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A MODEL FOR DYNAMIC CRITERIA MAPPING OF COMMUNAL WRITING ASSESSMENT

At the outset of this book, I argued that contemporary writing assessment stands in urgent need of a rigorous method for discovering how instructors of composition judge their students' work. Chapter 2 explains the context and methods for my Dynamic Criteria Mapping (DCM) project, and chapters 3 and 4 detail what I learned from using DCM in my study of City University. At the outset of this concluding chapter I foreground the benefits of DCM for all college and university writing programs—and for other organizations. I end by proposing specific strategies by which writing programs can employ this method for investigation, negotiation, and publication of their rhetorical values. In light of the substantial educational, ethical, and political benefits provided by DCM, the additional investment of time and energy required to conduct serious axiological inquiry is surprisingly and encouragingly modest.

When compositionists inevitably encounter obstacles and pressures motivating against such additional investment of resources, I hope they will focus on their students. For while faculty, programs, and others benefit significantly from DCM, it is our students who most urgently lack what DCM offers. Because they possess no adequate account of how their work is evaluated, they cannot do two important things: 1) understand the dynamics by which their rhetorical efforts are evaluated across the writing program and hold their instructors and administrators accountable for those dynamics, and 2) work from a detailed, nuanced representation of evaluative dynamics to enhance their long-term development and their immediate success as rhetors

In my experience conducting on-site DCM with several groups of faculty (and in listening to reviewers of this book), it is clear that DCM transforms the way we understand not only writing assessment but the

nature of composition itself. DCM reveals and highlights the complex, conflicted, communal quilt of rhetorical values that any group of composition instructors inevitably creates in the very act of teaching and assessing writing together. For all these reasons, students and teachers of writing need the truth about writing assessment. It is our responsibility to help them discover, compose, revise, and publish that truth.

BENEFITS OF DCM: RETURNS ON THE INVESTMENT

For writing programs that already conduct communal writing assessment along the lines of City University's or SUNY Stony Brook's, the additional resources—and the conceptual changes—required to carry out DCM should be relatively modest. However, obstacles to DCM will appear. For starters, any significant change in practices of teaching and assessment will require exceptional dedication and perseverance by faculty and administrators simply to overcome the inertia of how things have “always” been done. Furthermore, in our contemporary social context, educational resources are chronically scarce. While some sectors of our economy reap record profits year after year, schools, colleges, and universities must scrape and beg for what they need to prepare students for participation in democratic society. In light of these likely barriers to implementing the practices I propose below, I first want to highlight the benefits that make Dynamic Criteria Mapping worth the additional investment it requires of writing programs, colleges, and universities—and of the publics that support them.

1. Student Learning. At the heart of what we do is the student, striving to learn and succeed. Learning to write well is clearly one of the most powerful elements in any person's potential for success in personal life, professional life, and democratic citizenship. I believe in the unparalleled educational potential for Dynamic Criteria Mapping to give our students a more complex and more true portrait of how writing is learned, practiced, and valued. The author of the sample essay “Pops,” for example, could likely make excellent use of the criterion *Empty/Hollow/Clichéd*, on the basis of which one in ten writing faculty failed her essay. Likewise the author of “Gramma Sally” could take heart from knowing that her essay accomplished some of the most highly valued rhetorical goals in the program—*Significance, Interesting, Sincerity, and Taking Risks*—while also understanding that half the instructors failed

her for significant and repeated faults in *Mechanics*, *Control*, and *Consistency*. Equipped with such knowledge, students will better understand the challenge of writing well and will have more and better information about how to succeed in the effort. Exploring students' perspectives on DCM will also, I believe, prove a fascinating and productive topic of future research in the field of writing assessment.

2. *Professional Development and Community*. Communal writing assessment, and especially Dynamic Criteria Mapping, require more of faculty than do teaching and grading in isolation. Fortunately, DCM also offers tremendous potential for writing instructors' professional growth and feeling of professional community. As Belanoff and Elbow (1991) and I (1994a; 1997; 2000) have argued, participation in communal writing assessment—and especially in the rigorous evaluative inquiry of DCM—has the potential to teach teachers more powerfully than any conference, course, book, or other method of professional development. Coming face to face with colleagues, reading and debating with them your judgments of students' writing, putting your rhetorical values on the line and advocating for them, and listening to others do the same—these intense collegial activities lead to professional growth for teachers of writing unlike any other experience. Instructors become more aware of their own evaluative landscapes; they learn how others often evaluate and interpret texts very differently; and they work together to forge pedagogical policy on such sticky issues as revision policies, how to value in-class timed writing in a portfolio, and plagiarism. Participants in a recent DCM process wrote of their experiences: "Helpful to hammer things out with colleagues" and "This was the kind of conversation the RC [rhetoric and composition] faculty needed to be doing all along. Certainly we don't need to be grading in lock-step, but we do need to talk about what we value and what we ask of students." DCM also leads to a sense of ownership and belonging on the part of writing instructors—including teaching assistants and adjuncts—who see that they have a strong voice and a crucial role in articulating their program's values. Plus, DCM is fun—an intellectual, rhetorical, and pedagogical party: "Enjoyed listening to my colleagues and working through this together," wrote another recent participant.

3. *Program Development and Evaluation*. DCM provides unprecedented quantity and quality of information about what goes on in a writing program—and how that program could be usefully changed. We learn about how instructors teach, how they evaluate students' work, and how they

believe teaching and evaluation should evolve. City University learned that several values highlighted in the mission statement of the First-Year English Program—Revision, Significance, Mechanics, and Sentences—were indeed taught and valued. On the other hand, DCM at City University also revealed serious disagreements among faculty regarding how and when to value *Revision* (we also learned *why* they disagreed) and highlighted that *Mechanics* received disproportionate quantitative and qualitative emphasis. And nearly the entire issue of Contextual Criteria discussed in chapter 4 was new knowledge. Thus DCM is an unusually rich resource for guiding the growth of any writing program. In stark contrast to the powerfully conserving and stabilizing effect of traditional five-point rubrics, DCM also promotes growth and transformation of writing programs by asking faculty and administrators periodically to revisit and revise their maps, discovering new criteria, eliminating or merging others, and detecting hitherto unknown interrelationships among those criteria.

4. *More Valid Assessment of Students' Writing.* Over the past decade, many schools, colleges, and universities have moved toward portfolio assessment and communal assessment of students' writing. These developments mark significant and dramatic shifts in the theory and practice of evaluation in our field, especially developments in theories of validity (see Moss 1992). DCM builds on portfolio and communal assessment and improves it by moving us beyond rubrics, traditionally the main obstacle to telling the full and true story of how writing is valued. DCM continues progress in composition toward more valid assessment that coordinates teaching and evaluation to better serve the needs of students, faculty, and the public. By drawing a programmatic representation of values directly from instructors' accounts of how they teach and assess writing in their classrooms, DCM strengthens the bonds between how writing is taught and assessed. It supports best practices (such as revision, response, choice, and writing to real audiences) in the teaching of writing by institutionalizing those values on the program's criteria map. By delving deeper and providing a fuller and truer account of rhetorical and pedagogical values, DCM also strengthens the link between what we tell students and the public about teaching and assessing writing and what we really do. On all these points, we gain truthfulness and therefore validity.

5. *Relations with the Public.* Because the public (parents, legislators, media, businesses, unions, and everyone else) pays for education, the public wants and deserves to know what goes on in writing programs (among other educational efforts). Why should the public be satisfied

with a traditional rubric or scoring guide as an answer to its legitimate questions about composition instruction? DCM provides a relatively compact, accessible portrait of the true complexity and power of rhetorical instruction and evaluation. Though it has the potential to reveal some of our vulnerabilities and secrets (that we don't always agree and that we evaluate students according to Contextual as well as Textual criteria), DCM will ultimately gain us stronger trust and support from the public by showing them the truth, as well as the power and complexity, of what we do in writing programs. Maps of what we really value will simultaneously educate the public about important features of our discipline and our teaching practice, thus protecting us from misunderstanding and undervaluation, two problems frequently encountered by writing programs. Put simply, Dynamic Criteria Maps should help convince the public that teaching writing is not confined to eliminating errors and writing formulaic essays. It could reconnect our society with how rhetoric really works in the world—to create knowledge, understanding, and opinion, and thus to guide our actions—and help us leave behind the diminished, truncated understanding widespread among the public.

DCM is a rigorous method of inquiry into rhetorical values, offering us substantial educational, ethical, political advantages over traditional rubrics as well as over rubric-free assessment.

LIMITS AND STRENGTHS OF DYNAMIC CRITERIA MAPPING

Before discussing strategies for Dynamic Criteria Mapping, I wish to offer some reflections and cautions regarding how we should generate and use DCMs. A DCM carries with it an odd mix of power and powerlessness, usefulness and uselessness, depending on who has created the DCM, who plans to use it, and how it is to be used. The DCM presented and discussed in chapters 3 and 4 is true to the details and nuances of discussions and judgments of the numerous texts that came before evaluators at City University. As a result, this map offers insight into the rhetorical values at play in the classrooms and offices of the FYE Program that autumn. If those at City University wished to take up the DCM presented here and refine and develop it, it would yield even more significance and power for teachers and learners in that writing program. (Since the DCM offered here is new, it remains to be seen whether the real "City University" will do so.)

What this DCM cannot do, and must not be used to do, is guide a different writing program staffed by different instructors, teaching different

students, and evaluating different texts. The act and process of Dynamic Criteria Mapping is wholly and usefully portable among writing programs; the specific map of City University presented in the preceding pages is not. The map itself as an artifact is tailored with care from a specific set of conversations about a specific set of texts. For this reason alone, to import a DCM from one program to another would be a tremendous theoretical and pedagogical blunder. Even more important, administrators and instructors in every writing program absolutely must undertake this process for themselves. Others' DCMs can be valuable materials for use in one's own mapping process. Without growing your DCM locally, however, you miss out on the major benefits for professional development, community building, quality of instruction, student learning, and public relations promised by Dynamic Criteria Mapping as a process and an activity. As cartographer James R. Carter states (paraphrasing Phillip C. Muehrcke), "when individuals make their own maps they will learn more about maps and mapping than when looking at maps made by others."

For readers persuaded that DCM is worth the manageable additional investment of resources it requires, all that remains is to discuss how they might undertake the process.

HOW TO CONDUCT DYNAMIC CRITERIA MAPPING

If any single caveat can alert map users to their unhealthy but widespread naivete, it is that a single map is but one of an indefinitely large number of maps that might be produced for the same situation or from the same data.

Monmonier, *How to Lie with Maps* (emphasis original)

As my earlier description of research context and methods showed, I undertook a full-fledged qualitative inquiry into the dynamics of City University's rhetorical values. Employing grounded theory methodology, I spent months collecting and sifting data and more months interpreting those data and refining my analyses of them. I do not expect exceedingly busy instructors and administrators in writing programs to replicate my methods. Instead, I propose here a *streamlined* form of qualitative inquiry that will yield results more limited in detail and scope but still extremely informative and useful to administrators, instructors, and students (for starters).

The best news is that writing programs that regularly conduct communal writing assessment also already do the vast majority of the work of DCM. A few moderate changes in philosophy, terminology, and procedure

will provide these writing programs with all the pedagogical, ethical, and political benefits of moving beyond rubrics. For purposes of professional development, community building, open evaluative inquiry, axiological reflection, and accurate and detailed reporting to students and the wider public, a handful of principles and methods will suffice.

Return to Where We Began: Princeton, 1961

Poetically, we can return to the 1961 study by Diederich, French, and Carlton to find an outstanding model for most of the methods used in Dynamic Criteria Mapping. Recall that those researchers collected a large number of *diverse* student texts, submitted them to a dramatically *diverse* group of *distinguished* readers, and submitted those readers' comments on *what they liked and didn't like* in the student papers to careful and thorough analysis. In fact, there is considerable overlap between the original "[fifty-five] categories of comments" Diederich, French, and Carlton drew from readers' evaluations and the forty-seven Textual Criteria I found at City University, as documented in chapter 3. Here is a quick sampling of their "raw" (unreduced) criteria:

Relevance
 Development
 Too brief or too long
 Persuasiveness
 Ending
 Spelling
 Organization
 Maturity
 Mechanics
 Sincerity
 Grammar
 Clichés

(24)

Note that every one of these criteria identified by Diederich, French, and Carlton corresponds with one or more of the Textual Qualities arranged in my Dynamic Criteria Map or on the list of Textual Features. In other words, up to a crucial point, Diederich, French, and Carlton provide an outstanding model for inquiries like those that I advocate.

Having applauded Diederich, French, and Carlton for their methods and findings, I must also point out that not only are City

University's criteria informed by far more data than Diederich, French, and Carlton's but the criteria represented here are more nuanced, complex, and robust than those presented in the 1961 report and better grounded in the raw data. Note, for example, that I provide lists of verbatim excerpts (synonyms and antonyms) that made up each criterion. I also believe that my organization of instructors' comments into criteria and my arrangement of criteria into constellation simply makes more sense than Diederich's scheme. For example, the Diederich criterion "Too brief or too long," which obviously corresponds with my criterion *Length/Amount (of Text)*, is grouped in the ETS report under "IDEAS." I would expect quantity of text instead to be part of the category "FORM." "Punctuation" and "Grammar" Diederich places under "MECHANICS," which makes good sense to me. But why would another mechanical concern, "Spelling" be listed under "FLAVOR"? Unsurprisingly, the ETS report was also completely bare of Contextual Criteria. Why would positivist psychometricians look at context? To do so would be to make an inexplicable and inappropriate paradigmatic leap. By contrast, DCM is strong on context.

Where contemporary investigators must firmly part ways with Diederich, French, and Carlton is in the ETS team's rapid turn toward scores and statistical methods in an effort to "reduce the complexities" (15) they encountered and to prevent such complexities from corrupting future assessment efforts. Contemporary writing programs need to discover, document, and negotiate their evaluative landscape before they move to standardize and simplify it—if indeed they choose to do the latter at all. Dynamic Criteria Mapping provides the theory and methods for this new sort of effort.

Other Background for DCM

The model for Dynamic Criteria Mapping presented in the following pages builds directly upon a range of sources, which I wish to acknowledge directly and appreciatively. First, DCM assumes that first-year composition courses include a substantial component of communal writing assessment, including reading sample texts, debating the judgment of sample texts in large groups, and negotiating evaluations of live texts in small groups (see the "Research Context" section of chapter 2). This was the example set by administrators and instructors at City University, which in turn was closely and explicitly modeled on Belanoff and Elbow's (Belanoff and Elbow 1991, Elbow and Belanoff, 1991) descriptions of

their portfolio assessment program. For a host of reasons, I view these programs of teaching and assessing first-year composition as a models in their own right. Since neither City University's nor SUNY Stonybrook's inquiries into their own values produced a detailed and nuanced axiological record, however, Dynamic Criteria Mapping changes and adds several key theoretical and practical elements to the process.

The opening chapter of this book identifies many theorists of evaluation who have influenced my work and who made possible the ways of thinking about assessment that led to the DCM approach. But DCM also builds on and extends several specific *methods* of evaluative inquiry available in the literature. I have already addressed how *Factors in Judgments of Writing Ability* contributes to and corresponds with DCM methods and how DCM departs from and transcends Diederich's techniques. Guba and Lincoln's *Fourth Generation Evaluation* also powerfully informs the model I present here. Guba and Lincoln provide extensive theoretical grounding for such a "constructivist inquiry," and their method of directing various interest groups to construct their own views of whatever is being assessed helps to guide my vision of how DCM can work. DCM makes a distinctive contribution to and extends beyond Fourth Generation Evaluation in requiring various groups and individuals to work together to synthesize their diverse evaluative perspectives into a single, authoritative document: the map. This difference is most important for students, who would have difficulty using and learning from a complex, unresolved collection of documents like Guba and Lincoln's.

Likewise, in the realm of classroom-based DCM, I find inspiration in Walvoord and Anderson's *Effective Grading*. Although, as I explain later, I see the need to go further than Walvoord and Anderson toward genuine evaluative inquiry in the classroom—especially in how students' knowledge is solicited—many of their methods correspond to, support, and inform the DCM approach.

Below I describe in some detail the specific strategies and options I recommend for administrators and faculty who wish to pursue DCM and thereby tell a fuller story about writing assessment in their writing programs. These methods diverge from traditional methods for large-scale writing assessment (see White) because the goals and the theories that inform them are different. Whereas traditional rubric development seems to focus on qualities of students' texts, Dynamic Criteria Mapping brings to light the dynamics by which instructors assess students' writ-

ing. DCM therefore constitutes a “phenomenology of shared writing assessment” (Elbow 2001).

Selecting Sample Texts

Whether your writing program focuses on single essays or collected portfolios, you probably already collect sample texts for instructors to read and discuss in “calibration” or “norming” sessions. Along with rubrics or scoring guides, sample texts are, after all, a standard feature of psychometric writing assessment and are therefore nearly universal to shared evaluation. The key difference in selecting sample texts for hermeneutic assessment and for Dynamic Criteria Mapping is what qualities and features you are looking for in the sample texts.

Traditions of writing assessment dictate that sample texts serve several closely related purposes: sample texts should feature the rhetorical elements highlighted in the rubric; they should demonstrate the full range of writing ability instructors are likely to encounter later in “live” grading; and they should lead instructors to clarity, agreeability, and speed in their judgments.

As explained in chapter 1 (and in Broad 2000), these are not the goals of hermeneutic writing assessment, nor do they fit well with the goals of DCM. For the purpose of DCM is to discover, negotiate, and publish the truth about the evaluative topography of any given writing program, not to turn away from complexity and dissent in judgments. Therefore, those who select sample texts for discussion need to look for very different features from those found on the traditional menu.

Sample texts for DCM should be selected because they feature as many *kinds* of rhetorical successes and failures as possible. If those selecting sample texts are aware of criteria that are particularly important to their writing program (for example, significance, voice, detail, growth, mechanics), they should look for sample texts that exhibit (or fail to exhibit) those qualities. Finally, and perhaps most important (and most unlike psychometric assessment), the group selecting sample texts should not shun texts about which readers are likely to disagree in their judgments. On the contrary, these are crucial papers to include in the large-group discussions that precede live grading. For only by openly discussing, debating, and negotiating evaluative differences can a writing program move genuinely and with integrity toward increased evaluative coherence and community.

All these considerations in selecting sample texts point to the need for the group of faculty and others in charge of selecting texts to be as diverse as possible in institutional status: professors, adjuncts, TAs, undergraduate students. The group should also represent the full range of rhetorical interests evident in the writing program: correctivists, expressivists, creative writers, technical writers, literature instructors. Because of their power position in the writing program, administrators should probably play a limited role or be altogether absent from the process of selecting sample texts for discussion in Dynamic Criteria Mapping. Finally, the group for selecting sample texts should change with each round of DCM, so as to get as much diversity as possible in the texts and their qualities.

Articulation in Large Groups

In “Pulling Your Hair Out: Crises of Standardization in Communal Writing Assessment” (Broad 2000), I proposed changing the name of large-group discussions that precede live grading from “standardization,” “calibration,” or “norming” to “*articulation*.” The traditional names for these discussions point toward only part of their appropriate function: exploring how evaluators *agree*. These names neglect an equally important part of those discussions that has heretofore remained hidden and forbidden: exploring how and why evaluators disagree. In the current context, with its emphasis on making assessment fit with and support classroom teaching, communal writing assessment must explore both these aspects of shared evaluation. The word “articulation” refers to both how things are joined and how they are separated. That word also refers to the process by which writing instructors discover and come to voice what they value in their students’ work.

Once sample texts have been selected, copied, and distributed, and once instructors and administrators have read the sample texts and made notes on what they value and do not value in each text, they are ready to meet for articulation. In articulation sessions, participants discuss the specific criteria by which they were guided in reaching their pass/fail decisions about each text. While they should note and discuss evaluative agreement and disagreement, they do not need to ensure that everyone agrees on how a particular text should be judged. Instead, each participant should focus on *listening to* and *understanding* the full range of values at work in the program, and each participant should actively *reflect* on how the values discussed might inform her future

teaching and assessment of writing. Articulation constitutes no more or less than a powerfully transformative professional conversation.

Trios for Live Judgments

Before examining in more detail how discussions of sample texts lead to a Dynamic Criteria Map, we need to consider how trio meetings conducting “live grading” should figure in. Most of the work of collecting and analyzing data will take place in the large-group articulation sessions. Since trios are responsible for live grading of students with which each trio-mate has worked in the classroom, instructors have more, and more pressing, responsibilities when meeting in trios than they do when participating in articulation sessions.

We must therefore expect trios to contribute somewhat less to the DCM process than do articulation sessions. Trios should still maintain keen awareness of the criteria that arise in their discussions of texts. All trio-mates should keep notes on those criteria they mention or hear, and trio-mates can check in with each other at the conclusion of their meetings to compare and compile notes. Trios should then report their data to program administrators or DCM leaders, who can help instructors integrate trio findings into the DCM process. In this fashion, trios play an important role in DCM by confirming, refuting, or complicating the preliminary map generated in articulation sessions. The articulation and trio meetings are therefore mutually informative and transformative.

Collecting Data for Dynamic Criteria Mapping

As I described in chapter 2, my method for studying City University included tape recordings and transcriptions of norming sessions, trio meetings, and solo interviews. Such data gathering requires a large investment of time and energy, which I assume is unavailable to most writing programs. I therefore recommend the following streamlined techniques for gathering data on what we really value in students’ writing.

From among all the instructors who have prepared for articulation by reading and judging sample texts, two should volunteer to act as scribes. These scribes should stand where the large articulation group can clearly see them. Using whatever technology is available (marker boards, chalkboards, flip charts, or computers projected onto a screen), scribes should write down the specific criteria to which readers refer when they explain why they passed or failed a particular sample text. Scribes should also note the specific passage in the specific sample text

to which a participant refers when invoking one or more criteria. These references to sample texts will become important features of the final publication that emerges from DCM. Non-scribes should attend to scribes' work and provide correction and elaboration where necessary, so that the scribes' records reflect instructors' criteria as fully and accurately as possible.

Scribes must carefully avoid synthesizing, organizing, or conceptualizing how various criteria are interrelated. That work comes later, during data analysis. Their job during data collection is to identify and record the full range of rhetorical criteria (textual, contextual, and other) informing judgments of students' writing. Scribes' work should be carefully saved and made available to all participants at, or shortly after, the conclusion of the articulation session. If data analysis (see below) does not take place immediately following articulation, instructors should be able to carry these raw data into trio meetings and work from them and add to them during trios.

Analyzing Data for Dynamic Criteria Mapping

As with the data gathering methods described in the preceding section, I believe that a relatively simple and quick version of data analysis will provide instructors and administrators with high-quality knowledge and insight regarding how composition is taught and evaluated in their writing programs.

Ideally, data analysis for DCM would take place after all the teaching and evaluation for a particular course were complete. Instructors would be fresh from the intense experience of finishing a course—and particularly of evaluating students' portfolios—and would therefore be more keenly attuned than at any other time to their rhetorical and pedagogical values. Perhaps between terms, then, instructors would come together to view the raw data collected during articulation sessions and trio sessions. If between terms proves to be an unworkable time for instructors to meet, instructors could make notes on the documented raw data regarding additions, corrections, and connections they can offer based on their experiences at the end of the term.

Preferably in small groups, participants would then try to establish the identities, contents, boundaries, and interrelationships of the various criteria on which their evaluative decisions were made. They might discover large categories of criteria like or unlike mine (Textual, Contextual, Other). They might find more, fewer, or different rhetori-

cal criteria. They might perceive different relationships among criteria and therefore create different constellations. And their constellations might, in turn, be differently interrelated. Some criteria might be mapped two- or three-dimensionally, and others might be adequately represented by simple lists.

Analyzing data is the most intense work of Dynamic Criteria Mapping. Everything depends on being true to the data collected, yet analysis also invites participants to perceive, interpret, judge, and compose meaningful findings out of those data. Data analysis is a highly critical and creative activity that carries with it unparalleled power to understand and guide the writing program and the teaching and learning going on within it. And most important, it provides administrators, instructors, and students with an unprecedented opportunity to know how evaluation really works in their program. By the end of the process, participants are usually tired but also excited about and gratified by the valuable new knowledge they have produced.

A caution: in my experiences helping faculty map their values, data analysis is where most, if not all, of the preceding work can be lost or wasted. The danger is that participants will be tempted to import familiar, comfortable, and simplified schemes by which to arrange the criteria they generated during articulation. In their chapter “Analyzing Interpretive Practice,” Gubrium and Hostein quote Schutz on the crucial importance of protecting participants’ experiences from being interpreted in hasty or imported ways.

Schutz argues that the social sciences should focus on the ways that the life world—the world every individual takes for granted—is experienced by its members. He cautions that “the safeguarding of [this] subjective point of view is the only but sufficient guarantee that the world of social reality will not be replaced by a fictional non-existing world constructed by the scientific observer” (8).

Repeatedly, I have witnessed DCM participants rushing to fit the “social reality” (raw data) of what instructors have said they valued with a “fictional non-existent world” of what they thought about what they valued before DCM even began. Yet the whole DCM project aims to move us beyond what we think about how we value students’ writing and to discover what and how we really value.

The best technique for “safeguarding” the integrity of the raw data is for the analysts to work slowly and methodically from those data

through small steps of abstraction and conceptualization. For example, they would want to ponder carefully whether comments that texts are “interesting,” “lively,” “surprising,” and “creative” really belong together as a single criterion-cluster (as I concluded they did). At each step of conceptualization, they should check their category against the data they wish to gather there. Once participants have generated a collection of criterion-clusters, they can then work at discerning interrelationships among them, again with the same cautions against importing conceptual schemes and the same urgent plea that mappers induce their concepts with tenderness and care from the raw data before them.

Debating and Negotiating Evaluative Differences

Once participant-researchers have collected and analyzed their data, creating their categories, lists, and maps of rhetorical criteria, they need to undertake one more step before finalizing and publishing their results. Now that they know, perhaps for the first time, how they *do* value students’ writing, they need to undertake high-powered professional discussions regarding how they *should* value that writing. In other words, their focus shifts at this point from the descriptive to the normative. This is the stage at which their professional insight and wisdom may have the greatest impact.

In presenting my DCM findings from City University, I highlighted those dynamics that I believed required debate and, if possible, a decision one way or another on the part of the program. A few examples include:

- To what extent should whether a student fulfilled the assignment count for or against her?
- Which should influence judgments more: in-class, unrevised, unedited texts or texts whose writing processes included drafting, response, research, revision, and proofreading?
- How should perceptions of learning, progress, and growth figure into judgments of students’ rhetorical performances?
- What should be the weight and role of mechanics in the program’s teaching and assessment of students’ writing abilities?

These are the sorts of questions that deserve and require the professional attention of administrators and instructors in a program *before* they publicize their findings.

As with all aspects of teaching and assessing writing, consensus on these issues will be difficult to achieve. Minority reports and dissenting

opinions may therefore be useful elements of the DCM that emerges from these discussions. The main point is for instructors to be on the alert for criteria around which various dynamics, especially differences among instructors, put students at risk of being unfairly penalized. Since student learning is the heart of what we do, it needs to be the reference point for discussions by which writing programs not only record and discover but also shape and refine what they value in students' writing.

Publicizing, Learning, and Teaching from the Dynamic Criteria Map

Following its debate and negotiation of the DCM, a writing program will be ready to publish its map along with the sample texts that informed it. It should be made as simple and accessible as possible, especially to students, while still maintaining enough texture, nuance, detail, and complexity to be true to the evaluative dynamics it claims to represent. The Dynamic Criteria Map document that emerges is likely to include:

1. An introduction or preface written by one or more instructors or administrators explaining the goals, methods, and virtues of Dynamic Criteria Mapping
2. The constellations and lists of specific rhetorical criteria, including lists of synonyms and antonyms where available and references to sample texts to illustrate what each criterion looks like "in action"
3. Full sample texts discussed in articulation sessions (and perhaps one or two additional texts submitted by instructors from their trio sessions)
4. Other program documents (mission statements, syllabi, publications) useful to students and others who wish to understand what is taught and valued in the writing program

When a writing program's DCM is widely published and shared among students, writing faculty, other faculty, and the public, it should provide fodder for energetic dialogue regarding teaching and assessing composition. The DCM can informatively drive program assessment and design, as well as the rhetorical development of individual students. Here lies another avenue for future research: tracing the uses and perceptions of the DCM process and the DCM document by faculty, students, and others.

Revising the DCM

To be truly *dynamic*, a DCM needs to grow and change organically over time. Therefore, writing programs should treat their maps as works in progress and should adjust and enhance them periodically. Some

programs might conduct full-scale DCM every year, with multiple sample texts and large groups of instructors; others might read just one or two new sample texts each year or convene smaller instructor groups; others still might go longer between mapping sessions. The point is to keep the process going so that the DCM reflects the program's rhetorical values steadily more faithfully and so that the DCM keeps up with inevitable—and desirable—changes in the program's framework of values.

CLASSROOM DCM

Whether or not a writing program conducts communal writing assessment, instructors in that program can still conduct Dynamic Criteria Mapping. When shared evaluation is not an option, classroom-based DCM may be the only method for documenting and reflecting on an instructor's evaluative framework. Walvoord and Anderson present superb strategies for making assessment educational and supportive of key learning goals. Much of their language and thinking could serve as a guide for the work described in this book.

We urge faculty to abandon false hopes that grading can be easy, uncomplicated, uncontested, or one-dimensional. Teachers must manage the power and complexity of the grading system rather than ignore or deny it. (xvii)

and

[W]e place grading within the frame of *classroom research*—a term used for a teacher's systematic attempt to investigate the relationship between teaching and learning in her or his classroom. (xvii; emphasis original)

Walvoord and Anderson offer powerful conceptions of how instructors can make assessment into research, which in turn informs teaching and learning. I find their method for managing the power and complexity of assessment limited, however, by the nature of the “systematic investigation,” or inquiry, the authors suggest.

Note, for example, that instructors are urged to “identify” (67), “choose,” and “ask themselves” (68) about the evaluative criteria for primary trait analysis, which will guide students in fulfilling assignments and guide the instructor in evaluating students' work. A basic principle out of which I developed Dynamic Criteria Mapping is that people do not have satisfactory access to their rhetorical values by sitting and reflecting on them. Instead, people need to enter into discussion and debate of actual performances in an effort to discover what they (and others) value.

To their credit, Walvoord and Anderson recommend that instructors include colleagues (70) and students in the construction of evaluation schemes. “We know faculty who like to involve their students in establishing criteria for student work” (86). Unfortunately, the mildly condescending tone of the phrase “like to involve their students” is reflected in the methods proposed. Students are asked about what they believe good performance looks like in general, rather than what they know about the instructor’s evaluative framework.

This last point is the key to classroom DCM. Near the end of a course, instructors should ask their students to gather data (handouts, responses to writing, comments made in class) that answer the question: “What does this instructor (who wields the institutional power of the course grade) value in your work?” Students in this model are taken as more authoritative sources for answering this question than the instructor because students hold more data on what the instructor *really* values as opposed to what the instructor *thinks* she values. Beyond this key difference in data gathering, the process for classroom DCM closely parallels the process described above for programmatic DCM.