio system that allows students infinite revisions. The final four weeks of his class draws from a workshop schema he learned as a fiction writer, and this attention to process is intended to instill in students the revisable nature of their writing. This attention to revision, he notes, comes from a feeling of "obligation" since he, as a first-year writer, failed his first writing assignments and "couldn't dig himself out of it."

Tabitha did not detail a portfolio grading system, but she did note a grading strategy that made use of “generous extensions,” revisions, and attention to student anxiety about writing. By building in flexibility for students to attend to out-of-class concerns, Tabitha cues a classroom persona that counters rigid policies on issues such as late work and revisions. And by modeling the mobility of paper deadlines, she implicates their arbitrary nature. This, she argued, is one of her primary roles as a first-year composition instructor. For example, in terms of page requirements, she noted this exchange with her students: “Part of this is BS. Part of this is that I have to assign so many pages a semester and like this is part of my requirements, but part of it is that I really believe in this, and so I’m very real with my students about where requirements are and then where what I believe is, and so they know that it’s not all I’m just trumping up someone else’s game as if it’s all right.” This fidelity to her students over the institutional outsider—“someone else’s game”—creates a classroom of stance of us versus them, where Tabitha places herself on the side of the students. This maneuver helps reinscribe her role as she acts from a place of empathy and care: It’s unfair to hold students to standards without reason. At this point, Tabitha’s attention to the writing process (deadlines, revisions) overlaps with her pedagogies of care.

Anne-Marie does require students to submit a portfolio at the end of the semester; however, her policies on revision were unclear. She did detail a reflective assignment that doubled as a course evaluation, a move that suggested that she engages students in the kind of critical meta-cognition required of process-oriented pedagogies. And her assignment which pairs students with differing opinions to explore the impact of audience hints at inventional strategies.

Will alluded to peer reviewing as a time when students could explore their writing more fully with a real audience, while Daniel framed revisions in terms of work load, a real-world consideration. He stated that he had once extended the option to revise to every student, but now as he faces comprehensive exams, he has stopped offering students the opportunity to revise, as it implicates many hours of additional paper marking. This last point is not included to deride Daniel's pedagogies. Instead, I focus here on his pragmatic approach to teaching and his diagnostic, almost prescriptive grading practices. He includes in his marking of each paper very specific, detailed directions for improvement to signal to students that their future writing can be improved using referenceable methods.

Demystifying Academia and Transparent Teaching

Finally, one pedagogical imperative shared by each instructor—even as it surfaced in multivalenced ways—is an attention to demystifying the college classroom. From “mak[ing] the game more transparent for them,” as Tabitha does, to Paul's suggestion that “learning the game” is a part of being an academic to Will's assertion that his reputation may suffer because he's not “playing the game a little better,” this trope of mastering the often unspoken rules of the academy permeated many of our interviews.

Tabitha, Paul, and Anne-Marie all cited “transparency” as a goal of their teaching. On the micro level, they worked to make clear to students that some of what they must teach is handed down from administrators—the page requirement occurred as a frequent example. However, each instructor supported these requirements with the insistence that the demands of the first-year writing classroom may feel arbitrary to novices, but that they are not meant to be impossible to achieve. Further, each of the six instructors noted that they taught popular culture texts in their first-year writing classrooms, a pedagogical

move they describe as, at times, controversial. “One of the assumptions my kids have” Anne-Marie described, “is what constitutes an academic topic.” She utilizes the term academic here to represent “an approach” and “not a social identification.” Tabitha considered popular culture texts much as Daniel, as a common basis from which each person in class can begin. Rick’s employment of pop culture—here, video gaming—begins with common considerations of the practice and then moves students into the realm of the theoretical. Paul meets with each student early in the semester to return graded papers and “walk them through [his] grading process.” In this way, he stated that he makes the evaluation of their writing more humanistic, less absolute, at the same time that he gives each student clear instructions on how to best meet the demands of the class. In each classroom, students are challenged to consider scholarship as ever evolving, as Anne-Marie notes, “Academics are interested in everything.” In this way, Anne-Marie transforms the identity category of “academic” as one free of class bounds. One may then claim a working-class background and still operate as an “academic.”

I do not wish to make the teaching philosophies and practices of these six individuals seem more homogenous than they are. Indeed, while each may choose to frame, for example, the process of explaining “the game” or demystifying evaluation as a move to empower students, they also deploy the strategies differently; likewise, these curricular decisions stem from a myriad of personal experiences that help shape the instructors’ individual approach. While class may offer frameworks for one of these experiences, it is certainly not the only factor. Other factors, such as age, teaching experience, political orientations, social practices, and even comfort interacting with students may constrain the six participants’ pedagogies.

Chapter 10: Implications for Practice, Research, and Philosophy

The narratives of these six writing instructors make more complex the figure of the working-class academic. The six participants described many ways of taking up class, defining it, working with it and through it in their first-year writing classrooms and in the hallways of their department; they hold within themselves experiences which recount exploitative labor practices, dangerous work conditions, heroic family histories, and ethical imperatives borne from these backgrounds.

This research adds to the already lively discussion on class in academics; as Lindquist (2004) writes, “There’s something about the act of claiming working-class status that pisses people off” (p. 187). Indeed, some of the participants in this study voiced anger at what that considered the fallacious claim of being both working class and academic. The worlds are mutually exclusive, the argument went. One may have working-class experiences, and may reference their working-class lives in the past tense, but these experiences do not circumscribe one as working class in the present. Conversely, a few participants solidly defined themselves as currently claiming working-class status, even claiming that they felt even more authentically working class now that their incomes as graduate students were so small and the possibility of outside jobs made impossible by both contractual obligations and workloads.

Implications for Practice

Teacher Training

That these six self-identified working-class people also teach writing is a research choice bound in ethical concerns and a desire to help correct one of the social shortfalls of teacher training writ large: the recognition that “major institutions fail to account for the

identities of their members” (Christians, 2005, p. 152; also Taylor, et al., 1994). As an institution shaped by status quo, fed by schools tied into the military-industrial complex, and staffed by a diverse cadre of instructors, the university at large presents a case of identity negotiation among faculty and students—and those who dwell between.

Microcosms of negotiation exist in each college classroom and are refined, replicated, and crystallized differently, by instructors with weighted personal histories who teach students with equally complex identity navigations. As one of this university’s few “gateway” courses all students must take (unless they’ve opted out through AP scores or dual-enrollment credit), the first-year composition classroom boasts a tense history as both an arbiter of good taste and a product-oriented baseline each college-ready student must meet.

Teacher training and mentoring processes can be refined in light of the present data connecting class status to pedagogy. The assumed “unproblematic acquisition of the written, verbal, and cultural skills needed to perform well in a university setting” (Sowinska, 1993, p. 149) becomes decidedly problematic, as do relationships between novice teachers, their mentors, and the first-year students in their classrooms. Previous research on class negotiations in academia has focused on students’ struggles to code switch between home and school literacies (Heath, 1983; Lareau, 2003 and 2005; Greenwald and Grant, 1999; Seitz, 1998 and 2004; Heathcott, 1998). Only recently have scholars (LeCourt, 2006; Tobin, 2010; Lindquist, 2004; Gibson, Marinara, and Meem, 2003; Shepard, McMillan, and Tate, 1998) begun to narrate the affective dimensions of claiming a working-class background and to trace those dimensions through pedagogical methods

and methodologies. The present study pushes that inquiry into the pedagogy of “strategic empathy” (Tobin, 2010; Lindquist, 2004) by presenting cross-case interview data.

A final area of influence rests with those administrative bodies in composition departments who could begin these conversations among new graduate students and faculty, open spaces for critical discussion of identity factors like class, race, ethnicity and the like, and query the uptake of these factors in first-year writing classrooms in order to best serve the department’s goals for composition instruction while honoring instructors’ prior literacies and experiences.

Composition Pedagogies

Bloom (1996) argues that the university composition course, in its unfailing promotion of *Standard* American English, seeks to supplant, even demonize, non-standard dialects, a move that likewise implicates working-class critique. Sledd (1997) criticized Bloom’s work as too invested in its own schema, as she makes class differences among instructors invisible while simultaneously making class her focus. Sledd (1997) asserts, “English teachers are a distinct and suspect group within the great middle [class structure], and they themselves are further divided by income, education, and the ‘cultural manifestations of American social class’” (1997, p. 713). I do not posit that the university rightly or wrongly holds up middle-class standards; instead, I enter this conversation as a researcher interested in making more complex Bloom’s homogenous first-year writing instructor.

For all of its middle-classness, contrived or not, first-year writing courses are also often framed in terms of skill building or unidirectional information transmission. These courses are often staffed by graduate students and part-time lecturers, the “grievously

exploited” labor market of the university (Sledd, 1997, p. 712). Swearingen (2006) notes that composition is often touted as “the lowliest course in a hierarchy that eventually ascends to literature and theory. Its teachers must be nurturers, not intellects, patient, not brilliant. The writing course is the nursery of the college experience” (2006, pp. 543-4). In that already disenfranchised schema, the graduate student who teaches composition, as she inhabits the wasteland between *bona fide* member of the academy and life outside the academy, is made doubly aware of her positioning. Not only is she a novice by title, she’s also made aware that her career choice is fraught with class assumptions which may counter her own lived experience. It stands to reason, then, that the working-class academic charged with teaching first-year writing—the “lowliest course”—might take on as personal this disciplinary anxiety.

However, the six stories presented here resist that reading. Some of these narratives do indict experiences with this anxiety—teaching middle-class values, for example, through standardized language, or being expected to be the arbiters of high culture—but they also indicate that the participants’ working-class backgrounds provide them with innovative pedagogical methods affecting their language styles, their curricular decisions, their dress and classroom persona, and their proximity, both emotional and spatial, to students. Teacher training offers productive opportunities to begin to query pedagogical philosophies and their provenances within disciplinary conversations. Further, open discussion of these ideological commitments thus contribute to literature on the emancipatory role of composition and opportunities for resistance (Freire, 1970; Hurlbert and Blitz, 1991; Scott, 2009).

Implications for Research

Research By and For: Working-Class Researchers

An important research implication lies in my projection of the field perhaps 10 years from now. Organizations like the Center for Working-Class Studies (CWCS) based in Youngstown, Ohio, and the Association of Working-Class Academics (AWCA) promote research by and with academics in this demographic. As such, this project helps move the field in new directions with its contribution. The narratives of working-class people across all disciplines and ways of labor have suffered at the hands of researchers such as Clance, et al, as researchers work to homogenize the experiences of this demographic to make broad-brush statements on their felt disenfranchisement as misfits in their environments. This study's goal of recognition moves beyond this assumed deficit to posit that witnessing and working helped shape these instructors' teaching personas and academic imperatives. The connections between the hands-on labor of their pasts and the emphasis of cognitive work in their present and future presents an implication for working-class academics across disciplines.

Philosophical Implications

Purpose Reframed: Recognition of the Affective

Lindquist (2004) notes that "it seems as if class has gotten a fair treatment in the field, [and] its place in composition well theorized" (p. 190); however, she argues, these theories fail to account for the affective performance of class, via a critical pedagogy model, which construes class as a one-sided problem to be fixed. Lindquist's paradigm begins to enrich these heretofore one-dimensional theories—primarily built around the bodies and minds of working-class *students*—by introducing consideration of the affective and dialogic

co-construction of class in the classroom; that is, her plea to is to take up the felt, the emotionally contrived and performed elements of class that affect both instructor and student.

Impostership and Deficit Reframed

Previous research on and with working-class academics has centered on Impostership and deficit. From the Clance IP scale measuring “a) fear of failure; b) attribution of success to luck, error, or charm; c) the desire to stand out; d) the feeling of having given others a false impression; and e) the discounting of recognition from others” (Langford and Clance, 1993, p. 495-6) through the wholly qualitative narratives presented by working-class women in *Working-Class Women in the Academy* (Tokarczyk and Fay, 1993), the image of the blue-collar professor has undergone uncomplicated treatment in scholarship. A review of a few important titles begins to build the constraints of this body of knowledge: *Laborers in the Knowledge Factory* (Tokarczyk and Fay, 1995), *Hunger for Memory* (Rodriguez, 1983), “Imposters in the *Sacred Grove*” (Long, Jenkins, and Bracken, 2000), *Bootstraps* (Villanueva, 1993), *Lives on the Boundary* (1990), “You’re not Fooling Anyone” (Gravois, 2007), “Yer Own Motha Wouldna Reckanized Ya: Surviving an Apprenticeship in the ‘Knowledge Factory’” (Sowinksa, 1993), “Not Too Late to Take the Sanitation Test”: Notes of a Non-Gifted Academic from the Working Class” (Borkowski, 2004). While less deficit-focused scholarship has been taken up as foundational—such as Zandy’s *Liberating Memory* (1995) and Shepard, McMillian, and Tate’s *Coming to Class* (1998)—stories of joy and triumph haven’t yet become commonplace.

Extant work on teaching composition has, as Swearingen’s work does, focused on the exploitative nature of the job. (See also Kirsch, et al., for essays on the second-class

status of teachers of composition.) These bodies of work present felt absences, and as such, I cite the purpose of this study as recognition.

This recognition is made salient in my effort to present counternarratives to the proliferation of “Imposter” stories penned by working-class academics and to complicate grand narratives about those who teach first-year composition. And recognition, I argue, is purpose enough.

In *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, Taylor (1994) asserts, “Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being. Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need” (p. 26). This recognition implicates three rhetorical moves. First, it joins a vibrant—and visceral—conversation on the place of class studies in academia at a time when many academics argue that factors such as race or gender should act as primary lenses for study, since class too nebulous a category to code. Class is thus, at times, construed as a non-entity, as a designation that, because of its nebulousness, has no meaning. Tokarczyk and Fay (1993) argue, “precise analysis of [this kind of] social structure is impeded by the unwieldy size of that group” (p. 4). I argue that class is an important and inescapable social lens. In this study, precision is not a goal. Instead, the six participants and I worked together to produce a set of narratives that offer paradoxes, retractions, and half-remembered stories to give “due recognition” (Taylor, 1994, p. 26) to what we agreed was an underrepresented demographic.

Taking up Culture(s): Work and Working

In *The Mind at Work: Valuing the American Worker* (2004), Rose relates how his own working-class background “framed how [he] saw the world” (p. xiii). “Definitions of Labor”

seeks a similar path, as the narratives of these teachers of first-year writing implicate both current class considerations and historical reckonings.

Rose notes, “Work is freighted with meaning and moral judgment, by the society, by ourselves” (*The Mind at Work*, p. xxvi). Work, as an act, undergirded many of our discussions about class status. Watkins (1989) explicates this curious connection between the uses of the term “work” and its meanings in academe, writing “part of the work of ‘work’ as it were is to persuade others that what goes on in university English departments is ‘real work’” (p. 11; see also Horner, 2000). The recursive processes of defining their work, especially against and alongside historic templates of labor, formed a cornerstone of our interviews.

While participants diverged as to an economic definition of working class—since one could, for example, work as a plumber but earn more than a professor—they all considered “working-class” jobs to be hands-on. Rooted in physicality, these jobs were often dangerous and could lead to sudden, traumatic injuries. Just as “there is no writing is not an act of cultural articulation” (Fitts and France, 1995, p. xiii), every moment of labor is a rhetorical and political act that implicates both ethics and ideologies. How a person does work, the very use of body and mind, thus holds consequences beyond financial survival.

For the six participants in this study, the division between “mind work” and “body work” causes some strife, as they measured their current positions within the academy against past labor, often wondering about the validity or sustainability of both. It’s as Valerie Miner (1993) muses, “One of my brothers grew up to be a carpenter. The other works for a maritime union. So I’ve always carried that Miner suspicion that laboring with words is not real work. I ask myself: Does writing mean anything? Do I have a right to feel

tired at week's end? Shouldn't I be doing something useful?" (p. 74). Work, then, as Miner writes, should be tangible and useful; this concept of labor-as-use came through the interviews, as participants framed their work lives in terms of the benefits of their labor and as they consistently argued for teaching as the "real" work of the graduate student. Papers they write for classes may be read by one or two professors, possibly reworked into journal articles for likely narrow audiences; thus the reach of that labor is short. By teaching, they argued, they could reach more people in less time and provide a service that could be directly imported into the lives of their students. Miner's autobiography (1993) reinforces this trend: "Generally, teaching is more readily perceived as labor than is writing" (p. 81). Though writing may leave them tired at week's end, and in desperate need for time away from the job, it is so contained and isolated that these working-class instructors struggle with framing it as comparable to their previous forms of labor.

This definition of work formed the cornerstone for the negotiation of class identity. However, the instructors I interviewed did not jettison their working-class lives and backgrounds wholesale in favor of their academic lives. Gibson, Marinara, and Meem (2003) emphasize in "Bi, Butch, and Bar Dyke: Pedagogical Performance of Class, Gender, and Sexuality": "No one can be both professional and working class; so one's 'new' identity is perceived as a positive step up, a successful crossing of class barriers" (p. 469). The authors seem to assert that, while these two identities (and many others) may be harbored inside one body, those outside the body inscribe it with a coherent narrative; thus, a college professor must identify with the middle-class values she teaches. There is no room for both/and considerations.

This desire for coherent identity considers is present—and demanded by—professionalism. Bledstein (1976) argues, “The culture of professionalism has been so basic to middle-class habits of thought and action that a majority of twentieth-century Americans has taken for granted that all intelligent modern persons organize their behavior, both public and private, according to it” (p. x). To identify with a background outside of this professional sphere—as the son of a construction worker, the daughter of a coal miner—and to import values attendant to this background becomes unfathomable in this scenario where middle-classism is taken as the norm.

A Continuum of Class: Moving Beyond Binaries

While Gibson, et al.’s, article (1993) focuses on the interplay of three identity markers—bi, butch, and bar dyke—their interrogation of binaries informs this project. These dichotomies come into focus through their use of sexual preference as an analog for class: can one claim bi-class as a status in the same way that one claims bi-sexual as a status? Gibson, et al., argue that class, like sexual preference, is a much more complex relationship than the binary suggests and that working-class and lesbian autobiographies are problematic because

rather than defying the fixity of identity, [they] merely redraw the boundaries and serve to categorize individual subjects as different as those defined as ‘straight’ and ‘professional.’ These stories create a common experience, and the personal narratives suggest that there is something coherently the same about all lesbians, about all working-class persons, and consequently, something coherently the same about the ‘straight’ or ‘middle-class’ experience that is being resisted. But there are stories that confirm to neither category of identification. (1993, p. 468)

Working-class and lesbian autobiographies thus crystallize these identity categories, thereby strengthening the very system they wish to critique by masking difference. Gibson, Marinara, and Meem's schema correlates with Adrienne Rich's idea of compulsory heterosexuality and the role of lesbianism in upsetting this expectation (1980). Heterosexuality, as a political and social institution, is assumed. In the academy, middle-class values operate in much the same way. The six interviewees in this project support that complexity, as they related stories of fitting in, pushing back, and navigating their course through the doctoral program. Their stories are conflicting, contradictory, and at time ambiguous. A few participants simultaneously embrace and throw off the title of academic. Some subscribe to the wholesale purity of working-class lifestyles while recognizing that this belief is both classist and elitist. The findings are messy and complicated and rich with qualitative data.

Together, these implications add to discussions on the philosophy of composition and composition teaching practices. Many of the strategies outlined by the six participants appear in "best practices" articles and their largely student-centered approach falls in line with many departments social-epistemic guidelines (Berlin, 2003) for first-year composition.

Approaching the Gap

This project seeks to address the three major errors I detailed in Chapter 2 by providing corollaries to the body of knowledge constructed by and from Impostership studies. Instead of focusing on one-sided deficit tales—like so many of those in *Working-Class Women in the Academy* (1993) and *This Fine Place so Far From Home* (1995)—"Definitions of Labor" begins to complicate these complex identity negotiations by asking

writing instructors to make clear connections between their attitudes within the academy and their labor histories. Further, this study goes beyond Tokarczyk and Fay's (1993) emphasis on literature departments, to query the relationships between composition, "the lowliest course" housed in the English Department (Swearingen, 2006), and assumptions that instructors unproblematically take up the "middle-class enterprise" (Bloom, 1996) of teaching writing. Finally, "Definitions of Labor" starts to explore the deeply felt nature of graduate study, specifically in the Humanities. By presenting in narrative form the class backgrounds and pedagogical experiences of these six self-identified working-class graduate student writing instructors, "Definitions of Labor" connects teaching philosophies and feelings on professionalism to both agrarianism and industrialism. These pedagogical narratives suggest that the process of teaching writing is rich with conscious consideration, contradiction, and conflicts in ideologies between instructors and the expectations of academia.

Directions for future research

A number of confounding factors arose during the course of this project. These confounding factors provide five areas of inquiry for future research.

First, if the "Imposter Phenomenon" is taken as a valid construct, previous research (Topping and Kimmel, 1985; King and Cooley, 1995; Zorn, 2005) suggests that it strikes students of variable class backgrounds. Every participant in this study was in the process of credentializing—that is, they described their placement as in the midst of graduate study with the goal to finish and work in academics—and so the argument that most graduate students feel like "intellectual phonies" provides a confounding factor. Future research would explore the connections between Impostership and graduate study to connect class

identification, educational context, and affective display; this kind of study could begin with Zorn's (2005) five-factor list of graduate-study-specific stressors which may contribute to feelings of impostership in graduate students: Aggressive competitiveness; Disciplinary nationalism (highly specialized fields that don't value interdisciplinary work); Scholarly isolation; Valuing product over process; and Lack of mentoring" ("Academic Culture Feeds," NP). By examining these factors of academic life through the lens of class, researchers could enrich discussions on the emotional and generative uptake of professionalism in populations of working-class graduate students.

Second, it is impossible to separate rural identification with class identification in this study, especially as the former constrains the latter by controlling the types of labor available. Participants like Rick and Anne-Marie often conflated working-class status with rural identity based on their labor histories and their own ways of working. Productively teasing apart class and regional (or landscape-based) identifications through narrative accounts—not necessarily focused on the academy—offers opportunities for research which would contribute to current understandings of class identification, labor definitions, and material constraints.

Third, because of the racial homogeneity of my department, I interviewed only white graduate students. An iteration of this project could look at the interactions of race and class in the academic sphere, like Royster's "A View from a Bridge" (2003) or hooks's *Teaching to Transgress* (1994). Productive complication of these relationships between power, language, and race or ethnicity in the first-year writing classroom would lend much to the extant teaching and teacher training practices, while also calling into question the persistence of whitestream composition departments.

Fourth, in this study, participants did not orient to gender as an organizing identification. Further study could examine single gender cohorts—a sort of inductive foil to collections like *Working-Class Women in the Academy* (1993)—to explore differences in lifestyle expectations and motivations. Pressures of biological production—described by some of the participants as the desire to start a family—may intersect with Zorn’s (2005) five-factor rubric to shift focus of graduate student labor in ways that are counterproductive or undesirable. Likewise, the financial pressures of finishing a degree in a timely manner and securing academic employment in an ever-tightening job market may work against major life decisions. While a mixed-group study could begin these discussions, single-gender cohorts may go further in detailing some gender-specific pressures faced by graduate students.

Finally, a study more firmly rooted in participant observation and text analysis could begin to detail specific performances of working-class status in the college writing classroom. An ethnographic approach, perhaps one rooted in participant-observation, would add layers of complexity to the negotiation of identity in the classroom, as it provides a counterpoint to instructor narratives. At times—as in Paul’s narrative—an instructor’s philosophies and his/her enactment of these methods contradict in productive ways, and further research into these schisms could speak to the assumptions some instructors hold about the goals of first-year writing and the creative negotiation of institutional bounds.

List of References

- Aisenberg, Nadya, and Mona Harrington. *Women of Academe: Imposters in the Sacred Grove*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.
- Anderson, Kathryn, and Dana C. Jack. "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses." In *Women's Words. The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, edited by Sherna Berner Gluck and Daphne Patai. New York: Routledge, 1991. 11-26. Print.
- Aronowitz, Stanley. *Against Schooling: Toward an Education that Matters*. Boulder: Paradigm, 2009. Print.
- Ascham, Robert. *The Schoolmaster*. 1587. Ed. Judy Boss. *Project Gutenberg*. Web. 4 January 2011.
- Atwill, Janet. *Rhetoric Reclaimed*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1998. Print.
- Back, Les. "Politics, Research, and Understanding." In *Qualitative Research Practice*. Eds. Clive Seale, Giampietro Gobo, Jaber Gubrium, and David Silverman. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2004. 261-75. Print.
- Barone, Thomas. "Using the Narrative Text as an Occasion for Conspiracy." In *Qualitative Inquiry in Education*. Eds. Elliot Eisner and Alan Peshkin. New York: Teachers College Press. 1990. 305-26. Print.
- Benton, Thomas. "Just Don't Go: Part 2." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (19 March 2009): n. pag. Web. 15 November 2009.
- Berlin, James. *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures: Refiguring College English Studies*. West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, 2003. Print.
- Bernstein, Basil. *Class, Codes, and Control*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975. Print.
- . "Social Class, Language, and Socialization." In *Power and Ideology in Education*. Eds. Jerome Karabel and A. H. Halsey. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977. Print.
- Bizzell, Patricia. "Cognition, Convention, and Certainty: What We Need to Know About Writing." *Pre/Text: A Journal of Rhetorical Theory* 3.3 (Fall 1982): 213-43. *JSTOR*. Web. 29 December 2010.
- Bledstein, Burton. *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America*. New York: Norton, 1976. Print.
- Bloom, Lynn Z. "Freshman Composition as a Middle-Class Enterprise." *College English* 58.6 (1996): 654-75. *JSTOR*. Web. 29 December 2010.
- Bolker, Joan. "Teaching Griselda to Write." *College English* 40.8 (April 1979): 906-8. *JSTOR*. Web. 4 January 2011.

- Bourdieu, Pierre. "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction." In *Power and Ideology in Education*. Ed. Karabel and Halsey.. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. 487-510. Print.
- . *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977. Print.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean-Claude Passeron. *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*. London: SAGE, 1977. Print.
- Borkowski, Thomas. "'Not Too Late to Take the Sanitation Test': Notes of a Non-Gifted Academic from the Working Class." *College Composition and Communication* 56.1 (September 2004): 94-123. *JSTOR*. Web. 10 November 2006.
- Bowles, Samuel, and Herbert Gintis. *Schooling in Capitalist America*. New York: Basic Books, 1976. Print.
- Brodkey, Linda. "Writing on the Bias." *College English* 56.5 (1994): 527-47. *JSTOR*. Web. November 2010.
- Burns, Nancy, and Susan Grove. *The Practice of Nursing Research: Conduct, Critique, and Utilization*. St. Louis: El Sevier, 2005. Print.
- Butler-Kisber, Lynn. "Artful Portrayals in Qualitative Inquiry: The Road to Found Poetry and Beyond." *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 48.3 (2002): 229-239. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 February 2011.
- Chamberlayne, Prue, Joanna Bornat, and Tom Wengraf. *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science: Comparative Issues and Examples*. New York: Routledge, 2000. Print.
- Christians, Clifford. "Ethics and Politics in Qualitative Research." In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Eds. Norman Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2005. 139-164. Print.
- Christopher, Renny. "A Carpenter's Daughter." In *This Fine Place So Far from Home*. Eds. Dews and Law. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995. 137-150. Print.
- Clance, Pauline. *The Impostor Phenomenon: Overcoming the Fear That Haunts Your Success*. Atlanta, GA: Peachtree, 1985. Web.
- Clance, Pauline, and Suzanne Imes. "The Impostor Phenomenon Among High Achieving Women." *Psychotherapy Theory, Research, and Practice* 15.3 (1978): 241-47. Web.
- Clandinin, Jean, and Michael F. Connelly. *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2004. Print.

- Coffey, Amanda, and Paul Atkinson. *Making Sense of Qualitative Data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1996. Print.
- Cohen, Patricia. "The Long Haul Degree." *New York Times* 16 April 2010. Web. 29 May 2010.
- Connelly, F. Michael, and D. Jean Clandinin. "Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry." *Educational Researcher* 19.5 (Jun.-Jul. 1990): 2-14. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 November 2010.
- Creswell, John. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2007. Print.
- Cushman, Ellen. *The Struggle and the Tools*. Ithaca, NY: State University of New York, 1998. Print.
- Denzin, Norman. *Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1997. Print.
- . *Performance Ethnography: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2003. Print.
- DeGenaro, William. "'The New Deal': Burkean Identification and Working-Class Poetics." *Rhetoric Review* 26.4 (2007): 385-404. Print.
- Dews, C.L. Barney, and Carolyn Leste Law, eds. *This Fine Place So Far from Home*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995. Print.
- Ellis, Carolyn, and Art Bochner. "Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject." In *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. Eds. Norman Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2000. 733-768. Print.
- Ellis, Carolyn, Christine Keisinger, and Lisa Tillman-Healy. "Interactive Interviewing: Talking about Emotional Experience." In *Reflexivity and Voice*. Ed. Rosanna Hertz. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1997. 119-49. Print.
- Erhenreich, Barbara. *Nickled and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America*. New York: Holt, 2008. Print.
- Fitts, Karen, and Alan W. France, eds. *Left Margins: Cultural Studies and Composition Pedagogy*. New York: State University of New York, 1995. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. An Introduction. Volume I. Trans. Robert Hurley, New York: Vintage Books, 1990. Print.
- Gee, James. "The Narrativization of Experience in the Oral Style." *Journal of Education* 167.1 (1985): 9-35. *JSTOR*. Web. February 2011.

- Geertz, Clifford. *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books, 1983. Print.
- . *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books, 1973. Print.
- Gibson, Michelle, Martha Marinara, and Deborah Meem. "Bi, Butch, and Bar Dyke: Pedagogical Performance of Class, Gender, and Sexuality." In *Feminism and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*. Eds. Gesa E. Kirsch, Faye Spencer Maor, Lance Massey, Lee Nickoson-Massey, and Mary P. Sheridan-Rabideau. Urbana, IL: NCTE: 2003. 466-487. Print.
- Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982. Print.
- Giroux, Henry A. "Theories of Reproduction and Resistance in the new Sociology of Education." *Harvard Educational Review* 53 (August 1983): 257-93. *JSTOR*. Web. January 2011.
- . *Theory and Resistance in Education*. London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983. Print.
- Glaser, Barney, and Anselm Strauss. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. New York: Aldine Transaction, 1967. Print.
- Glesne, Corinne. *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction*. 2nd. ed. White Plains, New York: Longman, 1999. Print.
- . "That Rare Feeling: Re-presenting Research through Poetic Transcription." *Qualitative Inquiry* 3.2 (1997): 202-221. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 8 February 2011.
- Glesne, Corinne, and Alan Peshkin. *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction*. White Plains, NY: Longman, 1992. Print.
- Graden, John. *The Impostor Syndrome: How to Replace Self-Doubt with Self-Confidence and Train Your Brain for Success*. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2009. Print.
- Gravios, John. "You're Not Fooling Anyone." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 54.11 (2007 November 9). Web. 15 November 2010.
- Grbich, Carol. *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2007. Print.
- Greenwald, Richard, and Elizabeth Grant. "Working-Class Encounters in Higher Education." In *Teaching Working Class*. Ed. Sherry Lee Linkon. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999. 28-38. Print.

- Guba, Egon G., & Lincoln, Yvonna. S. *Effective Evaluation: Improving the Usefulness of Evaluation Results through Responsive and Naturalistic Approaches*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1981. Print.
- Gunzenhauser, Michael G. "Promising Rhetoric for Postcritical Ethnography." In *Postcritical Ethnography: Reinscribing Critique*. Eds. George Noblit, Susana Flores, and Enrique Murillo, Jr. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2004. 77-94. Print.
- Harvey, Joan C., and Cynthia Katz. *If I'm So Successful, Why Do I Feel Like a Fake?: The Impostor Phenomenon*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985. Print.
- Harvey, J. D. "The Imposter Phenomenon and Achievement: A Failure to Internalize Success" (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1981). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 42, 4869B-4970B. Web. May 2010.
- Hatch, J. Amos. *Doing Qualitative Research in Educational Settings*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002. Print.
- Heath, Shirley Brice. *Ways with Words*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. Print.
- Heathcote, Joseph. "What Kinds of Tools? Teaching Critical Analysis and Writing to Working-Class Students." In *Teaching Working Class*. Ed. Sherry Lee Linkon. Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999. 106-22. Print.
- Hinchey, Patricia H., and Isabel Kimmel. *The Graduate Grind: A Critical Look at Graduate Education*. New York: Taylor and Francis, 2000. Print.
- hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- Horkheimer, Max. *Between Philosophy and Social Science*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993. Print.
- . *Critical Theory*. New York: Seabury Press, 1982. Print.
- Horner, Bruce. *Terms of Work for Composition: A Materialist Critique*. Buffalo: State University of New York Press, 2000. Print.
- Illich, Ivan. *Tools for Conviviality*. New York: Harper & Row, 1973. Print.
- Johannesen, Richard. "Some Emerging Perspectives." Encyclopedia Entry. *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition: Communication from Ancient Times to the Information Age*. Ed. Teresa Enos. New York: Routledge, 1996. 238-239. Web. January 2010.
- Johnson, Greer. "Reconceptualising the Visual in Narrative Inquiry into Teaching." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 20.5 (July 2004): 423-434. Web. 10 February 2011.

- King, J.E., and E.L. Cooley. "Achievement Orientation and the Imposter Phenomenon among College Students." *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 20 (1995): 304-312. Web. February 2011.
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. Print.
- Langford, Joe, and Pauline Clance. "The Imposter Phenomenon: Recent Research Findings Regarding Dynamics, Personality, and Family Patterns and their Implications for Treatment." *Psychotherapy* 30.3 (1993): 495-501. Web. February 2011.
- Langston, Donna. "Who am I Now?: The Politics of Class Identity." In *Working-Class Women in the Academy: Laborers in the Knowledge Factory*. Eds. Michelle Tokarczyk and Elizabeth Fay. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993. 60-72. Print.
- Lareau, Annette. *Home Advantage: Social Class and Parental Intervention in Elementary Education*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000. Print.
- . *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003. Print.
- Lather, Patti. "Issues of Validity in Openly Ideological Research: Between a Rock and a Soft Place." In *Turning Points in Qualitative Research: Tying Knots in a Handkerchief*. Eds. Yvonna S. Lincoln and Norman K. Denzin. New York: Alta Mira Press, 2003. 185-216. Print.
- Leary, David, Victor Minichiello, and Jeffrey Kottler. "Radical Reflexivity in Qualitative Research." In *Qualitative Journeys: Student and Mentor Experiences with Research*. Eds. Victor Minichiello and Jeffrey Kottler. 49-70. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2009. Print.
- LeCourt, Donna. "Performing Working-Class Identity in Composition: Toward a Pedagogy of Textual Practice." *College English* 69.1 (2006): 30-51. *JSTOR*. Web. 9 May 2010.
- Linkon, Sherry Lee, ed. *Teaching Working Class*. Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999. Print.
- Lindquist, Julie. "Class Affects, Classroom Affectations: Working through the Paradoxes of Strategic Empathy." *College English* 67.2 (2004): 187-209. *JSTOR*. Web. May 2010.
- Long, Melanie, Gaye Jenkins, and Susan Bracken. "Imposters in the Sacred Grove: Working Class Women in Academe." *The Qualitative Report* 5.3-4 (2000). Web. 2 June 2006.
- Mack, Nancy, and Zebroski, James Thomas. "Transforming Composition: A Question of Privilege." In *Composition and Resistance*. Eds. C. Mark Hurlbert and Michael Blitz. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991. 154-164. Print.

- Madison, D. Soyini. *Critical Ethnography: Methods, Ethics, and Performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2005. Print.
- Manning, Rita. *Speaking from the Heart: A Feminist Perspective on Ethics*. Lanham, MD: Rowman, 1992. Print.
- Maxwell, Joseph A. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996. Print.
- . *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2005. Print.
- Mazurek, Raymond. "Class, Composition, and Reform in Departments of English: A Personal Account." In *This Fine Place So Far from Home*. Eds. Barney Dews and Carolyn Leste Law. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995. 249-262. Print.
- Miner, Valerie. "Writing and Teaching with Class." In *Working-Class Women in the Academy: Laborers in the Knowledge Factory*. Eds. Michelle Tokarczyk and Elizabeth Fay. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993. 73-86. Print.
- Minicheillo, Victor, and Jeffrey Kottler. *Qualitative Journeys: Student and Mentor Experiences with Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2009. Print.
- Moustakas, Clark. *Phenomenological Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1994. Print.
- Murray, Donald. *Write to Learn*. New York: Holt, 1984. Print.
- Noblit, George, Susana Flores, and Enrique Murillo. *Postcritical Ethnography: Reinscribing Critique*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2004. Print.
- Noddings, N. *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984. Print.
- North, Stephen. *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1987. Print.
- Pollner, Melvin. "Left of Ethnomethodology: The Rise and Decline of Radical Reflexivity." *American Sociological Review* 56.3 (June 1991): 370-380. Print.
- Polyani, Michael. *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*. New York: Routledge, 1958. Print.
- Porter, James. "Developing a Post-Modern Ethics of Rhetoric and Composition." *Defining the New Rhetorics*. Eds. Teresa Enos and Stuart Brown. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1993. 207-26. Print.

- Pratt, Mary Louise. "Arts of the Contact Zone." *Profession* 91 (1991): 33-40. Print.
- Prendergrast, Monica. "The Phenomena of Poetry in Research." In *Poetic Inquiry: Vibrant Voices in the Social Sciences*. Eds. Monica Prendergast, Carl Leggo, and Pauline Sameshima. Boston: Sense Publishers, 2009. Print.
- Reinharz, Shulamit. "Experiential Analysis: A Contribution to Feminist Research." In *Klein Theories of Women's Studies*. Eds. Gloria Bowles and Renate Duelli. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983. 162-192. Web.
- Rich, Adrienne. *Blood, Bread, and Poetry*. New York: Norton, 1994. Print.
- Richardson, Laurel. "The Consequences of Poetic Representation: Writing the Other, Rewriting the Self." In *Investigating Subjectivity: Research on Lived Experience*. Eds. Carolyn Ellis and Michael G. Flaherty. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE, 1992. 125-140. Print.
- . "Nine Poems." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 23.1 (1994): 3-13. Print.
- . "The Poetic Representation of Lives: Writing a Postmodern Sociology." *Studies in Symbolic Interaction* 13 (1992a): 19-29. Print.
- . *Fields of Play: Constructing an Academic Life*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997. Print.
- Richardson, Laurel, and Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre. "Writing: A Method of Inquiry." In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Eds. Norman Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE. 2005. 959-978. Print.
- Rodriguez, Richard. *Hunger for Memory*. New York: Bantam, 1983. Print.
- Root, Michael. *Philosophy of Social Science: The Methods, Ideals, and Politics of Social Inquiry*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1993. Print.
- Rose, Mike. *Lives on the Boundary*. New York: Penguin, 1990. Print.
- . *The Mind at Work: Valuing the American Worker*. New York: Viking, 2004. Print.
- Royster, Jacqueline Jones. "A View from a Bridge: Afrofeminist Ideologies and Rhetorical Studies." In *Feminism and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*. Eds. Kirsch, Maor, Massey, Nickoson-Massey, and Sheridan-Rabideau. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2003. 206-33. Print.
- Ryan, Jake, and Charles Sackery. *Strangers in Paradise: Academics from the Working Class*. Boston: South End Press, 1984. Print.

- Saldana, Johnny. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2009. Print.
- Scott, Tony. *Dangerous Writing: Understanding the Political Economy of Composition*. Utah State University Press, 2009. Print.
- Seitz, David. "Keeping Honest: Working Class Students, Difference, and Rethinking the Critical Agenda in Composition." *Under Construction: Working at the Intersections of Composition Theory, Research, and Practice*. Eds. Christine Farris and Chris M. Anson. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1998. 65-78. Print.
- . "Making Work Visible." *College English* 67 (2004): 210-21. *JSTOR*. Web. June 2006.
- Somers, Rene. "Class Act: How a Blue-Collar Professor Teaches at La Guardia." *In Transit* (2008): 10-18. Web. June 2006.
- Sowinska, Suzanne. "Yer Own Motha Wouldna Reckanized Ya: Surviving an Apprenticeship in the 'Knowledge Factory,'" In Tokarczyk and Fay. 148-164. Print.
- Shepard, Alan, John McMillan, and Gary Tate, eds. *Coming to Class*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1998. Print.
- Sledd, James. "A Comment on 'Freshman Composition as a Middle-Class Enterprise.'" *College English* 59.6 (October 1997): 712-14. *JSTOR*. Web. 9 February 2011.
- Spradley, James. *The Ethnographic Interview*. Toronto: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1979. Print.
- Stake, Robert. *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1995. Print.
- Swearingen, Jan. 2006. Book review. *Fractured Feminisms: Rhetoric, Context, and Contestation*, Laura Gray-Rosendale and Gil Harootunian; *Feminism and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*. Eds. Gesa E. Kirsch, Faye Spencer Maor, Lance Massey, Lee Nickoson-Massey, and Mary P. Sheridan-Rabideau; and *A Way to Move: Rhetorics of Emotion and Composition Studies*, Dale Jacobs and Laura R. Micciche. *College Composition and Communication* 57.3 (February): 543-551. *JSTOR*. Web. 15 December 2010.
- Taylor, Charles, and Amy Guttman, eds. With Kwame Anthony Appiah, Jurgen Habermas, Stephen Rockefeller, Michael Walzer, and Susan Wolf. *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. Web. 15 December 2010.
- Topping, M.E., and E.B. Kimmel. "The Impostor Phenomenon: Feeling Phony." *Academic Psychology Bulletin* 7 (1985): 213-226. Web. 4 January 2011.

- Tokarczyk, Michelle, and Elizabeth Fay. *Working-Class Women in the Academy: Laborers in the Knowledge Factory*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993. Print.
- Ulin, Priscilla, Elizabeth Robinson, and Elizabeth Tolley. *Qualitative Methods in Public Health: A Field Guide for Applied Research*. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2004. Web. 4 February 2011.
- Valdata, Patricia. "Interview with Dr. Janet Galligani Casey." *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* (3 November 2005): 20-23. Web. June 2006.
- Van Bueren, Gerealdine. "Why We Need More Working-Class Professors." *The Independent*. (6 October 2005): n. pag. Web. May 2006.
- van Manen, Max. *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990. Print.
- Villanueva, Victor. *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1993. Print.
- Watkins, Evan. *Work Time: English Departments and the Circulation of Cultural Values*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992. Print.
- Walsh, Susan. "An Irigarayan Framework and Resymbolization in an Arts-Informed Research Process." *Qualitative Inquiry* 12.5 (2006): 976-993. Web. 4 February 2011.
- Watt, Diane. "On Becoming a Qualitative Researcher: The Value of Reflexivity." *The Qualitative Report* 12.1 (2007): 82-101. Web. 4 February 2011.
- Wengraf, Tom. *Qualitative Research Interviewing: Biographic Narrative and Semi-Structured Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2001. Print.
- White, Brian. "Caring and the Teaching of English." *Research in the Teaching of English* 37.3 (Feb. 2003): 295-328. *JSTOR*. Web. 6 January 2011.
- Willis, Paul. "Cultural Production and Theories of Reproduction." In *Race, Class, and Education*. Eds. Len Barton and Stephen Walker. London: Croom Helm, 1983. 107-138. Print.
- . "Cultural Production is Different from Cultural Reproduction is Different from Social Reproduction is Different from Reproduction." *Interchange* 12 (1981): 48-67. Web. July 2010.
- . *Learning to Labor*. Aldershot/Farnham, UK: Gower, 1977. Print.

Wolf, Thia. "Writing as a Tool for Learning and Discovery." In *The Subject is Writing: Essays by Teachers and Students*. Ed. Wendy Bishop. 2nd. ed. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1999. 3-12. Print.

Zandy, Janet. *Calling Home: Working-Class Women's Writings*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990. Print.

Zandy, Janet. *Liberating Memory: Our Work and Our Working-Class Consciousness*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995. Print.

Zinsser, William. *Writing to Learn*. New York: Harper and Row, 1988. Print.

Zorn, D. "Academic Culture Feeds the Imposter Phenomenon." *Academic Leader* 21.8 (2005). Web. September 2010.

Appendices

Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Definitions of Labor: A Study of Working-Class Graduate Student Writing Instructors
Participant copy

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study focusing on working-class writing instructors at The University of Tennessee. These interviews will explore the teaching strategies of writing instructors who self-identify as working class.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

Your participation will be limited to three (3) hour-long one-on-one interviews and one hour-long focus group interview through the Spring 2010 semester. These interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed.

RISKS

This study presents minimal risks. Your identity will remain confidential. The findings may be presented at academic conferences and in future academic articles; however, any identifying markers will be changed or removed.

BENEFITS

Your participation in this study will not be compensated financially or otherwise. You may also be asked to participate in future versions of this study, though any future participation is not required nor expected.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the person conducting the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study. The researcher cannot guarantee confidentiality of the information presented in the focus group.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT

The University of Tennessee does not automatically reimburse participants for medical claims. If physical injury is suffered in the course of research, please notify the investigator in charge.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study), you may contact primary researcher Casie Fedukovich by mail at 311 McClung Tower, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN, 37996; by email at casie@utk.edu; or by phone at 865-207-5044. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Compliance Section of the Office of Research at (423) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

**I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form.
I agree to participate in this study.**

Participant's signature _____ **Date** _____

Investigator's signature _____ **Date** _____

Appendix B: Interview Protocols

Interview 1

Self-identification as a teacher

I see from the questionnaire that you marked XXX area as most affected by your identification as working class. Can you say more about that choice?

I see you marked XXX as the area least affected by your identification as working class. Can you tell me more about why you chose that area?

Describe what happened in English 102 this week.

Tell me about some positive experiences you've had with students while teaching at UT.

Think back to some negative experiences you've had with students while at UT. Tell me about them.

Home and academic culture(s)

I see you're from [hometown]. Can you tell me a little more about what it was like growing up there?

What kinds of work have you done in the past? How does that work compare to the kinds of work you're doing now? Can you describe for a day in one of your old jobs and a day now?

What's your ideal scenario post-graduation?

Class definitions

This project is about writing instructors who have self-identified as working class. Since you responded to the email asking for participants, it is fair to say that you self-identify as working class? How do you define working class?

How do you define middle class? Upper class?

Can you remember any negativity surrounding your choice to pursue a PhD? Describe one of those experiences.

Can you remember any positive experiences surrounding your choice to PhD? Describe one of those experiences.

What kinds of work do you consider to count as working-class labor? Why?

Interview 2

Working past

What's the best job you ever had?

What's the worst job you ever had?

Can you tell me about a memorable on-the-job injury?

Working present

What did you do in 101/102 this week? Anything memorable?

Do you consider injury to be a part of your work life now? What types of injuries?

Can you walk me through a typical day?

Can you walk me through a bad day?

Can you walk me through a good day?

Take a minute: What three words do you feel best describe your teaching philosophy?

MAP: draw your classroom. Where do you stand? Where do your students sit?

Working future

What's one fear you have about your future career?

Do you plan on working in academics?

How do you define one who is an academic?

What do they do? What does their day look like?

Interview 3

Teaching Life

We're at the end of the semester. What do you feel have been the strengths in your teaching this semester?

What do you feel have been the weaknesses in your teaching this semester?

Any changes planned for the next time you teach this class?

What assignment went particularly well? What assignment did not go well?

Any surprises this semester?

Do you consider yourself an academic?

Do you plan on working in academics?

How do you define one who is an academic?

What do they do? What does their day look like?

What's one fear you have about your future career?

What are you teaching in the fall? Do you see our discussions impacting your teaching and its incorporation of class?

The Rest of Life

Do you feel your class identification has been an asset to you as you grow as a teacher? Has it been a hindrance?

How do you see yourself shapeshifting between teacher and person? With family? With friends? With other grad students?

Would you ever utilize your class status as a research lens?

In what ways do you see yourself being "working class" as a professor? In what ways do you see yourself giving up things that are "working class" as a professor?

If you could leave this study with a final statement, what would that statement be?
Any concerns or questions about the study?

Appendix C: Introductory Questionnaire

Definitions of Labor: A Study of Working-Class Graduate Student Writing Instructors

Participant copy

Sex: Male Female

Age: _____

Hometown: _____

Years teaching: _____

Circle your "status" as a writing instructor at the University of Tennessee:

2nd year PhD 3rd year PhD 4th year PhD 5th year PhD
other (describe): _____

Areas of academic interest:

Number these areas of pedagogy in the order that they are most strongly influenced by your identification as working class or blue collar; 1 is "most strongly influenced"; 7 is "least influenced."

__ interaction with students in conferences

__ assignment creation

__ interaction with students in class

__ course content

__ interaction with professors

__ grading

__ other: _____

Any other comments: _____

_____.

VITA

Casie Janelle Fedukovich is a native of Princeton, West Virginia. She earned her BA in journalism and writing from Concord University in Athens, West Virginia, and her MA in English, with a concentration in creative writing, from The University of Tennessee in Knoxville. Fedukovich's research interests focus on the intersections of composition and class, with additional interests in research ethics and processes.