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CALL FOR ARTICLES

We welcome manuscripts of 20-30 pages, double spaced, on topics related to Basic Writing and ESL writing, broadly interpreted. Submissions should follow current MLA guidelines. Manuscripts are refereed anonymously. To assure impartial review, include name(s), affiliation(s), mailing and email addresses, and a short biographical note for publication on the cover page only. The second page should include the title but no author identification, an abstract of about 150 words, and a list of four to five key words. Endnotes should be kept to a minimum. It is the author's responsibility to obtain written permission for including excerpts from student writing, especially as it entails IRB review (which should be noted in an endnote).

Contributions should be submitted as Word document attachments via email to: Hope.Parisi@kbcc.cuny.edu, and Cheryl.Smith@baruch.cuny.edu. You will receive a confirmation of receipt; a report on the status of your submission will follow in eight to ten weeks.

All manuscripts must focus clearly on basic writing and must add substantively to the existing literature. We seek manuscripts that are original, stimulating, well-grounded in theory, and clearly related to practice. Work that reiterates what is known or work previously published will not be considered.

We invite authors to write about such matters as classroom practices in relation to Basic Writing or second-language theory; cognitive and rhetorical theories and their relation to Basic Writing; social, psychological, and cultural implications of literacy; discourse theory; grammar, spelling, and error analysis; linguistics; computers and new technologies in Basic Writing; assessment and evaluation; writing center practices; teaching logs and the development of new methodologies; and cross-disciplinary studies combining Basic Writing with such fields as psychology, anthropology, journalism, and art. The journal is in active dialogue with the scholarship of new literacies, translingualism, multimodality, digital rhetorics and online and social-media impacts as per intersectional writing identity formations.

The term “basic writer” is used with wide diversity today, and critiques the institutions and contexts that place students in Basic Writing and standardize academic language, as much as it may illumine the subtexts of individuals’ writing practices. To help readers, therefore, authors should describe clearly the student population and settings they are discussing.

We particularly encourage a variety of manuscripts: speculative discussions that venture fresh interpretations; essays that draw heavily on student writing as supportive evidence for new observations; research written in non-technical language; and collaborative writings that provocatively debate more than one side of a central controversy. A familiarity with the journal is the best way to determine whether *JBW* is your next venue for scholarship.

EDITORS' COLUMN

The fiftieth anniversary of *JBW*'s launch in 1975 is fast approaching. During the last half century, the landscape of Basic Writing has shifted, along with changing attitudes about educational equity, students' rights to their own language, anti-racist pedagogy, and the standards we use to access writing. Still, assumptions linger about Basic Writing programs, the students who are placed into or choose Basic Writing courses, and the faculty who teach them. Entrenched practices and expectations similarly linger. The authors in this issue probe these assumptions and practices as they explore the processes for assessing, ranking, and dividing student writers; the resilience of longstanding institutional structures and practices; what students want out of a college writing course and how they perceive Basic Writing; and the value of grammar to college writers. In the process, the scholarship centers the historical weight of the justice and equity frames at the foundation of Basic Writing as a field—frames that still define the scholarly and pedagogical work of many practitioners.

In "Basic Writing and Resisting White Innocence," Sean Molloy and Alexis Bennett bring us back to one of the field's starting points: the origins of Basic Writing at City College, CUNY in the late 1960s. Bennett, a recent college graduate, was Molloy's writing student and worked as a consultant in the writing center he directs. They combine their perspectives as student and teacher to reflect on the original Basic Writing system as it unfolded at CUNY in the 1960s and 70s—its impact on undergraduates, their educational prospects, and their largely contingent instructors. Molloy and Bennett demonstrate that a powerful narrative connected to white innocence pushed Black and Brown students at City College into newly designated Basic Writing courses during the same period that Mina Shaughnessy climbed the administrative ladder, first in City College's English department and later in CUNY's central office. According to Molloy and Bennett, "the reality of Basic Writing was a system of barriers, segregation, and exclusion, all grounded in a false and conveniently myopic white innocence." They argue that the original rationalization for Basic Writing was in fact so "conveniently myopic" that "none of Shaughnessy's arguments would have survived her death in 1978 if her Basic Writing narrative did not serve the larger institutional and cultural interests of white power structures within higher education that sought to resegregate PWIs and preserve white innocence." They add that the Basic Writing systems still prevailing at many institutions bare the traces of this foundational moment, and continue to rely on core assumptions about

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"exceptional" verses "basic" students. As Molloy and Bennett assert, these systems demand the ongoing, uncomfortable work of self-reflection and anti-racist resistance to build new paradigms for understanding, teaching, and framing undergraduate writers and writing programs.

In "Gatekeeping by Design: The Use of an Exit Exam as a 'Boss Text' in a Basic Writing Course," Stacy Wittstock looks at another way in which established paradigms linger and continue to shape practice. Her focus is the resilience of timed, high stakes writing exams to assess proficiency and advance students through the system. Though many scholars have identified the biases that drive this practice, and the field has intellectually "moved on from timed writing," practices on the ground vary. High-stakes exams still shape curricula and impact student success in many settings. To urge institutions to move beyond this outdated, damaging practice, Wittstock develops a case study of interviews with ten faculty and two administrators, along with historical documents. Her study underscores the importance of faculty voice in setting and revising policy. Further, it "illuminates the relationship between harmful assessment ecologies and the institutional devaluing of faculty and students throughout higher education and demonstrates the danger of considering programmatic microstructures like curriculum and pedagogical practices in isolation from institutional macrostructures that shape them." Wittstock acknowledges the difficulty of making change in a writing program when the institutional culture resists reform. Still, her study offers solutions that align with the recommendation of Molloy and Bennett to engage in the hard work of self-reflection that enables programs to identify the intuitional systems that shape practice, and explore how and where they might bend; align research with the practical needs and challenges the programs face; and elevate faculty voice and experience in the process. In particular, Wittstock underscores the importance of teacher agency to counter legislative and institutional control. She promotes efforts to "partner with and advocate for faculty, who are simultaneously the most vulnerable to upheaval caused by large-scale change and the individuals most often tasked with operationalizing those same changes toward equity for students in their classrooms."

Margaret E. Weaver, Kailyn Shartel Hall, and Tracey A. Glaessgen extend this call for agency from faculty to students in their article, "Challenging Assumptions about Basic Writers and Corequisites at Four-Year Institutions." They explore the increasing emphasis on corequisite models, driven by both fiduciary concerns around the cost of excess credits and the pedagogical emphasis on full-credit, more integrated models of instruction.

As their institution moved toward offering fewer prerequisite and more corequisite courses, Weaver, Hall, and Glaessgen studied the students who were selecting between the different options. They have found that "contrary to the assumptions being propagated in the literature and state legislatures, a significant number of our students prefer a prerequisite model of writing instruction that affords them more time to work on their writing in a low-risk environment prior to enrolling in the gateway course. By taking away this option, we are limiting students' autonomy to choose." Put another way: our assumptions about both Basic Writers and the value of higher education deny students' agency in setting their own educational path. Similar to Wittstock, the authors argue that teachers and administrators working most closely with students must have a voice in charting the future, and in resisting a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to account for the students who belie our assumptions and expectations. Students and programs have to be agile as they respond to shifts both within and beyond their institutions, and institutions have to provide flexible pathways to accommodate diverse students' roads to success. As Weaver, Hall, and Glaessgen put it: "we must continue to keep the needs of our students at the forefront and provide them with information and choices about the writing education they receive in our classrooms, and we must continue to demystify who these students are to the administrators and stakeholders making changes at our institutions."

Finally, Amanda Sladek adds her voice to this call for students' agency in shaping their own educational journeys in "Student-Centered Grammar Feedback in the Basic Writing Classroom: Toward a Translingual Grammar Pedagogy." In particular, she locates student agency in an approach to grammar instruction that honors students' right to determine the values that shape their own language, "including their agency in requesting help in conforming to standardized English." In her developing practice, Sladek struggled to balance her students' desire to master standardized English with her own resistance to mark their grammar missteps, believing it could undermine their confidence or stifle their creativity. Her exploration of the literature and experience in the classroom were telling her that, "language standards are artificially developed, no variety of English is linguistically superior or inherently correct, and the education system is designed to disenfranchise the very students who were most negatively impacted by my grammar marking." Despite her own deepening intellectual convictions about the shortcomings of grammar instruction, however, her students kept asking for it, and repeatedly identified grammar as one of their main writing concerns. Sladek narrates her struggle to reconcile this tension, ul-

timately arriving at her decision to "engage students more directly in their own grammar feedback by working with them in determining the type and scope of grammar feedback they wanted." She discusses the outcomes of this engagement, its intersections with research in translingual pedagogy, and the lessons from her students as her thinking has evolved.

Institutions of higher education are notoriously slow to change; practices get embedded, and along with them, outdated expectations and assumptions drive policy, curriculum, and attitudes. But foundations can be shaken by the stakeholders who experience the impacts of rigid structures most intimately: the students and faculty in the classrooms, and the directors at the helm of centers and programs. What would it mean for students to have a voice in defining "Basic Writing" as a course, as well as their values and identities as students? What would more equitably shared leadership that elevates faculty voice look like in our departments and programs? The articles in this issue provide insight into these questions. Further, they position us to keep the inquiry alive as we reflect on the purpose and effects of our institutional and programmatic structures, and as we resist those standards or curricula that restrict teacher agency, delimit student success, and quietly maintain the oversights, errors, and expectations of our past.

--**Cheryl C. Smith** and **Hope Parisi**

Basic Writing and Resisting White Innocence

Sean Molloy and Alexis Bennett

ABSTRACT: In this archival history, a college writing teacher and recent graduate together challenge the integrationist narrative of Basic Writing, grounded in "white innocence" and dating back to the 1970s. Joining other studies of physical and linguistic segregation in higher education, we recover the true birth of Basic Writing from 1969 to 1971 at City College and we find that racism was not an unintended bug of the first "Basic Writing" program, but it was rather the principal intended feature—a feature that was carefully concealed from students and outsiders with euphemisms and codes. We consider what this troubling birth means for the Basic Writing field today and enduring forms of white innocence that support monolingualism, including in our own experience together. We ask if it is still tenable for college writing teachers and researchers to remain "innocent" or neutral about Basic Writing and monolingualism.

KEYWORDS: Basic Writing; basic writers; City College; double consciousness; euphemism; linguistic racism; linguistic supremacy; Mina Shaughnessy; monolingualism; racism; segregation; testing; white innocence; writing assessment

In 2017, the California legislature found that California community colleges were referring over 75% of their incoming students (especially students of color) into uncredited "remedial courses." These placements discouraged students, burdened them with higher costs, and delayed their degree plans. To reduce these inequitable harms, California ordered its community colleges to reduce remedial placements by 2019 using multiple measure systems (not placement tests) which are "sensitive to cultural and language differences between students" ("Success Act"). The preliminary results of this

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Alexis Bennett *is a 2022 graduate of William Paterson University with a bachelor's degree majoring in Management and minoring in Public Health. She currently works as an educational instructor helping justice-involved youth obtain their high school diplomas and pursue post-secondary programs. She worked for two years as a senior writing consultant at William Paterson University's Writing Center.*

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mandated reform are striking. In 2015-16, only 10% of Black students, 18% of Hispanic students, and 20% of white students in California's community colleges completed any college-level, transferable English course within their first year of study. In 2020, under the new legal mandate, 22% of Black students, 32% of Hispanic students, and 29% of White students passed a college-level English class within a year (Cal-PASS Plus). Texas, Florida, and Connecticut have now passed similar laws and California is considering additional mandated limits on remediation (Zamudio-Suarez).

Providing effective support for every college student is a daunting and complex challenge. But given the massive failures of California's community college remedial systems, why were those placement tests and remedial writing courses still in place in 2016? Why has it sometimes taken legal mandates to force public college educators to reform remediation systems?

We believe part of the answer lies in the powerful narrative and related "white innocence" that have rationalized and protected Basic Writing systems since the early 1970s. Beginning with a 1970s Basic Writing origin myth that was principally shaped by Mina Shaughnessy, the Basic Writing narrative continues today to argue that some entering college students are more basic writers than their peers. For their own good, these "basic writers" must be identified, labeled, and often physically segregated into Basic Writing courses in which they are taught to linguistically segregate their Englishes from "academic English."

In 2013, Carmen Kynard closely examined the origin myth of Basic Writing as Mina Shaughnessy crafted it in her 1977 *Errors & Expectations*. Kynard positioned *Errors* as an "integrationist narrative" that relied on "white innocence" to feed a larger "white integrationist stance in composition studies," all of which obscured the work of HBCUs, Black teachers, and Black student protest movements (150). To Kynard, this integrationist narrative and stance in fact rationalized the "admissions and enrollment schemes" which have been "always used to keep students of color out of white colleges" by casting those students as "outside the bounds of school culture" either to be excluded or "paternalistically saved" (151). In 2022, Annie Mendenhall expands Kynard's thesis by tracing how all American school and college integration during the 1970s was reframed as remediation—a national narrative based on misapplied psychological research and grounded in racist and euphemistic stereotypes of cultural deprivation. Remediation as integration then shaped "college writing for decades" as it preserved the convenient innocence of predominantly white colleges—rationalizing in "the white imaginary" a system of "pre-college, non-credit literacy remediation [that]

integrated Black students into white mainstream literacy norms to compensate for literacy deprivation" (Mendenhall, 33-35). This "remediation as integration" narrative had an immediate and overwhelming impact on American education. In 1971 and 1972 the Nixon administration diverted $1.5 billion to fund remediation programs and by 1970, American colleges had launched 900 "remedial and equal opportunity programs" (37-38). Like Kynard, Mendenhall argues that this false narrative was really a conservative backlash to integration. For example, Mendenhall sees remedial placement policies as "rooted in anti-Black linguistic racism," a backlash to efforts like the 1974 "Students' Right to Their Own Language" NCTE resolution (65).

In sum, Kynard concluded that the "primary function and contribution" of Shaughnessy's *Errors* "was to offer the field a white, integrationist discourse as it simultaneously birthed and legitimated the field's canons on Basic Writing, writing program administration, and pedagogies for nonstandard language varieties" (154). What were in fact tools of erasure, marginalization, and exclusion were thus recast as inclusionary reforms. Kynard argued that (even in 2013) *Errors* was being used to "center white comfort and a white voice" in composition studies (197). Similarly, in 2012, frustrated with the convenient, enduring myopia of white innocence, Ian Marshall argued that "the project of Basic Writing" evidences both an institutional and American cultural inability "to fully and completely face the consequences of racism." He suggested "that it takes hard work not to see this" (60).

JBW and the Narrative of Basic Writing

The first words ever written in this *Journal of Basic Writing* were Mina Shaughnessy's introduction to its first issue as its founder. By the Spring of 1975, Shaughnessy was an Associate Dean of the City University of New York and the director of its new "Instructional Resources Center." She was the administrator responsible for all the growing systems of skills testing and prerequisite instruction in writing, reading, and math for the entire CUNY system and its 220,000 undergraduate students (Molloy, "Myopia" 345, 364). Shaughnessy wrote:

> A policy of admissions that reaches out beyond traditional sources for its students, bringing in to a college campus young men and women from diverse classes, races, and cultural backgrounds who have attended good, poor, and mediocre schools, is certain to shake the assumptions and even the confidence of teachers who have been

> trained to serve a more uniform and prepared student population. ("Introduction" 1)

Shaughnessy's advice for those shaken (and presumably white) college writing teachers, rather than "to abandon old standards" (2), was to enter the "unmapped territory" where they could teach more sophisticated grammar instruction to "intelligent young adults who want to be right [but] seem to go on, persistently and even predictably, being wrong" (3). In her first sentence, Shaughnessy wove together a Basic Writing origin myth that launched a narrative of integration, white innocence, and cultural deprivation.[1]

We do not attempt to untangle Shaughnessy's true innermost thoughts and values. She was a critical actor in the early expansion and promotion of Basic Writing and a complex woman. She was a caring, conservative, and formalist writing teacher at City College from 1967 to 1971 (White; Mayes; Arce; Shaughnessy, "Summer Seminar"; Molloy, "Myopia" 294-95; Maher). She studied deeply in the emerging field of composition, as is evident from her "Suggested Readings" section of *Errors & Expectations* (298-306). And yet Shaughnessy also—from 1969 to within months of her death in 1978—steered all writing instruction at City College and CUNY toward a tiered and segregating course system grounded in sentence formalism and enforced by relentless testing and tracking— all of it rebranded within the Basic Writing narrative as necessary, supportive, and caring. All those efforts were part of a nationwide white backlash to school and college integration (Mendenhall). Indeed, none of Shaughnessy's arguments would have survived her death in 1978 if her Basic Writing narrative did not serve the larger institutional and cultural interests of white power structures within higher education that sought to resegregate PWIs and preserve white innocence.

Our Purpose and Positionality

Here a recent college graduate (Alexis) and her former writing teacher and writing center supervisor (Sean) explore the space between the narrative of Basic Writing and the harm that the first Basic Writing system actually did to Black and Brown students at City College (and indeed all students) after it was created in a January 1969 City College English Department meeting— as well as what current tracking, and monolingual writing pedagogies actually have done to us.[2] Mindful of Kelly Ritter's 2018 call for historical work about writing programs to recover and preserve polyvocal accounts and enable "opportunity for response, revision, and re-appropriation" (40), we recover archival voices to debunk the origin myth that has sustained

Basic Writing since 1969. We also see limits to adopting collective memory as a rhetorical response to local and critical archival histories where that collective memory (as has been true with Basic Writing) has been shaped by self-interest, powerful cultural biases, and myopic rationalizations. We conclude that Basic Writing at City College was an intentional backlash to integration—a coded system that demeaned Black and Brown students and teachers in order to resegregate City College both physically and linguistically. We agree with Carmen Kynard, Min-Zhan Lu, and Ian Marshall that the Basic Writing narrative has always relied on and appealed to forms of "white innocence" that (of course) have never been truly innocent. We examine the ways monolingualism and white innocence have harmed Alexis throughout her school and college career. In conclusion, we ask if it is still possible to remain "innocent" or neutral about the core tenet of Basic Writing that colleges can and should label some entering students as more "basic" than others?

Alexis is an African-American woman who has just completed her undergraduate degree and who worked for two years as a peer Writing Center consultant at William Paterson University. Over two years, Alexis completed over 600 peer writing sessions. Alexis grew up surrounded and constantly nourished by the Black women and men in her family. She was able to watch and learn from the vast life experiences of the people around her. She debated with other students at school lunch tables about women's rights and the existence of mistreatment towards Black students by teachers and administrators. She once had to educate a white teacher on why it was disrespectful to say the n-word, even if he was just "reading it from the book." She struggled with horrific events in the world, like the senseless murders of Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland, and other people like her.

Sean is a white man who has taught writing courses at four colleges since 2003, including many sections that were labeled as introductory, "Basic Writing," or "English Basic Skills." Since 2016, Sean has taught full-time at WPU, where he has directed the Writing Center since 2018. Sean met Alexis when she took his mainstream, first-year honors writing class in the Fall of 2019. In the Fall of 2020, Sean hired Alexis in the Writing Center as a peer undergraduate writing consultant.

The differences in our race, age, gender, power, experiences, and perspectives raised some nuanced issues of collaboration and polyvocality in our work here. We have previously collaborated on several video oral history interviews of 1970s peer tutors in the Brooklyn College Writing Center, so we have had time to develop our collaborative rhythms (Berardi, Skerdal, and

Villamanga) and explore our power relationships. Being a former teacher/student and supervisor/employee writing team gives us a chance here to reflect more deeply both on our experience and the experiences of students subjected to the original Basic Writing systems at City College and CUNY.

Linguistic Innocence and Linguistic Segregation

In 1991, Min-Zhan Lu credited Shaughnessy with recognizing the validity of multiple Englishes. (We read Shaughnessy as more often simply designating all non-white Englishes as simply "wrong" and in "error" ["Introduction" 1-3, "Errors" 11].) Even crediting Basic Writing as a code-switching pedagogy, Lu argued that it promoted a "politics of linguistic innocence. . . which preempts teachers' attention from the political dimensions of the linguistic choices students make in their writing" (27). Lu recognized that student writers "need to decide how to respond to the potential dissonance between academic discourse and their home discourses" (27). But Basic Writing required writing teachers to ignore that often painful reality.

In 2009, Vershawn Ashanti Young laid out a detailed argument that all code-switching pedagogies effected "linguistic segregation" that caused harm to Black students comparable to systems of physical school segregation like the so-called "separate but equal" doctrine of *Plessy v Ferguson*. Young argued this linguistic segregation pushes Black students into a kind of painful "double consciousness," like the suffering W.E.B. Du Bois had described as a "racial schizophrenia" caused by segregation. Young argued that "to teach students that the two language varieties cannot mix and must remain apart belies the claim of linguistic equality and replicates the same phony logic behind Jim Crow legislation" (54). In 2018, Young recognized that code-switching still "emanates from well-intentioned educators and is pervasively accepted," but argued again that "it appears nonetheless to be a vestige of legalized segregation [which] forces African Americans to view their language, culture, and identity, as antithetical to the U.S. mainstream, and becomes a strategy not only to teach Standard English but to negotiate racism" (6).

In 2020, April Baker-Bell, Bonnie J. Williams-Farrier, Lamar Johnson, Carmen Kynard, and Teira McMurtry coauthored a Conference on College Composition and Communication "DEMAND" for linguistic justice, drawing in part directly on Young's work. They demand that "teachers stop using academic language and standard English as the accepted communicative norm" because such teaching is "rooted in white supremacy, whiteness, and

anti-Blackness. . . that. . . has a deleterious effect on Black Language speakers' humanity. . . [and] and creates a climate of racialized inferiority toward Black Language and Black humanity."

Kynard, Mendenhall, Young, Marshall, and Lu make clear that white "innocence" has never really been innocent and it has never been harmless. Alexis was never labeled as a "basic writer." But since she entered first grade, she has felt the pain inflicted by white linguistic innocence and code-switching expectations. She learned at once that "standard" English was the goal and anyone who couldn't quickly assimilate would be considered "less than" their peers. She couldn't help but notice that this language differed from the AAVE many Black students spoke to her, but she couldn't fully conceive the deeper meaning behind it. No school teacher ever told Alexis her home language (AAVE) was a sophisticated and rich form of English—only that there was a right and wrong way to speak and write. These assertions of white linguistic superiority harmed her sense of herself in powerful ways, especially coming from the places where she was supposed to learn and from the people who were supposed to teach her. All of this soon seemed very normal.

Attending a diverse school district, at first, Alexis always felt seen by, and could relate to, her classmates. But starting in fifth grade, as she grew older and mastered code-switching, Alexis was tracked into more "accelerated," "advanced," and eventually "honors" classes. Alexis saw fewer and fewer Black students around her in the increasingly segregated "advanced" tracks in middle and high school. Linguistic segregation and physical segregation merged. Her need to switch from her casual comfortable language to her schoolwork language became more drastic and overt. She excelled academically and she knew her adaptability was impressive—but was it something to be proud of? Alexis wasn't sure if she felt "less than" because of how her Black language was demeaned and rejected—or because she was succumbing to this white power structure.

In her first week of college, Alexis took a writing class with Sean that felt different. She remembers: "I was trippin at first at the thought of calling my new writing teacher (Sean) by his first name. The class was rough and we did a whole lotta writing, rewriting, and rewriting again! This man had us doin some research studies, video essays, and creating websites, and I'm thinkin to myself, is this an English class or did I miss and sign up for a video design class? I'm not gonna lie though, it was fun to try these new things and challenge myself, I love a good challenge. It was probably one of the few times in college where I was always talkin to my classmates and

I grew to love em all. This class really showed me what college learning and writing could be like and man, it spoiled me."[3]

But in all her other classes, Alexis knew that she had to separate her "at home" language from her school language, deepening her double consciousness. In her honors classes, (except for the one class with Sean) she could tell that there was a set expectation that students should write in "standard" English. Covering her frustration with a smiling, cheerful demeanor, Alexis quietly filtered out her AAVE, not even giving the professors a chance to think that she was in any way a lesser student. Significantly, Alexis never had a Black honors professor and only ever had one Black professor in her entire time in college.

Working at the WP Writing Center gave Alexis the real tea on what happens in the university in ways no tour or orientation ever could. Many students were told by their professors to work on grammar corrections or picky edits. Assignments often required white English to receive a top grade, typically made clear by the rubrics. Students saw white English notes on their drafts. They heard white English advice when they asked professors what they could improve. Sean trained the writing center staff to focus on higher-order, bigger concerns. He knew if we just copy-edit papers, some teachers would be happier. But our clients would not become more confident and fluid writers and thinkers. Still, it pained Alexis to work with students who could not achieve the high grades that would make the thousands of dollars they pay for tuition worth it. It was nonsensical to all the consultants and students that their professors could not see past their very reasonable strays from standard English to truly understand the depth and meaning behind their writing. It reminded the consultants that even though they were being empowered through education, they were also being suffocated by it.

For two years, Sean was comfortably unaware of Alexis's pain, confusion, and frustration. Alexis chose to share her experiences for the first time in a summer writing center training seminar led by staff members and dedicated to biases, microaggressions, and intersectional identities. These candid staff conversations startled Sean out of some of his white innocence. He had designed his writing courses and the writing center pedagogy to reject monolingualism and formalism. But he had not directly confronted those issues either—which left students like Alexis with few tools to critique, resist, and navigate a university culture deeply shaped by white linguistic superiority.

Erasure and Distortion Within the Basic Writing Narrative

The Basic Writing narrative frames integration at CUNY through the actions and reactions of white writing teachers to Open Admissions in the Fall of 1970. As Kynard has traced in detail, this frame enacts multiple forms of erasure and distortion. We discuss three aspects of that erasure here. First, the narrative erases the four decades of civil rights struggle before 1969 to end racial exclusion at white American colleges. Second, it erases the history of the Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) that educated hundreds of thousands of Black students before 1970. Third, it ignores the pressure that was building for CUNY to end its systemic exclusion of Black and Brown students through 1965 and the desegregation programs that did end it between 1965 and 1970.

As few as 28 total Black students graduated from *all* American colleges in *all* years before 1860 (Crossland 26). HBCUs— formed in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and the south after 1865— produced an estimated 1,151 graduates by 1895. Across those thirty years, white colleges[4] together graduated only 194 Black students, and 75 of those were graduates of Oberlin (Crossland 27). From 1900 to 1950, overall Black college student enrollments increased; but in 1950, there were still only about 100,000 Black American collegians, with over half of them studying in HBCUs (Crossland 28-29).

Beginning in the mid-1930s, civil rights activists and excluded Black students fought successful legal battles to gain access to white public universities (Pearson; Gaines; Sipuel; Sweat). These cases culminated in the unanimous Supreme Court 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision which concluded "that in the field of public education, the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" (495).

In *Brown*, the Court found that public education is perhaps "the most important function of state and local governments. . . In these days it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education." As such, education is "a right which must be made available to all on equal terms" (493). The Court found that segregation caused Black children "a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone" (494).

Brown brought increasing legal and political pressure on all white college systems to admit more Black and Brown students.[5] From the 1930s until 1957, New York City's public colleges (City, Brooklyn, Hunter, and Queens)

operated as four largely autonomous institutions, loosely overseen by a Board of Higher Education appointed by the Mayor. CUNY only became a single (and rapidly expanding) system in 1961, after the Heald Commission recommended massive expansions of the New York State and New York City university systems (Gordon 21-24, 82-83). Yet CUNY remained overwhelmingly white. In the mid-1960s its entire student body was "by all accounts" 94 to 97% white (Warren 2, 35). Even in 1967, only 3.6% of CUNY senior college matriculants were Black and only 1.6% were Puerto Rican—at a time when black and Puerto Rican students comprised 57% of all City public elementary students and 38% of high school students (Berger, "1973" 5). In 1963 (as the CUNY system was receiving increased New York State funding to expand) Republican Assembly Speaker Joseph Carlino directly charged CUNY with unfair racial exclusion. According to Carlino, "only 1.9 per cent of the [CUNY] student body was Negro." As such, CUNY "had become a haven for the elite," with high GPA requirements that forced Black and Latino students "to forgo college" (Currivan).

As pressure to integrate CUNY increased, in February of 1964, a new CUNY Chancellor Albert Bowker called for the launch of several new desegregation programs ("Three Pronged"). The most effective answer to Bowker's call would prove to be the SEEK Program.

In the Fall of 1965, City College launched the pilot version of what would soon be named the SEEK Program ("Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge"). SEEK was an affirmative action admissions, supportive teaching, and holistic support bridge program. The first SEEK students who arrived at City College in 1965 entered a program that holistically supported them with a sophisticated and diverse staff of administrators, counselors, and teachers—including writing teacher Toni Cade Bambara, who was soon joined by Barbara Christian and Addison Gayle (Bambara, "Sections"; Ballard, "Oral History;" Christian; Covington; White; Wiltshire; Holmes; Molloy, "Human Beings;" Brown). In 1965, SEEK likely seemed a small threat to conservative white faculty at City College. Many desegregation programs remained small; they admitted few students and suffered high attrition rates. For example, a 1964 Brooklyn College desegregation program named the "Academic Talent Search Project'' admitted only 42 total students in a single cohort. By 1968, 26 ATSP students had dropped out and only four had been fully matriculated (Furcron).

But SEEK successfully supported its students to succeed and it grew rapidly both at City College and across CUNY. Between Fall 1965 and Spring 1969, City College admitted a total of 915 SEEK students; as the Spring se-

mester began in January of 1969, 731 of those 915 were still active students. Only 184 had dropped out (Berger, "1968-1969" 46). SEEK obtained millions of dollars in New York state funding and quickly grew into the largest affirmative action program in any white four-year college system (Ballard, "Oral History; Berger, "1968-69"; Healy). By the Spring of 1969, SEEK had admitted about 4,000 students to CUNY's four-year colleges and 3,000 were still active students. About 10% of those SEEK students were white; 90% were Black and Brown (Berger, "1968-1969" 104). In mid-1969, Karen Sheppard became City College's first SEEK graduate ("In Retrospect"). Many other SEEK students soon joined her: close to 40% of the 1965 to 1967 SEEK cohorts would graduate from City College by mid-1972 (Frost).

With 731 SEEK students attending City College in January of 1969, it would have been clear to the English Department that SEEK and SEEK students were a permanent and growing part of City College. Moreover, many City College SEEK teachers, counselors, and students were already demanding fairer, more expanded admissions and greater curricular reforms, including direct criticisms of the English Department (Gayle, "Strangulation," "Not So Soon," "White Experts"; Bambara, "Black University"; Molloy, "Myopia" 196-217). In the Spring of 1969, student protests at City College and across CUNY would soon pressure Bowker and CUNY to adopt its 1970 "Open Admissions" policy (Ballard, "Jericho" 229-31). At City College, many of the 1969 student activist leaders (including Francee Covington and Henry Arce) were SEEK students (Arce, Covington). But as Kynard notes, the Basic Writing narrative soon largely erased the success, activism, and advocacy of the SEEK teachers and students.[6]

The City College English Department in 1969

Within the English Department, overt complaints about the racial integration of City College were largely limited to the openly racist, misogynist, and homophobic Associate Professor Geoffrey Wagner—for whom racial integration represented *The End of Education* (1976). But more subtle, covert, and/or unconscious reactions to integration began taking shape within the English Department as early as 1965. The English Chair, Edmund Volpe (then a 42-year-old William Faulkner scholar) publicly supported the new SEEK program (Platt; Volpe, "Confessions"). He hired a racially integrated teaching staff of special SEEK lecturers to teach SEEK's growing number of writing sections. But Volpe also kept this special SEEK faculty physically and functionally segregated from the rest of the department. The English Depart-

ment did not allow "regular" English faculty to teach any SEEK courses from 1965 to 1967, even when they volunteered ("Minutes," [2 Mar 1967] 2; Molloy, "Myopia" 170-72). The Department also added a new high-stakes grammar section to its mandated final exams for all first-year-writing courses (Molloy, "Myopia" 147-51). The SEEK teachers refused to use the exam (Covington 7; Wiltshire; Molloy, "Myopia" 214-15). The Department also began to plan a new writing certification exam that would be required for graduation (Volpe "Open Letter" 1; Molloy, "Myopia" 246-47).

Volpe's January 1969 Plan for a "Basic Writing" Course

The English Department's covert pedagogical resistance to integration came to a head during a January 16, 1969 department meeting led by Volpe where they discussed and approved changes to the English curriculum (Boxhill). Assistant Professor Roger Boxhill kept the minutes. In this meeting, Basic Writing was born and so we look closely now at those minutes.

Seventy of the English Department's 76 tenured/tenure-track (and therefore voting-rank) professors were white men aged about thirty to almost seventy (CCNY, "1969-70" 62-65). An English Department rule had excluded all women faculty until about 1959 (Johnson 24), and a decade later the tenured ranks still included only five women assistant professors. (Molloy, "Myopia" 165-73, Tables 1, 2, 3). The poet James Emmanuel had been promoted to be the Department's only Black professor after completing his Ph.D. in 1962, but Emmanuel was on leave during 1968-69 (CCNY, "1969-70" 63-64). The young poet and literature critic Wilfred Cartey was then being hired from Columbia to join the City College English Department as its second Black professor (Seifman). But Cartey was not present at the January meeting.

In a time when faculty seniority, rank, and white male privilege all carried substantial weight, the dominance of the senior men is evident from how often they spoke. Volpe talked by far the most. Several of the six other full professors and seven associate professors who were present (all white men) jumped in often. Of the eighteen assistant professors present, fourteen did not speak at all. Only two women, Assistant Professors Marcia Allentuck and Madeline Cosman spoke briefly. Before 1960, the Department had employed few non-tenure track teachers. But the rapid growth of SEEK had prompted the Department to hire many more lecturers. (No SEEK writing teacher had yet been offered a tenure-track position.) The 52 English lecturers that year were far more diverse in sex, race, and age than the professors; they included:

Toni Cade Bambara, Barbara Christian, Addison Gayle, Audre Lorde, Janet Mays, Lawrence Neal, Raymond Patterson, and Adrienne Rich.[7] They may have been present at the meeting. But lecturers could not vote and their presence was not recorded in the minutes unless they spoke. Only one did: Lecturer Mark Mirsky spoke briefly about new elective writing workshops (Boxhill 3). Shaughnessy was still an untenured SEEK lecturer; the minutes do not show her as speaking or listed as present.

Recoding English One, Two, and Five

Volpe explained that several committees had prepared proposed curriculum changes and language for the 1969-70 City College course "catalogue," all collected into a 12-page document by a committee led by Volpe.[8] While it is easy to get lost in old writing course numbers and descriptions, we discuss some of them here to trace why and how Volpe and the English Department created "Basic Writing" and how they carefully encoded confusing signals within it.

For about three decades until 1965, City College had "prescribed" two mainstream writing courses for all incoming students: the required, two-credit English One and English Two. For most of these years, the only "remedial" course had been English Five "for students who are reported deficient in the mechanics of English composition" (CCNY, "1968-69" 71). By 1968-1969, the listed "remedial" courses also included English Six, offered only as an evening class to "foreign students" (71).

In 1965, the City College SEEK pilot program had placed all of its 113 incoming students into special stretched versions of the mainstream English One and Two. Few SEEK students entering in 1965 and 1966 were placed into any English Five sections. In 1965, the Department combined English One and Two into a single, four-credit English One, reducing required composition to a single semester. English One was described as:

> 1. **Composition.** An intensive course in writing, extending from a review of basic grammatical principles to an introduction to the research paper. It stresses written composition in the essay form. The teaching of writing is coordinated with course readings. Frequent conferences required. (CCNY, "1968-69" 71)

Although English Two was eliminated for mainstream students after 1965, the SEEK Program continued to offer it (Molloy, "Myopia" 72-73). SEEK Director Allen Ballard wrote that by 1967-68, City College SEEK offered

"basic, stretched out credit bearing courses to students in areas of English, Speech, Reading, Mathematics, Social Studies and Romance Languages" (Ballard, "1967-68" 1). Ballard used "basic" to mean required gen ed courses—a common usage at City College at that time (Molloy, "Myopia" 74, n. 16). For example, the 1970-71 School of Engineering Bulletin listed 60 credits of "Basic Courses" required for all Engineering students, including Chemistry, Biology, and Physics (50). These SEEK "stretched-out" mainstream courses followed "the syllabus of the regular college courses" but were "smaller in size and" met "for more classroom hours per week" (Berger, "1968-69" 46). In this way, SEEK argued to the college that the SEEK students—from day one—were completing the same work in the same required courses as all City College students. As such, SEEK's "stretched" course model anticipated (by about 25 years) the core concepts and structure of the 1992 Arizona State writing course stretch model (Glau 79-80). While offering smaller classes and extra instruction, the SEEK model argued for the dignity and equality of the SEEK students.

But in the January 1969 meeting, Volpe proposed a whole new writing course system.

In past Bulletins, English courses had been listed under the headings "remedial," "prescribed," or various groups of electives. Volpe explained that the prescribed English One composition course would now be eliminated. So would the "remedial" and "prescribed" course categories. Volpe instead proposed a new category of "Departmental Courses" which would be coded language:

> Professor Volpe explained that in the context 'departmental' was a euphemism for 'remedial.' He pointed out that the new English One was actually the old English Five, a course that would be required of a student whose performance on the achievement exam was below standard. . . " (Boxhill 2)

Volpe did not describe the new "Department" courses in the January meeting minutes, but they were later published in the 1969-70 Bulletin. The first was:

> 1. **Basic Writing.** Prescribed for students who do not meet minimal standards on the Achievement Examination. An intensive course in the writing of essays, extending from a review of grammatical principles to an introduction to the research paper. Conferences required. P/J. 3 hrs wk. 2 cr." (CCNY, "1969-70" 67)

Volpe had to explain his new "euphemism" to his own Department because the new "1. Basic Writing" course looked a lot like the newly discontinued "1. Composition" mainstream gen ed course. "Basic Writing" was also numbered as English One and the substance of the coursework was almost identical to the old mainstream composition course. All this made it look like a mainstream required course. "Departmental Courses" also suggested mainstream required courses, like those previously listed as "Prescribed Courses." But the new Basic Writing carried only two credits instead of four, students would be placed into Basic Writing only when they failed a new "Achievement Examination," and Basic Writing would be graded on a pass/no pass basis.[9] The now discontinued "5. Remedial English" course had been a callous, but clearly understood and little used tool, openly designated as a pass/no pass, sub-college course (CCNY, "1968-69" 71). Basic Writing was something new— a course designed to appear to be mainstream but coded to be understood by college insiders as remedial.

Further complicating the new system, Volpe explained that the Department also created two new writing elective courses, "40-41—courses which in the revised curriculum correspond to the old 1-2" (Boxhill 3). In the 1969-70 Bulletin, this new English 40 was described as: "40. Writing Workshop I. The writing of essays. Emphasis on clarity, coherence, and personal expression. Some work in research methods. Frequent conferences required" (69). Although the course content was not much different than the new Basic Writing and both courses were graded on a pass/no pass basis, this workshop carried three credits and a much higher, more prestigious course number.

Why was Volpe (for the first time in City College's 120-year history) creating euphemistic categories and describing courses in ways that implied they were mainstream, while they were in fact meant to be understood by insiders as remedial? Why all these shuffled course numbers and blurred lines? And which students would be placed into these new coded remedial courses? As recorded in the January meeting minutes, Volpe explained:

> Professor Volpe then asked for and received the permission of the department to rely on his own discretion in rewording the description of courses in the [Departmental] list in order to imply, insofar as possible, their appropriateness for pre-baccalaureates and the foreign born, as well as for those whose main language was not English. (Boxhill 2)

The "Pre-Baccalaureate Program" was the title of SEEK in its pilot year (Levy). City College English faculty continued to use "Pre-baccalaureates" as another name for SEEK students. Volpe and the English Department fully and openly intended to steer, "insofar as possible," these mostly Black and Brown students into their new remedial "Basic Writing" course. How did the English Department plan to segregate their students in this way? They planned to connect the Basic Writing course to a new system of high-stakes writing tests. Assistant Professor Madeline Cosman explained:

> the Achievement Examination determine[s] whether a student is required to take a remedial course in writing or is free to elect what courses in the department he wishes. The Qualifying Examination determines whether a student has satisfied the standard of composition set by the department for graduation. Although the Qualifying Exam is of course more difficult, the two examinations are similar in form. (Boxhill 1)

In this way, the English Department did not merely create a coded new remedial "Basic Writing" course specifically intended for Black and Brown students: they also integrated that course with a new testing system that they intended would push Black and Brown students into Basic Writing.

Having heard Volpe's plan, the English professors at the meeting at once voted to ratify it, and "Basic Writing" was born.

Consider the harm these English professors were willing to inflict in order to create their new segregative course and testing system. They eliminated all required first-year-composition. Many entering City College students would receive no writing instruction at all from the Fall of 1969 to the Spring of 1971 (Molloy, "Capitulation"). The total number of English courses offered would be greatly reduced. As the faculty body in charge of writing instruction, the English professors also deliberately demeaned their own work within the University. With the new "Achievement Test," they were building a system where many new City College students would be told that they were either "unexceptional" or "basic." The new "Qualifying Exam" would block other successful students from graduation.

This original Basic Writing system was not in fact created to foster integration. It did not help any City College students with new or better writing instruction. Rather it merely converted required writing instruction for most white students into elective courses and it secretly recoded required mainstream writing courses for mostly Brown and Black SEEK students

into remedial ones. SEEK writing teachers, students, and courses would be demeaned as remedial. They would be pushed toward shallow formalism in order to align with the new high-stakes writing tests required for graduation.

To Alexis, looking deeper at the systemic inequities that existed then and persist today, it appears that English Department leaders may have been intimidated by SEEK students' potential. Not only were SEEK students equal to other college students, they had the capacity and will to be extraordinary. Since SEEK students were often marginalized and disadvantaged in more ways than one, they were surely aware that they had to unjustly work twice, and maybe three times as hard to reach City College and then succeed there. Although unfair to them, the hurdles erected by the English Department and other parts of City College undoubtedly made SEEK students more resilient and motivated (Covington; Wiltshire; White). Their ability to overcome those hurdles and succeed alongside other, more privileged students, would certainly have been seen as a threat to the established educational power structure that preyed on minorities. In other words, the 1969 English professors did not fear that the SEEK students would fail; they feared that they would succeed.

SEEK Students are Transferred into Basic Writing (Fall 1969 and Spring 1970)

The new Basic Writing system launched in Fall 1969. The 1969-70 Bulletin explained that incoming students would be sorted by a "Placement Examination" into three levels. Those "failing to meet minimal standards in writing skills" were "assigned to remedial classes." (Here, the euphemisms slipped a little.) Those "exceptional students" with high test scores would be exempt from any writing courses as well as the new "Proficiency Examination." Those with middle scores would be "counseled" to take the new English 40 "Writing Workshop course or to continue with self-study." However, all those *un-exceptional* students would also be required to pass the new Proficiency Examination (a timed, prompted essay test) in order to graduate (66).

We do not know whether Shaughnessy played any role in shaping this first Basic Writing course system before January 1969. She certainly did not agree to abolish required writing courses and she would actively oppose that decision for years (Molloy, "Capitulation"). And we can find only limited course placement records from 1969-70. But Shaughnessy's growing power within the department soon became evident. She was promoted to Assistant Professor in November of 1969 (Volpe, "Letter"). In the fall of

1970, Shaughnessy was given a newly created title: "Assistant Chairman in charge of all composition work in the English Department. This means that she supervises the remedial courses" (Gross, "Reappointment"). And it was Shaughnessy who implemented the Department's new Basic Writing scheme in 1970 and 1971.

In 1969-70, the physical segregation effected by the Basic Writing program is clear when we track the SEEK sections of Basic Writing 1 against the new elective Writing Workshop 40. The Fall 1969 Course Schedule listed nine non-SEEK Basic Writing One sections and fourteen English 40 sections (32-34). But by the Spring of 1970, almost no non-SEEK students were in Basic Writing 1. Only three mainstream sections were offered, as compared to eighteen Writing Workshop 40 sections (Spring 1970 Course Schedule 34-36).

The SEEK course sections were not in the public Course Schedule as non-SEEK students could not register for them. But Shaughnessy later reported to Gross (who was by then the new English Chair) that all the SEEK Composition courses had been renamed as Basic Writing courses in the Spring of 1970 when 402 SEEK students had been placed into 31 course sections of what she described as "Basic Writing 1, 2, 3 (old 5.8, 1.8, 2.8)" ("Progress" 2). SEEK course sections were marked with a ".8" (Arce, Rich) so Shaughnessy meant that the Department had simply converted all the SEEK writing courses (two of which had been mainstream courses before) into a new three-course version of Basic Writing. Moreover, in Spring 1970, only SEEK students had been placed into Basic Writing 2 and Basic Writing 3 courses; the Spring 1970 course schedules for all non-SEEK students listed no such sections at all.

In total, in the Spring of 1970, there were 31 sections of SEEK student Basic Writing and only about three sections of non-SEEK student Basic Writing. And this conversion of SEEK courses into Basic Writing was not done based on any careful and neutral assessment of each student as in Shaughnessy's myth; the entire SEEK writing course system was simply redesignated as Basic Writing. The English Department simply recoded all the SEEK writing students, and all SEEK writing courses, as remedial.

City College Expands Basic Writing (1970-71)

In September 1970, CUNY launched its open admissions program, greatly expanding access to all of its colleges. Shaughnessy was now an "Assistant Chairman" of the English Department in charge of composition. This title was also a kind of code. Gross explained in an October 30, 1970,

memo to Provost Abraham Schwartz that it meant that she supervised "the remedial courses and will therefore be largely responsible for the future success of the open admissions program" (Gross, "Schwartz"). Shaughnessy did not control those English 40/41 writing workshops, which the Department considered to be mainstream courses.

The entire three-course "Basic Writing" sequence was now listed in the Bulletin under the euphemistic "Department" remedial category:

> **1, 2, 3. Basic Writing.** (1) Diagnosis of individual writing problems, introduction to grammatical features of Standard English, introduction to description, narration, and analysis. (2) Organization and development of the expository essay. Techniques of quotation and citation. (3) Application of the techniques of summary, analysis, and research to significant works of literature. Frequent conferences are required in all basic writing courses. P/J. (CCNY "1970-1971," 82)

Continuing to blur the lines between mainstream and remedial courses, these descriptions could have referred to college-level (or even advanced) writing courses. But their remedial status was signaled by their "P/J" (pass/no-pass) grades and their low status as "Department" courses.

In Fall 1970, Shaughnessy continued to place almost all SEEK students into the new Basic Writing courses: 171 into Basic Writing 1, 125 into Basic Writing 2, and 160 into Basic Writing 3. There were 308 incoming SEEK students that Fall but Shaughnessy placed only 41 SEEK students into the higher-status elective English 40 writing workshop. Shaughnessy also placed about one-quarter (596/2,351) of all other incoming students into Basic Writing 1. About one-tenth of entering non-SEEK students (228/2,351) either elected or were placed into English 40 (Shaughnessy, "Progress" 1-2). In sum, while the new Basic Writing system funneled about 90% of entering SEEK students into between one and three semesters of coded remedial Basic Writing courses, only 25% of the non-SEEK entering students were placed into Basic Writing. Again, no non-SEEK students at all were placed into the new Basic Writing 2 and 3 courses, which were still segregated entirely for SEEK students.

In sum, by December of 1970, Volpe's January 1969 intention had been fully realized. SEEK and the remedial Basic Writing courses were closely intertwined. Inside SEEK writing classrooms, little had changed. Tests did not yet control everything. Following a practice begun in SEEK in about 1966, current

Basic Writing students were placed into future writing courses largely based on their writing teacher's overall assessments. Mary Soliday preserved many of the Basic Writing mid-term reports from Fall 1970. She found them to be "crammed with stories about students' lives, observations about language learning, and descriptions of coursework " (Soliday 93). A rich source, the reports show a large group of amazing teachers with differing approaches, all diving in to meet the needs of each student, and pushing them to become better writers (Molloy, "Myopia" 262).

Yet the new "Basic Writing" system had now deemed all those amazing teachers, courses, and students to be remedial.

Other New Barriers for SEEK Students

Once the segregative Basic Writing 1, 2, 3 and Writing Workshop 40, 41 system was in place, the English Department quickly used it to further exclude SEEK students. A new prerequisite for many English elective courses required either a passing grade on the new writing Proficiency Examination or in English 40 (CCNY, "1970-1971" 83). But Shaughnessy placed almost all the SEEK students into the Basic Writing 1, 2, 3 sequence, not English 40— so it was harder for them to qualify for English electives. As an extra twist, Basic Writing students were not allowed to also take the English 40 writing workshop as an extra writing course (and an alternate to the Writing Proficiency Examination) because completing "the entire 1, 2, 3 sequence in Basic Writing. . . is considered an equivalent" to English 40 (Shaughnessy, "Basic Writing" 11). In combination, the new rules reduced the number of Black and Brown students who could take many advanced English courses.

Other departments apparently understood the code because they soon followed the English Department's example. In December of 1970, Shaughnessy complained to Gross about "the academic penalty some students must pay for being placed" into Basic Writing ("Basic Writing" 11). The Nursing School had begun to refuse to give credit for non-letter grade classes, negating all the credits SEEK students earned in the three Basic Writing courses. Shaughnessy also complained that "the schools of Engineering, Architecture and Nursing" were requiring a passing grade on the Proficiency Exam or English 40 as a prerequisite for their advanced courses (Shaughnessy, "Basic Writing" 11-12). The Engineering school quickly offered its students the option of avoiding the new Writing Proficiency Exam completely by instead passing English 40 (CCNY, "Engineering 1970-1971" 50).

After the Fall of 1970, many more non-SEEK students would be placed into the Basic Writing sequence. But most of the first students to be designated as basic/remedial writers were the SEEK students— just as Volpe and the English Department had intended in their January 16, 1969 meeting. This first Basic Writing course/testing system intentionally trapped the SEEK students into a stigmatized and segregated course track with added barriers to success. This Basic Writing system also led the way for other academic departments to create similar barriers to success, all of which discouraged, defeated, and excluded SEEK students.

Basic Writing Fails Students at City College from 1971 to 1976

By 1971, the City College SEEK writing program had been fully merged into the Basic Writing system. The SEEK students struggled within this new system, with "the percentage of SEEK students failing Basic Writing courses. . . somewhat higher" than other students over several semesters "preceding" Spring 1973 (Skurnick, "1973" 4). In addition, SEEK students were far more likely than other students to be placed into the grammar-intensive Basic Writing One class. In Fall 1972, the new City College WPA Blanche Skurnick placed 47% (161/338) of SEEK students and only 24% (430/1782) of other students into Basic Writing 1. In Spring 1973, 61% of Basic Writing One placements (164/271) were SEEK students (Skurnick, "1973" 1). The combination of high Basic Writing One placements, high course failure rates, and the additional proficiency exam gateway (launched in 1969 and validated by Shaughnessy in 1972) combined to target and segregate SEEK students away from mainstream, full-credit courses.

In the Spring of 1975, as Shaughnessy was promoted to be a CUNY Associate Dean and as *JBW* was born, the failure of Basic Writing at City College was growing more evident. In March, lecturer Pat Laurence and assistant professor Bill Herman cited the "basic dissatisfaction. . . some of us have felt" with Basic Writing: "Broadly speaking, not only is the failure rate too high in the sequence, with many students repeating courses a number of times, but the achievement level of those passing through the sequence is frustratingly uneven" (1). By 1975, many City College writing courses were taught by adjuncts. But tenured faculty from other departments with few majors also began to teach writing courses beginning in the Fall of 1974. In 1975 and 1976, CUNY imposed drastic budget cuts and layoffs. These layoffs devastated the largely untenured writing faculty. Skurnick reported that from

Fall 1975 to Fall 1976, seventy writing sections at City College had been taught by tenured faculty assigned from other departments (Skurnick, "1977" 1-2).

Skurnick reported even higher failure rates in all the Basic Writing courses and the Proficiency Examination—which since at least 1973 had also served as a Basic Writing Three course exit exam (2). Failure rates for non-SEEK students in all Basic Writing courses over the three semesters from Fall 1975 to Fall 1976 ran from 22 to 37%. SEEK student failure rates in all writing courses ran from 24 to 41% (3-4). Budget cuts in 1975 even forced Skurnick to run six 100-student lecture versions of Basic Writing courses. She ran three more 100-student Basic Writing sections in the Spring of 1976 (Skurnick, "1977" 2; Molloy, "Myopia" 366-67).

Shaughnessy Promotes Exclusion and Testing Systems (1975-1978)

In April of 1976, Dean Shaughnessy privately urged CUNY's top administrators to adopt a "selective retention" policy (CUNY, 1976, April 2). Shaughnessy also reported to top CUNY administrators her many actions to develop, study, and promote skills testing across CUNY. She warned them that a new CUNY-wide testing system would be "deeply, pervasively controversial on several grounds" and urged the CUNY Board of Trustees and campus "policy makers" to use "a firm implementing hand" to overcome resistance ("Memo to McGrath" 7). In a December 5, 1976 memo, Shaughnessy recognized that the "penalized testing" system she was planning would eliminate Black and Latino students in a way that would strike many as a "desperate and educationally irresponsible move" (Shaughnessy, "Note to Murphy" 3). Yet, she continued to build it.

The reality of Basic Writing was a system of barriers, segregation, and exclusion, all grounded in a false and conveniently myopic white innocence. In the Fall of 1978, CUNY launched a massive, system-wide, mandatory basic skills testing and tiered course system. In 1978, over half of the 22,000 entering CUNY students failed some part of the new writing, reading, and math exams. Between 1978 and 2016, CUNY labeled close to 750,000 students as "basic" and tracked them into stigmatized sub-college writing courses (Molloy, "Myopia" 388-90).

Basic Skills Systems Segregates American Colleges for Four Decades

As Mendenhall notes, CUNY was hardly alone. Across America, college systems added layers of discouraging, costly, and demeaning new "remediation" barriers. For example, in 1971 (ten years after a federal judge had ordered the University of Georgia to admit Hamilton Holmes and Charlayne Hunter, its first two Black students) Georgia developed a minimum skills proficiency reading and writing test program for sophomores across its thirty-three campuses (Ridenour 338, 343; Pounds 327; White, "Misuse" 31). Georgia soon added new first year writing placement, course exit, and admissions tests (Ridenour 332-334). In 1974, the University of Georgia system adopted a "Retention of Black Students" plan which expanded remediation grounded in arguments of cultural deprivation. (Mendenhall 41-42, 68-69)

In 1978, New Jersey implemented a new mandatory "Basic Skills Testing Program" that required its public colleges to administer new Basic Writing, reading, and math tests and place students who failed the tests into sub-college level courses. That year, about 43% of all entering students failed some part of those new tests (Molloy, Fonville, and Salam 11-14). Our university eliminated "Basic Writing" here in 2018. However, reading and math placement tests and mandated zero-credit reading and math courses remain in effect here.

A zero-credit "English Writing Laboratory" course first appeared at Wisconsin's Stout State University in 1968. This new course description did not refer to any placement test requirements; it instead promised "new structural and linguistic approaches to basic writing." (Stout, "1968-1970" 94, "1964-1966"). But in 1976, Stout added an "English Department Placement Examination" to block access to its mainstream course (Stout, "1976-1977" 123). In 2020, Basic Writing course/testing legacy systems were still in effect across the Wisconsin University system (Nicoles and Reimer).

In the California State University system, after the English Department chairs collectively embraced new mandated writing course exit tests in 1972, the entire system implemented them in 1973 (White, "Opening" 310, 315). More tests soon followed. After decades of pushing close to half of its incoming students into prerequisite courses based on placement tests and seeing low graduation rates, CSU eliminated both those tests and courses in 2018 (Mlynarczyk).

Resisting White Innocence

Alexis is typically the type of person that prefers to endure rather than to complain. So she never thought she would reveal her vulnerability in our summer 2021 writing center training session. However, she felt safe enough to say what was on her mind, supported by her fellow consultants. She expressed the way she felt living at the intersection of being a Black woman and how it shaped her experiences at the writing center. "I told everyone that sometimes, I get uncomfortable. The way that I am approached, the way I'm perceived, the way I'm treated. Living at this intersection, it's hard to pinpoint exactly what about you makes people mistreat you. Is it cuz I'm Black. . . a woman . . . or both? I talked about feeling demeaned by students, sometimes being treated like an eligible bachelorette and sometimes being treated like I was useless before I even got the chance to help. I was talking about microaggressions, and many times, they felt very loud."[10]

Sean realized we had to speak directly in the writing center (and in his writing courses) about white English. The staff read and discussed Young's "Naw, We Straight," and the 2020 "DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice." For Alexis, it wasn't until reading Young's article and learning more about code-meshing, code-switching, double consciousness, and "Standard English" that she realized how this structural linguistic racism had been harming her since first grade. As a young Black college student, Alexis felt like she was being oddly validated or recognized for years of strenuous actions she had no idea she had been taking.

Our discussions as a staff about the harms of linguistic racism at WP have led us to take new actions. We invited a dean to join us for an hour-long discussion about white English expectations at our university. Sean has added labor contracts to all his courses modeled on Asao Inoue ("Grading Contract") and Sean explains why they are an option. He is adding new readings to writing center training and writing courses as well. Of course, resisting his own white innocence is an ongoing challenge.

A Fraught History and a Polemic Battlefield

In her critique of the false and harmful narrative of Basic Writing, Kynard also recognizes that the research within the field of Basic Writing has been "a polemical battlefield," citing harsh criticisms of *Errors* and Basic Writing dating back to *College English* articles by John Rouse in 1979 and Min-Zhan Lu in 1992 (Kynard 154, 198). After Shaughnessy founded *JBW* and edited four issues that focused on errors, grammar, and writing tests

from 1975 to 1978, *JBW* was reborn as an independent, peer-reviewed journal that has published both some harsh critiques (and also many defenses) of Basic Writing. Many of the writing teachers who have dedicated themselves to fight for dignity and justice for all college students have joined the academic conversations within Basic Writing and *JBW*. As we note above, *JBW* published Lu's 1991 article that argued Shaughnessy had propagated "an essentialist view of language and a politics of linguistic innocence" (37). In 1993, William Jones argued in *JBW* that the racism at the core of American life situated "basic writing programs as Jim-Crow way stations. . . for. . . thousands of Black and Latino students" (72). Jones believed that America's "bedrock conviction that Black and Latino youths are incapable of high academic achievement" distorted both the writing instruction they received and their own self-images. Reading "basic writer" as a euphemism for minority students (73-74), Jones complained that sophisticated and successful process and dialogic approaches to teaching writing and the "accumulated knowledge of the profession" were seldom "delivered in the service of Black and Latino students" (77). In 1997, Ira Shor argued openly in *JBW* that Basic Writing had emerged as a conservative response to the expanded college access of the 1960s, serving as "a new field of control to manage the time, thought, aspirations, composing, and credentials of the millions of non-elite students marching through the gates of academe" (93). Shor attacked Basic Writing as "an empire of segregated remediation" (95).

Despite this rigorous debate, an unavoidable implied meta-argument in a journal (and in a field) that still keeps the name "Basic Writing" is that the enterprise of determining which entering college students are more "basic" than others (usually based on their facility with white English) continues to have arguable merit. We recognize that many hundreds of researchers and tens of thousands of writing teachers have done amazing work under daunting conditions within the umbrella of BW over the last fifty years. Nonetheless, in *JBW* in 2020, Sean and two formerly designated "Basic Writers" at WPU studied the racism that shaped Basic Writing at our university, reflected on the ways Basic Writing had harmed us all, and concluded that:

> so long as college writing programs and teachers define their work by searching out and measuring student deficits—by finding ways to argue that some incoming college students (like Sil and Abdus) are more "basic," less able, less likely to succeed, and less valued than others, colleges will fall short of their missions to fight for racial and social justice. The poisoned trees planted four or five decades

> ago will not be fully rooted out. . . In the end, we must oppose, rethink, and reimagine these biased old legacy systems until the day sometime soon when they are all "eliminated root and branch." (Molloy, Fonville, and Salam 27)

The first version of Basic Writing did not help to integrate City College. It was in fact a pedagogical white backlash to integration that segregated Black and Brown writing students into remedial courses, created barriers to their success, and denigrated them as "less than" other students—all in ways that were carefully obscured with euphemisms and codes. Basic Writing falsely equated integration and remediation by simply recasting writing courses for Black and Brown students as remedial and recasting Black and Brown writing students as the original "basic writers." In no sense was this terrible harm accidental or truly innocent. Racism was not an unintended, accidental consequence in the original version of Basic Writing: it was instead its principal intended feature.

Leaving Basic Writing behind will not end monolingual writing pedagogies, euphemisms and codes, invalid placement systems, and white linguistic supremacy. It will only be one important initial step in a much larger and longer struggle. Resisting white innocence, like resisting all forms of convenient myopia, is an ongoing, uncomfortable, and reflective process. But we believe it is time to directly reject the narrative of Basic Writing and the core assumptions embedded into it since 1969.

Notes

1. Here we sometimes use "origin myth" to refer to Shaughnessy's specific Basic Writing narrative, offered in similar forms from 1971 to 1978. While the Basic Writing story has grown larger and more complex, we believe that core and troubling elements of the original Basic Writing narrative have not changed since 1975—and cannot change within this paradigm.
2. Here (with gratitude to Conor Tómas Reed) we capitalize "Black" and "Brown" as chosen formal designations by people of African, Caribbean, Indigenous, and Latin American descent whose self-naming was part of their emancipation, while we lower-case "white" to signal that this umbrella term homogeneously designates people of European descent (but also other ethnicities at different periods of political racialization in U.S. history).
3. While we write together here in third-person (and mostly white English) through most of this article, Alexis wanted to reflect here her sense of

alienation as she entered a white college. The language used here reflects Alexis' AAVE as a first-year college student.

4. We sometimes refer to predominantly white colleges/institutions (or PWIs). But prior to the 1960s, with the notable exception of Oberlin, we think it is more accurate to call them white colleges.
5. While the facts in *Brown* involved public schools, it also invalidated apartheid public college systems. In 1956, *Brown* was further extended to invalidate all other apartheid systems (Browder v Gale). But *Brown* was only partially extended (after a seventeen year delay) to those "de facto" northern segregated school systems which showed evidence of "segregative intent" in 1973 (Keyes v. Denver; Molloy, "Myopia" 318-20).
6. While we discuss some aspects of the SEEK desegregation program here, a full description of the 1960s City College SEEK model, its writing program, and its remarkable early writing faculty are far beyond our possible scope. But a growing body of recovery scholarship over the last decade has recovered and preserved many of the voices of 1960s and 1970s CUNY SEEK and other students, teachers, and administrators. Recovered primary sources and SEEK voices include: a twenty-item collection within the *CUNY Digital History Archive* ("SEEK's Fight") which links to YouTube oral histories by Allen Ballard, Francee Covington, Marvina White, and Eugenia Wiltshire; Bambara "Lost & Found," "Sections," "Something"; Berger "1968-1969"; Christian. Secondary sources include Holmes; Reed; Brown; Molloy, "Myopia" 60-217, "Human Beings, "SEEK's Fight." Alexis, Sean, and Conor Tómas Reed have also recovered other 1970s CUNY student and teacher voices (Berardi, Simms and Adams Simms, Skerdal, Villamanga, Zanderer).
7. (CCNY, "1969-70" 65; Molloy "Myopia" 168-173). We use the 1969-70 Bulletin to count faculty as the CCNY Bulletin faculty lists always looked back to the preceding year. It is possible that more lecturers (like David Henderson and June Jordan) were teaching but not listed (CCNY, "1970-71" 80).
8. (Boxhill 1). This 12-page document was not preserved with the surviving minutes. But the professors edited and discussed its contents in some detail during the meeting and the 1969-70 CCNY Bulletin corresponds closely to their discussions and proposed edits. We rely on the minutes and bulletin here.
9. The other "Department" courses were a sequence of five ELL courses collectively titled "Grammatical Principles and Writing." The students

likely to be prescribed into these courses were listed in the 1969-70 Bulletin as "those for whom English is a second language" (68).

10. This is Alexis's raw reflection on what happened the day she opened up to writing center colleagues about her experiences. The register here is different from her earlier code-meshing example. Studying concepts including intersectionality and microaggressions has empowered Alexis and affected her language uses in different situations. She is a dynamic human being and the way she speaks and communicates is not monolithic.

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[Note: Below, we abbreviate the Archives and Special Collections, Morris Raphael Cohen Library, CCNY. New York, NY, down to "CCNY Archives" for brevity. Other archives are more formally listed. In all cases, we use full URLs so that links are viable.]

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Gatekeeping by Design: The Use of an Exit Exam as a "Boss Text" in a Basic Writing Course

Stacy Wittstock

ABSTRACT: This article investigates a Basic Writing program shared between a University of California campus and a local community college in which the curriculum, assessment practices, and larger programmatic structures were heavily influenced by an exit exam modeled after the UC system's Analytical Writing Placement Exam (AWPE). Drawing from scholarship on assessment ecologies and critical systems thinking, I analyze data from an institutional ethnography, including interviews with faculty and administrators and institutional documents. My analysis centers on how institutional and administrative thinking about students and *faculty established the AWPE as the dominant force within the program, creating friction between stakeholders as perspectives on the program's purpose diverged. This research has implications for the challenges presented by regressive institutional cultures of writing for WPAs and researchers working toward reform in Basic Writing programs across higher education.*

KEYWORDS: Basic Writing; basic writers; community college faculty; critical systems thinking; ecological models; exit exams; institutional ethnography; writing programs

For the last several decades, thousands of students admitted into the University of California system each year have taken the Analytical Writing Placement Exam (AWPE) as one of their first actions as an admitted student. The AWPE is one of several ways students have satisfied the system's Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR), historically known as "Subject A." In her book about Subject A's history, Jane Stanley notes that the requirement has existed since the University of California's establishment in 1869 and argues that "the. . . ability to label a group of students 'remedial' is a powerful rhetorical tool" (6) that has long served the UC's desire to distinguish itself as one of the preeminent public colleges in the US. In 1919, Subject A was shifted from an admissions requirement to a prerequisite for enrollment in

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courses requiring "substantial writing" (UCOP, "The Requirement"), with failure to meet the requirement within one year of admission resulting in potential disenrollment (University of California Academic Senate). For students who matriculate to a UC campus without having fulfilled the ELWR, satisfying the requirement typically involves passing a developmental writing course. This article examines a case study of one such course, Workload 99 (WLD 99), at the campus of UC Sierra.[1] In 1993, due to ongoing budget crises in the UC system, instruction for WLD 99 courses was outsourced to a local community college. Where previously students could pass a Subject A course in the English Department with a C or higher to fulfill the requirement, concerns from institutional stakeholders at UC Sierra over whether moving instruction to a community college would lower standards led to the creation of an additional condition: that WLD 99 students not just pass the course, but also pass an independently-graded, AWPE-style final exit exam for the course.

UC Sierra is not unique in this; archives of Basic Writing scholarship suggest that exit assessments are relatively common (e.g., Hake; Meeker; Molloy, "Diving In"; Sullivan). In recent years, scholarship in Writing Studies has called attention to the negative impact of supposedly colorblind (Davila) standards-based writing assessments that wield the hammer of Standardized Edited American English (SEAE) against students of color and students from marginalized language backgrounds (e.g., Baker-Bell et al.; Inoue and Poe). A dearth of recent research on the role that timed writing and exit exams currently play in curriculum and practices within writing classrooms and programs suggests that, at least in terms of Writing Studies literature, much of the field has moved on from timed writing. However, the distributed nature of college writing instruction across the US makes it difficult for Writing Studies researchers to account for the diversity of structures, programs, and institutions in which writing is taught and assessed, as well as the range of disciplinary backgrounds and familiarity with Writing Studies literature of those in charge of designing and leading such instruction. To what extent, then, does this perception of moving on within the literature of the field reflect the reality on the ground? In what ways might timed, high-stakes writing exams still drive curriculum and instruction in writing programs and classrooms in institutions across the country? If our goal is for scholarship on equitable and just writing assessment to shape curriculum and instructional practices, more research on the current landscape of assessment in classrooms, writing programs, and institutions is needed.

In this study, I investigate the role of the AWPE in WLD 99 courses. This article draws from the concept of "boss texts" in institutional ethnography (Griffith and Smith; LaFrance *Institutional Ethnography*) as well as scholarship on critical systems thinking (Flood; Melzer; Midgley) and assessment ecologies (Reiff et al.; Inoue; Molloy, "Human Beings") to examine how the AWPE shaped and standardized curriculum in WLD 99 courses, restricting teacher agency and ultimately limiting student success. Through interviews with ten faculty and two administrators, as well as analysis of historical documents, I explore the institutional, programmatic, and pedagogical structures that established the AWPE as the dominant force in WLD 99. I examine how institutional and administrative thinking about both students *and* faculty shaped programmatic investment in the AWPE and created friction between stakeholders as their perceptions of the purpose of the course diverged. I highlight the importance of drawing from the experiences and perspectives of faculty, who are in a unique position to demonstrate how larger programmatic and institutional constructs impact their everyday work of teaching. This case study further illuminates the relationship between harmful assessment ecologies and the institutional devaluing of faculty and students throughout higher education and demonstrates the danger of considering programmatic microstructures like curriculum and pedagogical practices in isolation from institutional macrostructures that shape them. In order for reform of harmful assessment ecologies in developmental writing programs to succeed, WPAs must look beyond change on the programmatic level and work to interrogate, address, and dismantle the regressive institutional ideologies and structures underpinning such ecologies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sean Molloy traced the advent of a high-stakes exit exam for Basic Writing at City College, CUNY, starting in the 1970s, critiquing the role writing program administrator Mina Shaughnessy played in its establishment, from her initial rejection to her eventual embrace of such assessments as supposed valid measures of student's proficiency in writing ("Diving In"). In the ensuing decades, exit exams spread throughout the CUNY system (Chadwick; McBeth) and on to colleges and universities across the country (Meeker; Hake), often featuring in traditionally "remedial" courses which offered zero credit but were still required for the students placed into them. Molloy et al. demonstrate how conscious and unconscious racism informed the regressive institutional structures shaping what they call "legacy Basic

Writing programs," including the common implementation of draconian timed assessments for placement and course-exit, the bureaucratic hurdles that limit reform efforts in these programs, and the enduring impact that being labeled "basic" can have on students.

Attention from researchers on exit exams and the roles that they play in curriculum and classroom practices has largely waned in recent years; a phenomenon that some have attributed in part to researchers in the field moving on to models like portfolio assessment (Yancey; Molloy, "Human Beings"). Mentions of exit exams are more common in articles focusing on two-year colleges (e.g., Anderst et al.; Avni and Finn; Doran; Patthey-Chavez et al.). A TYCA survey of two-year college writing programs found that while most of the institutions surveyed did not use an exit assessment, many respondents suggested they were interested in developing one (Sullivan). What remains unclear is how common exit exams are in Basic Writing programs today and what influence they might have on the curriculum and assessment practices of the programs in which they exist. By addressing this gap in the research on exit exams within Basic Writing programs, researchers can better understand the challenges WPAs may face when developing and integrating more equitable assessment models.

Considerable history of scholarship in a variety of fields exists exploring the notion that an assessment may influence instruction. J. Charles Alderson and Dianne Wall defined the concept of washback as the notion that "testing influences teaching" (115) and note that scholarship at the time posited that washback may cause instructors and students to take actions they might not otherwise if not for the presence of a test. Washback has been explored extensively in research on language testing (Cheng et al.), ESL and EFL courses (Hamp-Lyons), and test preparation courses taught internationally (Green; Sun). It has also been the subject of considerable research in K-12 education scholarship (Au, "High Stakes Testing"; Au, "New Taylorism"; Dappen et al.), particularly in the wake of policies like No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top (Crawford; Hursh; Menken; Mertler). Writing Studies scholars have discussed the potential impacts of increased K-12 accountability testing (Bernstein), standardized testing and exit exams (Otte), and the Common Core State Standards (Addison) on curriculum and instructional practices in college writing classrooms.

Ecological models have gained prominence in Writing Studies literature in recent decades as scholars have considered the ways that institutional and programmatic structures designed to uphold White supremacy enforce White language practices like Standardized Edited American English (SEAE)

in writing curriculum and pedagogical practices. Linking to concepts like consequential validity, or the potential social consequences of an assessment (AERA, APA, and NCME), ecological models consider how assessment practices based in SEAE disproportionately impact students along race, language, and class lines. Mary Jo Reiff et al. note that approaching writing programs through an ecological lens illuminates the ways that "discourses, rhetors, texts, utterances, and material (and immaterial) objects form. . . networks of dynamic interaction" (6). Molloy connects ecological assessment to sociocultural validity in his analysis of how CUNY's SEEK program in the 1960s became a model for socially just and fair Basic Writing programs ("Human Beings"). Asao Inoue theorizes antiracist writing assessment ecologies that might account for interrelations between environments, individuals, and objects "without denying or eliding linguistic, cultural, or racial diversity, and the politics inherent in all uneven social formations" (77).

Related to ecological models is critical systems thinking (CST). In his article applying systems thinking theories to writing program administration and reform, Dan Melzer described systems thinking as a methodological process that considers the relationship between a system and "suprasystems" that shape and influence it. CST moves beyond traditional systems thinking by considering the social and historical conditions, particularly in regards to race, class, and gender, that give rise to inequities embedded in systems (Flood; Melzer; Midgley). CST makes explicit the ideologies of individuals within a system as well as those reinscribed by the system itself. In a Writing Studies context, such thinking recognizes that all writing programs, especially those invested in remedial constructs like WLD 99, "operate from ideologies," which "become normalized and go unchallenged as the system grows more and more rigid" (Melzer 92). CST emphasizes that individuals operate in ways that are bolstered by the structures and embedded ideologies of the systems in which they work, so that understanding corruption in programs like WLD 99 involves looking beyond the actions of individuals to larger structures reinforcing systemic oppression. By examining WLD 99 using CST and ecological models, I uncover the ways that institutional structures, infused with deficit ideologies toward faculty and students, shaped harmful curriculum and assessment practices in the program.

METHODS

Methodological Framework

To examine the WLD 99 program through the lenses of ecological models and critical systems thinking, I used the methodological framework of institutional ethnography (IE). IE is a feminist, social justice-oriented methodology that aims to improve equity in workplaces by examining how institutional structures, practices, and norms both shape and are shaped the everyday experiences, perceptions, and positionalities of the individuals within those institutions (Smith, *Sociology for People*; LaFrance and Nicolas). In IE research, texts and documents within an organization are seen as "crystallized social relations" (Campbell and Gregor 79). IE researchers analyze textual hierarchies within institutions to understand how "boss texts" (Griffith and Smith) at the top of the hierarchy regulate other subordinate texts, which then dictate the everyday actions and procedures of individual workers. Michelle LaFrance emphasizes the ways in which boss texts like program learning outcomes reify the ideas, values, languages, rhetorical frameworks, and ideal practices that mediate and shape the work of writing programs (*Institutional Ethnography*).

Institutional ethnography is a relatively new methodology in Writing Studies research. A 2012 article from Michelle LaFrance and Melissa Nicolas outlined IE as a framework for studying writing programs, including how individuals' differing standpoints might impact how they experience practices and activities. LaFrance extended this in a 2016 study of divergence in how information literacy was negotiated and enacted by WPAs, writing faculty, and library faculty ("Information Literacy"). Michelle Miley expanded IE into writing center research ("Looking Up"; "Mapping Boundedness") and the methodology featured in two panels in the 2021 CCCC convention program (Cox et al.; Workman et al.). While IE frameworks have not yet been widely used to study Basic Writing programs, I found the focus on the relationships between boss texts, course practices, institutional structures, notions of writing and writers, and individuals' positionalities helped expose larger systems and institutional perspectives that were foundational to the assessment ecology within WLD 99 and that might otherwise have been intangible.

Institutional and Programmatic Context

UC Sierra is a Research I institution located in Northern California with a little over 40,000 total enrollment (UC Sierra Data, "At a Glance"). The institution serves a diverse student population, with over 75% of degree-seeking undergraduate students identifying as a race or ethnicity other than White (UC Sierra Data, "Common Data"). About 29% identify as an underrepresented minority, 40% identify as first-generation, and about 14% are international students (UC Sierra Data, "At a Glance"). From 1993 to 2021, the WLD 99 program operated through a partnership between UC Sierra and Grasslands Community College (GCC). The program was administered jointly by Anita, UC Sierra's director of the Entry Level Writing Requirement (née Subject A) since 1983, and Joseph, the dean of GCC's satellite campus. Hiring and staffing of faculty was overseen by GCC, while curriculum and administration of the final AWPE was controlled by UC Sierra. There were three versions of WLD courses: WLD 99O for students in the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), WLD 99L for students needing additional English language support, and WLD 99A for all other students.

The UC system's Analytical Writing Placement Exam (AWPE) is one of several ways students can complete the system-wide Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR), known as Subject A until 1986. The AWPE is a timed, single-response, holistically-scored essay exam in which students are given a passage of writing to read and respond to within two hours. Passages are largely pulled from Western-centric popular non-fiction and newspaper editorials like *The New Yorker*. The exam is scored on a six-point rubric (UCOP, "Examination Process") by two readers, whose scores are then combined into a composite score. A composite score of eight or above passes while a six or below fails. The rubric can be roughly divided into two main concerns: 1) the clarity of students' ideas and incorporation of evidence from the passage, and 2) the students' language control in terms of SEAE. Since it was originally designed in 1986, the AWPE has remained essentially unchanged in its prompt, administration, and scoring, as evidenced by a sample examination from 1987 (UCOP, "Sample Examinations").

Historically, the final for Subject A courses across the UC system was the Subject A exam, including in UC Sierra's "English A" prior to the course being outsourced and renamed WLD 99 in 1993. For continuity and to ensure that instructional standards in WLD 99 would meet those previously established in English A, UC Sierra administrators charged Anita with replicating English A's original curricular ecology in WLD 99, including the content,

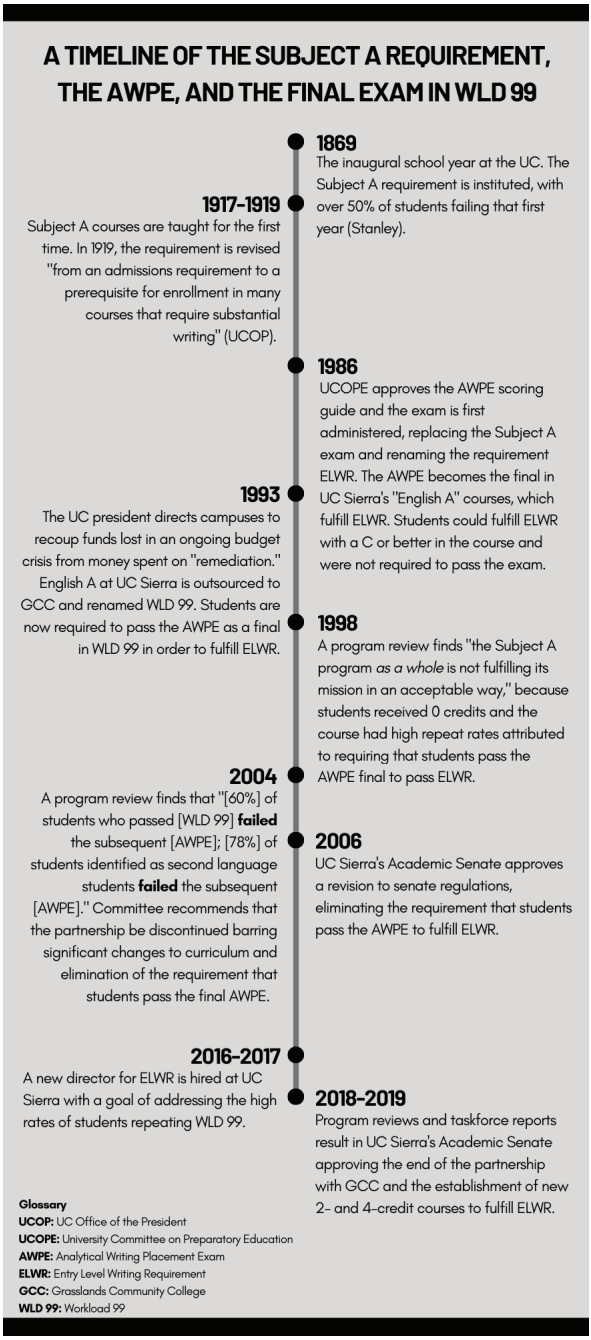

Figure 1. A timeline of the Subject A requirement, the AWPE, and the final exam in WLD 99

textbooks, assignments, assessment practices, rubrics, and final exam based on the AWPE. Under Anita's direction, from 1993 until 2017, the final exit exam in WLD 99 courses was required to be a previously-proctored AWPE prompt and was scored using the same rubric through a group grading process where faculty did not assess their own students' exams. Until 2006, passing the AWPE final exam alone determined ELWR satisfaction for students in WLD 99. Students who thrived in WLD 99 but failed the final AWPE exam failed the course. Figure 1 displays a brief timeline of the UC system's Subject A requirement (now called ELWR) and AWPE, as well as the final exam in WLD 99 at UC Sierra.

Data Collection

Participants

Ten faculty members and two administrators were interviewed for this IRB-approved study in the spring of 2019. Recruitment occurred through email invitations sent out to faculty who had taught a WLD 99 course within the last two years as well as two former program administrators. Participants were asked to complete a short questionnaire prior to their interview to establish background information related to their academic and professional history and their teaching experience in WLD 99 and in writing courses more generally. Instruction for WLD 99 courses was historically carried out by adjunct instructors from GCC; in Fall 2017 93.75% of WLD 99 faculty were part-time adjuncts contracted on a quarterly basis. At the time of the interviews, seven of the ten faculty worked exclusively as part-time adjuncts at Grasslands Community College. Of the other three faculty, two were full-time lecturers in the writing program at UC Sierra and the third was a full-time instructor in UC Sierra's intensive English program. Administrator participants included Anita, the director of Subject A, ELWR, and WLD 99 from 1983 until she retired in 2016 and Joseph, the dean of GCC's satellite campus from 2006 until his retirement in 2018. Participants had a wide range of experience teaching writing and in working for the WLD program, and most had taught all three versions of WLD courses.

Research Questions

The current analysis was part of a larger study investigating participants' perceptions and experiences within the WLD 99 program and with

ongoing institutional, programmatic, curricular, and pedagogical changes. Research questions for the current analysis included:

- What institutional, programmatic, and pedagogical structures shaped WLD 99 curricula?
- How did participants perceive of the goals and purposes of WLD 99 courses?
- What role did disciplinary, professional, and/or institutional identity play in the structure of the WLD 99 program and how participants enacted its curricula?
- What tensions or alignments existed between WLD 99 faculty, administrators, and institutions?

Interviews

In alignment with institutional ethnography's resistance to promoting "reified or static understandings of the people, events, or sites studied" (LaFrance, *Institutional Ethnography* 5), data for this study comprised semi-structured qualitative interviews with twelve participants to best allow for individuals to share their own stories about their experiences within WLD 99. All interviews were completed between February and June of 2019 using an interview protocol designed to elicit answers related to three main areas linked to the research questions (see table 1). Interview protocols for both faculty and administrators can be found in Appendices A and B.

Table 1. Areas of inquiry in the interview protocols

Institutional and community concerns in WLD 99	**Goals, purposes, and perceptions of WLD 99**	**Ongoing programmatic changes within WLD 99**
Participants' experiences with workplace labor conditions and their sense of community within the WLD 99 program.	Participants' sense of the goals and purposes of WLD 99 and their perceptions of WLD 99 students.	Participants' perceptions of ongoing changes to curriculum and assessment practices in WLD 99.

Document and Artifact Collection

Institutional and programmatic documents and artifacts were collected to provide additional contextual information for individuals, events, and concepts identified in the interviews. These documents were compiled from archives digitized during a 2018 program review. Archival materials included the AWPE rubric and related information and materials located on the UC Office of the President's website, as well as WLD 99 programmatic documents related to curriculum and assessment, such as program-specific rubrics, grading guidelines, curriculum outlines, and course policies. Other documents analyzed included official documentation such as mission statements, academic senate minutes related to policies and policy changes, two external program reviews completed in 1998 and 2004 respectively, an internal program review completed in 2018, and other miscellaneous correspondences such as memos, emails, and letters between various stakeholders.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved listening to the audio recordings and reading through the transcribed interviews in MAXQDA while composing analytic memos that focused on documenting initial observations, preliminary open codes, and frequently used words and phrases. During open coding, I chose several methods outlined in Johnny Saldaña's *Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. These methods included but were not limited to descriptive coding, concept coding, emotion coding, and values coding. Open codes were then refined through a process of rereading each analytic memo and transcript; confirming, collapsing, or separating each open code into larger categories; writing out definitions with criteria for inclusion or exclusion; and selecting examples that exemplified the code (see Appendix C). The process of refining the open codes also allowed me to select for further analysis relevant institutional and programmatic documents and artifacts; these documents and artifacts were then analyzed using the codes developed from the open coding of the interviews.

FINDINGS

Analysis reveals that the AWPE influenced almost all aspects of WLD 99 curriculum and administration—in many ways, the AWPE *was* the WLD 99 program. Interviews with faculty indicate that the dominance of the AWPE caused conflict between faculty and administrators. Faculty felt

the curriculum was restrictive and that they were pressured by administrators and peers to fail students, particularly students from non-dominant language backgrounds. As a result, faculty participant Sarah perceived the programmatic culture as "people. . . taking a lot of pride in failing a bunch of students." While most faculty viewed the course as developmental and felt that the emphasis on the final exam negated the progress their students made throughout the term, the institutional priority at UC Sierra of ensuring adequate writing proficiency placed the AWPE at the center of an ecology built around SEAE as defined and afforded by the exam itself—therefore, the exam and its related curriculum and practices functioned as both a method of programmatic control and a way to ameliorate perceived deficits in WLD 99 students and faculty.

Effects of Institutional and Administrative Perspectives on Faculty and Students

After the decision to outsource Subject A courses had been made, a primary concern of UC Sierra administrators was ensuring that the Subject A standards, and therefore the standards of the UC itself, would be maintained in WLD 99 courses. As a member of the committee that had designed the original AWPE in 1986, Anita believed the exam represented the UC system's standards for college writing, noting that "The whole basis for the course came from the university's perspective about what students needed to be able to do at the university, and what measures would help determine if they had those skills." The AWPE also allowed UC Sierra to have the ultimate control over what happened in WLD 99 classrooms given that, as Anita explains, they "could not supervise [GCC] instructors because they did not work for the UC. . . ." In this way, the AWPE boss text became a tool to maintain UC Sierra's control in WLD 99, and in the eyes of the institution, uphold UC system standards for both students *and* faculty.

Faculty participants recognized the institutional fixation on the AWPE. Sharon, a veteran WLD 99 teacher, describes director Anita as "very static, and unchanging" in regards to the AWPE in WLD 99, remarking that Anita "was always wanting to protect the integrity of that exam. . . that's just a mantra she talked about." Joseph, dean at GCC's satellite campus, notes that Anita "was really focused on the AWPE. And as a university representative I trusted her to that." For her own part, Anita appeared conflicted about the role the AWPE had assumed in WLD 99 even as she enforced that role as director, noting that "it's not what the AWPE was ever designed for. It's

really a placement tool, it's just to give campuses additional information, should a particular student have taken it. . . it was never intended to be the whole shebang."

Joseph's sense that the importance placed on the AWPE by Anita was a proxy for UC Sierra's institutional interest was accurate. Similar to Anita's contention about the exam noted above, a 1993 report from the UC Sierra Committee on Preparatory Education recognized the substantial change to graduation requirements requiring the exam represented, noting that "previously the Subject A exam was diagnostic, indicating the level of writing course that the entering freshman student needed." Yet, requiring the exam was seen as the best way to ensure that students would be held to the same rigor in WLD 99 as they presumably had been in English A when it was taught by UC Sierra lecturers. A 2004 program review completed by UC Sierra's academic senate contends that the policy requiring that students pass the exam to satisfy the ELWR was "instituted in order to keep control over the Subject A standard firmly within the university, which alone sets the bar for passing the requirement." Similarly, minutes from a 2006 academic senate meeting state that "Using the AWPE exam in this way and having it graded by both [GCC] and [UC Sierra] faculty was apparently done to attempt to ensure that outsourcing the course would not lead to a reduction in the quality of instruction."

The decision to require the exam meant that fewer students completed the ELWR through WLD 99 on their first try. The 2004 program review contends that "Whereas [90%] of all students passed English A after one quarter of instruction, now substantial numbers of students are required to retake [Workload 99], some three times." In the 2003-2004 academic year, 60% of students who passed the WLD 99 course had failed the subsequent AWPE, with 78% of students designated ESL failing the exam. Joseph expressed skepticism about the validity of the AWPE as an assessment in WLD 99 given that "the pass rate on AWPE tended to be lower, sometimes 20% lower than the pass rate on the course as a whole which indicated that students were doing well on the other stuff." Both program reviews completed in 1998 and 2004 recommended discontinuing the use of the AWPE final exam as a requirement for fulfilling ELWR through WLD 99. Finally, in 2006 UC Sierra's academic senate policy was revised; students could fulfill the requirement by *either* passing a local sitting of the AWPE or by passing a WLD 99 course with a grade of C or better.

The AWPE final exam requirement was borne from UC Sierra administrators' fundamental distrust in both the quality of the two-year college

faculty as well as in the ability of a writing course to determine writing proficiency as accurately as a timed writing exam. Even after the 2006 policy change, UC Sierra administrators continued to express skepticism that passing WLD 99 alone was an appropriate way to satisfy the ELWR. A 2006 letter from UC Sierra's representative on the UC Council of Writing Programs predicted that the policy change would "erode writing proficiency standards" and recommended either the reestablishment of the AWPE as an exit exam or requiring that the final exam represent at least 30% of students' total grade and be assessed by a "normed committee" rather than the course instructor. Despite being tasked with its instruction, WLD 99 faculty were not seen as capable of ensuring that students had adequately met the ELWR standard.

Effects of the AWPE on Professional and Teaching Culture in WLD 99

This negative perception of WLD 99 faculty, in combination with the privileging of the AWPE by Anita and other UC Sierra administrators, created an intentional interlocking relationship between the AWPE final exam and all aspects of WLD 99's professional and teaching culture. The 2006 letter from UC Sierra's representative on the UC Council of Writing Programs recommended that consistency be ensured by standardizing how the exam was integrated, as well as other aspects of curriculum and assessment. This standardization included dictating the type and number of essays assigned (at least eight during a ten-week quarter, with at least two being in-class timed essays), assessment practices (all based on the six-point AWPE rubric), textbooks (specifically designed for and required in WLD 99 courses), and more.

Unsurprisingly, faculty participants largely describe the curriculum as restrictive. Faculty participant Sarah, who had taught WLD 99 for a year at the time of this study, describes feeling "somewhat smothered and very, very much micromanaged in the sense that you only have this one type of assignment. Here's how you're going to go about it. Here's how you're going to grade, here's how much your final is going to be worth. You must have two midterms." Words like "strict," "restrictive," "rigid," or "micromanaged" were used by participants to describe the curriculum, with many expressing that there was little autonomy to make even minor changes, such as choosing a different textbook. While some faculty felt there was a little flexibility with the proportion of assignments that had to be timed, in-class exams, most felt compelled to assign more to prepare students for the AWPE final. Sharon reported stressing about how to fit the required eight essays into a

ten-week long course and lamented that this structure prevented her from spending much time on writing process strategies. Jessica, who also taught in UC Sierra's intensive English program, described doing what she could to innovate within the prescribed curriculum. Eventually, she quietly developed her own AWPE-style prompts because she felt those available from the state-wide exam were "dated," "out of touch," and culturally inaccessible. Because the AWPE was the dominant genre students engaged with, the AWPE rubric played a key role as a boss text guiding how both in-class and out-of-class essays were assessed. The official six-point AWPE rubric (UCOP, "Examination Process") was required for final exam assessment and many faculty reported using it for all essays.

In addition to its restrictive nature, the WLD 99 curriculum had also remained essentially unchanged since long before the 1993 outsourcing. Faculty participant Lynn, who had taught English A at UC Sierra in the 1980s, was surprised to see how little the course changed when she returned to teach WLD 99 several decades later: "I was astonished to come back and see the same textbooks. . . same process and the same final exam. And I thought 'Oh my gosh.' I've taught in so many different programs and schools and never have I seen a program where there's just no evolution or change." Many instructors had also been teaching in the program for a decade or longer and had likely become acclimatized to its restrictive curriculum over time, acting as enforcers of standardization in faculty meetings and final exam scoring sessions. In reality, given the administrative investment in the AWPE as the standard for ELWR fulfillment, there was little reason for the curriculum to evolve.

The use of the AWPE as both the foundation for the course and the final exam resulted in what several participants describe as a culture of failure within the program—one in which, as program reviews from 1998, 2004, and 2018 note, students routinely failed and repeated the course two or three times. While washback from the AWPE itself was likely an important factor in the development of this culture, negative attitudes toward WLD 99 students were fortified within the assessment ecology of WLD 99 through documents and email communications from administrators, which were then reinforced by peers in meetings and the group grading structure for the final. It is important to note that the deficit mindsets embedded within the WLD 99 program towards developmental writing students, the majority of whom are first-generation students, students of color, and students from non-dominant language backgrounds, mirrored similar perspectives held throughout the UC system (Stanley), as well as institutions, writing pro-

grams, WPAs, and faculty across the US (e.g., Hull et al.; Rose, "Re-Mediate", "Rethinking"; Shor).

Evidence of these deficit perspectives can be found in WLD 99 documents developed to guide assessment of students' writing. An undated document titled "On Grading [WLD 99]: Guidelines and Suggestions," developed by Anita and the GCC administrators, explains how faculty should approach grading students' work:

> Students take [WLD 99] because they were unable to demonstrate adequate/passing basic writing skills on at least one of several different tests, including the AWPE; it thus makes sense that your students are likely to start out with grades in the D range. . . . Given the above, **it's uncommon to see a B essay in the first few weeks of the quarter**—and even more unusual to see an A essay. This means, of course, that **course grades in the A range are exceedingly rare**. Students who write well enough to earn these grades would likely have satisfied the ELWR by one of the other means possible and would not be held for [WLD 99]. [emphasis original]

As this document indicates, it was expected that students would perform poorly early on and that they would continue to underperform in comparison to their non-WLD 99 peers, who were assumed to be more proficient and adequately prepared. The rhetorically forceful formatting, including bolding some phrases and underlining others, reveals the emphasis placed on aligning grading with program expectations. Jessica remembers that when she first started teaching WLD 99, "The first email I got was like, 'No one should have higher than a C average on your first essay'. . . like the message was just 'they are not college ready'. . . there was sort of an underlying pressure to not pass students, especially non-native speakers." Given that the predominant image of a WLD 99 student in this grading document is one of under-preparation and underperformance, it is unsurprising that WLD 99 was described colloquially as "a three-quarter course" as it was assumed that students would likely need to repeat the course multiple times to pass ELWR.

While the purported purpose of this document was to standardize how faculty approached grading, the emphasis on low grades early in the term may have also primed faculty to be hyper critical. Jessica comments that during the group grading sessions for the final exam "it felt like everybody was grading down." Exams were scored by two different scorers and instructors were not allowed to grade their own students' exams. Faculty

were then obligated to accept their peers' scores and (after the 2006 policy change) highly encouraged to ensure that if a student failed the final exam, they would also fail and repeat the course. Joseph, dean of GCC's satellite campus, observed that the group grading process "had an interesting dynamic to it. In some ways it could make people be more conservative." Several faculty also reported finding their peers to be harsher graders than they felt was either warranted or fair. Emily, a lecturer in UC Sierra's writing program who also taught WLD 99, felt that she was more lenient than her peers: "I felt like they were flunking a lot of my students who really didn't need Workload again. . . . I had a couple of students who were getting like B pluses and A minuses, up until they took the final exam. . . . And then they failed the final exam, so I was required to somehow fail them in the course."

Several faculty felt that their peers were particularly strict when assessing students from non-dominant language backgrounds—unsurprising given the AWPE rubric's emphasis on SEAE. Henry, who had taught EFL courses abroad, felt that the program had "engendered a culture of fear, especially in our ESL students, many of whom told me that. . . coming to [UC Sierra], they entered a culture of, really, terror. Some of them used the word terror, right?" Krystal, whose background was in TESOL, commented "the biggest number of ESL students I ever had pass that exam at any point was eight, I have a class of eighteen." Krystal maintained that timed writing was especially unfair for English learners and felt this explained the high rates of failure for these students on the final exam. Henry described what he called "bureaucratic xenophobia" in WLD 99, which manifested in faculty and administrators lacking patience for students still acquiring academic English.

Several faculty identified program-wide emails as a source of pressure. Sharon noted that through email, administrators would provide faculty with decontextualized data about pass rates while scolding them for passing students who had failed the final: "[Joseph, dean of GCCs satellite campus] would. . . release the data. . . there was that disparity, and he was always complaining. 'Only 35% passed the final, but yet 75% are passing the class.'" Emily reported feeling personally targeted by these emails: "I would look at what they were doing in Workload and I would say, I can't flunk these students. It makes no sense to flunk them, so I'd pass them, and then I'd get these emails." Sarah believed the "assumption" conveyed through emails and other communications was that most students would fail, commenting that "a lot of times I felt that was the instruction." Jessica concurred: "That was sort of the message. . . students shouldn't pass on their first try basically." Neither Joseph nor Anita mentioned these emails in their interviews, signal-

ing a significant divergence in experiences between the two groups. When I asked Joseph whether there was concern at UC Sierra about mismatch in pass rates on the exam and in the course, he replied "From [UC Sierra] in general I didn't get that."

Not all faculty reported experiencing programmatic pressure to fail students, nor were they all frustrated with policies related to the final exam. Renata, a long-time lecturer in UC Sierra's writing program and WLD 99 instructor, attributed the group grading process to ensuring objective grading: "my students are getting graded on the merits or whatever is on that piece of paper, and not just whether I feel sorry for them." Renata and other faculty also viewed timed-writing as an important skill for students to practice—Eric notes that "If we're trying to be equitable to every student. . . that would be a beneficial skill to them, to be under pressure. . . ." Joan, who had joined the WLD 99 program after retiring from a different program at UC Sierra, associated the group grading sessions with community building for WLD 99 faculty: "We kind of got to know how we were looking at things. . . it was good pedagogically, and it was good to create community, and it happened three times a year." Similarly, Renata felt that "it was really nice being able to be with each other for that all day grade at the end of every term to build that community. . . ." and Eric noted that "I think that really binds you together and to do that consistently and to be able to have the face-time with people and sit shoulder-to-shoulder with them and not just for a meeting." Interestingly, these perspectives still demonstrate the ways in which the AWPE final exam was the center of WLD 99 culture, even shaping how faculty experienced workplace community with peers.

Impact of the AWPE on Participants' Conceptions of Purpose of WLD 99

The AWPE as a boss text controlling WLD 99 curriculum and instruction caused friction rooted in conflicting conceptions of the purposes of WLD 99 courses between the institution, program administrators, and faculty. When I asked Anita to describe WLD 99 courses, she responded: "Even though it was traditionally considered a remedial course, it was not truly remedial, it was a course that taught university level materials with the idea of preparing them well." But for an institution invested in preserving its elite status, the idea that some students admitted to UC Sierra might need additional preparation for college writing meant that the focus of such courses must, like most remedial courses, be on guaranteeing students' proficiency,

rather than a space for learning and development. For UC Sierra, the AWPE final exit exam became a necessary gatekeeper, ensuring students deemed underprepared could not continue unless they could prove that they had first obtained the basic skills taught in WLD 99. In keeping with the original goal of the Subject A requirement (Stanley), the final exam allowed UC Sierra to maintain the elite status and standards of the UC system; in this way, given that the ELWR was an enrollment and not an admissions requirement, the AWPE in WLD 99 became a tool for weeding out those who, in the institution's perspective, may have been admitted in error.

Conversely, when I asked faculty participants about their perception of the purpose of WLD 99, most described the course as an opportunity for students to practice and develop conventions of college reading and writing. Renata described the course as practice with reading and using feedback to revise writing. Sharon's goal for students was to develop their knowledge of writing process strategies. Lynn wanted to provide students with "really broad experiences in reading lots of different texts. That's probably the biggest contribution I can make is becoming a good academic reader." For Jessica, her "personal purpose for the class is to help them build their confidence in writing and be able to target a specific task." Emily felt that "I never saw my students as needing to get a B or an A to pass the class. They just needed to get a C. . . They're still trying to figure this stuff out."

DISCUSSION

The concept of boss texts in institutional ethnography provides a lens through which to understand the restrictive nature of WLD 99's assessment ecology. Dorothy E. Smith notes that subordinate texts within an intertextual hierarchy must be recognizable as fitting within the procedural frame established by a boss text ("Incorporating Texts"). Given that the AWPE was the boss text of WLD 99, all other texts within that intertextual system—the essays assigned both in- and out-of-class, the textbooks, the rubrics, and even students' grades themselves—had to be recognizable within the AWPE framework. Examining the AWPE's role as a boss text illuminates how, programmatically, the centrality of the exam reified SEAE as the only acceptable dialect within WLD 99, enabling practices that disparately impacted first-generation students, students of color, and students whose home languages or dialects did not conform to SEAE.

In his article on critical systems thinking, Melzer urges WPAs to "look beyond individual actors within the system" and "focus on systemic oppres-

sion and its relation to the conceptual model that underlies the system and that the system normalizes" (92). An undated mission statement describes the purpose of the WLD 99 program as helping students "gain the writing skills they need to succeed at the University." In reality, WLD 99 courses functioned as test preparation classes as opposed to developmental writing courses, with the AWPE consuming all other educational considerations. UC Sierra's institutional desire to maintain the elite standards of the UC in WLD 99 by rigidly enforcing the AWPE created a culture a failure within the program that had a devastating effect on the students held for WLD 99 and negatively impacted faculty in the program as well. WLD 99 faculty exuded an almost palpable sense of frustration in our conversations, be it with the curriculum itself, with program administrators, or with their own peers. WLD 99's problematic assessment ecology was further exacerbated by the cross-institutional structure in which the program and its students were relegated outside the UC to be taught by faculty whose precarious positions offered them little room to advocate for themselves or their students. Ultimately, while faculty and program administrators like Anita and Joseph may be the easiest targets for criticism, as Melzer argues, institutional structures and systems are powerful influences that create conditions for systemic inequities to thrive.

One of those broader systemic inequities at play within WLD 99 was the allegiance to Standardized Edited American English (SEAE) as the primary measure of students' writing. Stanley contends that a periodic, recurring desire among some higher administrators in the UC system to use Subject A as an admissions requirement often coincided with periods of increased diversification along race, language, and class lines in California. The AWPE was also central to how students were targeted for instruction in WLD 99, given that most students placed into WLD 99 by either failing the state-wide AWPE, because they were unable to take the exam due to living out-of-state or internationally, or because they had not been able to fulfill the requirement through other means.[2] Research has demonstrated that writing placement processes have disparate impacts on first-generation students, students of color, and students from non-dominant language backgrounds, resulting in disproportionately high numbers of these students being placed in developmental coursework (Henson and Hern; Inoue; Nastal). Faculty participants largely reported that students from non-dominant language backgrounds experienced higher rates of failure on the final exam in WLD 99. The AWPE rubric and other programmatic assessment tools heavily emphasized elements of SEAE, which were reenforced by the group grading process and

the rigid and unchanging curriculum. In this sense, students who struggled with SEAE were specifically targeted by the AWPE for placement in WLD 99 and then held until they either demonstrated proficiency according to its standards or were dismissed.

The use of the AWPE in WLD 99 underscores the importance of resisting the view that assessment instruments and practices are neutral or colorblind (Davila; Haertel and Pullin; Inoue and Poe; Toth et al.) and demonstrates how institutional structures can enable deficit and racist ideologies to be embedded in writing assessment ecologies (Inoue; Molloy, "Human Beings"). The repetitive curriculum of WLD 99, wherein students continually composed essays in the same genre, echoes the types of "remedial" writing curricula Rose asserts are not only limiting, but also fail to actually prepare students ("Re-mediate"). WLD 99 also illustrates the persistence of deficit ideologies associated with students deemed underprepared, particularly when those students come from communities of color and other non-dominant groups (e.g., Guttiérez et al.; Hull et al.; Rose, "Rethinking").

LaFrance theorizes that boss texts can "regulate—and often standardize—practice, mediating idiosyncrasies and variability in local settings" (*Institutional Ethnography*, 43). In WLD 99, the AWPE was used to regulate and standardize not only the curriculum and its related materials, but also the practices of the faculty teaching the course. What it could not do, however, was meaningfully shift how faculty in the program understood their purpose as teachers or their individual goals for students, even as they often felt powerless to act on those perspectives. While UC Sierra administrators may have viewed WLD 99 as a necessary gatekeeper ensuring the standards of the university were being upheld, the folks on the ground in WLD 99, including faculty and program administrators like Anita and Joseph, continued to view the purpose of the class as developmental and their role as teachers to help students cultivate the skills needed to be successful in college writing.

RECOMMENDATIONS: ANALYZING SYSTEMS FOR STRUCTURAL CHANGE

The results of this study suggest a key question facing Writing Studies researchers, WPAs, and those working toward reform in "legacy Basic Writing programs" (Molloy et al.) like WLD 99: How does a writing program work toward change when the institutional culture of writing is rigid and regressive? The recommendations below focus on bridging the microstructures of

curriculum and pedagogy with macrostructures like institutional ideologies and directions in Writing Studies research:

- *Address institutional systems shaping curriculum and practices.* Reform in Basic Writing should focus on addressing entrenched institutional structures and ideologies shaping curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy. This study reinforces Melzer's recommendation that WPAs "work for change at the systems level rather than tinkering with an isolated course, program, or department. . . " (90). The extent to which the AWPE was embedded in the curricular structure and culture in WLD 99 meant that simply changing or even removing the exam would not have been enough to fully address the impact of the deficit mindsets underpinning its harmful assessment ecology. Research on and reform within such programs should leverage tools like programmatic assessment to dismantle regressive institutional systems and attitudes. The 2022 CCCC revised position statement on writing assessment calls for the use of multiple methods in programmatic assessment (Hensley et al.)—institutional ethnography is an ideal methodology for such work, with its emphasis on engaging a constellation of data sources and voices in revealing how power structures shape everyday work within institutions.
- *Pursue research on the status of timed writing and exit exams in Basic Writing.* More research is needed to determine how common the structures and ways of thinking represented by the AWPE in WLD 99 are in Basic Writing programs across the country. Such research could provide valuable information to the field and inform guidance and support for WPAs working for change in such programs. A survey of WPAs in Basic Writing programs in 2- and 4-year institutions could shed light on how common practices like timed writing and exit exams are, as well as their relationships to curriculum and pedagogical practices in Basic Writing courses.
- *Listen to faculty voices.* This article demonstrates the value of examining curriculum not only through student outcomes or perspectives of WPAs, but also through conversation with faculty. Programmatic assessment (Hensley et al.) as well as reform in Basic Writing programs should draw from perspectives of faculty, who not only have a clearer view of how institutional structures impact everyday writing instruction but are often the ones to experience

> change most acutely. Soliday reminds us that "reform does not consist exclusively of a critique of curriculum but of a struggle to improve the conditions for teaching and learning that shape the everyday experiences of both teachers and students" (104). Researchers and WPAs should tap into the valuable wellspring of faculty voices, and when possible, include faculty in conversations in which they have a direct stake.

States across the US have increasingly been engaging in reform of developmental education. Taking effect in 2018, California's AB 705 overhauled placement of students in developmental writing and math courses in the state's community colleges, resulting in the elimination of many traditionally remedial courses. Though not affected by the law, the landscape of Basic Writing at UC Sierra has changed significantly over the last few years, coinciding with this state-wide shift in perspectives on remediation. In 2017, a new director for the Entry Level Writing Requirement was hired by UC Sierra, shifting the position from Undergraduate Education to the writing program and from a continuing lecturer to an advanced assistant professor. Increasing scrutiny of outcomes in WLD 99 based on the results of a 2018 program review and a taskforce report on closing the preparation gap for UC Sierra students created ideal conditions for the new director to successfully pilot new credit-bearing 2- and 4-unit Basic Writing courses in 2019. Taught by UC Sierra lecturers, curriculum for these new courses focuses on providing students with opportunities to practice and develop their knowledge and confidence in academic literacy tasks common across university discourse communities. Since 2019, the writing program has slowly increased the number of credit-bearing sections offered and as of fall term 2021, WLD 99 has been discontinued. The quiet closure of the WLD 99 program was also followed not long after by the retirement of the state-wide AWPE; the AWPE was offered one final time in May 2022 with increasing costs for administering the exam offered as explanation.

Soliday contends that reform within composition programs cannot occur "without a better institutional understanding both of the complex, long-term role writing instruction plays in providing access to the university and of the ways in which outside forces determine the kinds of curriculums we can institutionalize" (104). While this study illustrates the damaging impact regressive ideologies and structures can have within Basic Writing programs, it also demonstrates the profound dedication to both their students and the craft of teaching that many faculty working in Basic Writing

programs have, despite institutional devaluing of their work. As states and institutions continue to legislate for reform in developmental education, it is crucial that researchers and WPAs both partner with and advocate for faculty, who are simultaneously the most vulnerable to upheaval caused by large-scale change *and* the individuals most often tasked with operationalizing those same changes toward equity for students in their classrooms.

Notes

1. All names and titles of specific individuals, programs, and institutions referenced in this study have been replaced with pseudonyms, except for system-wide elements at the University of California (i.e., the AWPE, Subject A, the ELWR, etc.)
2. Other options include qualifying scores on the SAT, ACT, AP, or IB exams, or earning a C or higher in a transferrable composition course at a community college or university.

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APPENDIX

Please note that for confidentiality, all Appendix documents have been edited to either include pseudonyms or to redact information that could not be obscured with a pseudonym.

Appendix A: Instructor Interview Protocol

1. Institutional/Community Concerns

- In the questionnaire, you indicated that you have been teaching in the Workload 99 program for ___years. I'm interested in learning more about your experiences in teaching for WLD 99 during this time.
  - How did you first get started teaching WLD 99 and what was your impression of that experience at the time?
- Have you experienced any challenges when teaching in the WLD 99 program?
  - If so, can you give me some examples of times when you felt particularly challenged? What made those experiences challenging?
- Do you feel that you have experienced challenges related to your labor conditions when working for the WLD 99 program? If so, in what ways have you felt challenged?
- The WLD 99 community includes a wide variety of instructors and administrators from both GCC and UC Sierra.
  - Do you see yourself as a part of any of these communities? Why or why not?
  - Can you tell me about a time when you felt particularly included in or excluded from the WLD 99 community?
- The Workload 99 program is shared between three different institutions—UC Sierra, GCC, and GCC's satellite campus.
  - Do you feel like you have a relationship with any or all of these institutions?
    - If so, can you tell me your perspective about your relationship to these institutions?
    - If not, can you explain why you don't feel like you have a relationship with these institutions?

2. Goals, Purposes, and Perceptions of WLD 99

- What can you tell me about your personal approach to teaching WLD 99 courses?

    - When you teach a WLD 99 class, what learning goals do you personally have for students? Can you give me any examples of these goals?
    - What types of assignments have you typically employed in your WLD 99 classes? In what ways do you feel these assignments support the goals you have for you students?
- What can you tell me about how you imagine your role in WLD 99 classrooms?
    - How would you describe your relationship with your students?
    - When you give feedback to students on writing, what do you tend to focus on? Why?
- In your perspective, what purpose(s) do you think the ELWR serves for UC Sierra students?
    - What specifically do you think distinguishes a student who is unfulfilled from those who are already fulfilled?
- In your perspective, what purpose(s) do you think WLD 99 courses serve for UC Sierra students?
    - What specifically do you think distinguishes a student who is unfulfilled from those who are already fulfilled?
- In your experience, how prepared do you think typical incoming WLD 99 students are to write at the college-level?
    - What are some typical ways your WLD 99 students have seemed prepared to write in college? Underprepared to write in college?
    - In your experience, what are the primary instructional needs of WLD 99 students? Can you give some specific examples?

3. Curricular/Institutional Changes

- Recently, several changes have been made to curriculum in Workload 99 classes.
    - In your perspective, have these changes impacted your teaching and/or professional life in the WLD 99 program? If so, in what ways?
    - In your perspective, have these changes impacted your sense of your role within the WLD 99 community? If so, in what ways?
    - Have these changes impacted your relationship with other members of the WLD 99 community? If so, in what ways?

4. *Final Question*

- Is there anything else you think I should know about your experiences in the WLD 99 program?

Appendix B: Administrator Interview Protocol

1. Institutional/Community Concerns

- In the questionnaire, you indicated that you have been working in the Workload 99 program for ___years. I'm interested in learning more about your experiences in working for WLD 99 during this time.
  - How did you first get started working in WLD 99 and what was your impression of that experience at the time?
- Have you experienced any challenges when working for the WLD 99 program?
  - If so, can you give me some examples of times when you felt particularly challenged? What made those experiences challenging?
- The Workload 99 program is shared between three different institutions—UC Sierra, GCC, and GCC's satellite campus.
  - Have you experienced any challenges related to this institutional structure? If so, can you give me some examples of these challenges?
- The WLD 99 community includes a wide variety of instructors and administrators from both GCC and UC Sierra.
  - Do you see yourself as part of any of these communities? Why or why not?
  - Can you tell me about a time when you felt particularly included in or excluded from the WLD 99 community?

2. Goals, Purposes, and Perceptions of WLD 99
- In your perspective, what purpose(s) do you think the ELWR serves for UC Sierra students?
    - What specifically do you think distinguishes a student who is unfulfilled from those who are already fulfilled?
- In your perspective, what purpose(s) do you think WLD 99 courses serve for UC Sierra students? What do you think are the goals of these courses?
    - In your perspective, do these goals and purposes align or conflict with the larger learning goals at UC Sierra?
        - If you feel that they align, in what specific ways do you feel like they align?
        - If you feel like they conflict, in what specific ways do you feel like they conflict?
- In your experience, how prepared do you think typical incoming WLD 99 students are to write in college?
    - What do you think are the primary instructional needs of WLD 99 students?
    - In what ways do you feel WLD 99 instructors are prepared to support students with these instructional needs? In what ways may they be underprepared?

3. Curricular/Institutional Changes
- Recently, several curricular changes have been made to the Workload 99 program.
    - From your perspective, what do you feel are the primary goals and purposes of these curricular changes?
- Several changes have also been made to the institutional structure of the administration of Workload 99 courses.
    - In your perspective, have these changes impacted your professional life in the program? If so, in what ways?
    - In your perspective, have these changes impacted your sense of your role within the WLD 99 community? If so, in what ways?
    - In your perspective, have these changes impacted your relationship with other members of the WLD 99 community? If so, in what ways?

4. *Final Question*
- Is there anything else you think I should know about your experiences in the WLD 99 program?

Appendix C: Select categories and codes with definitions and examples from participants

Categories	Codes	Definitions	Examples
Curriculum & Pedagogy	AWPE & final exam	Instances when either the AWPE or the final exam in WLD 99 are referenced. Includes perceptions of the role of the test and its implementation in curriculum, grading practices and rubrics, and criticisms or justifications of the exam and its use in WLD 99.	"But what [the AWPE] does. . . is offer a clear window into what the university thinks is important for students to be able to do, and also what faculty expect students to be able to do and what they'll need to do." (Anita)
Curriculum & Pedagogy	Unchanging & rigid	Perceptions that WLD 99 curriculum was unchanging and/or rigid. Includes faculty perceptions of being micromanaged and discussion of the control faculty did or did not have over curriculum, textbook selection, and/or assessment.	". . . everybody had to teach from the same text. That in itself is very strange to me. That everybody would have to work in lock. The expectation is that everybody moved in lock step." (Sarah)

Purpose & Goals	Purpose & goals of WLD 99	Participants' perceptions of the purpose and goals of WLD 99. Includes discussion of how administrators and/or the institution viewed the course. Excludes discussion of personal purpose/goals or approaches to teaching the course (i.e., those not identified by participants as being prescribed by the program).	". . . the determination has been made by somebody else that this particular student. . .needs more preparation before they're really ready for university discourse. So the goal of WLD 99 is to get them to be stronger, in terms of their reading and analysis, and in terms of the way they are able to write. . . ." (Joan)
Perceptions of People	Perceptions of institution or admin	Participants' perceptions of the thoughts, expectations, or perspectives, of the institution and/or administrators. Includes administrator perceptions of the different institutions and actors involved in the partnership as well as faculty thoughts on the expectations or perceptions of administrators or the institution.	"So you should not like, an A or B is a rarity, was basically the message I got. And there was sort of an underlying pressure to not pass students, especially non-native speakers." (Jessica)

Challenging Assumptions about Basic Writers and Corequisites at Four-Year Institutions

Margaret E. Weaver, Kailyn Shartel Hall, and Tracey A. Glaessgen

ABSTRACT: Despite the push for all institutions of higher learning to embrace a corequisite model for writing instruction, there is limited evidence that suggests this model is desirable for all students. This study seeks to expand our understanding of the characteristics of students enrolled in Basic Writing at a 4-year comprehensive university, and the reasons why students enroll in either a prerequisite or corequisite writing course. After surveying both prerequisite and corequisite Basic Writing students at our institution, our findings reveal that students who enroll in either model may not neatly fit within the description of basic writers found in the literature and in Complete College America data, and their reasons for enrolling are diverse. Their responses challenged our assumptions about who our basic writers are, and it became clear that in our program a shift to offering only a corequisite course model would not address the needs of our students who wanted more than a single semester to work on their writing skills. The accepted rationale for eliminating prerequisite Basic Writing courses is not supported by our data.

KEYWORDS: basic writer; corequisite; mindset; student choice; survey

As the nature of higher education changes around the country, Basic Writing administrators and instructors find themselves enmeshed in a debate regarding the efficacy of developmental education. Over the past 10 years,

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national attention has been given to students who are deemed "not ready" for college-level work. A cursory glance at article titles in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Ed* reveals a less than hospitable landscape for those engaged in developmental education: "Colleges Need to Re-Mediate Remediation" and "Overkill on Remediation" (Rose; Fain). These calls for reform reflect growing concerns about increasing college debt, retention and graduation rates, placement mechanisms, and social justice.

Research has not brought clarity to these concerns, especially given the contradictory nature of the findings. Some researchers have found students are less likely to graduate if required to take developmental courses ("Spanning the Divide"); other researchers have found students who take developmental courses are more likely to graduate (Attewell et al.). Some scholars link developmental courses to a decrease in retention rates (Cholewa and Ramaswami) while others argue such courses boost retention rates (Boylan and Bonham; Otte and Mlynarczyk). Similarly, some writing administrators have discovered that placement based on test scores can lead to underplacement (Toth), whereas other administrators have found that students may lack the ability to accurately self-place into writing classes as revealed in the lower pass rates in these courses (Barnett and Reddy; Blakesley).

Perhaps one of the more obvious examples that this debate has not subsided is the juxtaposition that Justin Nicholes and Cody Reimer share of two sessions at the 2019 Conference on College Composition and Communication. After a session of senior scholars waxing poetic about the inadequacy of Basic Writing to meet student needs, the Council on Basic Writing met in the same room to discuss "how BW from teacher-scholars' perspectives provides students with an early ally and supports students' rhetorical skills, writing know-how, self-efficacy, and persistence to graduation" (Nicholes and Reimer 37). These conflicts in perception make it difficult for Basic Writing instructors to advocate for the needs of their students, especially when program decisions ignore the importance of local context.

When William Lalicker conducted a survey of writing program administrators twenty years ago, he found a wide range of Basic Writing programs (i.e., prerequisite, stretch, studio, intensive). Today, however, many states and institutions are moving away from institutionally-specific programs and adopting a corequisite model of Basic Writing education with the public-facing purpose of helping students progress more efficiently through their college careers. Several states have even passed legislation that requires all institutions of higher learning to adopt a corequisite model (Scott-Clayton). Though a corequisite model is not explicitly required in the state of Mis-

souri, House Bill 1042 mandates that Missouri institutions of higher learning replicate "best practices in remedial education" (*Missouri House Bill No. 1042*, 3). Because this legislation was spurred by the national non-profit organization Complete College America (CCA), Missouri institutions have been strongly encouraged to adopt a corequisite model. The state funded a 2016 training workshop for Basic Writing program coordinators from all community colleges and public universities in Missouri unabashedly titled "Missouri Corequisite Academy." Following this training, our institution was one of many in the state that piloted a corequisite model in 2017. This pilot prompted us to begin questioning our own context and the assumptions of our students that our program was built upon.

The majority of self-reported data collected by CCA regarding success of the corequisite model is from community colleges, and emphasis is placed on the corequisite model developed in 2007 at the Community College of Baltimore, the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) (Adams et al. 56). CCA does break down state-specific data according to 2-year and 4-year institutions, but no information is available for how many 4-year institutions are represented by this data. Hunter Boylan, Director of the National Center for Developmental Education, observes, "I've never seen, in my 30 years in higher education, such sweeping change made on the basis of so little evidence" (cited in Smith). Boylan is not alone in his assessment. He and others have expressed concern that too few controlled trials have been conducted to reach definitive conclusions about the corequisite (Belfield et al.; Goudas; Goudas and Boylan; Mangan). Nevertheless, dramatic claims are made about the corequisite: "Several states have scaled Corequisite Support and as a result have double or tripled the percent of students who are completing gateway math and English courses in one year" ("Corequisite Support"). Despite limited evidence, the underlying assumption of what Katherine Mangan labels the "Corequisite Reform Movement" is that the corequisite model can work for every institution. Agreeing with Boylan, Jill Barshay emphasizes in *The Hechinger Report* that state policymakers are rushing to pass legislation based on "a new ill-defined corequisite model before we know if it works and, if it does, for which students."

We know that community colleges and comprehensive universities typically enroll different types of students. This study seeks to expand our understanding of the characteristics of students enrolled in Basic Writing at a 4-year comprehensive university and the reasons why students enroll in either a prerequisite or corequisite Basic Writing course. Despite the push for all institutions of higher learning to embrace a corequisite model, our

findings suggest that this model may not be desirable for all students enrolled in a 4-year institution. Even among 4-year institutions, the needs of Basic Writing students will vary. While the corequisite model allows students to complete the credit-bearing gateway English course in one semester, we have found that not all students desire this fast-track pathway. Contrary to the assumptions being propagated in the literature and state legislatures, a significant number of our students prefer a prerequisite model of writing instruction that affords them more time to work on their writing in a low-risk environment prior to enrolling in the gateway course. By taking away this option, we are limiting students' autonomy to choose.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Missouri State University is a public, comprehensive university system located in Missouri with 26,000 students who attend its seven colleges and graduate college and is the second largest university in the state. Each fall, Missouri State University welcomes approximately 2,600-3,000 first-time new in college (FTNIC) students and 1,500-1,700 new transfer students ("About Missouri State"). Of FTNIC students, 32-34% of students self-identify as First-Generation; though definitions of First-Generation students vary, the most commonly used definition, and the one that Missouri State University utilizes, is that neither parent graduated from a 4-year institution (Petty 133). This percentage is slightly higher than the national average for 4-year universities.

At Missouri State University, all first-time new in college students, regardless of their academic major, are required to complete the university's general education program, which includes 45 credit hours. Six hours within the general education program are assigned to Writing I (ENG 110) and Writing II (a course with variable prefixes based upon academic discipline). Historically, placement in Writing I has been determined by test scores, primarily the ACT English subscore. Some students receive credit for ENG 110 based on Advanced Placement (AP) exam scores or high school dual credit. Conversely, incoming students with less than an 18 on the ACT English subsection (or an equivalent) or those who do not have test scores are not eligible to take ENG 110. They are required to pass ENG 100, a prerequisite 3-credit Basic Writing course graded Pass/No Pass prior to enrolling in ENG 110. ENG 100 is credit bearing for financial aid purposes and enrollment, but not for graduation or degree requirements. Important to note, any student who desires additional assistance with writing may enroll in ENG 100.

In 2012, the Missouri Legislature passed House Bill 1042. This bill mandates that Missouri institutions of higher learning replicate "Best Practices in Remedial Education" (Thomson). The impetus for this bill was concern about the increasing amount of college debt, the high dropout rates, and the time it takes college students to graduate. Spurred by Complete College America (CCA), legislators link these concerns to the number of non-credit developmental courses students must take prior to enrolling in college-level courses. Although the Missouri Department of Higher Education emphasized that it did not want to be prescriptive and require all institutions to implement the same model, the Department of Higher Education funded a 2016 training workshop for Missouri institutions of higher learning titled Missouri Corequisite Academy.

At the two-day Academy, representatives from Missouri colleges and universities were all tasked with developing an Action Plan to implement the corequisite model on our respective campuses. As a result, the English Department Head, the Director of Composition, and the Basic Writing Coordinator of our university drafted an Action Plan for 2016-2019, which included developing and piloting a corequisite during Spring 2017, moving to 50% scaling of the corequisite by Fall 2017, and ultimately achieving 100% scaling of the corequisite by Fall 2018 (based on success of the course in terms of student persistence and pass rate). The goal, in other words, was to eliminate any prerequisite Basic Writing courses. This programmatic goal was set based on the CCA data and the self-reported data of several community college representatives who served as workshop leaders. We were aware that our student population did not seem to reflect CCA's data regarding the high percentage of students enrolled in "English Remediation" at 4-year institutions. CCA reports that 12% of students at 4-year institutions nation-wide enroll in "English Remediation" ("Data Dashboard"). However, only 5% of our institution's students are required to enroll in our Basic Writing course. This percentage has been consistent over the last ten years. Nevertheless, if the corequisite could increase student success rates and persistence at other institutions, we surmised it could increase student success rates and student persistence at our 4-year institution.

In Spring 2017, our institution piloted one corequisite course which allowed students to take ENG 100 and ENG 110 concurrently so that they could complete their general education writing requirements in two semesters instead of three semesters. The ENG 100 and ENG 110 courses were taught by the same instructor, scheduled back-to-back, to create one longer class, and both were populated by the same students who had voluntarily enrolled

in the linked courses. Our model did not resemble the common ALP model for a corequisite course; instead, it more closely resembled, as Hall notes, "David Schwalm and John Ramage's *Jumbo* course model at Arizona State University" (Glau 33 cited in Hall 65). The curriculum was modified so that ENG 100 served as a support structure for the ENG 110 curriculum, rather than as a separate course. Preliminary findings suggested the corequisite was as effective as the prerequisite in terms of pass rates; however, many of the students who enrolled in the pilot were not required to take ENG 100. Eleven of the 19 students were eligible to take ENG 110 based on their ACT scores. Given the small number of students enrolled in the corequisite pilot and the unexpected number of students who were not required to take ENG 100, it was inconclusive if the corequisite could ultimately increase success rates and student persistence of our students beyond what we had already been able to accomplish with the ENG 100 prerequisite.

Moving forward with our Action Plan, we moved to 50% scaling of the corequisite in Fall 2017, four sections of prerequisite and four sections of corequisite respectively, and committed to gathering more data, particularly about the students who enroll in Basic Writing at our 4-year university. As the pilot progressed, however, administrative decisions made outside the Composition Program made us deviate from the proposed Action Plan we had created. The university reduced corequisite scaling from 50% to 43% in Fall 2018, offering four sections of the prerequisite and just three corequisite sections. Following a downturn in enrollment at the university in Fall 2019, the number of corequisite sections was again reduced. In Fall 2019, the university offered two sections of the corequisite and five sections of the prerequisite (one of which was offered online). Forces outside the program, in other words, were determining how Basic Writing was offered at the university. Enrollment shifts, FTEs for instructors, and reduced budgets were driving the Action Plan, not data about the students who enroll in Basic Writing at our institution.

PREVIOUS ASSUMPTIONS

The corequisite pilot and the subsequent study prompted us to acknowledge that we had made several assumptions about the students enrolled in our Basic Writing classes—assumptions that were grounded in the available literature rather than our own institutional research. We have chosen to make visible these tacit assumptions to contextualize our findings, in much the same way that Cheryl E. Ball and Drew M. Loewe

begin their edited collection *Bad Ideas about Writing*: "'[T]he public' in all its manifestations—teachers, students, parents, administrators, lawmakers, news media—are important to how writing is conceptualized and taught. These publics deserve clearly articulated and well-researched arguments about what is not working, what must die, and what is blocking progress in current understandings of writing" (1). Explicitly articulating these assumptions provides important insight into why we were surprised to discover who the students are in our Basic Writing program and how to best advocate for them in the face of many outside pressures determining their educational opportunities.

Assumption 1: Only Students Required to Take Basic Writing Enroll in ENG 100 (Either Prerequisite or Corequisite)

Students, faculty, and legislators are all concerned about the amount of college debt that students are accruing, and many attribute this debt to an excess credit "epidemic" (Barshay). Few students graduate with the minimum number of credits required. This is understandable because students often enter college "undecided," whether they are officially undeclared or not. Students may also enroll in courses they do not need in order to meet financial aid requirements, particularly when students have not declared a major (Cuseo; Glaessgen et al.). Another cause for excessive credits is transferring to other institutions; courses may or may not transfer, depending upon articulation agreements. CCA contends, though, that the biggest culprit of excessive credits is the number of required remedial courses students must take prior to enrolling in college-level classes. Our particular state has embraced this narrative that developmental courses are the primary cause of the credit epidemic, hence the passage of HB 1042 and the Missouri Corequisite Academy.

Other states have passed legislation as well. In 2013, the state of Florida passed one of the most aggressive pieces of legislation to curb what CCA perceives as the biggest culprit in the excessive credit epidemic. Senate Bill 1720 prohibits institutions within the Florida Community College System from requiring remediation of any student with a Florida high school diploma (Scott-Clayton). Other community colleges have followed Florida's lead and moved away from requiring developmental classes. By utilizing Directed Self-Placement (DSP), these institutions make enrollment in Basic Writing optional for students.

The majority of colleges that have moved to DSP have experienced a reduction in the number of students enrolled in Basic Writing classes; a higher percentage of students are choosing to enroll in credit-bearing college-level classes. On the surface, this solution seems to be reducing the excess credit epidemic (Barnett and Reddy 10). These findings fueled our programmatic goal of moving to 100% scaling of the corequisite by Fall 2018. We assumed at a 4-year university like ours that has extensive dual credit programs, students would not enroll in ENG 100 and take an additional three hours of credit unless it was required, regardless of whether the class was offered as a prerequisite or corequisite.

Assumption 2: A Higher Percentage of First-Generation Students Enroll in Basic Writing, Both the Prerequisite and the Corequisite

Researchers have documented that first-generation students typically have lower scores on college entrance exams than continuing-generation students (Martinez et al.; Saenz et al.; Terenzini et al.). Because the majority of 4-year institutions, including ours, use standardized test scores to determine placement, this translates into a higher number of first-generation students being required to enroll in basic classes. Indeed, Xianglei Chen confirmed this in her research (Chen, *Remedial Coursetaking* vi). She found first-generation students enrolled in 4-year institutions were more likely to take a remedial reading course in comparison to continuing-generation students, 12% to 4% respectively (Chen, *First-Generation Students* 11). Although her research did not look at writing classes, we assumed that the same trend would hold for students enrolled in our Basic Writing courses.

Many researchers have offered possible explanations as to why first-generation students are more likely to have lower scores on college entrance exams. The most common explanation is lack of academic preparation (Byrd and Macdonald 22; Snell). Peter J. Collier and David L. Morgan propose that many first-generation students also lack what they refer to as cultural capital: "knowledge about interacting successfully in academic settings" (429). Ideally, cultural capital is learned and reinforced by family members who have their own experiences to draw upon, but first-generation students do not have the parental advice to help them understand university expectations or to prepare for college entrance exams (Dennis et al.; Engle). These factors would then, we suspected, lead to these students enrolling in Basic Writing courses in higher numbers.

Assumption 3: Students Enrolled in Basic Writing Courses are Students Who Did Not Take Advanced Writing Classes in High School

Research shows that students in basic math courses often did not take higher level math courses in high school and first-generation students, in particular, usually limit themselves to taking courses that are required in high school rather than taking advanced courses (Chen, *Remedial Coursetaking* v). Although little to no research has been done to identify if this holds true for writing courses, this assumption prevails at the administrative level. Perhaps the most obvious example is how math and writing are often combined when reporting institutional data for basic courses. At the Missouri Corequisite Academy, each institution was provided data about the percentage of students who are enrolled in developmental courses. Our institution's alarming percentage was approximately 25%. However, this provided a skewed representation of the percentage of students enrolled in Basic Writing at our institution. Only 5% of students enroll in Basic Writing. The significantly higher percentage reflected students who are required to enroll in basic math. At our institution, the goal of 100% scaling of the corequisite was based on data that combined math and writing. This combined data painted an inaccurate scenario of a quarter of our student population being placed in multiple semesters of writing remediation.

Assumption 4: Students with a Fixed Mindset or Negative Self-Perceptions Would be More Likely to Enroll in Our Prerequisite than the Corequisite

A fixed mindset perceives intelligence as something that is fixed at birth; no amount of effort can change it. This differs from a growth mindset. A growth mindset perceives intelligence as something that is malleable and can be expanded. These mindsets reflect how individuals perceive personal control. Someone with a fixed mindset will tend to attribute success or failure to external forces whereas someone with a growth mindset will tend to attribute success or failure to internal effort (Dweck).

Some research has suggested that mindset is a function of upbringing, particularly within the family unit. Parents who treat their child's abilities as fixed often engage with their child in unconstructive ways, emphasizing performance. Kyla Haimovitz and Carol S. Dweck found that "parents who see failure as debilitating focus on their child's performance and ability rather than on their child's learning, and their children, in turn, tend to believe

that intelligence is fixed rather than malleable" (879). In other words, the parents conditioned their children to adopt a fixed mindset. Anat Gofen's qualitative research explores first-hand accounts of parent-child interactions that emphasize ability over effort (107). Using semi-structured interviews with first-generation students, Gofen collected personal stories about what led her subjects to pursue higher education. In almost every story shared, parental belief in the student's abilities was emphasized. If the grades that the student earned were not good, parents blamed either the teachers or the system, not the student's effort. As one college student explained, "When I got a bad grade my mom told me that it's because this teacher cannot teach" (112–13). Ken Bain is quick to emphasize,

> Even well-meaning parents and teachers can foster that fixed view. We've long assumed that positive feedback always has desirable results. But some recent research has painted a more complex picture. . . When children are young and family members constantly tell them how brilliant they are (or how dumb), they get the message: Life depends on your level of intelligence, not on how you work at something. You've got it or you don't. Nothing can change that reality they think. (110)

Students often carry this fixed mindset into college and assume that they have little to no control over whether they succeed or fail ("I will fail because I'm just not good at writing"). For example, research shows some first-generation college students perceive their writing skills as lower than the writing skills of continuing-generation students (Banks-Santilli; Penrose; Tulsa Junior College and Oklahoma Office of Institutional Research). The Cooperative Institutional Research Program's (CIRP) Freshman Survey from 1971 to 2005 reveals that this gap is particularly wide between the self-ratings of first-generation students and continuing-generation students regarding writing ability. Only 37.2 % of first-generation students rated their writing ability above average as compared "to an average person of the same age." This self-rating is twelve percentage points lower than that reported by continuing-generation students—a gap that is significantly larger than even the percentage gap in self-ratings of mathematics and science (Saenz et al. 31).

Such self-ratings in writing ability are exacerbated by institutional inequities that fuel students' negative self-perceptions, particularly for at-risk populations. As Zaretta Hammond points out, "the educational system has historically underserved culturally and linguistically diverse students of

color" (90). The result is that many students of color have underdeveloped "learn-how-to learn" skills and analytical writing skills (Boykin et al.). According to Complete College America, prerequisite coursework is a reality that is "disproportionally true for low-income students and students of color" ("Spanning the Divide"). Students' awareness of this lack of academic proficiency can significantly reduce confidence and lead to a fixed mindset. "Many culturally and linguistically diverse students start to believe these skill gaps are evidence of their own innate intellectual deficits" (Hammond 90) and are, therefore, insurmountable (Cammarota and Romero; Duncan-Andrade).

Eileen Kogl Camfield investigated this concept of "learned helplessness" particularly for students placed in Basic Writing courses and found that "underdeveloped coping skills may stem from an inability to self-assess one's work" (3–5). Examining narratives from students, Camfield and her instructional team found much that suggested poor self-perception and the anxiety some students felt about writing "could be compounded by a tendency to compare oneself unfavorably with others" (5). This tendency could translate to students avoiding situations in which they might struggle or fail because these experiences undermine their sense of their abilities and intelligence (Blackwell et al.). Because students enrolled in the corequisite model earn a letter grade, the possibility of failure is quite real; the student may earn an "F" for the writing course. As such, this could affect the student's choice of which course to take. Students enrolled in the prerequisite model do not face the same potential for failure; students earn either a "P" or "NP," neither of which have any impact on the GPA. We assumed, therefore, that students who have adopted a fixed mindset regarding writing would opt to enroll in the prerequisite. We assumed, in other words, that Adrienne Rich's description of basic writers was fairly accurate—ENG 100 students are students who are "grim with self-depreciation and prophecies of their own failure" (11).

METHODOLOGY

Our corequisite pilot in Spring 2017 revealed how little we knew about the students in our Basic Writing courses. Although the student pass rate of the pilot corequisite was comparable to the pass rate of the prerequisite sections, many of the students who enrolled in the pilot were *not* required to take ENG 100. This unexpected discovery prompted us to gather more information about the students who enroll in ENG 100. When we moved to 50% scaling of the corequisite in Fall 2017, we collected institutional data about the students enrolled in both prerequisite and corequisite sections.

Like previous years, the Basic Writing Coordinator checked the ACT score of each student enrolled in ENG 100 (both prerequisite and corequisite). Students who received an 18 or higher on the English portion of the ACT were reminded in the first week by their instructors that ENG 100 was not a requirement. This notification gave the students the opportunity to transfer into a stand-alone section of ENG 110 if so desired.

At the conclusion of the semester, institutional data was used to determine how many students enrolled in ENG 100 (prerequisite or corequisite) were required to take the course, based on ACT English score. Institutional data was also used to determine First-Generation status of students enrolled in the prerequisite and corequisite. Students self-identify as "First-Generation" and "First Time New in College (FTNIC)" on their admissions application to the university. Missouri State University defines First-Generation in admission applications as "neither parent has graduated from a four-year institution."

Following IRB approval, all ENG 100 students enrolled in in-person sections of the prerequisite and corequisite were given a survey within the first three weeks of the fall semester.[1] The 10-15 minute survey asked students a variety of multiple-choice and open-ended questions. The full survey instrument is provided in Appendix A. One survey question asked students why they chose to enroll in ENG 100. Students were offered multiple options and encouraged to select all that applied. Due to unclear phrasing on the pilot 2017 Fall survey that affected how students answered, this question was revised for Fall 2018 and Fall 2019. Also, on this question, the survey instrument differed depending on if the student was enrolled in a corequisite or a prerequisite section. On both versions of the survey, an open-ended "other" option was also offered. The choices provided on the survey are shown in Figure 1, and in context as they were provided to students in Appendix A. Mentions in the question choices to SOAR refer to our institution's summer pre-arrival advising for first-year students, where they determine their first semester schedules and acclimate to campus.

Although we assumed that students with a fixed mindset would be more likely to enroll in the prerequisite than the corequisite, our pilot Fall 2017 survey did not yield information that could help us determine this. We added two direct yes/no questions to the Fall 2018 and Fall 2019 surveys modeled after Dweck's work: "Do you believe writing can improve with practice?" and "Do you believe that some people are naturally better writers?" We reasoned that these two questions would reveal if students leaned more toward a fixed mindset or growth mindset. If students had a growth

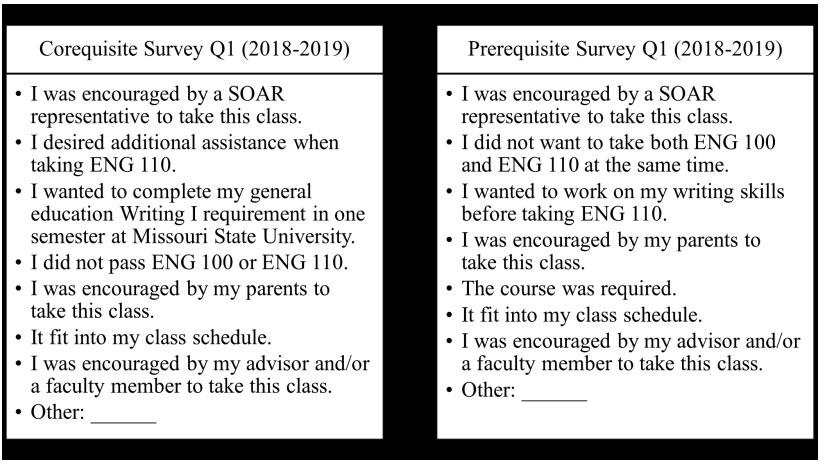

Figure 1. Student Choice Survey Question from Corequisite and Prerequisite Survey Instruments

mindset, we assumed that they would acknowledge the role of hard work and revision. Conversely, if students had a fixed mindset, we assumed that they would believe good writing is a function of natural talent determined a birth.

Another question asked students to identify which English classes they had taken in high school. On the Fall 2018 and Fall 2019 survey, students were asked to choose all that applied from a selection that included Honors courses, Standard courses, AP courses, dual credit, or that they had not attended high school in the United States.

Table 1 details the response rates from the pilot survey in Fall 2017, as well as the surveys in Fall 2018 and Fall 2019. The same survey instrument was used in Fall 2018 and 2019 for consistency and comparability of data despite variations in enrollment. The online prerequisite section in Fall 2019 was not surveyed due to limitations of the in-person, paper survey and is therefore not represented in these data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Assumption 1

Most of the assumptions we made about our students, though grounded in the available literature, were inaccurate. Contrary to CCA's concern that students are being required to take Basic Writing, over a quarter of our

Table 1. Total Unique Survey Respondents in 2017, 2018, 2019 and Combined

	Respondents	*Enrolled*	*Response Rate*
			2017
Prerequisite Sections	58	77	75%
Corequisite Sections	59	73	81%
Total	**117**	**150**	**78%**
			2018
Prerequisite Sections	51	79	65%
Corequisite Sections	38	56	68%
Total	**89**	**135**	**66%**
			2019
Prerequisite Sections	51	74	69%
Corequisite Sections	20	38	53%
Total	**71**	**112**	**63%**
			2017, 2018, 2019 Combined
Prerequisite Sections	160	230	70%
Corequisite Sections	117	167	70%
Total All Years	**277**	**397**	**70%**

students elected to enroll in ENG 100 even though it was not required. Time and money, in other words, did not seem to be the primary determiners for some of our students. Across all three data collection years, approximately a quarter of the students who were eligible to take ENG 110 (by the university's placement criteria of an ACT English score 18 or higher) enrolled and remained in ENG 100 after the add/drop period. Even though students would register for fewer total classes during the semester (given that the corequisite course is six hours), students eligible for ENG 110 were on average twice as likely to enroll in the corequisite course than the prerequisite.

Four-year institutions like ours that do not have directed self-placement (DSP) grant little autonomy to students when it comes to writing placement. The university system (both advisors and online registration) prohibits students from enrolling in ENG 110 unless they meet the ACT threshold number; however, students can exert agency by choosing to enroll in ENG 100 if they desire additional writing practice and support in consultation with their academic advisor.

Community colleges that have moved to DSP report a reduction in the number of students who elect to enroll in Basic Writing classes. Four-year

institutions that have moved to DSP report a similar reduction in the number of students who elect to enroll in Basic Writing classes, but interpretation of this decline differs (Blakesley; Toth). There remains an assumption that only students required to take the course will, especially when they are granted autonomy to choose. All of the existing research focuses on students being given agency to enroll in the gateway course through DSP and similar measures of placement, rather than their agency to enroll in the Basic Writing course.

Assumption 2

Although we incorrectly assumed that only students required to take ENG 100 would enroll in the course, the number of students enrolled in the prerequisite and the corequisite did include a higher percentage of first-generation students at our university. Though approximately 32% of our total student population self-identify as first-generation, this student population comprises a larger percentage of our basic course enrollment, which reaffirms the findings of other 4-year institutions (Chen, *First-Generation Students* ix; Chen, *Remedial Coursetaking* 5). In addition, we found that a slightly higher percentage of these students were more likely to enroll in the corequisite course over the prerequisite course. In 2017, 44% of total prerequisite students were first-generation compared to 48% of total corequisite students, and in 2018, 42% compared to 53%. However, in 2019, the trend flipped, with 43% in prerequisite compared to 39% in corequisite.

Assumption 3

We also found that a significant number of students enrolled in ENG 100 had taken advanced courses in high school based on their survey responses. In 2018, 31% of prerequisite respondents indicated they had taken at least one advanced level writing class in high school (categorized as either Honors, AP, or Dual Credit). An additional 10% of prerequisite students indicated haven taken at least two types of these courses (for example, both Honors and AP, rather than one or the other). Sixteen percent of corequisite student respondents took at least one advanced class in high school, with an additional 3% taking two course types. In 2019, this split between prerequisite and corequisite reversed. A higher percentage of students in corequisite classes in 2019 took at least one advanced writing course in high school, 25% plus 5% who took two course types, compared to 14% plus 4% of prerequisite students. What this suggests is that, contrary to our previous assumption, taking an advanced writing course in high school does not

guarantee students feel prepared for college-level work (Hall). Additionally, experience in advanced high school writing classes does not, in some cases, transfer to success in standardized testing.

The presence of some students not required to take the course surprised us and prompted us to inquire why these students would take the course, especially given that some had taken advanced writing in high school. The most popular responses from students were what we anticipated. Across both survey years, the majority of students in the prerequisite indicated they enrolled in the course because it was a requirement. Students in both the prerequisite and corequisite who responded "Other" wrote in qualitative responses that indicated they had enrolled in the course due to low ACT scores or that the course was required. Furthermore, the corequisite students confirmed that they chose the course because it allowed them to complete their Writing I requirement in one semester. However, students could select multiple responses. This provided additional insight into factors influencing the students' choice of enrollment, regardless of whether the course was required or not. In Tables 2 and 3, we show the options students were given in the survey along with response rates.

Contrary to concerns about excessive credits and the necessity of Basic Writing, prerequisite students were twice as likely to also respond

Table 2. Prerequisite Students "Why did you take this class?" Responses

2018 n-51	**2019 n=51**	**Multiple Choice Responses (could select more than one)**
27%	22%	I was encouraged by a SOAR representative to take this class.
18%	12%	I did not want to take both ENG 100 and ENG 110 at the same time.
29%	29%	I wanted to work on my writing skills before taking ENG 110.
6%	2%	I was encouraged by my parents to take this class.
51%	55%	The course was required.
18%	12%	It fit into my class schedule.
27%	37%	I was encouraged by my advisor and/or a faculty member to take this class.
6%	6%	Other

Table 3. Corequisite Students "Why did you take this class?" Responses

2018 n=38	2019 n=20	Multiple Choice Responses (Could select more than one)
18%	30%	I was encouraged by a SOAR representative to take this class.
13%	15%	I desired additional assistance when taking ENG 110.
55%	60%	I wanted to complete my general education Writing I requirement in one semester at Missouri State University.
0%	0%	I did not pass ENG 100 or ENG 110.
3%	5%	I was encouraged by my parents to take this class.
18%	10%	It fit into my class schedule.
42%	50%	I was encouraged by my advisor and/or faculty member to take this class.
16%	20%	Other (Low ACT score placement in course)

that they desired additional assistance with writing than their corequisite counterparts. As shown in Tables 2 and 3, both groups of students responded that input from an academic advisor or another faculty member influenced their decision to enroll in the course, but this factor was indicated by a larger percentage of corequisite students.

Assumption 4

Finally, our initial assumptions posited that a higher number of students enrolled in the prerequisite course would have a fixed mindset about writing ability. Our pilot survey data from 2017 did not yield information that could help us identify mindset, so we tailored questions in 2018 to address this. To understand students' perceptions, we asked two different questions: Do you believe writing can improve with practice? Do you believe that some people are naturally better writers?

We assumed there would be a disparity in the responses given by students who chose to enroll in the corequisite and those enrolled in the prerequisite. However, students in both prerequisite and corequisite dis-

played assumptions reflective of a fixed mindset, assuming some people are "naturally better writers"; however, the percentage was significantly lower than we had anticipated (5-16% over the two-year span). The statement, "I believe writing can improve with practice," prompted similar responses from both the prerequisite and corequisite students for both 2018 and 2019. At least 95% of the prerequisite and corequisite students indicated that they did believe writing can improve with practice. This response suggests that both prerequisite students and corequisite students displayed evidence of a growth mindset in that they believed they had the ability to eventually become a better writer. We had anticipated that corequisite students would display evidence of a growth mindset, but we had not anticipated the same result with the prerequisite students. This finding was particularly surprising given that over a quarter of our students elected to enroll in ENG 100 even though it was not required. Despite having a growth mindset, negative self-perceptions of their writing ability clearly persisted. As discussed earlier, institutional inequities can fuel students' negative self-perceptions. Not receiving AP or dual credit due to test scores or inability to pay fees are institutional inequities that could reduce students' confidence and lead them to assume that they *need* more writing assistance.

TOWARD NEW CONCEPTIONS OF BASIC WRITERS

This project is ongoing, and it has become a vital part of understanding the students in our Basic Writing program and making administrative decisions about the prerequisite and corequisite courses. It has demonstrated to us the necessity of analyzing the needs of local student populations rather than relying solely on the available literature and self-reported data of community colleges. Our work has allowed, even in some small part, for our students to have a voice in this conversation. Echoing Kailyn Shartel Hall's assertion for expanding work on student perception, our work emphasizes that student choice and experience must inform our decisions as administrators and Basic Writing educators, and that "multiple factors are involved in students' perception of their writing ability and having additional venues to mediate that in higher education is a necessity" (76). We agree with Becky L. Caouette's concerns about corequisites: "I do not believe that corequisite models can make significant inroads in destigmatizing underprepared or alternately-prepared students unless these same students are encouraged to choose which course best meets their needs" (56). Offering students only the corequisite significantly limits their ability to choose the writing

support that will meet their educational needs. A lack of options is not the same as student choice.

We had little control over the information and advisement given to students during their decision-making process regarding enrollment. We also had no control over how many sections of the corequisite were offered. These issues led to a smaller surveyable population for data collection, and that, we do acknowledge, makes our data more difficult to apply outside of our local context. Programmatically, we had accepted assumptions about basic writers that were not reflective of the real students at our 4-year institution. Furthermore, we had allowed these assumptions to guide our programmatic decision-making. Articulating these assumptions in writing has served as a powerful reminder to us that research involving students is dependent on local context and needs. With this revised understanding of our own local context, we are able to better serve our students and create a program that is responsive to their educational needs.

Our initial impetus for this study was curiosity about the corequisite model. CCA contends that these required remedial courses students must take prior to enrolling in college-level classes are the biggest contributor to the increasing amount of college debt, high dropout rates, and the time it takes college students to graduate. CCA reports that 12% of students at 4-year institutions nationwide enroll in "English Remediation"("Data Dashboard"). We knew from before implementing the corequisite that our data did not reflect CCA's data regarding the high percentage of students enrolled in "English Remediation" at 4-year institutions. Only 5% of students at our institution enroll in ENG 100. The more we delved into institutional research, the more we realized just how little our student population reflected the literature and CCA's data. Three of our four tacit assumptions were not accurate for the students at our 4-year institution. Only one tacit assumption was accurate: a higher percentage of first-generation students enrolled in ENG 100 as compared to the percentage of first-generation students at our institution.

One of the most important discoveries we made was that a quarter of our students *chose* to take Basic Writing, prerequisite and corequisite, even when not required. The initial enrollment in our pilot corequisite was not an anomaly. Students chose to take Basic Writing for a variety of reasons, including a desire to strengthen writing skills. Prerequisite and corequisite students were equally likely to have a growth mindset with regard to writing ability; however, this growth mindset did not counter the negative self-perceptions that many of the students had regarding their writing ability.

Another important discovery was that at least one quarter of all students in our prerequisite and corequisite classes reported that they took advanced writing classes in high school. As Hall explains, "some students indicated they took the AP course but did not pay to take the exam, and similarly some students took a Dual Credit designated course but did not pay for the credit hours" (75). Our program has not collected information from students who are enrolled in ENG 110, so we do not have any comparison data to know if this large number is reflective of how many in our entire student population have taken advanced writing classes in high school. We can share, though, that this study has prompted us to take a closer look at all incoming students at our 4-year institution and the roadblocks that may exist, including the requirement of an ACT score and payment of course fees to receive dual credit. Significant changes have been made in the past year. The university has eliminated the ACT requirement to receive dual credit and replaced it with a high school GPA requirement of 3.25. In addition, the university now offers scholarships for high school students who receive free and reduced lunches. These students may take up to six hours of dual credit per semester at no charge.

CONCLUSION: A CAUTION?

Undergirding developmental education is an issue of social justice and "students' right to make an informed choice about their education" (Toth 147). Many community colleges have implemented DSP as a way to honor students' right to choose whether to take a Basic Writing course or a "gateway" course. Of particular concern is how the "Corequisite Reform Movement" has begun to shift the discussion surrounding "choice" to complete elimination of all Basic Writing courses. One-hundred percent scaling of the corequisite model is appealing to administrators because it provides justification to get rid of developmental education at 4-year institutions, and writing program administrators at 4-year institutions are being pushed by state mandates to move students more quickly through the first-year sequence. Our research suggests that students at 4-year institutions may not desire to move this quickly. We tend to agree with Goudas that this is an "apples-to-oranges" comparison (Goudas). Four-year institutions need solutions that meet the needs of their student populations.

On a more pragmatic note, COVID-19 has also necessitated the implementation of DSP at more 4-year institutions because many students have been unable to take the ACT. Since the inception of this study, our 4-year

institution implemented DSP in Fall 2020 for students, but only for students without ACT scores. Though university administrators see the DSP as a stopgap measure dispensable when things "return to normal," COVID-19 has provided us with a fortuitous situation to collect data comparing the accuracy and efficacy of using DSP versus ACT. This type of localized data speaks to administrators who are concerned about retention.

The future of developmental education is at risk; the most obvious example is the legislation in Florida (Senate Bill 1720) that bans any remediation. With such sweeping changes, strategies/models of Basic Writing that have proven effective are being abandoned. Rather than acknowledging the need for multiple pathways, as our colleagues in mathematics have done ("Missouri Math Pathways Initiative"), a one-size-fits-all model may not fit who our particular students are or what they desire. As Basic Writing educators continue to work with and against these challenges in our institutions, we must continue to keep the needs of our students at the forefront and provide them with information and choices about the writing education they receive in our classrooms, and we must continue to demystify who these students are to the administrators and stakeholders making changes at our institutions.

Note

1. IRB Protocol Number IRB-FY2018-121 at Missouri State University.

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APPENDIX A: 2018-2019 STUDENT SURVEY

Student Name: _____
ENG 100 Section/Instructor:_____

1. (Author Note: Answer choices for **PREREQUISITE** SECTIONS SURVEY)
   Why did you take this class? Please select all that apply.

____ I was encouraged by a SOAR representative to take this class.
____ I did not want to take both ENG 100 and ENG 110 at the same time.
____ I wanted to work on my writing skills before taking ENG 110.
____ I was encouraged by my parents to take this class.
____ The course was required.
____ It fit into my class schedule.
____ I was encouraged by my advisor and/or a faculty member to take this class.
____ Other: _____

1. (Author Note: Answer Choices for **COREQUISITE** SECTIONS SURVEY)
   Why did you take this class? Please select all that apply.

____ I was encouraged by a SOAR representative to take this class.
____ I desired additional assistance when taking ENG 110.
____ I wanted to complete my general education Writing I requirement in one semester at Missouri State University (MSU).
____ I did not pass ENG 100 or ENG 110.
____ I was encouraged by my parents to take this class.
____ It fit into my class schedule.
____ I was encouraged by my advisor and/or a faculty member to take this class.
____ Other: _____

2. Which English classes did you take in high school?
   a. Honors Courses
   b. Standard Courses
   c. AP (Advanced Placement) Courses
   d. Dual Credit Courses (or equivalent of ENG 110)
   e. Did not attend High School in United States
   f. Other _____

If you answered C: AP (Advanced Placement) Courses for Question #2, please answer 2a, 2b, and 2c. If not, proceed to Question 3.

If you answered D: Dual Credit Courses for Question #2, please answer 2d. If not, proceed to Question 3.

2a. If you took AP English, which AP Course did you take? Select all that apply.

a. AP Language and Composition
b. AP Literature and Composition
c. Both AP Language and Composition and AP Literature and Composition

2b. If you took AP English, did you take the exam?

a. Yes, I took the AP Language and Composition Exam.
b. Yes, I took the AP Literature and Composition Exam.
c. Yes, I took both the AP Language and Composition Exam and the AP Literature and Composition Exam.
d. No, I did not take an AP English Exam.

2c. If you took an AP English exam (as noted in question 2b) what was your score? _____

2d. If you took a dual credit English course, please indicate any that apply:

a. Yes, I passed the ENG 110 dual credit course and the credit transferred to MSU.
b. Yes, I passed the ENG 110 dual credit course, but the cost of the course was not covered.
c. Yes, I passed the ENG 110 dual credit course, but test scores placed me in this course.
d. No, I did not pass the ENG 110 dual credit course.
e. I am unsure if I passed the ENG 110 dual credit course.

3. In what ways has your family influenced your decision to attend college?

4. Are you a first-generation college student? (i.e., the first person in your family to attend college or university)

a. Yes, I am a first-generation college student.
b. No, I am not a first-generation college student.
c. I am unsure if I am a first-generation college student.

5. Have you declared a major with the university, or are you undeclared?

6. Have you taken ENG 100 before?
   a. Yes, I have taken ENG 100 before this semester.
   b. No, I have not taken ENG 100 before this semester.

6a. If you answered Yes to Question #6, at which institution did you take ENG 100 (or an equivalent)?

7. Do you feel like a part of the MSU Academic Community?
   a. Yes, I feel like a part of the MSU Academic Community.
   b. No, I do not feel like a part of the MSU Academic Community.
   c. I am unsure if I am a part of the MSU Academic Community.

7a. In a few short sentences, describe why you do or do not feel like a part of the MSU Academic Community. If you are unsure, please describe why.

8. What have previous teachers said about your writing?

9. Do you believe writing can improve with practice? Yes or No

10. In what way has your family encouraged writing?

11. What type of writing is your favorite?

12. How confident are you with academic writing?

13. In writing, what do you struggle most with?

14. In writing, what are your strengths?

15. What is your classification?
   a. Freshman
   b. Sophomore

c. Junior
d. Senior
e. Nontraditional
f. I am unsure of my classification

16. Are you a military veteran? Yes or No

16a. If you answered YES to question #16, are you active duty? Yes or No

17. Do you believe that some people are naturally better writers?
Yes or No

18. What makes an effective piece of writing?

Student-Centered Grammar Feedback in the Basic Writing Classroom: Toward a Translingual Grammar Pedagogy

Amanda Sladek

ABSTRACT: This article discusses a method of grammar feedback in Basic Writing that asks students to determine the extent of grammar feedback the instructor provides on their writing. Student-directed grammar feedback acknowledges students' agency and ownership of their own languaging and aligns with translingual writing pedagogy. Drawing on students' preferences for their grammar feedback as well as their written explanations of these preferences, the author argues that a truly translingual approach to grammar feedback is one that engages students in discussions and debates about language, gives them the knowledge they need to consider their language critically, and ultimately honors their agency over their own language, including their agency in requesting help in conforming to standardized English.

KEYWORDS: antiracism; Basic Writing; feedback; grammar correction; language; predominantly White institution; PWI; standardized English; translingualism; White instructor

Marking grammar in student writing has always induced a sort of cognitive dissonance for me, even before I could articulate why. Early in my teaching career, which I began as a graduate student, I understood that many of my students wanted to master standardized[1] English and it was my job to give them all the tools they might need to achieve their goals. But I also quickly realized that enforcing standardized English disproportionately affected the grades of students of color, multilingual students, and working-class students. I did what I thought I needed to do to minimize the negative effects of grammar marking on students' grades and self-confidence: keeping actual editing marks to a minimum, putting "grammar and mechanics" at the bottom of my rubric and assigning it a nominal number of points, and

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grading in any color other than red. Meanwhile, my studies began to shift simultaneously toward writing pedagogy and English language studies, and my grammar correction approach, which seemed student-centered at the time, just didn't seem to align with what I was learning: language standards are artificially developed, no variety of English is linguistically superior or inherently correct, and the education system is designed to disenfranchise the very students who were most negatively impacted by my grammar marking. Yet, I didn't see an alternative, particularly when students continued to point to grammar as one of their main concerns in their writing.

I faced what Melinda J. McBee Orzulak calls a "linguistic ideological dilemma," which arises when "teachers who take up linguistically responsive positions that value student language variation still struggle in moments of enactment due to expectations that they serve as gatekeepers for 'standard' English(es)" (176). For me, these dilemmas are informed by my position as a White, middle-class writing instructor teaching linguistically heterogenous students at a predominantly White institution (PWI).[2] I am, of course, not the first White writing instructor to narrate their experience confronting their own privilege, linguistic and otherwise, in the classroom. Scholars such as Octavio Pimentel et al., Matthew R. Deroo and Christina Ponzio, and Sarah Stanley have undertaken such explorations of the dilemmas inherent in confronting their privilege in order to effect antiracist writing pedagogies. Emily Machado et al. describe three such dilemmas, two of which are most relevant here: "a sense that attention to grammar in feedback can enhance and/or inhibit written communication" and "apprehension about whether grammar instruction empowers or marginalizes linguistically minoritized students" (39).

These dilemmas are related, the authors argue, in that they are rooted in a monolinguist, prescriptive language tradition. Even instructors who attempt a more descriptivist approach to language and acknowledge the existence of multiple grammars can face these dilemmas due "in large part to pervasive deficit language ideologies in society" (Machado et al. 39). Regarding the belief that attention to grammar in feedback can enhance writing, a review of the literature on error correction in second-language students' writing notes general agreement that these writers find grammar correction helpful (Ferris 105). Nichole E. Stanford reports similar attitudes in US-born Cajun students as well as their instructors. Even some of the leading proponents of code meshing and World Englishes in the classroom caution instructors that "in order to be 'heard' in the dominant discourse, multilinguals" (and, I would add, other linguistically minoritized students) often "need

to learn the existing rules of the discursive practice they wish to be heard in [as well as] how to resist and rewrite the rules, norms or values to serve their interests by meshing the rules" (Michael-Luna and Canagarajah 59).

While I don't believe that you must, as the saying goes, "know the rules to break the rules," I can't deny that some facility with the language of the discourse community a student is targeting does help them communicate within that community, and in the case of academic communities, that means facility with standardized academic English. And a writing class is the place most students expect to gain this facility. The dilemma arises from holding this in tension with the knowledge that excessive (and even non-excessive) grammar marking can lower students' writing confidence and stifle their creativity, a fact that has been well established by scholars including Nancy Sommers, Mike Rose, and Asao B. Inoue (and verified by the experiences of hundreds of writing instructors, myself included).

The second dilemma, an "apprehension about whether grammar instruction empowers or marginalizes linguistically minoritized students," is also complex and one that I am still working through as a White writing instructor. Machado et al. explain that at the heart of this dilemma is the tension between the fact that instructors want to give minoritized students access to the prestige language variety while being mindful of the fact that this practice may "reinscribe language marginalization" (46). This one is difficult because my privilege prevents me from truly understanding where my underserved students are coming from; as I commit to the ongoing work of unlearning my internalized White supremacist assumptions and enacting antiracist pedagogy, my positionality and lived experience mean that my understanding of racism will always be incomplete. In the opening of a 2017 *JBW* article, Stanley describes this positionality in terms of stage directions, setting the scene of the "TEACHER"[3] (a stand-in, she explains, for herself that could just as easily be a stand-in for me) as "a cerebral, well-intentioned, but oblivious WHITE authority" struggling to reconcile her own privilege in her writing feedback to a student of color (5-6). Though the article doesn't focus exclusively on language, she goes on to describe her dilemma in a way I feel is apropos: "*. . . given how the world surrounding how my classroom operates . . . then what should be my response to this particular writer*?" (6). When I settle on a method for responding to grammar, I am doing so as a White language authority, and my presence as the authority brings with it all the violence that we enact on people of color in the larger society. So when students of color specifically tell me that they *want* a type of feedback that I'm hesitant to provide, such as explicit corrections to standardized English,

figuring out how to minimize violence can be complicated. Not surprisingly, as I became more aware of how to discuss and assess language in a way that values students' identities and languaging practices, I found that my sense of dilemma intensified.

At first, I tried to minimize the impact of grammar on students' grades as much as possible—marking errors without taking off points before eventually pivoting to labor-based contract grading (modeled after Inoue), which eliminates the problem of point values but doesn't provide much guidance in marking the actual papers. Around this time, I also finished my graduate program and began teaching at a small Midwestern state university, an appointment that included two sections per semester of Basic Writing (called English for Academic Purposes at my institution[4]). It was also around this time when my work in language studies began to engage more directly with languaging and translingualism as named concepts. But I struggled to integrate these ideas into my teaching in ways that students seemed to find interesting and relevant, perhaps partly due to the fact that my own languaging (especially in professional contexts) tends to be fairly close to standardized, if casual, English. As a model, I'm not exactly translanguaging in an easily observable way, though I am communicating in a way that is authentic to me and my background. Yet, there are many ways to practice translanguaging, as this term encompasses several interrelated principles, methods, and perspectives.

While translingual pedagogies are diverse, they typically strive toward several of the following worthwhile (and interrelated) goals:

- Rejecting the "pathologization of different Englishes that do not meet a narrowly defined set of standards dictated by . . . a privileged few" (Lee, *Politics* 2)
- Questioning the boundaries that separate languages (Horner and Alvarez)
- "Understand[ing] how meaning-making practices can be brought to the attention of writers, so that they gain awareness and sensitivity to language difference and heterogeneity" (Lee and Alvarez 267)
- Helping students understand and expand their linguistic repertoires and developing their critical language awareness (De Costa et al.).

These goals can be achieved through a variety of pedagogies, curricula, and assignments, many of which are beyond the scope of the present article.[5] Yet, because translingual pedagogies reject the idea that one language or variety is superior to another, it can be reasoned that a truly translingual approach to grammar feedback would not require students to conform to standardized academic English and would not necessarily correct deviations from this artificial norm (Lee, "Beyond"; Schreiber and Watson). In my heart, it seemed as though I couldn't work toward translingual pedagogical goals while still correcting grammar. But I also had classrooms full of students telling me that they wanted to work on their grammar, sometimes specifically asking me to mark their grammar as rigorously as possible. Most of my students want access to the prestige language variety. The reasons behind this are complicated and require a nuanced response, which I discuss in the next section, but my race and class privilege complicate my practice of translingualism, as my own academic journey has been aided by forces that make many of theirs more difficult. I felt the need for some sort of middle ground, a way to give students some of the grammar feedback they sought within a translingual framework while attempting to build a more critical understanding of grammar.

This is when I decided to engage students more directly in their own grammar feedback by working with them in determining the type and scope of grammar feedback they wanted. I decided to study their responses more systematically in 2018 in an effort to improve my process of soliciting students' assistance in responding to their grammar. Here, I describe my attempt to bring translingual pedagogical goals in line with my own grammar feedback practices, as well as students' response to this feedback and the ways they advocate for their own needs within translingual grammar assessment. For my data, I solicited and analyzed anonymized reflection responses students submitted with each major assignment in two sections of BW that I taught in Fall 2018, wherein they indicate whether they want me to mark grammar in their assignment and why. My findings prompt a more informed reckoning of goals for translingual pedagogy and grammar feedback for my Basic Writing students and possibly BW populations generally. Before turning to students' responses, though, I describe my specific approach to grammar feedback in relation to similar approaches and translingual pedagogy more broadly.

GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION AS IDEOLOGICAL DILEMMA

As previously noted, translingual pedagogy is incompatible with grammar assessment that requires students to produce writing in standardized academic English and penalizes them for deviations. This traditional approach communicates that language variation is unacceptable in academic contexts and reinforces the linguistic fiction that academic English is inherently superior to the languages and Englishes students use in their daily lives. Even seemingly progressive language policies—such as allowing students to write in their preferred language only for some assignments or for early drafts—send this message when we ask for high-stakes projects and final drafts in standardized English (Canagarajah). These practices work against the development of translingual dispositions, which Xiqiao Wang (drawing on A. Suresh Canagarajah) defines as "an attitude of openness toward language difference and negotiation, through which students develop metalinguistic awareness of their rhetorical repertoire and cultural knowledge as resources for learning" (57-58), because the language choice (standardized academic English) is made for students. They do not have the opportunity to think about how to use their language to achieve their own goals.

More importantly, judging students based on the language standards of the academy, even if only in certain assignments, perpetuates the system that creates their disenfranchisement. Scholars such as Canagarajah and Vershawn Ashanti Young therefore argue for code meshing, which Young explains "blend dialects, international languages, local idioms, chat-room lingo, and the rhetorical styles of various ethnic and cultural groups in both formal and informal speech acts" (114). These practices, which validate students' languaging while inviting critical engagement with their language as an academic resource, can be especially generative in the BW context, as BW students' academic histories are often characterized by a lack of language validation. Yet, while code-meshing approaches certainly can work within translingual pedagogies, I agree with Bruce Horner and Sara P. Alvarez that code meshing is not synonymous with translingualism, primarily due to its focus on linguistic features rather than "the social relations *of the language users to the language*" (20).

Horner and Alvarez instead focus on labor and choice, arguing that even seemingly monolingual texts (such as those that attempt to approximate standardized English) can therefore be the result of translingual processes. They further explain that their perspective of translinguality, one that I agree with,

> [shifts] the sense of language use from consumption to production—even when the acts of production appear merely to exactly 'reproduce' conventional forms. There is far less emphasis, or concern, with doing what is recognizably 'new' (a hallmark demand of neoliberalism). Indeed, newness per se is from this perspective an irrelevant criterion . . . Instead, there is an insistence on the role played by the concrete labor of every instance of writing and speaking, reading and listening in sustaining and revising any and all language, whether seemingly conventional or not, the social relations advanced through such usages, and the responsibility for contributing to such relations . . . The fact that much of that labor is likely to be directed toward maintaining those social relations currently obtaining does not make it any less productive, nor does it obviate the value of recognizing the role of language work in sustaining and, potentially, changing such relations. (20-21)

Taking this view, evidence of translingual dispositions is not always present in the text. Rather, it's reflected in students' thought and labor as they make choices about their language within a translingual framework. Therefore, students who choose standardized grammar for their final products can still engage in translingual processes as they engage in the labor of determining and defining their goals, needs, and languaging strategies.

Difference is inevitable even when writers compose with the goal of conforming to standardized academic conventions, and students still exercise agency by determining "what kind of difference to attempt, how, and why" (Lu and Horner 592). And, I would argue, this is true of *all* students in the classroom, not just those whom we have determined have developed "enough" of an understanding of translingualism or of their own language use. Though translingual pedagogies ideally facilitate and build upon the knowledge students need to engage in translingual laboring, I concur with Lucas Corcoran that BW language pedagogy must begin with "the belief that students already possess profoundly nuanced understandings of language and rhetoric and their socio-political, cultural, and material implications" (61). As important as it is for students to discuss the politics of language, translingualism, code meshing, and related issues, and as much as I try to incorporate them into my own classroom, I also don't want to position myself as the arbiter of whose languaging decisions qualify as legitimate.

This is especially true since much of the work happens internally, beyond the instructor's awareness.

This leaves several questions that must therefore inform pedagogy: How do we determine if a student has developed a translingual disposition if the texts they produce do not code mesh in ways that we recognize? How do we respond if a student makes a languaging choice that we ultimately feel is misinformed or misguided? How can we determine whether students' writing is 'translingual enough,' if such degrees of translinguality are even possible? And how do we respond if a student rejects translingualism altogether? A translingual approach to writing pedagogy and grammar would not *require* students to code mesh or communicate in a typically "non-academic" language or variety—or, more accurately, it assumes that even a text written in standardized English "can result from a translingual writing process" (Schreiber and Watson 95) such as Horner and Alvarez describe. In fact, denying students correction to standardized English when they ask for it can in such instances strip them of their agency to make choices about their own language (Shapiro et al.), which works against the goals of translingual pedagogy.

At the same time, though, research confirms that students' desire for grammar correction frequently comes from an internalized deficit perspective—the idea that their language is incorrect, nonacademic, or inferior, perhaps reinforced by previous school experiences. Indeed, even some within the English discipline still argue that standardizing students' language helps ensure their future success. We see this argument in publications intended for writing scholars (Lazere), general academic audiences (Jenkins), and the public (Fish). The perception that students' language is deficient is often the product of a culture that uses judgements of language as thinly veiled fronts for judgments of race (Rosa and Flores, Inoue, Young) and/or culture (Stanford). Because this attitude is so endemic in education and society at large, students may be unaware that they've internalized racist judgments of their language and writing. As Inoue asks:

> When students discuss writing quality . . . how will they negotiate the ways that any "text is evaluated" against a dominant white discourse? . . . How will they understand past or present evaluations of texts, of their own texts, as more than an individual's failure to meet expectations or goals, but also as a confluence of many other structures in language, school, and society, forming expectations they (and their teacher) have little control over? (19)

Inoue goes on to caution that, without critically interrogating the systems that create linguistic disenfranchisement in the classroom, even a class that attempts to give students as much freedom in their languaging as possible "can easily turn into a class that asks students to approximate the academic dispositions of the academy" (19).

Thus, the dilemma: We can and should provide the education students need to recognize and critique the racism, sexism, and ableism embedded in language standards and make informed choices about their grammar feedback (as I discuss further in the next section), but as Jerry Won Lee argues, we also

> need to reject the notion that any particular criterion can be set for all students . . . and do our best to understand students' individual aspirations and the means to achieve those aspirations. For advocates of translingualism, this does mean accepting the possibility that translingualism may not be what every student wants. Translanguaging assessment means continuing to reimagine assessment as attending to student aspirations on an individual level rather than merely reacting to disciplinary trends. ("Beyond" 185)

Ultimately, students must be regarded as the experts on their own experiences, goals, and needs. We can lead our classes in discussion, analysis, and critique, but I as a middle-class, White English professor—with all the privileges that entails—have much less to lose in negotiations of language than my students of color, my students who speak stigmatized Englishes, or, really, any of my students (none of whom have a PhD in English). I can share my knowledge with them, as they share their knowledge with me, but I ultimately can't speak for them or tell them what's best for them. I don't see this position as a contradiction, though it is sometimes an uncomfortable place to sit, one that involves constant negotiation and adjustment as I attempt to keep the larger context in mind while working with the students in front of me.

From this, it's logical to conclude that a one-size-fits-all approach to grammar feedback doesn't work. A translingual approach to grammar feedback is one that "recognizes that all students . . . already mobilize multilingual resources and deploy translingual practices to . . . *forge agentive identities*" (Xiqiao Wang 59, emphasis added). Part of respecting students' use of language to exercise agency means respecting their wishes regarding grammar

feedback, sharing with them the knowledge they need to make informed, reflective choices, and encouraging them to share their linguistic knowledge with us. Thus, there is room for grammar feedback in translingual writing assessment; however, it must be student-centered and accompanied by writing instruction designed to develop students' translingual dispositions.

A central component of both my framework and those that inspire it is student choice, informed by the labor of critical reflection, though student choice in grammar feedback is not unique to translingual pedagogy. For example, Ryan P. Shepherd et al. describe "grammar agreements" that ask their L2 composition students to choose between "'extensive,' 'focused,' and 'minimal' feedback" on their grammar (44). Each option involves different amounts of grammar marking, with the "extensive" option asking instructors to mark most grammatical errors and requiring students to meet with the instructor outside of class and the "minimal" option only asking the instructor to mark grammar when it impacts meaning. While most teachers in their study found the agreements useful in promoting student agency over their grammar feedback, the authors note the potential for this model to increase instructor workload, particularly if many students request the "extensive" option. Moreover, research demonstrates that such extensive grammar marking is less effective than focused grammar marking, leading the authors to suggest reconsidering or eliminating the "extensive" option (51). Shuichi Amano takes a different approach to grammar agreements with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Japan, asking them to choose between three different types of grammar marking (ranging from explicit correcting to just noting the locations of errors) and questions focused on expanding and developing the content of their writing. To Amano's surprise, most students chose the content-focused questions over grammatical feedback. Neither article discusses translingualism by name, though both approaches highlight student agency in their own grammar feedback by asking students to reflect on the feedback that best serves their needs and honoring their control over their languaging.

In the following section, I describe a self-study of a similar approach to student-centered grammar assessment in my Fall 2018 BW classrooms and offer my findings into students' responses to this approach. While students' responses indicate a persistent focus on standardized English conventions, they also show that, when given the chance to decide how their grammar will be assessed, some students gage this decision with thoughtfulness and, in some cases, a burgeoning translingual awareness.

INSTITUTIONAL AND COURSE CONTEXT

My university serves the small towns and rural communities of the (mostly socially conservative) central and western portions of our state. We have a significant population of first-generation students: 41.9% of undergraduates self-identified as first-generation in 2020. Roughly 74% of undergraduates self-identified as White in Fall 2021, while about 13.5% identified as Latinx (our next-largest ethnic group on campus). Roughly 87% of undergraduates are under 24 years old (University Online Enrollment Factbook). While BW at my institution reflects these demographics to a certain extent, it is more diverse in terms of ethnicity, age, and language. While I don't have an exact figure, based on my experience teaching the course, I would estimate that roughly 30-60% of students in a typical section of ENG 100A self-identify as multilingual. The diversity of students in the class is also reflected in their attitudes toward standardized English, their confidence in their writing and language, and their level of concern over academic grammar conventions.

Our BW course carries as much credit as other courses in the introductory composition sequence but does not count toward students' general education English requirement. Students are typically placed into this course based on exam scores (at the time of the study, the English portion of the ACT or a departmental essay exam, though we have since transitioned to a directed self-placement model) or the recommendation of the University's second-language support office. Others, most often nontraditional students, elect to take the course as a refresher before the general education composition course. At the time of the study, the University offered 1-2 BW courses per semester, though that number has increased recently to 2-3 due to changes in our student population's needs and our shift to directed self-placement.

The stated goals of the course according to the University's course catalog are for students to become more "analytical, interpretative, and self-conscious of the persuasive motives of writing" while "[learning] to develop, organize, and express complex ideas that are appropriate for the academic context." While there are no stated grammar goals in the course description and no set course objectives instructors must meet, the description of the next course in the sequence, Introduction of Academic Writing, includes "stylistic, grammatical, and punctuation skills," so grammar is typically integrated into both courses.

Michael T. MacDonald and William DeGenaro describe a pilot BW curriculum designed to foster a "transcultural ethos," and our courses utilize

many similar practices: "multilingual text selection," "modelling written code-meshing," "drawing on knowledge from inside and outside the text," "regular low-stakes writing assignments," and working with scholarly texts about transcultural language use (31). However, unlike their course, I don't devote my entire semester to language issues. I typically structure the course around four units, each focused on a different genre. While the specific projects change from semester to semester as I revise the course, they almost always include at least one project focused on students' own languages and literacies, a research project, a multimodal or multimedia project, and a final revision assignment. For example, a typical project sequence might include a literacy narrative, reading response (where I provide a list of potential texts that includes code-meshed examples), an "argument two ways" assignment (described below), and a revision assignment (typically one that asks students to revise a previous project to a multimodal and/or public[6] genre).

The literacy narrative and "argument two ways" assignments are particularly revealing of students' language attitudes and practices. In their literacy narratives, students often discuss topics such as learning English as a second language or learning the literacies involved in an extracurricular activity or group. They compose this for an audience of their classmates, so it serves an introductory purpose in addition to supporting the language-related goals I discuss here. Because this is the first major assignment, we also spend time in this unit discussing translingual approaches to language; language discrimination and policing; code meshing; the relationship between language, identity, and power; and the historical development of standardized English. We read texts such as Gloria Anzaldúa's "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," Young's "Should Writers Use They Own English?," and writing from previous students (always shared with permission), as well as texts that call into question print-based definitions of literacy, such as Tony Mirabelli's "Learning to Serve: The Language and Literacy of Food Service Workers." We also analyze representations of dialect and code meshing in popular media.[7]

In the "argument two ways" project,[8] students must create two versions of the same (or a similar) argument: a thesis-driven academic research paper and a second version composed for an audience of their choice, using whatever genre they choose. Students also complete a worksheet that prompts them to analyze the differences in the rhetorical situations and how they tailored different aspects of their communication (including their grammar and language) to fit. Though this project does not specifically require students to write for a nonacademic audience (they can write a presentation to

be delivered to the University's Faculty Senate in addition to their research paper, for instance), I encourage them to use this project to write about an issue they care about and address a community they're already part of, using the language they use with that community. This project provides a great opportunity to discuss how languaging norms vary across and even within communities and gives students the chance to demonstrate their rhetorical dexterity. Though standardized English isn't required for either portion of the project, most students choose to attempt standardized English for the academic portion.

Early in the semester (before the first project is due), I explain how I approach grammar in students' projects. As we discuss it in class, the information is projected on a slide that is also posted to the course Learning Management System (LMS) page for the duration of the semester (see figure 1).

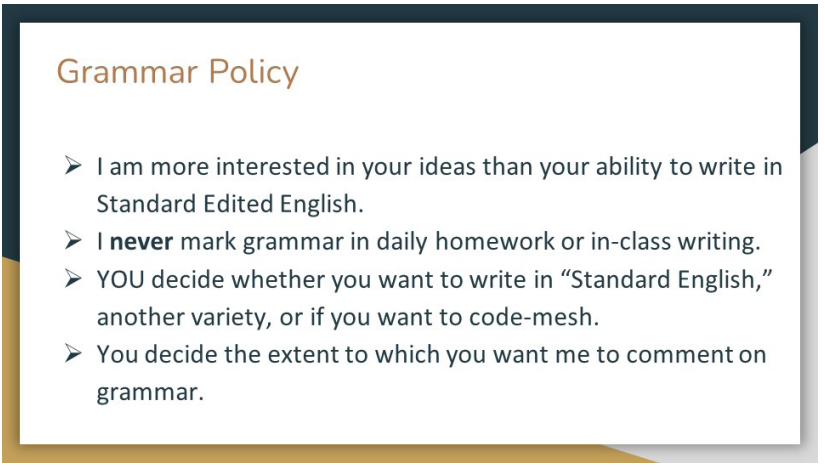

Figure 1. Grammar feedback policy as presented to students.

I explain that this policy is open to revision based on input from students, though so far I haven't received any requests for changes (though I do get some initial confusion).

For students who want grammar feedback in their projects, I use an approach inspired by Richard Haswell's minimal marking. As I explain to students, I use the electronic feedback mechanism built into my university's LMS to highlight areas students may wish to edit. If there is a particular pattern of "error," I provide an explanation (or, more often, a link to an

explanation) in marginal comments. I encourage students to work through their grammar questions with me during office hours or with a writing tutor, though I do not require them to do so. This way, the students who want more guidance on grammar get it, but they decide whether and how this guidance takes place. If they come to my office hours, I guide them through making the edits themselves, explaining conventions and showing students where to apply them as needed. Though I of course can't speak to the conversations students have with tutors, peers, or others as they make any desired grammatical edits, this practice still gives them more ownership over their editing process than they would have if I were to simply edit their writing myself, as they decide whom (if anyone) to consult and the type of help (if any) to request.

In the days after we go over the grammar policy, we discuss some possible reasons why students may or may not want to conform to standardized English and why they may or may not want grammar feedback on their projects. We return to these issues periodically throughout the semester, particularly in the third unit as students negotiate how to frame the same message for two different audiences. Though language is not an explicit focus of every unit, it recurs as a theme or the subject of example texts as we explore other writing topics throughout the semester; for example, we often use Canagarajah's "The Place of World Englishes in Composition" to practice reading and annotating academic texts during the research unit.

With each project submission, I ask students to specify whether they want me to mark deviations from standardized English in their writing, giving them the option to elaborate on their answer if desired. Students complete their reflections in the form of surveys distributed electronically via the course's LMS page. They are graded on completion. Unlike Shepherd et al.'s previously-discussed grammar agreements, I ask these questions in the context of a set of reflection questions I developed (some of which I adapted from Kathleen Blake Yancey's *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*; see Appendix) to promote critical thinking, meta-awareness of linguistic and rhetorical choices, and writing knowledge transfer (Yancey; Yancey et al.). Students answer the same reflection questions with each major project submission. For the study described below, I focus on the fifth and sixth questions:

- Do you want me to make grammatical editing marks on your submission? Remember that grammar/usage doesn't negatively impact your grade either way.
- Why do you want me to mark/not mark for grammar?

STUDY METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

Data Collection and Limitations

My data comes from BW students' anonymized responses to the fifth and sixth questions of the reflections they submitted with each project in Fall 2018. Every student who was enrolled in either section the course for the entire semester was included in the study sample, with a total of 36 students. I tracked responses across the first three major projects in the course, as the final project, a collaborative website, did not allow for easy grammar feedback. Unfortunately, I was not able to collect information from students' actual projects or their classroom interactions due to the limits of my IRB approval, which is a significant limitation to this study. In the future, students could provide further insight into their views of translingual pedagogy through interviews or via documentation of their comments in language-focused discussions. Additionally, as I did not anticipate studying students' reflection responses when I taught during Fall 2018,[9] I did not collect information about students' language background, ethnicity, gender identity, age, or other potentially relevant demographic information. Considering students' grammar feedback requests against these characteristics would be a fruitful area for future research. And because the data was anonymized, I could not track specific students' responses across the semester, though that would be interesting to examine.

Analysis

First, I imported the survey results from the course LMS into Excel (keeping each project's results in a separate tab) and sorted the responses based on whether the student elected to receive or not receive grammar feedback. Then, using an inductive approach informed by grounded theory, I read through the responses several times, making note of common themes (presented in the following section). Once I'd generated a list, I imported students' responses into NVivo and tagged each according to theme. Finally, I repeated the process with the untagged responses (tagging each according to emerging themes) until each response was associated with a thematic tag.

FINDINGS

Table 1 presents the number of students who requested grammar feedback with each project, with "other" referring to students who requested

feedback only on specific features (spelling, comma usage, etc.) or for students who expressed no preference (giving responses such as "you can if you want to").[10]

Table 1. Students' Preferences for Grammar Feedback

	Yes	No	Other	No Submission	Total
Project 1	29	1	3	3	36
Project 2	24	6	3	3	36
Project 3	23	7	1	5	36

As demonstrated by the table, in each project, most students asked for grammar feedback. However, the number of students who elected not to receive grammar feedback grew with each project. Nearly one fifth of total students (and 22.5% of students who submitted a reflection) chose not to receive grammar feedback on the third project.

Yet, these numbers mean little without knowing the rationale behind students' decisions; as discussed previously, even the decision to receive grammar feedback can be agentive. Students' rationales are broken down by theme in table 2 and explained below.[11]

Most often, students' justifications for wanting or not wanting grammar feedback were focused inward. Several expressed *insecurity* about their grammar, like a student who noted that they wanted grammar feedback because: "I received a bad evaluation of grammar in peer review. He or she . . . suggested speaking aloud for finding grammatical errors. However, I'm not a native English speaker, so it's embarrassing to say, I don't know where I was wrong even if I read aloud." Occasionally, students would opt out of grammar feedback for similar reasons: "This was the most rushed paper by far due to family issues so there might be a lot [of grammar issues]. Funny because its[12] a paper over procrastination."

Conversely, other students chose whether to receive grammar feedback based on their *confidence* in their grammar: "I think I was good on this paper and do not really feel like I need [grammar marking] at this time" or "I would want you to mark for grammar because I've really worked to have a good grammar." While these responses do uncritically position "good" grammar as a writing goal, they also show some self-reflection. The students have thought about the degree of effort they've expended on conforming to

Table 2. Themes Informing Students' Grammar Feedback Preferences

	Project 1	Project 2	Project 3	Total
Good Grammar = Good Writing	6	8	9	23
Insecurity	7	5	5	17
Looking toward Future (general)	6	5	3	14
Looking toward Future (specific)	5	5	4	14
Confidence	1	4	2	7
Compare to Past Assignments	3	2	2	7
Grammar Less Important	1	2	1	4
No Explanation Given	4	2	5	11
Total	33	33	31	

standardized English (though they do not provide specific descriptions of that effort), and unless grammar correction from me is a tool that can help them achieve their goals (such as "native" speaker-like communication or praise for hard work), they can do away with it. Unfortunately, most students did not provide justifications or rationales for their goals in their responses, so their anonymized reflections offer little insight in that regard. And again, while I can help the class interrogate the institutional and societal influences behind their attitudes toward language and grammar if they choose to, their goals are ultimately theirs to determine and explain (or not) as they see fit.

I was pleased to see that several responses did indicate a burgeoning awareness of some social influences that affect grammar perception and assessment. For instance, even though I did not include an option to ask me to only focus on specific grammatical features (an option I've included in subsequent semesters), several students' responses demonstrated an understanding that *grammar is less important* than content or that not all grammar "errors" are perceived as equally serious. For example, one student wrote:

"If I misuse a word, or did something that makes no sense, please mark it" before explaining that they did not need feedback on punctuation. Indeed, misused words and unclear meaning are more likely to interfere with the author's message than the occasional misused semicolon. When students did ask me to focus my attention on specific issues, they were almost always spelling and word choice. While these aren't grammatical features per se, the fact that they rank foremost among students' correction requests suggests an awareness that meaning takes precedence over minor surface features.

A few students even stated this outright. One student noted: "Most people don't read papers and go wow they are missing a lot of commas and stuff. I believe that what we have to say is more important than grammar." Statements like this, though relatively infrequent, indicate that some students are thinking about their grammar in the context of their writing as a whole. However, few rationales explicitly point to the development of a translingual disposition as Xiqiao Wang defines it: "an attitude of openness toward language difference and negotiation" (57). Only two comments specifically address language variation: one (in response to the first project) in which the student requested no grammar feedback because English is their third language and their "first two language doesn't have use grammars"[13] and one (in response to the second project) asking for grammar feedback but that I "take it easy on some of the language because it is not formal writing at all." While these responses lack detail, they do present language variation nonjudgmentally.

Other students consider their grammar in relation to past or future work. Those who *compare to past assignments* would often express curiosity over whether their grammar was improving, as in the case of one student who straightforwardly noted in their second reflection, "I want to see how much I have improved." As there were many students who *looked toward the future* in their reflections on their grammar feedback, I felt it appropriate to separate them into two groups: those who thought about *specific* contexts in which they would need to communicate in standardized English ("I have to take English 101 and 102, plus write many other papers for various classes. Although you do not grade for grammatical errors, other instructors do, and I would like to get better.") and those who made more *general* statements about the importance of standardized grammar for their futures ("So I get the chance to see what I did wrong so I can improve in the future").

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many students' responses did implicitly rely on the assumption that *good grammar equals good writing*, the theme that occurred most frequently across responses. These students sometimes expressed

resistance to or outright rejection of translingual ideas. One multilingual student specifically equated "beautiful" writing with "native" style, writing: "In the future, I want to write like a native English style and speed. I want an essay like anybody says it is beautiful." Another student emphasized how seriously they take grammar across all three reflections, connecting it to their career goal of teaching elementary school.[14] The fact that a large majority of students in each project asked for grammar feedback may also point to the pervasiveness of the belief that standardized grammar is necessary for effective writing. It's difficult to unlearn, particularly if students come from of high schools or ELL programs that emphasize grammar. Naturally, some students default to what they've been conditioned to value or, after considering translingual approaches to grammar, ultimately reject them (as I discuss further in the next section). The classroom provides opportunities through curriculum and structures to foster awareness of student's agency as language producers, including their agency to reject translingual ideas. Jerry Won Lee argues that this potential for rejection must be a crucial component of building a translingual classroom ("Beyond"). And while the belief that good grammar equals good writing runs counter to the goals of my class and to translingual approaches to grammar, we can use even these students' responses as a springboard toward developing a more complete understanding of language, as I discuss in the final section.

STUDENT AGENCY, INTELLECTUAL RIGOR, AND TRANSLINGUAL DISPOSITIONS: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering students' responses on their own, I initially felt discouraged. While some students do show thoughtful reflection and even awareness that standardized grammar is not the most important feature of good writing, there are no outright rejections of the status of standardized academic English, no celebrations of one's own language (unless it was their mastery of standardized English), and not even many fully-articulated explanations for choosing standardized English. This was consistent across projects regardless of audience. It's easy to conclude from an initial read that students did not develop translingual dispositions. Yet, it's important to consider these responses in the broader context of the classroom and students' larger educational goals. Keeping in mind Corcoran's assertion that "students already possess profoundly nuanced understandings of language and rhetoric" (61), as well as the internal, sometimes-invisible labor of translingual negotia-

tion, I want to resist making sweeping judgements about students' language awareness, especially as it applies to their language outside of school. This is especially true when "profoundly nuanced understandings of language" might include the understanding that they will be punished for nonstandardized language forms in other classes or situations.

With this in mind, I look to other signs of students' progress toward developing translingual dispositions. Most of these come from their engagement with other elements of the class. While students were seemingly reluctant to apply anything but a prescriptivist lens to their own work, they were more open to discussing translingualism in the abstract or as it applied to the course material. When it wasn't tied to evaluation of their writing, I noticed that students engaged in debates about the relationship between language and power, the purpose of language standards, and the functions and rhetorical potential of code meshing. They expressed thoughtful ideas about the course readings, bonded over shared experiences with English education, and shared insights from their own language background—for example, regional slang or phrases from their other languages. Even most of the students who resisted translingual ideas grappled with them in a way that required critical thought. Yet, not all did, which leads me to my first recommendation.

Recommendation 1: Respond to Reasons for Translingual Rejection

Even if a student uncritically rejects translingualism,[15] there are still good reasons to honor their decisions over their grammar feedback. While we as instructors may know that competency in standardized English conventions does not guarantee future economic success and that the desire to conform to standardized or "native" English is often a response to the West's false claims of language ownership, we should not ignore, dismiss, or intellectualize our students' concerns that their ideas will be dismissed or they will lose access to opportunities because of others' judgments of their language. As Inoue and Stanford each note, when future instructors penalize students for nonstandardized grammatical features, students are likely to internalize this failure, and they will certainly be held accountable for any consequences brought about by lowered grades. Further, ignoring students' requests for grammar help can lead them to lose confidence in their writing instructors (Ferris), and all students deserve to feel prepared and supported as they enter future writing situations. If I've done my job as

an instructor, students should have had the opportunity to learn the forces behind language judgments and decide how to respond to them.

Recommendation 2: Minimize the Evaluative Space; Amplify the Critical-Interrogative Space

Still, I found that, even though many students were still worried about their grammar, they eventually began to respond to the message that good writing is about more than grammar. During one-on-one draft conferences, I noticed that students began to focus more on ideas and expression rather than editing. The students who wanted editing help would generally schedule a separate meeting to focus on sentence-level concerns, meaning that rather than spending all our one-on-one time with editing, we were able to work through a variety of writing issues in our discussions. This meant that students produced more original, complex, and developed papers than they would have if they'd expended most of their energy on sentence-level concerns (as many had been doing previously). Even for the students who can't or won't engage with translingual perspectives, this is still a desirable outcome. Again, these meetings took place separately from any sort of evaluation, leading me to wonder how the evaluative context, even under labor-based contract grading, impacts students' attitudes toward their language. I'm unsure whether students truly are reluctant to let go of their preoccupation with standardized English in their own writing or if it's the evaluative context specifically that triggers this preoccupation with standardized English as, even in the absence of traditional grading, responding to writing automatically shifts the discussion of grammar back to a mainly textual endeavor. This question would be an interesting one to explore in future research and teaching.

Recommendation 3: Enhance Potential for Reflection

Another site for critical interrogation of students' language ideologies, perhaps the most important one from a response standpoint, is the written reflection. While the students studied here were invited to reflect on their grammar feedback preferences, few chose to do so in the survey, and I believe the wording of the reflection itself contributed to this reluctance. There is definitely more potential there to provide space for students to reflect on the tensions and contradictions inherent in course instruction, for example, and to elicit reasons students might want to conform to or subvert standardized English. The reflection can be reframed to gain more

insight into the kind of labor involved in students' translanguaging, and if instructors and students track and discuss these responses throughout the semester, students' evolution in thought provides yet another rich site for reflection (and future research).

Recommendation 4: Use Translanguaging to Build Metacognitive Awareness

Finally, while allowing students to choose their own level of grammar feedback may seem overly permissive or lacking in rigor to some, I believe it is actually more intellectually demanding than applying a uniform grammar policy across students, with the potential to even lead to "transferable meta-knowledge of writing" (Xiqiao Wang 60). We know that standardized English isn't always going to best meet students' writing goals within the rhetorical situations in which they find themselves. In the "Argument 2 Ways" project, for instance, students who submit TikTok videos or Twitter threads know that they're more likely to engage their audience with more conversational language (and, in the case of social media, length constraints like Twitter's 280-character limit may prevent them from using standardized academic English—hence, conventions like using numerals 2 substitute 4 words). Even in more traditionally "academic" writing situations, students may choose to code mesh in service of their argument, like Anzaldúa or Young. By refusing to judge all student writing according to standardized English conventions, openly encouraging students to code mesh as desired, and asking students to explain their language choices in their writing, we invite them to truly think about their language goals. This metacognitive awareness of language, built through reflecting on their languaging, helps build students' genre awareness and facilitates their growth as writers (Driscoll et al.). As Xiqiao Wang alludes to, this metacognition has also been linked to writers' ability to transfer their writing knowledge to various rhetorical situations (Yancey et al.), which would be interesting to further investigate. Despite some instructors' fear that the lack of enforcement of standardized English does not prepare students for the "real world," in reality a translingual approach to grammar assessment likely serves as even better preparation.

By highlighting students' voices in the conversation surrounding translingual writing feedback in BW, I hope to extend the dialogue on the teaching applications of translingual theory and provide insight into how our pedagogies are taken up by students. Students' responses resist neat categorization: though most students ask for help with grammar standardization, for

instance, their reasons for doing so vary in content and depth. Beyond this, the fact that students seemed reluctant to describe in detail the translingual processes behind their text production—giving reflection responses that, in many cases, seem to privilege standardized English—while appearing more comfortable discussing translingualism in the abstract, is interesting and warrants more systematic investigation. Asking students to be active negotiators in their own grammar feedback may not end language discrimination or erase the power dynamics inherent in the teacher-student relationship. Yet it may allow for more individualization, more critical thought, and a more accurate in-class representation of how language actually functions through agency and choice.

Notes

1. I use "standardized grammar," "standardized English," etc. rather than constructions like "Standard English" or "Standard Edited English" because it "stresses the agency involved in the standardizing process" (Stanford 79) and somewhat avoids the implication that other varieties are "substandard."
2. Both my PhD-granting institution and my current university are PWIs. I further discuss my current class and university demographics in a later section.
3. The capitalization reflects the genre convention of capitalizing character names and other important elements in stage directions.
4. Despite the title, the course is not an EAP course in the traditional sense of the term; it serves as our Basic Writing course. I refer to it as Basic Writing or BW throughout the rest of the article to reflect the course's purpose more accurately.
5. Two recent collections, *Linguistic Justice on Campus: Pedagogy and Advocacy for Multilingual Students* (eds. Schreiber et al.) and *Teaching English Variation in the Global Classroom: Models and Lessons from Around the World* (eds. Devereaux and Palmer), as well as the final section of *Reconciling Translingualism and Second-Language Writing* (eds. Silva and Zhaozhe Wang) and the article "Confronting Internalized Language Ideologies in the Writing Classroom: Three Pedagogical Examples" (Slinkard and Gevers) are excellent resources for those looking to learn more about specific teaching practices that advance translingual goals.
6. Students can opt out of the public sharing component or share their work anonymously.

7. For more detail about these lessons, see Sladek and Lane 2019.
8. Thank you to my former MA student Kimberlee Haberkorn for the initial inspiration for this project.
9. Because I removed identifying information from students' responses, I was able to receive IRB approval to use them after the end of the semester.
10. While I did not specifically indicate that students could provide responses other than "yes" or "no" this time, students' responses from this semester inspired me to explicitly note in future semesters that students have the option to request feedback only on specific features or to provide me with more nuanced direction.
11. Table 2 does not include students who did not submit reflections.
12. To preserve the authenticity of students' voices, I present their comments without editing for spelling and grammar conventions unless such editing is necessary to clarify meaning.
13. This is almost certainly untrue, as most linguists hold that all languages have a grammatical system (Anderson). It's likely that the student's other languages have a very different grammatical system than English and that the student's knowledge of these languages' grammars may be more internalized than academic.
14. Though I was not able to track specific students' responses due to their anonymization, this student consistently referred to their major and referenced previous responses in their subsequent responses, so I can confidently conclude the responses come from the same student.
15. When I refer to students who "reject translingualism," I mean those who, after engaging in class discussion, explicitly reject translingual goals or principles and/or remain committed to the superiority of standardized English (not those who produce seemingly monolingual texts, which can be the result of translingual processes).

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APPENDIX: PROJECT REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Who do you consider your primary audience for this project?
    a. How are they like and unlike you?
    b. What do you expect them to already know about the topic?
    c. How might they feel about your topic?
2. What is your primary goal in this piece of writing? What are you trying to accomplish?
3. How would you describe the type(s) of language(s) you write with in this project? Please discuss level of formality, any dialects or languages you mix, and how you would describe your overall writing style.
4. Why did you choose to write in the language variety/varieties that you did?
    a. What effect do you hope your language has on your readers? Why do you want your language to have that effect?
5. Do you want me to make grammatical editing marks on your submission? Remember that grammar/usage doesn't negatively impact your grade either way.
6. Why do you want me to mark/not mark for grammar?
7. What was the most challenging part of this assignment for you?
8. What was the part that came most naturally?
9. What was your favorite part of the unit?
10. If I teach this unit again, what should I change?
11. What do you wish you could have improved upon in your project? Why couldn't you do that?
12. What did you learn about writing in this unit?
13. For your next project, you will write [brief description of next project]. What would you like to remember from this and/or the last unit to help you with the next unit/project?
14. What advice would you give to a student next semester writing the same assignment?
15. Anything else you would like to say?

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