Scholarly Re-vision

Using Burkean Frames as a Heuristic for Iterative Narrative Reflection and Practice

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved November 2019 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2019

ABSTRACT

This dissertation develops a heuristic—one I call the iterative narrative reflection framework—for rhetorically engaged, data-driven teacherly theory building using Kenneth Burke's frames of acceptance and rejection. Teacher-scholars regularly develop curricula and lesson plans informed by theory and prior experience, but the daily practice of teaching and learning with students rarely plays out as expected. In many cases, institutional constraints and the unpredictable lives of students interact with teachers' plans in surprising and sometimes confounding ways. Teachers typically make sense of such challenges by constructing post-hoc narratives about what happened and why, attributing motives and agencies to other participants in ways that suggest how to respond, move forward, and get back on track. Whether such narratives are part of a deliberate practice of reflection or an informal and largely unnoticed mental process, they are rarely thought of as constructed accounts and therefore as rhetorical acts that can be subjected to serious review, criticism, and revision. Yet these stories are shaped by familiar genre conventions that influence interpretations of events and motives in ways that may or may not serve well as teachers consider how best to respond to unfolding events. Using the iterative narrative reflection framework to guide my analysis of my own teacherly narratives through multiple layers of reflection and criticism, I demonstrate across the dissertation's three cases how such deliberate, methodical analysis can reveal tacit assumptions and additional interpretive possibilities. Ultimately, such a process of iterative reflection enables the teacher-scholar to choose from among a wider range of available means of persuasion and pedagogical possibilities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my mother, Valoa Robinson, who taught me how to enjoy the comic dance of language and life even when your legs wobble and fatigue dogs your steps; and my father, Lynn Robinson, who gave me many early lessons in creative problem-solving, methodical inquiry, and seeing failure as an essential part of the process. Though they had no material means to support me in my educational endeavors, my parents endowed me with invaluable mental tools, without which I never could have made it this far.

I have also been helped along my educational career by countless professors and fellow graduate students. When I was still an undergraduate, Vaun Waddell gave me my first academic job; he remains a valued mentor and friend. I also thank Karen Holt for introducing me to rhetorical studies, and Scott Samuelson for giving me the timely encouragement I needed to pursue graduate studies.

I express particular gratitude to the members of my PhD committee: Elenore Long, for reading countless drafts and providing so much excellent feedback; Shirley Rose, both for shepherding my research process and for mentoring me in Writing Program Administration; and Keith Miller, for being such a keen reader, Burke scholar, and always-supportive friend. Likewise, I thank Victor Villanueva, who made me a Burkean; Nancy Bell, who hired me as her research assistant and taught me much about the pedagogical power of comedy; and Kristen Arola, through whose friendship I have developed a keener interest in multimodal composition.

Among the many classmates and friends I have met during the course of my graduate studies, a few deserve particular mention. I could not have asked for a better

peer mentor at the outset of my Master's studies than Donna Evans. The "Glitter Mafia" has provided endless hours of support, commiseration, laughter, and sparkles; there never was a more awesome graduate support network than Abigail Oakley, Andrea Severson, Cindy Tekobbe, Holly Fulton-Babicke, Monica Boyd, and Nancy Roche. I owe Nancy a double portion of thanks (and some LEGO) for her invaluable skills as a copyeditor. And of course, I could not have written this dissertation without the help of Steven Hopkins, whose office chats I will no doubt continue to enjoy for many years to come now that I can once again find him just down the hall.

Last of all, I thank my Heavenly Father, whose boundless grace delights, humbles, sustains, and inspires me.

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CHAPTER 1

REFRAMING TEACHING AND RESEARCH

OR "ATTITUDES TOWARD ACADEMIA"

This chapter previews the problem driving my study and the heuristic I constructed to pursue it. Its title echoes Kenneth Burke's *Attitudes toward History,* from which I draw key concepts for reflection and situated theory building about teaching and research. A dissertation is the final threshold through which a scholar must pass in order to secure professional membership within the institutions of higher education. It is, as many before me have noted, a journey fraught with difficulty, both inherent and constructed, both personal and institutional. This dissertation is a work of autoethnography; it composes, critiques, and transforms a narrative of my own halting journey through this initiatory process. By critiquing my own narratives, I seek to authorize this autoethnographic work as a legitimate contribution to our disciplinary body of knowledge, first in my own eyes by coaching an attitude toward my journey which makes professional use out of my rich store of error as an apprentice to the discipline, and second in the eyes of academic gatekeepers who require allegiance to the standards of academic discourse (what Burke would call the "reigning symbols of authority" (*Attitudes* 58)) and the production of knowledge that is original and useful to the field.

Constructing a Heuristic for Reflection and Theory-Building

The tension between our situated theories and our unfolding experience creates a rhetorical space for knowledge construction (Flower, "Teachers"), and such knowledge, while not necessarily generalizable, is of great importance to the practice of researching,

teaching, and writing program administration. But, as Paul Lynch observes in *After Pedagogy*, it is less clear how we might go about systematically analyzing the gap between what we theorize is likely to happen in our teaching and research, and the situation as it actually unfolds. As Charles Bazerman has noted about his own efforts to study how innovators build their conceptual frameworks, composition as a discipline has yet to develop methods for studying the very crux of this matter. He writes: "I have found no means to gain empirical purchase on the actual internal processes by which this deep work occurs" ("Writing with Concepts" 268). In this dissertation, I first construct, then analyze and re-construct autoethnographic narratives of my experience as a teacher and a researcher to contribute to this line of inquiry.

My inquiry arose from a need to make sense of what I perceived at the time as significant failures of, or at the very least limitations in, my efforts to engage in research about the teaching of writing. Following Janet Atwill's advice in *Rhetoric Reclaimed* for eliciting rhetoric's capacity for knowledge building, I wanted an approach that was "rational and repeatable without being rule governed" (82)—both systematic enough to be generalizable, yet flexible enough to adapt to the practical complexities that I was encountering through teaching and conducting research in composition.

On the one hand, I needed methods for collecting and describing experiential data systematically, and on the other, I needed complementary rhetorical theory that would help me make productive knowledge of that experience. As it happened, I found the theory first, and the methods only much later. My methods are derived primarily from Carolyn Ellis's *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography*. Autoethnography is, as Ellis, Adams, and Bochner explain, "an approach to research and

writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience." Autoethnography provided me with a systematic means (described in greater detail in the next chapter) for gathering the sort of data necessary for a work of reflection and situated theory building. Not only that, but its emphasis on narrative as an important tool for knowledge construction also clarified for me the potential of Kenneth Burke's "frames of acceptance and rejection," inflected by the work of Linda Flower and Paul Lynch, among others, as techne for analyzing my own experience in ways that have proven extraordinarily useful. In the next section, I offer a methodological justification for my approach.

Framing Reflection and Situated Theory Building

How situated theory works is a vexing disciplinary question. Lynch argues, "it is not enough merely to reflect on previous experiences; those reflections must find their way back into new practices" (88). Toward this end, Bazerman offers criteria for a successful theory: a "heuristic for action" that enables us to "do better with [its] guidance than without" ("Theories" 103) and to create more habitable "discourse universes" for ourselves ("Theories" 111). While literature isn't typically thought of as a kind of theorizing, Kenneth Burke argues that it does offer us "equipment for living," in an essay by the same name (304). To analyze the autoethnographic vignettes presented in succeeding chapters, I draw on Kenneth Burke's frames of acceptance and rejection, with particular emphasis on his "comic frame," which he argues to be the most suitable for just the kind of thing my dissertation project aims to study: the composition and revision of human life (*Attitudes* 173).

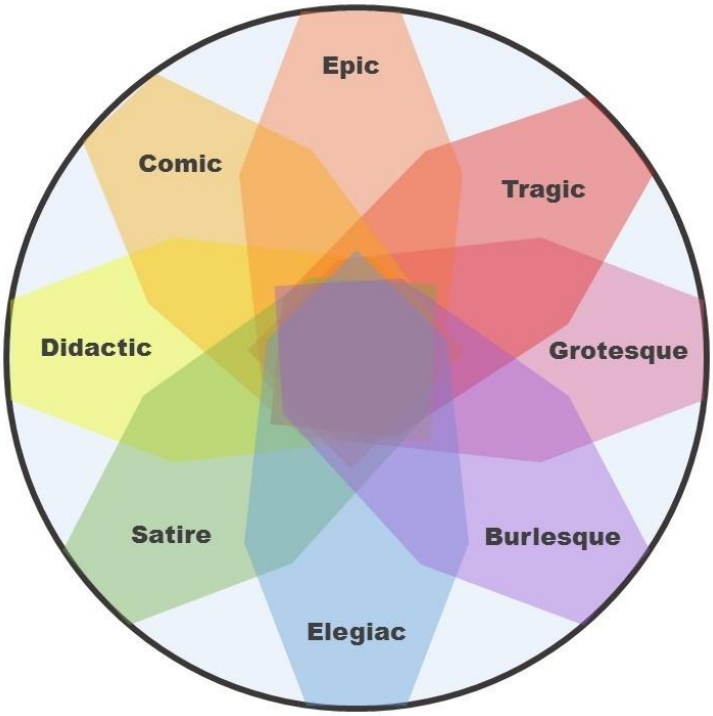
In *Attitudes toward History*, Burke argues that our representation of motives—our own and others'—is a narrative construct shaped by typically unconscious rhetorical choices. Thus, he writes that "in the motives we assign to the actions of ourselves and our neighbors, there is implicit a program of socialization. In deciding *why* people do as they do, we get the cues that place us with relation to them" (170), and the relationships we thus create guide how we can respond to the situations in which we find ourselves. Articulating these guides for action so that they may be systematically tested and refined is—as Linda Flower writes in "Teachers as Theory Builders"—a rhetorical project. While the teachers in Flower's study engage in the conscious construction of situated theories, her discussion of students' task representations indicates that even when we are not consciously engaged in reflecting on past experience, drawing on prior knowledge, and making informed predictions about what will happen or what we can do next, we are still making choices about how to interpret situations and approach our work.

Just as Flower's students were typically unaware that "their representation of a task was a thing they constructed" and that they could choose to construct it differently in order to make available other options for completing the task (12), our attribution of motives is typically tacit—and indeed is intertwined with our task representations. Like the task representations of Flower's students, our attribution of motives is often done while the situation is still unfolding. Flower argues for the value of methodically constructing such situated theories, and I would add that our methods should include an examination of the motives we attribute to agents within our constructed narratives. Our choices about what motives we attribute to agents in a given situation are ordinarily driven by past experience and habit, rather than a conscious consideration of many

possible motives. Reflection provides an opportunity for us to consciously test our representations and consider other options.

Both reflection (which emphasizes past experience) and situated theory building (which emphasizes future action) involve a kind of storytelling: they have a situation or scene which includes characters and objects with which we can interact and which may resist our interactions. They always include a sequence of events that may be considered causally or teleologically. And these narratives carry values which may be more or less implicit. We can think of our reflections and situated theories as text, or as Burke would have it, as "structures of symbolism" (*Attitudes* 34). Burke suggests that in literary or poetic forms, we find each genre's "own peculiar way of building the mental equipment (meanings, attitudes, character) by which one handles the significant factors of his time" (ibid); elsewhere he argues that normally "the imaginative expression of a trend," that is, aesthetic movements, the development of new genres, "precedes its conceptual-critical counterpart," that is, the enactment of a *zeitgeist* through philosophy and public policy (75). In other words, our personal narratives, whether reflective or future-oriented, are subject to genre conventions. It follows that we can subject them to a critical lens just as we could any other text. This dissertation models such a practice, and adopts Burke's "poetic categories" (34), through which he taxonomizes his frames of acceptance and rejection, to create a kaleidoscopic lens through which to examine experience-based narratives I have constructed about my research and teaching (see fig. 1).

Figure 1: Kaleidoscopic Lens of Burke's Poetic Categories



Viewing Popular Images of Teaching and Research through Burke's Poetic Categories

In this section, I illustrate Burke's poetic categories by analyzing several film and television representations of teachers and researchers. However, my purpose is not to show that I have become a Burkean scholar of film. Rather, this portion of my dissertation offers useful touchstones for scholar-practitioners who bear responsibility for training TAs, adjuncts, and new faculty who perhaps have less of a teaching background, and for teachers who are compelled to engage more deeply in reflective praxis and situated theory building. Because popular cultural narratives permeate our consciousness and exert persuasive power over the ways in which we construct ourselves and others, many rhetoric and composition scholars have theorized about and analyzed mass media representations such as advertisements (Barthes), visual reproductions in print media

(Hall), film and television (McLuhan, Blakesley), social media (Daer et al.), memes (Huntington), and video games (Bogost), among others. Thus, my Burkean analysis of several film and television representations of teaching in this chapter is one way of showing audiences that Burkean frames permeate the cultural imaginary about teaching. It also enables me to illustrate what these frames mean to audiences who are unfamiliar with Burke's work, and/or for whom terms like "epic, comic, and tragic" carry different connotations than they do in Burkean terms.

The narratives we tell about the past and the future are intended to help us cope with or address the problems of existence. Burke argues, following William James, that in constructing these narratives we can adopt basically two attitudes: an attitude of acceptance or an attitude of rejection (*Attitudes* 3-4), and by "attitude," Burke means "an incipient program of action" (20). In other words, attitudes prepare us to act and suggest what form our actions should take. Because frames of acceptance "name both friendly and unfriendly forces [and] fix attitudes that prepare for combat" (20), acceptance doesn't mean passivity or resignation—indeed the distinction between acceptance and rejection is, according to Burke, "primarily a matter of emphasis" (21). To illustrate and test his frames of acceptance and rejection, Burke considers several literary genres: the epic, tragic, and comic, which he identifies as primarily frames of acceptance; elegy, satire, and the burlesque, which emphasize rejection; and finally grotesque (or mystical) and didactic, which Burke describes as transitional. However, he says, "None of these poetic categories can be isolated in its chemical purity. They overlap upon one another, involving the qualitative matter of emphasis" (57). Attitudes cannot ever be wholly accepting or rejecting, because in accepting one condition, we reject other possibilities—

what matters is which attitude we embrace as primary (21). Furthermore, Burke acknowledges that "one could with justice divide the field differently" (57), and he does just that in Part II of *Attitudes,* where he discusses frames of acceptance and rejection in terms of historical epochs. In essence, then, Burke tells us that meaning-making in both literature and life is guided by narrative conventions, and therefore that we can apply the same critical tools that we use to analyze texts to analyze the ever-developing narratives that shape our public discourse. It follows, then, that a similar method can be applied at the smaller scale of interpersonal relationships in the context of writing pedagogy: the project of this dissertation.

The selection of these literary genres and their associated tropes is neither arbitrary, nor specially privileged. Burke finds "suggestive value" (*Attitudes* 57) in "reading all human behavior through the lens of drama" (Newstock 471), no doubt in part because these genres are familiar to him as a literary scholar—a familiarity likely to be shared generally within the umbrella of "English departments," notwithstanding our varied disciplinary emphases. Thus, bearing in mind that no framework ought to be held too rigidly, I am suggesting that we, as reflective writing teachers, might take up—as I do in this project—Burke's poetic categories (epic, tragic, comic, elegy, satire, burlesque, grotesque, and didactic) as a heuristic by which we might reflect on and make conscious choices about our attribution of motives in our processes of reflection and situated theory building.

Burke's idiosyncratic method of alluding to other scholars and texts without any formal system of citation makes it somewhat challenging to trace the sources of his thought, but his descriptions of literary genres in *Attitudes toward History* evidently draw

on Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* for genres of more ancient lineage. His explanations of genres which developed later bear strong resemblance to Snider's genre descriptions in his *System of Shakespeare's Dramas.* Although Burke is now known primarily for his groundbreaking work as a rhetorician and his use of Aristotle is unsurprising in that light, he was also an influential literary critic whose work on Shakespeare continues to be felt by literary critics, directors, and performers (Newstock 470). Burke's literary categories can best be understood in this context of Aristotle and Shakespeare.

In the next section, I review these terms and note some important differences between the genres they represented for Burke and the conventions they may evoke in current usage, particularly for my purposes as lenses for interpreting the work of teaching and research in this dissertation. In so doing, I create a shared language for engaging in the work of reflection and situated theory building. Following Burke's lead, to illustrate the poetic categories I draw examples of researchers and teachers from popular culture films and television shows such as *Stand and Deliver, Wit, Educating Rita, Mr. Holland's Opus, The Fly, The Faculty,* and *The Big Bang Theory*, and examples from public discourse about teachers and academics. But this is not a work of literary or film criticism; it is the attitudes underlying the genres, rather than their form, that most interests us. Furthermore, I acknowledge that in appropriating Burke's categories for autoethnographic rather than primarily socio-political purposes, I must necessarily change them, perhaps just as thoroughly in my own way as they have been changed in colloquial usage by semantic drift. But such adaptation is necessary, not only to make the meanings of these frames accessible for my audience but also to make them more

serviceable for myself.[1] In selecting paradigmatic narratives for the poetic categories, I discover my cues for analyzing my own experience. But in following Burke's lead, I also invoke his disclaimer: that these examples are to be taken as suggestive only. I do not intend to embark upon a thorough analysis of any narrative but my own.

Frames of Acceptance

As noted earlier, acceptance is not passivity. Acceptance frames are identified as such because they enable a person to make adjustments as necessary in order to retain their "allegiance to the reigning symbols of authority" (Burke, *Attitudes* 58), an active process that often involves influencing as well as being influenced by institutional forces and policies (though not necessarily in equal measure). In the push-and-pull between identification with and division from societies and institutions, a frame of acceptance emphasizes identification. Burke identifies the dramatic genres of epic, tragic, and comic as among the frames of acceptance; each of these three frames enables identification through different rhetorical and social processes.

The Epic Frame: Heroic Teaching in Stand and Deliver

The epic is generally recognized as the oldest literary genre, which Burke says "arises under primitive, non-commercial, conditions" and is "designed…to make men 'at home' in those conditions" (*Attitudes* 34-35).[2] The epic is characterized for our purposes

[1] Christina Santana's study of a tool for engaging in public discourse about the future of driverless cars demonstrates how Burke's frames may be adapted in order to facilitate productive deliberation and promote consideration of multiple perspectives and "more realistically complex understandings and expectations of the future" (i). Participants in her study gravitated toward their own understandings of Burke's terms rather than their literary definitions; some participants found them "difficult to grasp" or felt that the frames imposed "an unnatural focus" (92), but nonetheless a majority of participants found them helpful for "generatively widening their thinking" (90).

[2] Though note Brecht's "epic theatre" of the early 20th century.

by its elevated language, serious subject, grand scale, and heroic deeds. Epics typically involve a metaphysical (and often also physical) journey. Epics help shape cultural norms and values, by either reinforcing them or calling them into question. The epic hero is characterized by "courage and individual sacrifice for group advantage" and the audience is encouraged to share the epic hero's virtue vicariously through identification (35-36). The current, colloquial usage of "epic" to denote something that is excellent, outstanding, or impressive dates back merely to the 1980s, and this current usage retains only superficial traces of its original sense—the elements of struggle and sacrifice so essential to the epic frame are no longer immediately apprehended by the term. An epic character is motivated by a desire to accumulate public virtue through personal struggle and perhaps heroic sacrifice.

There is no shortage of modern depictions of cinematic teachers in the epic frame, and a representative example will no doubt elicit a number of additional examples following the same narrative structure. In films depicting teachers (and it is usually teachers rather than researchers), the protagonists must buck educational conventions and endure the opprobrium of their peers in order to win the respect of and teach an especially unruly group of students, who go on to achieve remarkable educational success. The teacher's commitment to and success at teaching invariably requires great personal sacrifice—whether that means turning down more lucrative and prestigious jobs, neglecting personal relationships or ambitions, or even their own health.

For example, in *Stand and Deliver*, Jaime Escalante quits a lucrative job as a computer programmer to teach the subject at a struggling East LA high school populated almost entirely by Hispanic students, only to discover that the school's funding for the

purchase of computers has fallen through for the third year in a row. He is assigned instead to teach basic math, but quickly decides to teach the kids basic algebra instead. Meanwhile, his colleagues include people originally hired to teach PE and music, who feel relatively unqualified to teach much beyond basic math. Thus, Escalante is presented as a singularly extraordinary individual, located in a community in need of saving.

Initially dismissive and belligerent, many of Escalante's students become converted to taking the study of math seriously through Escalante's unconventional teaching methods. Escalante also meets with resistance in a department meeting when he declares his intention to teach calculus the next year. Whereas the other faculty debate the community's economic problems and express concern about building up students' confidence in the face of limited opportunities, he insists that the solution is setting higher academic standards, declaring that "students will rise to the level of expectation."

Escalante's epic prowess is not confined to the intellectual realm, either; outside the classroom, we see him breaking up a gang fight on campus, and physically restraining one of the gang members. Later in the film, enraged by the accusation that his students have cheated on the AP exam without being given an opportunity to prove their innocence, Escalante growls a threat to beat up an ETS investigator if he ever sees him on the street.

The epic hero's sacrifice appears in multiple forms throughout the film. First, we learn that Escalante has given up a more lucrative and prestigious career in the private sector in order to teach in this struggling, inner-city school. Then, as we see him achieving more and more success in the classroom, we're given a glimpse into his family life, strained from his neglect of his wife and child in favor of his students. As the date of

the exam draws nearer and the pressure on both teacher and students increases, Escalante loses his temper over his would-be proteges' inability to calculate a correct answer to a practice question. He storms out of the classroom, only to collapse from a heart attack in an empty stairwell. Ultimately, however, all of these personal sacrifices are swept aside, either undone or dismissed as unimportant: he leaves the hospital early and returns triumphantly to his students' study session in progress. When he begins to succumb to discouragement in the midst of the AP cheating controversy, he expresses doubts to his wife about his choice to be a teacher rather than a programmer. Despite her earlier anger at his familial neglect, Mrs. Escalante reminds her husband that although his teaching career earns less money and less respect in the eyes of American society, he has the love of his students. And of course, his heroic sacrifice is ultimately vindicated when 18 of his students not only pass the exam, but clear suspicion that they cheated by retaking it with similar results. As Escalante strides triumphantly down the otherwise-empty hallway, punching the air, a coda lists the number of students from Garfield High School who have passed the AP Math exam, which has increased year after year since 1982, when the film is set.

It is worth noting that although *Stand and Deliver* is among the many "Epic Teacher" films "based on a true story," its historical details have been embellished to better fit the epic frame. The real Jaime Escalante taught math and physics (not computer programming) for many years in his home country of Bolivia, and his career in the United States prior to returning to teaching consisted of jobs in food service and as an electronics technician, while teaching himself English and returning to college to obtain US teaching credentials ("Jaime Escalante" 1). He taught at Garfield for four years before

teaching his first calculus class, and it was a further four years before the fateful AP exam in 1982, depicted in the film, took place. Notably, however, his students' nickname, "Kimo," is no Hollywood embellishment; it's Indian sidekick Tonto's nickname for the eponymous hero of the radio and television series *The Lone Ranger* (ibid. 2). In other words, Escalante's students explicitly frame him as an epic Western hero.

Perhaps this tendency to write teachers in the epic frame arises from our association of the epic genre with "the primitive condition."[3] For in our cultural consciousness, what are the untutored but "primitive"? And if so, then it is the heroic task of the idealized educator, endowed by nature (it is supposed) and by struggle with uncommon intellectual virtues, to enlighten his pupils.

The Tragic Frame: Teaching and Research in Wit

Tragedy is the next-oldest literary genre, after the epic. In the Aristotelean tradition, tragedy involves a reversal of fortune, usually brought about by excessive pride, which leads to the breaking of a divine edict or moral law: a disruption of the natural order. Shakespeare scholar Denton Snider says that the tragic individual "must remain true to the ethical element of his nature, and he perishes rather than surrender or abandon his principle…. He prefers death to the loss of his end" (48). The tragic fall not only reverses the protagonist's fortunes, but may have negative implications for others too. The punishment typically involves ostracism and death—like the biblical scapegoat. While the tragic ending is catastrophic, it is redemptive nonetheless. It's about reasserting

[3] Alternately, the phenomenon might simply arise from the fact that most authors are highly educated; like Plato's recommendation of the "philosopher king" in the *Republic*, they prize most highly those virtues which they themselves possess—we all would like to be the heroes of our own stories.

human limitations by symbolically excising those who threaten or violate those limits. A tragic protagonist is motivated by a rigid adherence to principle and single-minded pursuit of a goal.

The above description might lead one to think that the tragic frame is one of rejection, rather than acceptance, as Burke would have it. But the difference between one frame and another is a matter of emphasis: the ingredient we select as the essence. We can get a cue as to whether a poetic category operates within a frame of acceptance or rejection by asking in what relationship to the action the audience is encouraged to place themselves. Whereas a tragic hero's downfall comes as a result of some symbolic rejection, the overall ethos of tragedy is one of acceptance, because the punishment of the tragic scapegoat restores the natural order, or in other words, reaffirms the status quo. It is this restoration through expiation that produces catharsis in the audience. Tragedy's prevailing attitude primarily submits to rather than resists limitations imposed by the status quo, but like all acceptance frames, it should not be mistaken for complacency. The very conflict enacted through tragedy reveals flaws in the status quo. By exciting pity and fear in the audience on behalf of the tragic hero, whose unyielding adherence to an admirable goal or ethical principle leads ultimately to the hero's destruction, tragic narratives can create a space for structural change.

Like the epic, there is no shortage of cultural material from which to construct a tragic narrative of research and teaching. The basic sin of tragedy is pride, and the *sine qua non* of research and teaching is the practice of going beyond the borders of the known—put more poetically, transgressing the cultural knowledge base—and returning to declare "I know something you don't." If the researcher/teacher's comic resources are

not sufficient to make a bridge between the old paradigm and the new, or if the prevailing attitude of society is too rigid to integrate the new material, then the scholar will die, usually figuratively through an arrested academic career (Burke might call it secular excommunication), but occasionally literally, as in the case of Socrates.

Considered in this way, it becomes apparent why graduate study is the source of such widespread angst.[4] It demands an act of hubris, because the profession of academia requires of its initiates both strict adherence to the prevailing symbols of authority—the theories, methods, and genres of a discipline, which often remain occluded on the assumption that the "worthy" will apprehend them without help—and the production of some *certifiably* new and useful idea, which is a paradoxical affront to the established order. And of course, even if we succeed, we will in turn be supplanted. But I hasten to add that this essentially competitive tragic frame is merely natural, not inevitable. And as I will show, there is a large measure of the comic ingredient in the academic enterprise, as well. We choose which frame is primary.

In a rare cinematic emphasis on literary scholars, Mike Nichols provides us with an illustration of teaching and research in the tragic frame through his adaptation of Margaret Edson's Pulitzer-prize winning play, *Wit* (2001). Its protagonist, the ironically named Vivian Bearing, is an eminent scholar of John Donne's Holy Sonnets. Bearing's ovarian cancer was left undetected until stage 4, implicitly because her total focus on the study of seventeenth century metaphysical poetry has rendered her oblivious to the

[4] As evidence for this widespread angst, I might point to the popularity of the webcomic "Piled Higher and Deeper," which as of April 2014 had 6.5 million unique visitors to its website annually; and the "LEGO Grad Student" blog, which as of this writing has more than 150,000 followers across all social media platforms. While both of these examples partake liberally of the comic spirit, the comedy is a reaction against the pull of tragedy.

mundane world of ordinary human life, including that of her own body. She begins an experimental new treatment at a research hospital, but although she declares that she "would prefer that a play about me be cast in the mythic-heroic-pastoral mode…the facts…conspire against that" (Edson 6). She warns, "It is not my intention to give away the plot; but I think I die at the end" (ibid.).

Throughout the film and play, Bearing functions as something like a Greek Chorus, narrating and commenting upon the action, and providing flashbacks to her own education and tenure as a professor. Thus *Wit* provides us with a figurative doubling, as numerous parallels are drawn between Bearing's single-minded focus on her research (often to the detriment of her students, cf. Edson 58-63), and the clinical researchers' focus on gathering data about their new chemotherapy treatment (often to the detriment of their patients, cf. Edson 75). An early juxtaposition keenly sets up this parallel structure. Bearing's oncologist, Dr. Kelekian, tells her that "the experimental phase has got to have the maximum dose to be of any use" (11), and the scene transitions to a conference with Bearing's own mentor, the illustrious E.M. Ashford, who chides the now-young scholar for her sloppy work on a seminar paper. "The effort must be total for the results to be meaningful," she tells Bearing, shortly before urging the young woman to put off returning to the library in favor of spending time outside with friends—the latter of which presents "an insuperable barrier" for Vivian (Edson 13-15).

The central conflict of *Wit* as tragedy is presented as a seemingly-insuperable tension between wit (the intellectual exercise of paradox and wordplay) and compassion. Through the character of E.M. Ashford, Bearing's own mentor, who is both an eminent scholar and a compassionate woman whose life is filled with meaningful personal

connections, the author hints that this juxtaposition is, in fact, a false one; a melodramatic error of punctuation. Bearing's unwillingness to compromise her complete dedication to the subject of wit, to embrace simplicity and with it compassion, leads to her downfall—not cancer, which cannot be caused by any sort of tragic flaw, but rather Bearing's profound personal isolation, and her inability despite a lifetime of studying the Holy Sonnets to cope with her life's greatest challenge. Thus Vanhoutte[5] writes that "Vivian experiences her disease as a ritual degradation—a painful and humiliating erosion of the barriers that had separated her from, and elevated her above, other human beings" (393).

Throughout her ordeal, Bearing recalls numerous instances of casting aspersions on her students' intellectual capacity and frames her own scholarly pursuits not in terms of teaching and learning but rather as "a way to see how good you really are" (Edson 20). Yet in the final moments of the film, as pain-dulling morphine erodes the final vestiges of Bearing's ability to engage in her usual flights of verbal wit, she says to the "never very sharp" (69), deeply compassionate nurse, Susie, "I trust this will have a soporific effect," to which Suzie replies, "I don't know about that, but it sure makes you sleepy." As Bearing dissolves into laughter, she informs Susie that "'soporific' *means* 'makes you sleepy'"—a lesson her own father taught her as a young child. The two laugh together, and Susie says, "I never would have gotten it. I'm glad you explained it." And at last, Vivian says simply, "I'm a teacher" (73-74). This declaration is flatly contrasted in the penultimate scene, as a medical research fellow ignores a Do Not Resucitate order and

[5] Vanhoutte's article offers an interesting reading of Edson's tragic framing of cancer, noting that it "by providing a providential answer" to the perennial "why me" question posed by cancer sufferers, *Wit* "quiets the metaphysical anxieties that this mysterious disease raises and affirms cultural myths about its causality" (394). Though Vanhoutte herself does not reference Burke, her analysis demonstrates the validity of Burke's casting tragedy as a frame of *acceptance*.

attempts to resuscitate Vivian over Susie's objections, frantically declaring that "She's Research!" (82, capitalization original). In the last moments of both the play and the film, Vivian is both naked and silent. Having shed "wit," the identity with which she clothed herself, there is no final barrier between herself and the audience, nor (the play implies) between herself and God.

The Comic Frame: Non-traditional Teaching and Learning in Educating Rita

As a genre, comedy is distinguished chiefly by its happy ending. Both Burke and Snider juxtapose comedy and tragedy.[6] Both genres involve "a collision with some ethical principle on the part of the individual" (Snider). But unlike tragedy, in comedy this collision is the result not of hubris but of deception—though the deception need not be intentional or external; thus, resolution is achieved not through death but through the removal of that deception, or in other words, by uncovering a previously obscured truth. Whereas tragedy involves a fall and typically ends in death, comedy's motion is to elevate; Shakespearean comedies characteristically end with wedding dances. Put another way, tragedy's solution to disruption is to excise the offending element, but comedy's solution is to integrate opposing forces. Burke affirms George Meredith's assertion that "one excellent test of the civilization of a country [is] the flourishing of the Comic idea and Comedy; and the test of true Comedy is that it shall awaken thoughtful laughter" (46). Since comedy involves someone low rising to a higher state, it tends to be subversive. A comic character may challenge the authority of elders/tradition/society, but not necessarily to overthrow them—hence it is a frame of acceptance.

[6] Simons argues that Burke's concept of comedy is more properly juxtaposed with melodrama than with tragedy; I tend to agree with his assessment.

A pair of exchanges from the film of Willy Russell's *Educating Rita* illustrates the challenge of distinguishing "tragic" and "comic" as literary genres from their modern, everyday usage. Rita, a hairdresser who enrolled in an Open University course on literature, has difficulty understanding why Chekhov is regarded as a comic genius when his characters endure so much suffering, and why *Macbeth* is a tragedy, but a botched perm or a man killed by a falling tree branch is not. The narrative itself presents a tension between these genres, as the characters walk a knife's edge between playing out their own stories as either tragedy or comedy. Ultimately, the tension is resolved through comic recognition rather than tragic catharsis.

Educating Rita's comedy derives primarily from the characters' repeated failure to perceive the sources or remedies of their own struggles, or to communicate clearly with one another. Rita tells her tutor, Frank, that she has enrolled in his Open University course because she wants "to know…everything," but it becomes apparent that by "everything" she means the ability to understand high culture, which she sees as a means of obtaining freedom from a life and social circle that she finds stifling.

The principal action of the film takes place in Frank's office. Rita's first entrance is impeded by a broken door handle. When she does finally manage to get in, she tells Frank, "You wanna get it fixed!" (2). "I suppose I always mean to," he replies. Rita tells him:

> That's no good always meanin' to, is it? You should get on with it; one of these days you'll be shoutin' 'Come in' an' it'll go on forever because the poor sod on the other side won't be able to get in. An' you won't be able to get out. (2)

This tension between meaning and doing continues throughout the film. But the narrative calls into question Rita's own belief that her quest to transform herself "from the inside" through education, rather than from the outside, as her hairdressing clients try to do (11), will give meaning and freedom to her own life. Her hunger for learning and "culture" blinds her to the ways in which Frank is trapped within his own social position. For instance, in this first scene, we learn that Frank must hide the evidence of his drinking problem behind volumes of the literary canon, and as Rita gazes out a beautiful window which Frank declares he rarely thinks about except to imagine throwing bothersome students through it, Rita asks "God, what's it like to be free?" To which Frank wryly replies "Ah. Now there's a question. Would you like a drink?" (7).

Rita's unbridled enthusiasm and endless questioning of everything he tries to teach her at first invigorates as well as frustrates Frank. But as Rita gradually learns to substitute "honest opinion" about the books he assigns her to read with the sort of literary criticism that will enable her to pass exams and to pass as educated among the traditional students at the university, Frank expresses increasing misgivings about the value of what he's been teaching her. Frank, we have learned, is a failed poet, and he identifies literary pretension as the source of his failure as a poet (68). He does not want Rita to become trapped as he feels trapped, but she still sees education—or rather, access to high culture, which is not quite the same thing—as the key to her freedom. Toward the end of the film, they argue furiously about it, and Rita stops coming to her lessons. Nevertheless, Frank schedules Rita's exams, and after she passes them, she returns for the final scene.

Frank is being sent on sabbatical to Australia in disgrace, having "made rather a night of it" a few weeks previously (round about the time of their last argument, it would

seem) (72). As they discuss her response to the exam question on *Peer Gynt*, Rita tells Frank:

> You think you gave me nothing; did nothing for me. You think I just ended up with a load of quotes an' empty phrases; an' I did. But that wasn't your doin'. I was so hungry. I wanted it all so much that I didn't want it to be questioned. I told y' I was stupid. (71)

We learn that Rita's university flatmate, Trish, whom Rita thought was "so cool an' together," who spent "half her life eatin' wholefoods and health foods to make her live longer" tried to commit suicide shortly before the exam (71-72). In the wake of this disillusionment, Rita thought about intentionally giving a curt, flippant answer to the examiner's question, but, she says, "I chose not to. I had a choice. I did the exam…. An' it might be worthless in the end. But I had a choice…. Because of what you'd given me I had a choice" (72).

Frank, too, has a choice—he suggests that he will not return from his Australian sabbatical, and instead offers to take Rita with him, if she wants to. She evades, and with understanding, Frank asks what she is going to do. After listing several possibilities, she concludes, "I dunno. I'll make a decision. I'll choose. I dunno" (73). Finally, she says, "All I've ever done is taken from you. I've never given anything." Frank objects, but Rita cuts him off. She declares that "I never thought there was anythin' I could give you. But there is. Come here, Frank…" and at last, she gives him the haircut she promised during their first meeting (73). The comic spirit in *Educating Rita* is manifest in both Frank and

Rita overcoming their self-deception[7] as a result of learning to see through each other's eyes. The film's resolution also makes explicit the specific power of a comic frame, in that a comic recognition opens up new possibilities rather than merely returning to the status quo unchanged.

Burke draws "an important distinction between comedy and humor" in his schema (*Attitudes* 43). One way of grasping the distinction is to think of the "thoughtful laughter" excited by a comic frame as a "laughing with," whereas humor encourages an unreflective "laughing at." Comedy requires "maximum…complexity" (42) and by offering multiple charitable but chastening perspectives, it instills shrewd humility in the audience. "Comedy is essentially *humane"* (42), but retains a heroic element, by "making the character as great as the situation he confronts" (43). But "humor reverses this process…by *dwarfing the situation*…. [Humorists'] customary method of self-protection is the attitude of 'happy stupidity' whereby the gravity of life simply fails to register" (43). The distinction between comedy and humor might also be illustrated by the relationship of each to tragedy. Tragedy and comedy may be blended, and the resulting hybrid genre might exhibit great pathos, but, when events which might otherwise be tragic are portrayed humorously, the result is absurd or grotesque. Satire represents another, presently very popular vein of humor. Given the importance of the distinction for the present work, it is unfortunate that the terms "comedy" and "humor" are currently colloquially synonymous, but there is no easy way around the problem. Thus, in

[7] Or at least, a portion of it--comic humility prevents us from imagining that self-deception can be entirely overcome.

considering the comic frame one must bear in mind the distinction between comedy and humor.

Burke explicitly identifies the comic perspective with the work of the critic, with the processes of analysis and synthesis. And he describes it as fundamentally social.

Each of the three frames of acceptance—epic, tragic, and comic—concern themselves with equipping individuals for working within given systems, even when change is necessary and sought after. But working within existing systems is not always possible or desirable. Therefore, in considering what frame of motives will be most productive for engaging in critical reflection and future planning, we must also include frames of rejection.

Frames of Rejection

Frames of acceptance and rejection are best understood as operating on a spectrum, or perhaps as different parts of a wave. Frames of rejection arise when the prevailing symbols of authority become untenable, and usually endure only until the old symbols of authority have given way to new, more acceptable ones. Burke notes that any attitude of rejection typically brings with it feelings of "discomfiture" and "guilt." Thus, frames of rejection are useful as agents of change, but tend to destroy themselves. In Burke's schema, the frames of rejection are satire, elegy, and burlesque. However, in this dissertation I will address only the latter two, since as Reynolds, Schwartz, and Bower note, modern fiction written by and about academics does not as yet include works of satire.

The Elegiac Frame: Teaching as Noble Sacrifice in Mr. Holland's Opus

The characteristic stance of elegy (or "plaint") is one of mournfulness or regret; it is a lament for the dead (though the "dead" object may be metaphorical). The elegy is essentially reflective: aimed toward the subject with the object being merely an aid to reflection.[8] Burke asserts that the elegy is a symbolic rejection that actually enables acceptance (44), but of an especially passive kind. Whereas other frames of rejection suggest potential for change, the elegy mourns the status quo while suggesting its inevitability. Elegy turns mourning into an art that, through its particular symbolic rejection, enables one who adopts the elegiac frame to endure the unendurable without either feeling impelled to do anything to change circumstances or to make peace with them.

The scholarly vocation necessarily involves looking backwards in order to move forward. Put another way, we inevitably place ourselves in conversation with the scholars and teachers whose work preceded and underpins ours, but always with the goal of expanding the boundaries of our disciplinary knowledge. To cease this forward or outward expansion, to tell ourselves and our students that we now know all there is to be known about a subject, would be the death of our discipline. Such an image puts me in mind of young Truman's geography teacher in *The Truman Show*. When the eponymous boy (who is the unwitting star of a reality TV show about his life) declares to his class that he wants to become "an explorer, like the great Magellan," his teacher points to a map of the world and declares that unfortunately, there's nothing left on Earth to

[8] Somewhat puzzlingly, Burke identifies the pastoral genre as a kind of hybrid of humor and elegy; its chief characteristic is ironic humility wherein the "lowly" is depicted as morally superior, but this ironic humility may be assumed even by those who are not really "lowly."

discover. Thus, because of this symbiosis between academe's past and future, the elegiac frame fits the profession poorly, and elegiac depictions of scholars are comparatively rare. I can think of only one example in film.

The titular character in *Mr. Holland's Opus* is a composer who is forced to take a job as a high-school music teacher to support his family. Although he is a gifted teacher, throughout the film he mourns the loss of time he would wish to spend completing his "American symphony" and so for most of the film his obsession with what he does not have also leads him to discount the benefits of his "day job" and to neglect his deaf son, who he feels cannot share his life's driving passion. At his retirement at the end of the film he is surprised to see his "opus" performed by an orchestra composed of his former students. This film might seem to be more in the epic vein of other inspirational teacher movies, but its constant focus on Mr. Holland's lament for what he has lost is not entirely overcome in the eulogistic symphony of his retirement.

Despite having described this frame as a poor fit for the necessities of the academic profession, looking outside the realm of cinema we might recognize the elegiac frame in the all-too-common genre of educational reform narratives,[9] in that they rely on a spirit of perpetual mourning for an imagined lost ideal. Such reform narratives, particularly since the 1983's landmark report, *A Nation at Risk*, prime the public to passively accept a perpetual state of school reform, which enables what McClure calls "Higher Education's Reform-Industrial Complex." This example from the realm of public discourse differs significantly from the pop-culture film and television narratives I

[9] A Google search for "what's wrong with American education" yielded about 228 million results; a search for "how to reform US education" yielded about 232 million results.

use to illustrate Burke's frames in this chapter; it represents something more akin to the kind of larger cultural narratives that Burke himself explores in *Attitudes.* I discuss educational reform narratives further in the section on the didactic frame below—a placement that also illustrates Burke's point that these frames overlap upon one another.

The Burlesque Frame: Mocking Teachers and Researchers in Sitcoms

The term "burlesque" dates to late 17th century; the OED defines it as "derisive imitation." Burlesque involves the caricaturing of serious subjects: exaggeration by overemphasis or under-emphasis, mockery, and ridicule. Like satire, it is a subgenre of humor. A burlesque frame might be achieved by using an elevated manner for trivial subjects, or by treating serious subjects in a trivial way. Unlike satire, burlesque's critique really is external:

> [T]he writer of burlesque makes no attempt to get inside the psyche of his victim. Instead, he is content to select the externals of behavior, driving them to a 'logical conclusion' that becomes their 'reduction to absurdity'…. He deliberately suppresses any consideration of the 'mitigating circumstances' that would put his subject in a better light. [It is] partial not only in the sense of *partisan,* but also in the sense of *incompleteness*. (*Attitudes* 54, emphasis original)

This frame is, perhaps, the most disastrous for a teacher to assume toward her students, or, indeed, toward her colleagues. The deliberate distortions of a burlesque frame promote an "us vs. them," or still worse, a "me vs. everyone else" attitude. By perceiving others only as objects of ridicule, the burlesque rhetor deprives herself of the opportunity to learn from the failings of others, or from their recognition of her own failings.

Moving to the small screen, *The Big Bang Theory* represents typically exaggerated and reductive characteristics of the nerdy, socially stunted researcher in each of its four main characters: Leonard Hofstadter, Sheldon Cooper, Rajesh Koothrappali, and Howard Wolowitz. These burlesque caricatures range from that of Leonard, the show's nominal straight man and the least socially awkward of the four, to that of his roommate Sheldon, whose extreme social ineptitude, neuroticism, frequent childishness, and lack of empathy trade heavily on autism stereotypes (although in the sixteenth episode of the show's second season, Sheldon declares to his friends that "I'm not crazy; my mother had me tested"). Rounding out the quartet are Rajesh, an astrophysicist who is literally rendered mute by the presence of women unless he's drunk; and Howard, who lives in his stereotypically overbearing Jewish mother's basement despite holding a full-time position in a lucrative department of a prestigious university, and whose social awkwardness most often manifests in the form of sleazy come-ons to every woman he meets.

All four characters are faculty at Caltech; while the show revolves primarily around their social lives, their interactions are frequently marked by professional rivalries centered on the hierarchical prestige of their respective fields and their relative IQs. In keeping with stereotype, Sheldon, a former child prodigy with an IQ so high he argues that the standard test cannot measure it accurately, regards his field of theoretical physics as the pinnacle of pure science. Aerospace engineer Howard, who (in addition to carrying the stigma of pursuing applied science) has only a Master's degree, is at the bottom of the academic totem pole. All the characters regard the social sciences and especially the humanities with particular derision. In the first episode of season two, Sheldon disparages

a former girlfriend of Leonard's because she had a PhD in French Literature; in another, Amy convinces him to support a university fundraiser because otherwise the money will go to the liberal arts ("The Benefactor Factor").

Outside of work, these characters' social lives revolve around obsessive and elaborate engagement with stereotypically nerdy interests such as comic books, role-playing and video games, and science fiction franchises. In accordance with the male nerd stereotype, for much of the series these four men struggle to attract women or have relationships; their attempted interactions range from embarrassingly awkward to actual harassment, though the latter is also played for laughs, at least in the early series.

The Big Bang Theory likewise trades in burlesque stereotypes of its female characters. At first, there is only one woman among the main cast: Leonard and Sheldon's new neighbor Penny, a ditzy blonde and aspiring movie star from Nebraska who dropped out of community college and now works as a server at the Cheesecake Factory. Even as Leonard pursues Penny romantically, the nerd quartet frequently mocks Penny's lack of education. On the other hand, through her on-again, off-again relationship with Leonard, Penny comes into regular contact with the other male characters and to some degree helps them learn how to act more "normal." Later in the series, two additional female cast members join the series: Bernadette Rostenkowski, a microbiologist; and Amy Farrah Fowler, a neuroscientist. Like their male counterparts, these scholarly women are portrayed as deeply socially awkward, though somewhat less stereotypically nerdy. The nature of these women's social awkwardness depends on sexist stereotypes: while Amy is portrayed as cool, calculating, and rational to the point

of near-sexlessness (though she does pursue Sheldon romantically), Bernadette is portrayed as ruthlessly competitive, domineering, manipulative, and strident.

The show's reception among academics and members of real-life nerd culture has been mixed; while some have embraced the show's portrayal of nerd culture (cf. Murray), many argue as I do that *The Big Bang Theory* merely perpetuates ridicule of nerds and academia (cf. Ream, Weber, Elderkin). Through its exaggerated characterizations of academics as intellectually arrogant and socially alienated, *The Big Bang Theory* invites its audience to see academics, and by extension academia, as essentially "other." Among the most glaring examples is the sixth-season episode "Tenure Turbulence." In his *Inside Higher Education* review of that episode, Todd C. Ream observes that "In a mere half-hour…a number of possible cultural stereotypes of the life of university faculty members are brought to light," including "skepticism over the possibility of someone having access to a job for life [and] how such a job is earned." Even when the show invites identification with its main characters, the audience is coached to do so in spite of, rather than because of their nerdy, academic remoteness. Thus, academics who watch the show are invited to identify against themselves, even as it normalizes academic contempt for those outside academia and toxic intellectual hierarchism among those within academia.

Transitional Frames

Burke characterizes two additional frames as "transitional," by which he means frames that tend toward the foreground in "periods marked by great confusion of the cultural frame, requiring a radical shift in people's allegiance to symbols of authority"

(*Attitudes* 57-58). The two poetic categories Burke marks off as transitional are the grotesque and the didactic**.**

The Grotesque Frame: Monstrous Teachers and Researchers in <u>The Fly</u> and <u>The Faculty</u>

The grotesque is associated by Burke with mysticism; like comedy it fixates on incongruity, but "*without* the laughter" (*Attitudes* 58, emphasis original). By making a cult of incongruity and subjectivity, or by "fix[ing] the transitional" (*ibid.* 70) the grotesque or mystic attitude may subside into an especially passive frame of acceptance, wherein its acolytes turn away, monk-like, from social realities and immerse themselves instead in the subjective waters of the "subconscious."

In *The Fly* (1986), the researcher's transformation is a manifestation of his fear of alienation, of a loss of humanity engendered by a too-great emphasis on intellectual development, and that by making a great leap away from professional consensus by means of scientific discovery, he will lose the fellowship of his colleagues. The shift in allegiance from one paradigm to another is thus arrested.

The horror movie *The Faculty* (1998) presents a similarly mystical-literalist depiction of alienation from another perspective. The film is a version of the "pod people" trope. High school students discover that their teachers have been infected and their bodies taken over by an alien parasite. The teachers are attempting to spread the parasite, first to the student body and then to the world beyond. The band of student heroes who discover the alien incursion include a diminutive, bullied nerd; a genre-savvy goth girl whom other students believe is a lesbian; the captain of the football team who quits the team right before the big game; and a slacker/drug dealer repeating his senior

year (likely in order to remain closer to his customer base, since we are given to understand that his claims to scientific genius are not, in fact, in jest). In other words, all the heroes are characters who do not conform to socially sanctioned academic roles. In the opening montage of the film, we are given a picture of a high school rife with violence, drug use, and falling academic standards. As other characters become infected with the parasite, they become models of educational decorum; in one scene, while the band of misfits anxiously tries to get out of the high school, they pass a classroom in which every student gazes toward the teacher with rapt attention and raise their hands in unison as a question is asked. But the parasite also attempts to entice each of the heroes individually to submit, with promises of social acceptance.

The Faculty's alien parasite is a physical representation of academic ideology, pejoratively referred to as "elitism," "snobbery" and perceived as inherently *hostile* to the more-embodied ideologies of what non-intellectuals often refer to as "*real* life." Because the educational enterprise is *per se* a project of *changing minds* (we would say "developing," but for those who are suspicious of academia, it amounts to the same thing), it necessarily involves shifts in identity, which may be and often are perceived as invasive. Take, for example, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos's address to the 2017 Conservative Political Action Conference, in which she told college students that "The faculty, from adjunct professors to deans, tell you what to do, what to say, and more ominously, what to think." This sentiment, an echo of the 2016 Republican Party

Platform's statement on "Improving Higher Education," was met with cheers and applause.[10]

While recent research by Mariani and Hewitt indicates college does relatively little to change students' political allegiances, literacy, composition, rhetoric scholars have acknowledged for many years that embracing the discourse conventions of academia does pose a risk of alienating students, particularly those from non-dominant cultural backgrounds. For teachers, the sliver of truth within this oversimplified view of education-as-indoctrination lays bare a moral dilemma of our profession, particularly when education is made compulsory either by legislation (as with K-12 education) or economic necessity (as is increasingly the case for college education). At the end of *The Faculty*, the audience is subjected to a final montage of our heroes, who despite fending off an alien invasion, appear to have been unable to fend off the necessity of conforming to academic norms in order to gain the social acceptance they crave.

Notably, the biology and culture of the alien parasites in *The Faculty* are hive-like; while each parasite would appear to have some degree of autonomy, it is physically and mentally tied to "the queen," and when she is killed, all her offspring die as well. Intellectual pursuits, as contrasted with physical labor, have long been culturally perceived as effeminate (cf. Hofstader 186, 196, 285; McCarthy 98). Thus, from within a grotesque frame one might perceive the cultivation of intellectualism negatively as a symbolic castration, whereas another frame might allow us to perceive the intellect being

[10] Anxiety over the supposed liberal indoctrination of college students has even led the conservative nonprofit Turning Point USA to create a website, *Professor Watchlist*, "to expose and document college professors who discriminate against conservative students and advance leftist propaganda in the classroom."

subsumed within a symbolic feminine as a kind of return to the womb, pointing toward a rebirth.

The Didactic Frame: The Sentimental Trap of Political Narratives about Teaching

If the grotesque frame is passive, the didactic frame is "the active frame to match it" (*Attitudes* 75). Burke argues that in the unfolding of history, "the imaginative expression of a trend," that is, aesthetic movements, the development of new genres, "precedes its conceptual-critical counterpart," that is, the enactment of a *zeitgeist* through philosophy and public policy (ibid). "The didactic would attempt to reverse this process, by *coaching* the imagination in obedience to critical postulates" (ibid, emphasis original). Burke mostly regards such attempts as futile insofar as human will tends to resist such coaching (ibid). But he admits that some influence from the "conceptual-critical" side, particularly the creative application of Descartes' principle of "organized doubt" has positively affected our "productive modes" (*Attitudes* 76). The chief characteristic of the didactic is oversimplification, the tendency to avoid the troublesome need for synthesis by deciding to "label certain people 'friends' or 'enemies,'" or by observing that situations contain both "good" and "bad" elements, but resolving the tension by "deciding that the desirable feature was the 'essence'" (79). Thus the didactic tends toward the sentimental, and "the sentimental…is the weak side of didacticism" (ibid.).

If this seems an overly cynical way of thinking about didacticism, it's worth noting that Burke identifies both rhetoric and the essay genre with the didactic (76), and that he explicitly recommends the coaching in oneself (and in society) of a comic frame. Burke himself was famously an "autodidact." The coaching of attitudes being necessary,

our goal should be to do so with charitable shrewdness that retains an element of humility about the process. It's best we be honest about our project, lest we make bigger fools of ourselves.

The pejorative term for didactic art is propaganda, and many of the aforementioned examples of movies about teachers might qualify as didactic, in that they endeavor to "coach" an attitude toward teaching, either positive or negative. Narratives which would coach a positive attitude depict teaching as a noble, self-sacrificing vocation with far-reaching influence. In the case of K-12 education and the increasing adjunctification of higher education, such narratives might aim to compensate symbolically for the reality of increasing social alienation caused by institutional realities of low pay, low autonomy, and low social status (as exemplified in such proverbs as "those who can, do; those who can't, teach"). In so doing, they equip teachers and would-be teachers to resign themselves to exploitative material conditions in exchange for spiritual/symbolic benefits. Narratives which would coach a negative attitude will emphasize the professional ingredients of hubris, sophism or relativism, and coercion. In so doing, they justify the impoverished material conditions in which so many academics and teachers find themselves. It is a case of what Burke calls "Heads I Win, Tails You Lose" (*Attitudes* 260).

Outside the realm of the cinema, we could point to prevalent negative narratives of educational reform, which emphasize standardized testing for the purposes of simplistically sorting teachers and schools into "good/successful" and "bad/failing." This emphasis serves additional economic ends as it stresses a consumer model of education and retroactively provides justification for its privatization since, if you judge education

by business standards, it will necessarily come up short, and only those who specialize in business will be equipped to "fix" it. An unintended byproduct of this shift in emphasis is a decrease in *student* accountability, because, by metaphoric extension, they become education's customers (who have only rights, as in "the customer is always right") rather than its subjects (who have both rights and obligations).[11]

The Serviceability of Frames for Teacherly Reflection

We adopt various frames by an act of will, and the choice of which frame to adopt has a profound impact: "In the motives we assign to the actions of ourselves and our neighbors, there is implicit a program of socialization. In deciding why people do as they do, we get the cues that place us with relation to them" (*Attitudes* 170). Of these frames, Burke identifies the comic frame as "the most serviceable for the handling of human relationships" because it is "charitable, but…not gullible" (106-7); neither sentimental nor cynically brutal (170). Despite the comic emphasis recommended in *Attitudes toward History*, Burke's later works give much more attention to the tragic frame. As William Rueckert observes, Burke himself seems to have chosen the tragic frame as the "essence" of the lot of poetic categories ("Tragedy" 380). How does one account for this apparent contradiction between Burke's assertions and the allegiances implicit in his pattern of emphasis?

Perhaps the clue is already there in *Attitudes* after all, as Burke toys with the idea of the inevitability of guilt, which calls forth the primal need for expiation and catharsis.

[11] In Burkean fashion, we might note that this shift alienates students as well as teachers, since it deprives them of the necessity of having to *earn* their intellectual inheritance. Perhaps the seeds of this narrative tendency were planted in naming the value of a course in terms of a number of "credits," evoking the concept of unearned purchasing power.

This attitude, which centers "guilt" as the ground of the human condition, comes to full maturity in his famous definition of man.[12] Yet his later works do retain some sense of comic optimism. In his afterword to the second edition of *Attitudes,* Burke makes the reasons for this later emphasis on the form of tragedy explicit and reaffirms his recommendation of the comic frame. "The critical analysis of 'tragic' motives" he writes, "is in essence 'comic'" (348-349). There would be no need to coach a comic attitude toward social relations if it were humanity's natural inclination. The tragic frame is, for Burke, the poetic embodiment of the concept of "original sin." It is our fallen condition; we can only fit ourselves for civilized society by rising above it; hence the need to coach a comic attitude. Yet he also attributes a "motive of human goodwill as such" to a "pre-historic heritage" implicit in his "plea for the 'comic'" (347). Burke's dual emphasis on the tragic and the comic frames no doubt contributes to the common mistake of later rhetorical critics taking them as binary, and therefore mistaking the tragic frame as the "rejection" half of this false binary, with comic as the "acceptance" frame, though Burke himself took pains to explain that the frames are not meant to be either binary or mutually exclusive. Indeed, of the two terms, considered on a spectrum as I have suggested they might be, it is the comic frame that admits a greater part of the rejecting spirit, through its necessary ambivalence.

Burke's comic frame embraces an attitude of ambivalence that recognizes the inadequacy of individuals, as well as of the systems in which they operate. Neither

[12] "Man is the symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal, inventor of the negative (or moralized by the negative), separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making, goaded by the spirit of hierarchy (or moved by the sense of order), and rotten with perfection" (Burke, *Language,* 16).

ambivalence nor a recognition of inadequacy requires resignation to the status quo (which would lead us back to opportunism), but rather, the comic frame should lead us toward humility, toward a "charitable attitude that is required for purposes of persuasion and co-operation, but at the same time maintains our shrewdness concerning the simplicities of 'cashing in'" [13] (Burke, *Attitudes* 166). This charitable shrewdness functions by "picturing people not as vicious, but as mistaken. When you add that people are necessarily mistaken, that all people are exposed to situations in which they must act as fools, that every insight contains its own special kind of blindness, you complete the comic circle" (41). The comic frame enables "people to be observers of themselves, while acting. Its ultimate would not be passiveness, but maximum consciousness. One would 'transcend' himself by noting his own foibles" (171). The comic frame suggests an orientation toward action which enables us to recognize the limitations of a given system, heuristic, or perspective, and keeps us aware of the existence of other perspectives and hence possibilities. It enables us to critique the system even while we operate within it, and to do so without "selling out" or falling prey to demoralizing cynicism. The shrewd humility engendered by a comic attitude promotes such adaptability, seeing it as

[13] Throughout *Attitudes toward History* Burke makes frequent use of capitalistic metaphors to describe human relations, both because he believed the symbols of capitalism to be conveniently available to his audience and because, he said, unlike other symbol systems devised by sociologists and psychologists, the symbolic terms of capitalism arose dialectically, and therefore better reflect, albeit still over-simplistically, essential features of human society (93-94).

The related concepts of "cashing in" and "selling out" recur regularly, sometimes together but often separately. "Cashing in" can mean "to betray" but can also mean, less pejoratively, "to take advantage of," or still less pejoratively, "to profit from" or "to derive maximum advantage." Burke uses "cashing in" in both the pejorative and non-pejorative senses (though somewhat surprisingly, he does not, in *Attitudes,* use "cashing in" in the most euphemistic sense of all, "to die"). The comic frame allows us to "cash in on" failures and imperfections by learning from them, thus using them to maximum advantage.

"Selling out" is used exclusively in the pejorative euphemistic sense of compromising one's integrity, or abandoning one's principles for profit. The other sense, of selling one's entire stock of something, may also be inferred; when one has "sold out," there is nothing left—alienation is complete.

necessary rather than merely inconvenient or inefficient. In short, then, the comic frame is characterized by an ambivalent attitude of charitable shrewdness that primes us to work within (and subvert) systems that contain many vectors of imperfection, including ourselves.

Burke notes that a comic frame can use the other frames profitably by "discounting" their problematic emphases, but he also notes that there are some extremities of alienation that the comic frame cannot and should not attempt to mitigate. As he says, "the materials incorporated within the frame are never broad enough to encompass all the necessary attitudes" (40). Thus, a heuristic for engaging in reflection about teaching and research based on Burke's dramatistic[14] frames must give attention to the various categories for two reasons: first, because the comic frame, while arguably the most serviceable, is evidently not the most common, and we must be able to identify the narrative frames to which we default before we can consider re-framing our experience in a more comic light. Second, the other frames remain necessary because the comic frame alone will not serve in all cases.

The work I have done in this chapter illustrates for readers how these frames for thinking about teaching and research typically operate in our culture through our popular media. These illustrations have served a further purpose, which may best be conveyed by transitioning to an autoethnographic voice in a narrative vignette (see figure 2).

[14] A reference to Burke's system of dramatism which is most fully elaborated in *A Grammar of Motives,* but the seeds of which are present in the earlier *Attitudes.*

Figure 2: Narrative Vignette of the Author Working at a Faculty Writing Retreat

I'm sitting in the loft of a cabin nestled within the snowy Teton valley, staring at a draft of my dissertation chapter on teaching, trying to find a way back in after a months-long hiatus. The inertia is palpable. Why, I wonder, have I waited so long to work on this monster?

I can come up with an impressive list of reasons: I went on the job market, had a campus interview, followed by preparations to move two states away to take up my new, full-time position, and then there were new faculty orientation meetings to attend, curriculum to revise and design from the ground up, more courses and students to teach than ever before, and of course, more papers to grade. There just hasn't been *time*, I tell myself. But there's time now, during this blessed faculty writing retreat—no students, no meetings, no emails to read and answer, no papers to grade, not even a decent enough Wi-Fi connection to get distracted by Netflix or Facebook. And yet I'm still not writing.

I think back on my prior writing experience. What did I do in the past when I was stuck? Talked to my grad school friends (900+ miles away now). Called my mom to talk about my research (no cell service). Ah! Read, or re-read sources. So back into my post-it-tab-laden copy of *Attitudes toward History* I go.

I give myself a time limit: one afternoon to re-read sources, and tomorrow I'll definitely write something. But Burke seems slipperier and far less linear, and my annotations less helpful than I remembered. An afternoon and a morning of the three-and-a-half-day retreat slips by, and I mentally put my foot down. After lunch, I won't even look at my copy of *Attitudes* anymore*;* I'll just open my draft and revise something, and that will lead to writing.

During lunch, my colleagues and I ask each other how our writing is going, and what we're working on. I give the well-rehearsed "elevator pitch" version of my dissertation, and explain that I'm working on the "teaching" chapter. This intrigues them, of course, because our university is heavily teaching-focused. More questions follow, and as I struggle to think how best to explain Burke's poetic categories to colleagues from diverse (and mostly literary) scholarly backgrounds without making myself seem foolish by talking about literary texts that I'm certain they're far more conversant with than I am, I hit upon the idea of bringing up some examples from pop culture. I can practically see the light bulbs blinking on above their heads. Suddenly, Burke's theory makes more sense, not only to them, but to me once again, too.

I know what I need to do. After washing up my lunch dishes, I open a new document, and start a new chapter—this one. The first twenty pages or so seem to fly from my fingers. After that, of course, my brain as well as my shoulders are tired and sore, and it gets harder, and there are still revisions to do, and the other chapters still lurk, half-written, in the shadows. I look up from my work and realize that my colleagues all went to bed hours ago. I close my laptop, click off the lamp, and use the light from my otherwise-useless cell phone to find my way to my own bed while trying not to wake the others.

It was only months after the "aha moment" described in figure 2 that I realized I hadn't just needed a better way to generalize the concept of Burke's poetic categories for readier use by other teachers and researchers. I also needed a way back into my project that didn't require immediately returning to the never-comfortable process of self-analysis.

Immersing myself in pop culture narratives of teaching and research while writing this chapter has provided me a kind of distance from my own lived experience, but also a stronger sense of identification with the archetypal teachers and researchers they represent. Not that I've ever thought of myself as a Jaime Escalante, Vivian Bearing, Mr. Holland, or any of the others. Not exactly. But I, and my departmental colleagues—and you, I think, reader—are imbricated with just such stories of teachers and researchers. My ability to identify with many of these narratives, and my frequent desire to resist their more absurd exaggerations, gives me confidence that the project I've embarked upon is no mere idiosyncratic navel-gazing. Burke and I do have something to say to other scholars about teaching and research, after all. There are, indeed, stories worth writing and re-writing here.

With Paul Lynch, I argue for a more methodical approach to analyzing the gap between our situated theories (to borrow Flower's term) about what we think will happen, and the narratives we construct on "Tuesday morning" (xi) after our actual experience of teaching (and research) fails to "follow the script," so to speak, that we construct. Burke's poetic categories, illustrated through popular culture narratives of teaching and research, constitute the lens through which I will address this gap. In chapter two, I describe in greater detail my autoethnographic methods, drawn from the work of Carolyn Ellis, for constructing and re-constructing my own "Tuesday morning" narratives. In chapters three, four, and five, I practice iterative narrative reflection using three representative cases presented as narrative vignettes. Chapter three takes up the question, "why teach collaboration?" in a class discussion following my having introduced a collaborative research assignment and in an office conversation with Steven, my fellow graduate

teaching associate. Chapter four explores an incident of failed collaboration through a tragic frame and considers how a teacher might mentor students in such a situation while still respecting their agency. Chapter five turns from teacher-student interactions to practice iterative narrative reflection on a vexing series of Facebook exchanges with a former colleague whose characterization of collaborative pedagogy invites a grotesque framing. In each of these cases, I explore how revisiting reflections with a comic attitude can generate further insights and point toward additional possibilities for future action.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGICAL MESSINESS: DESIGNING AND RE-DESIGNING RESEARCH

This dissertation is the culmination of a series of attempts to study how composition teachers can better facilitate collaborative student writing. That teachers as well as students benefit from a regular practice of metacognition—or in other words of reflective practice—is well-understood. What is less well understood is how we can methodically engage in such reflective practice, and how we can coach it in others. It is this problem, the absence of a sufficiently robust heuristic for engaging in reflective practice, that became the focus of my research, and for which I suggest Kenneth Burke's frames of acceptance and rejection as a generative heuristic.

Linda Flower argues that teacher-scholars routinely construct situated theories based on their own observation-based vernacular research and other past experience to make informed predictions about what their students know and need to know, and how they will respond to various tasks, in order to plan curriculum and teaching. Because such situated theories are reflexive and dialogic, they do not aim for stable generalizability but rather are open to constant revision in light of new experience or research (9). Indeed, it is often the tension created by our task representations and our actual experience that provides the exigency for reflection and re-theorizing. Put another way, we rarely, if ever, recognize a need to analyze or theorize until after our experience has frustrated or baffled our expectations.

The necessity of using experience as a starting point for theorizing and for guiding future action leads Paul Lynch to argue that, rather than being an approach *to*

teaching based on theory or research, the essence of pedagogy must be the thinking we do *after* teaching, when we consider what actually happened in light of what our theories (whatever their source) led us to believe would happen, and that this reflection-on-action must be future-directed; that is, it must help us to plan what to do *next* (88). Thus, Lynch argues for an "after-pedagogy" that treats reflective teacherly experience as a means of fostering growth, not only within our classrooms but within our discipline as a whole. The problem, as Lynch sees it, is that we lack a taxonomy for thus "activating experience" (20). And "without a taxonomy, or a network reshaping our interpretations of the present and the past, there is no way to put narrative claims under scrutiny…. But a taxonomic casuistry can allow us to think about those claims while maintaining some fidelity to the situations from which they sprung" (134). Burke's poetic categories, as a means for describing a range of "attitudes of acceptance and rejection" through which we organize our experiences, provide such a taxonomy. I read Burke as arguing that our attribution of motives must be open to reinterpretation, in order to maintain as much agency as possible and to manage unresolvable contradictions in our experience (92).

In this dissertation, I use Burke's frames of acceptance and rejection as an analytical tool for engaging in a recursive reflective practice toward situated theory building about teaching collaborative writing.

Defining Collaboration for the Purposes of My Study

My need for a sufficiently robust heuristic for pedagogical reflection was not the first thing that drew me to this project. Rather, it began with a particular pedagogical activity that I was trying to reflect on: that of collaboration. For the purposes of this

dissertation, I use "collaboration" primarily in a limited sense to describe writing students' efforts to jointly research and write a text. Composition scholars have defined and stretched the term "collaboration" in various ways (e.g. Kenneth Bruffee, Sylvie Noel and Jean-Marc Robert, Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede), and William Duffy has argued that the lack of a precise definition of the term presents problems for studying it rigorously. Like Lunsford and Ede, I see value in recognizing a spectrum of collaborative practices and possibilities that warrant our attention as composition scholars, and at the same time affirm the need to clearly identify what sort of collaboration we mean in a particular instance. Writing is often mistakenly imagined as an essentially individualistic endeavor; writing assignments that are explicitly collaborative challenge this notion, and as a result, such assignments require specific attention to the social practices of writing. Thus Burke's frames, inasmuch as they equip people to navigate imperfect social situations, offer a means both for engaging with and reflecting on the social activities of teaching collaborative writing. My goal is not only to provide insights into teaching collaborative writing, but also to enact and describe a model of rhetorical reflective practice that can be adapted for general use by scholar-teachers.

As writing teachers, we expect to encounter certain types of challenges in the classroom based on our own experience with collaborative writing assignments and what we've likely read from the substantial body of research on collaborative writing. Research offers strategies for responding wisely to these challenges (perhaps most notably through the many years of collaborative scholarship by Lunsford and Ede, but also in the work of Bruffee, Noel and Robert, and others). Such scholarship informs our situated theories of what it means to teach collaboration in composition, but by itself it is

not sufficiently responsive to ever-changing contexts in which we find ourselves. It cannot tell us how to make sense of what actually unfolds in our classrooms. Lynch's concept of "after pedagogy" suggests a need for adaptable heuristics for engaging in reflective practice; it is this gap which I address by using Burke's frames of acceptance and rejection to construct and test such a heuristic.

Describing the Collaborative Assignment Framing My Study

The collaborative research assignment that my 2013 pilot study and 2015 follow-up study focused on grew out of a teaching partnership between Katrina (a pseudonym) and me. Katrina presented the original version of the assignment as part of her first-year writing sequence in a TA seminar at Washington State University, where we were both master's students. We developed our first-year writing curriculum together, and I continued to use and adapt the assignment independently over the next few years. With Katrina's encouragement, I independently designed and conducted a study of several first-year writing classes that were using my adapted version of the assignment at Arizona State University. However, present circumstances preclude me from reproducing the assignment itself in this dissertation.[15] The subject of the present inquiry is not the assignment itself but the process of teaching students how to work through a collaborative research project. To make my discussion of these collaborative processes clearer, I will provide a sense of the assignment's general shape and scope.

[15] As I note in this chapter, the nature of the assignment was not unique, though it was novel to both of us at the time. The original version of the assignment prompt that I taught was written primarily by Katrina with some feedback from me, and although I have revised the assignment for my own use many times, I have chosen to defer to her request that I not reproduce either her version or my own version of the assignment prompt here.

For this collaborative assignment, first-year writing students were organized into groups based on their fields of study and asked to conduct interviews, textual analysis, and secondary research in order to discover how the discourse communities that they were seeking to enter make and evaluate evidence-based arguments. Similar assignments have been described in composition literature (e.g. Anne Beaufort 40-42; Ann Johns, Malcolm Kiniry and Mike Rose; Doug Eyman; and Rebecca Robinson, among others). Students were invited to collaborate both to share the logistical and conceptual load of the research assignment, and to attenuate the impact on the limited pool of experts available for students to interview. Although collaboration would be necessary to make the assignment manageable, Katrina and I anticipated that students would find collaborative writing itself to be challenging. Thus, a significant portion of teaching the assignment was dedicated to helping students learn to navigate the social processes of researching and writing together.

Describing the Pilot Study: Confronting the "Mess" of Research

From the outset, my intent has not been to create a work of autoethnography; my arrival at that methodology was the result of a series of earlier attempts, combined with various interpersonal and institutional challenges that required me to repeatedly re-envision my project. I have come to understand that my experience is not unique, though an explication of research methods typically elides the sometimes-chaotic, organic process of developing a research project in favor of presenting a clean, clear, and linear explanation of how the researcher arrived at their data. However, because I have arrived at a project in which reflection and revision are foregrounded, in this chapter I eschew a

sanitized presentation of my methods in favor of a somewhat narrativized account of the various stages of the research that inform my present work.

The study that ultimately led to this dissertation began with a convergence of problems and opportunities (they are often the same thing) in the Fall of 2012. First, I had a collaborative writing assignment for First-year Composition, focused on giving students an opportunity to explore the differences between the ways their various disciplines approached writing arguments, which I'd been using quite successfully for several semesters. I was preparing to participate as one of six instructors in a First-year Composition "Studio Pilot" (hereafter "FYC Studio Pilot"), an experimental hybrid model for composition courses with a coordinated curriculum and a modified class schedule. According to the FYC Studio Pilot schedule, students would meet face-to-face for larger (up to 50 students) lecture-style class sessions once a week, complete online modules outside of class, and have the opportunity to attend a series of smaller, focused on-campus workshops that were offered at various times during the week. Because of the number of students we anticipated would be enrolled in the FYC Studio Pilot, the involvement of other instructors, and its coordinated curriculum, this seemed to me a great opportunity to collect data about the efficacy of the collaborative research assignment. This entailed my first foray into the IRB process and designing human subjects research methods.

At the same time, my attention was drawn to the similar ways my students, both in FYC and professional writing courses, struggled with collaboration generally: a struggle that resonated with me as a teacher and as a researcher. I felt I needed a way to teach collaboration more effectively, and that research ought to help me discover such a

way. Ultimately, I was looking for theoretical models to both explain and cope with the collaborative challenges and the possibilities I saw in my classrooms, and ways to test such models more systematically. I wanted to be able to talk about what I was trying to do, and what I thought my students were actually doing, in more empirical terms. Like many novice scholars, I conceived a grandiose project that attempted to gather data about both this collaborative writing assignment in particular, and collaboration in the composition classroom in general, with a single study.

For my pilot research project, I planned several data collection methods. In addition to my plans to collect student writing samples of the research paper itself, I created a survey with the intention of getting a broad sampling of student attitudes about the assignment, and I planned to conduct end-of-project interviews of select students. I also planned to observe and record student writing workshop sessions and the weekly curriculum planning meetings of the 6 instructors (including myself) teaching the FYC Studio Pilot, and to have the instructors write weekly brief reflection memos about the progress of the assignment. Open to the exploratory process, I wanted to look broadly in my inquiry, hoping that whatever results I obtained would help me see a bigger picture, which I could then use to decide in what direction a richer, more focused line of inquiry might lie.

Almost nothing went according to plan. Because of low enrollment in the FYC Studio Pilot sections, I was reassigned to teach a professional writing course instead. I could still conduct my study of the collaborative writing assignment, but only as an observer. There are, of course, many advantages to *not* being a participant-observer in one's own research. But from the very outset, my concept of what my pilot study of

collaborative writing would be and the reality of the unfolding situation were diverging; I was shaken.

Rather than being immersed in the FYC Studio Pilot courses all along, I would be coming in as a researcher during the third and final writing project. I maintained contact with the other FYC Studio Pilot instructors throughout the semester, and it became clear that the classroom model being tested in the FYC Studio Pilot was having problems of its own. Student engagement was very low: only a tiny handful ever came to the "optional" weekly writing workshops, participation in the weekly lectures was minimal, and student work was comparably poor. Not, as it turned out, an ideal or even representative sample for my study. It was apparent that observations of student writing workshops would not be feasible. Still, I attended the curriculum planning session the week before the third assignment would be introduced.[16] Enough students consented to participate in my study for me to feel confident of collecting more than enough data to make my research project useful. However, I had not anticipated the probability that not all students in a group would agree to participate. In fact, there was not a single group in which all members gave consent. Therefore, while I would still be able to collect survey data, collect individual writing reflections, and conduct interviews, I would not have *any* finished student papers to study.

Frustrated by the numerous obstacles that required a continual re-imagining of what data my study could feasibly produce, I drastically scaled back both my expectations and data collection efforts. In the end, my student data were limited to

[16] The instructors had decided against holding these weekly as had been originally planned; instead they typically met only once before each major project was introduced and relied on other means of communication to informally manage issues as they arose.

survey responses, final project reflection memos, and three interviews, which had to be conducted via email because, despite having indicated a willingness to be interviewed, no students responded to my request for a face-to-face interview.[17] By the time the semester ended and the data analysis could begin, I was thoroughly demoralized.

Despite what I perceived at the time as a huge failure, my pilot project achieved a great deal. I began to see potentially fruitful avenues for a more focused follow-up study in a traditional classroom setting, which I conducted in Spring 2015. I also began to see both my students' collaborative writing work and my own scholarship in a new light. But it took a long time for me to realize that was the case. Ultimately, what enabled me to transform my perception of failure into one of modest success was the realization that the theoretical framework I had been using to interpret my observations about collaboration applied as well to my research process.

Discovering Burke's Frames as Equipment for Pedagogical Inquiry

While striving to articulate how Burke's comic frame could be applied in the composition classroom to understand and facilitate the collaborative writing process, as a novice researcher I myself had been operating within a tragic frame: a frame in which hubris is "the basic sin" (and certainly one of which I accused myself most vigorously, for conceiving such an obviously grandiose and idealized research plan and then dramatically failing to achieve it). The tragic frame moreover "admonishe[s] one to 'resign' himself to a sense of his limitations" (Burke 39). The struggle to move beyond a tragic frame of resignation to my failure toward a comic frame that would enable me to

[17] It would seem that for students, the pressures of end-of-semester course work and exams may outweigh the attractions of a free lunch.

accept and then to take advantage of my own error (or as Burke would put it, "cash in on" my own "rich store of error" (93, 172)) in order to move beyond it ultimately enabled me to recapture a sense of agency with a heightened awareness of the institutional constraints in which I must employ that agency. Thus, to complete my project, I had to once again make myself a participant-observer; I had to use my own experience as well as my observations of students collaborating to test my application of the comic frame.

Many compositionists desire and have worked hard to place our discipline on a firmer empirical footing. My original research plan was such an attempt. Yet as I learned, institutional structures can thwart our attempts to get that kind of data, and we often must make a case for a given praxis on even less than the traces of evidence that I was able to collect and analyze in my pilot study. Because of the nature of the work we do, we often must rely on rhetorical, practical wisdom that, while far from offering certainty, nevertheless enables us to effectively move forward as researchers and as teachers. Reflecting from within a comic frame on my own research enabled me to find more nuanced, qualified claims about my teaching and research. The necessity of relying on contingent evidence for making practical judgments about what to do can feel like a concession, but I have come to accept Joseph Dunne's observation that wise rhetorical action requires us to embrace such dynamic, nuanced, situated "truths" (256), without clinging to them too tightly.

Burkean rhetoric assumes that our human process of meaning-making is "dramatistic;" that is, it involves assuming that people and institutions, as agents, have motives for what they do. We can't actually know someone else's motives, so we use story-based genres to organize our experiences. As Burke argues, "the ultimate metaphor

for discussing the universe and man's relations to it must be the poetic or dramatic metaphor" because such a metaphor offers "a vocabulary of motives already at hand, evolved through the whole history of human thought" (*Permanence* 263). Such poetic or dramatic genres give us "cues" we can use in order to attribute motives to others, which then determine our attitude toward others and enable us to identify potentially appropriate responses.

Thus, I conducted yet a third IRB-approved study, which took the form of autoethnographic inquiry. From my original vision of a study in which I would analyze teachers' and students' processes of completing a collaborative research paper, my project evolved into an effort to construct a heuristic that can be used by teacher-researchers (as well as others) to engage in reflective practice. This third iteration of my research included the following data: selections from several years' worth of my lesson plans, assignment prompts, selections from my teaching journals across the same span of time, and transcripts from an extended interview about my teaching this collaborative writing project with a fellow graduate teaching associate. Together with the student data gathered from my 2013 and 2015 studies, these additional methods enabled me to reconstruct key episodes, or "vignettes," representing specific challenges I have encountered in teaching the collaborative research project. In the next section, I explain my autoethnographic methodology in greater detail.

Constructing an Autoethnography for this Study

This dissertation is a work of textual autoethnography. The vignettes in this chapter, presented as "figures" within text boxes, represent moments of tension in a

fictionalized account of my teaching a collaborative writing project in a first-year composition (FYC) class. Because I have taught this project many times in the past ten years, the class described in these vignettes is an amalgamation of my experiences teaching collaborative writing in FYC over the course of many years. Some of the student voices come from surveys, interviews, "self and peer evaluations," and project reflections written by participants in my pilot study of a collaborative FYC assignment explained in the previous section; others come from a follow-up study conducted in 2015. Some students and instructors in the narratives in chapters three and four are composite characters drawn from student data and my own teaching journals.

Such fabrication enables me to protect the identities of participants, to collapse several years' worth of formal and informal observation into a single, cohesive narrative, and to analyze multiple layers of my own meaning-making in order to move toward a transferable framework for reflection and situated theory building. Narrative enables us to make use of observation and experience as we construct an account of not just what happened, but how and why. Put another way: as a researcher-practitioner interested in reflection as a rhetorical act, my goal is not to represent what unfolded in a particular classroom, but to theorize my own process of meaning-making through reflective practice, and to draw readers into that space of theorizing with me.

The process of meaning-making is always and essentially a process of storytelling—we tell ourselves a story about what happened, or what we think is going to happen, and why, every time we practice reflection. The purpose of reflection is not so much to represent reality as to help us make sense of our experience and decide what to do next, and how. Burke's frames of acceptance and rejection, drawn from literary

genres, offer a way of examining motives within such narratives, and remind us that such motives are rhetorically attributed and not inherent to a particular situation or the actors within it. Although I may refer to audio recordings and written accounts from other participants, like Ellis I am cautious about questioning participants' motives about what to say or tell (323). Thus, the motives I identify within these narrative vignettes arise from my deliberate construction of the situations; they do not necessarily reflect the internal lives of the other characters. My purpose is not to peek into the minds of students or colleagues, but to observe myself thinking about them, to evaluate the usefulness of the narratives I have constructed and perhaps to create new ones. By turning my rhetorical eye back on my own subjectivity, I aim not to "see through" it but rather to create a better model for productive meaning-making—to better equip myself and other composition scholars and teachers to be "*observers of themselves, while acting*" (Burke, *Attitudes* 171, emphasis original).

To that end, in the chapters that follow, I deliberately construct narratives from within one of Burke's frames of acceptance and rejection. In chapter three's narrative, an illustration of the kinds of discussions I have with my students as I introduce a collaborative research project, I adopt a naturalistic frame—that is, I try to represent something as close as possible to my authentic (though amalgamated) memory of such a day in class. The narrative in chapter three therefore acts as a kind of "control" for the subsequent chapters, in which I adopt a more comic, playful role as narrator, consciously remembering significant episodes from teaching this collaborative research assignment through a series of Burke's frames, as I described in chapter one. Such consciously playful constructions allow me to explore how the adoption of rhetorical frames of

acceptance and rejection, which are typically unconscious choices, influence not only my perception of events but the rhetorical responses that appear to be available in a given situation.

In constructing such semi-fictional narratives rather than presenting my data as realistically as possible, I follow in the footsteps of Carolyn Ellis, a leading autoethnographic researcher, who describes a continuum of qualitative research in the social sciences with "realist" methods of representation at one end and "interpretive" methods at the other. Autoethnography, with its emphasis on narrative, falls toward the interpretive end of the spectrum, and might be described as more art than science. "Rather than believing in the presence of an external, unconstructed truth," writes Ellis, researchers nearer the "interpretive" end of the spectrum "embrace narrative truth, which means that the experiences they depict become believable, lifelike, and possible" (30). The goal of narrative truth is "to convey *meanings* more so than *facts*" (116). In adopting this approach, I do not mean to discount the importance of facts—that is to say, the importance of seeking, as much as possible, to understand things "as they really are." But especially within the realm of the social, "facts"—raw data such as recordings, field notes, textual artifacts, and so forth—cannot be separated from narrative construction.

From the very beginning, the process of observation assumes and constructs a narrative through our choices about where to direct our attention and why: one that events as they unfold may resist and transform, to be sure (else what would be the point of observation in the first place), but a constructed narrative nonetheless. Furthermore, to the degree that it might be possible to portray an accurate picture of what happened in a particular class in a particular semester, it would never map exactly onto the next class in

the next semester. Any narrative we construct through reflection inevitably becomes in our minds a typified experience, one which must be lifelike but not exact in order to provide useful grounds for planning future action.

Given this emphasis on narrative verisimilitude, it might be asked why I felt the need to include these real students' and colleagues' voices in my narrative at all; why not create a wholly fictional narrative? I can only answer that it is because these voices are among those that I hear when I think about what I have done and what I will do when I teach collaboration. As Ellis asserts, a key ethical consideration of autoethnography is that, as far as possible, the text reflects all stakeholders' views (124). By intentionally seeking out and including students' and colleagues' voices in this narrative, I hold myself accountable to them, as well as to readers, fellow scholar-teachers, and scholarly theory on writing and collaboration.

The validity of this (or any other) autoethnographic work ultimately depends on readers' judgment of whether it resonates with and helps them make sense of their own experiences and equips them for future action. Thus, in constructing this narrative, I am beholden to more than my own memories and sense of meaning. In constructing an autoethnographic account and theorizing about it, I invoke an audience (Ede and Lunsford) of fellow composition scholar-practitioners who themselves, I hope, will engage in a similar process of rhetorically grounded, accountable reflection.

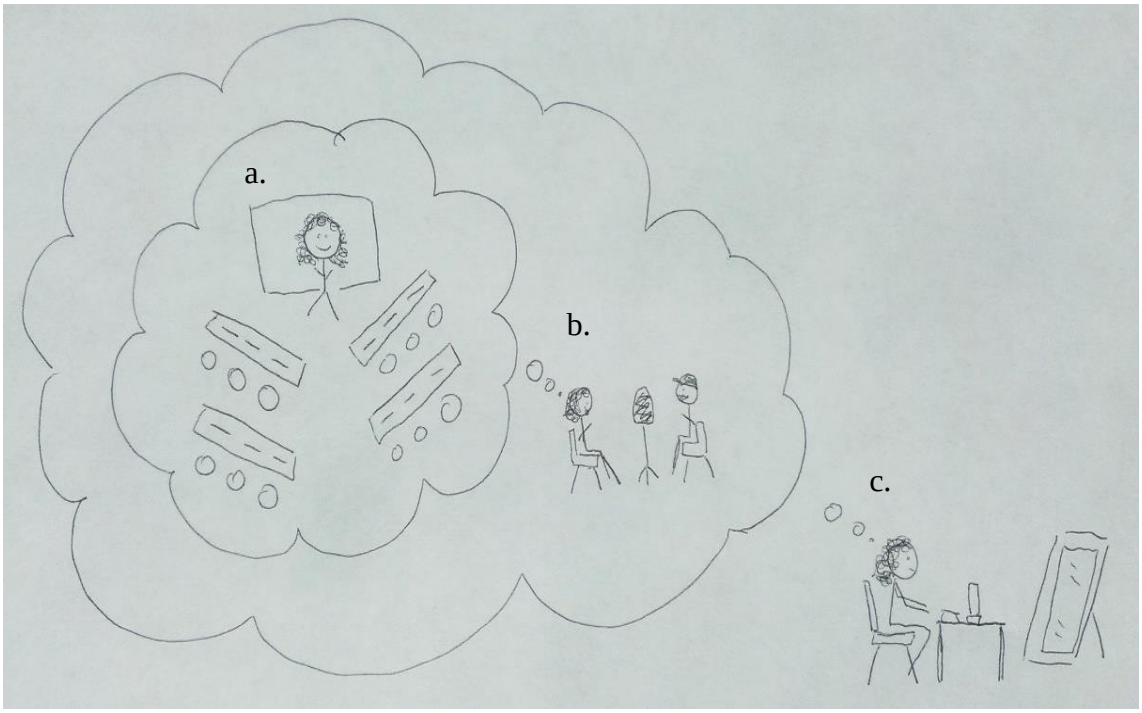
Layering Reflection as Methodological Technique for this Study

The site of inquiry for this dissertation is not classroom observations, as would be expected in traditional ethnographic field work. Rather, the site of inquiry is my own

reflective practice about teaching collaborative writing. Reflective practice is recursive. We construct situated theories for teaching writing based on prior and acquired knowledge from our own experience and the work of other composition scholars. Then we test our theories in the "laboratory" of the classroom; we see what actually happens. We reflect on what happened: how it met and didn't meet our situated theory. That reflection may be formal or informal, private or (most often, I suspect) with colleagues. Then we start the cycle all over again. But the stories we tell ourselves about "what happened" are no less rhetorically constructed than the stories we tell ourselves about "what will happen." Perhaps the most difficult work of reflective practice occurs in the nebulous space in-between concrete experience; thus the need for an autoethnographic approach which pays explicit attention to my own processes of narrative construction.

This approach, which I call "iterative narrative reflection," is not intended to be a "pure representation" of specific events; nor is it objective, comprehensive, detached, or static. As a pedagogically oriented practice, iterative narrative reflection is empirically grounded, attuned to multiple perspectives, consciously interpretive, open to criticism, and subject to revision. Iterative narrative reflection is autoethnographic because it involves systematic analysis of how we construct stories that place ourselves in relation to others. Its aim is to generate practical knowledge: to enable teacher-scholars to "do better with [its] guidance than without" (Bazerman, "Theories" 103) by helping the scholar-practitioner make sense of her experience and decide what to do next, and how.

Figure 3. The Author Engages In Recursive Reflection.



Because reflection is recursive, and because the process of observing one's narrative construction itself reconstructs and alters the narrative, it would be possible to get stuck in an infinite regression. I limit my inquiry here to three layers of recursive reflection,[18] as illustrated in figure 3. At the first layer (a), I reconstruct narrative vignettes of myself teaching a collaborative research paper. In constructing these descriptions of my teaching experiences, I do not rely solely on memory. I returned to course materials that I developed alone and with colleagues from 2008-2015 and teaching

[18] This idea of multiple layers of seeing and thinking is not original. For instance, in Terry Pratchett's Discworld series, would-be witch Tiffany Aching has "first sight" which enables her to see what is really there rather than what she expects to see, and both "second thoughts" (thinking about thinking) and "third thoughts" (thinking about thinking about thinking).

Though it was not intentional on my part, my inclusion of three layers has additional mystical significance: in the Hebraic traditions the number 3 symbolizes completion, perfection, permanence; in Christianity the Godhead consists of three persons. Hindu mysticism includes the concept of a "third eye" which sees the truth. And there is the epistemological trinity of "thesis, antithesis, synthesis" with the third stage supposedly the one nearest to the truth. Even Burke invokes a law of threes in his frequent discussion of the "symbolic transcendence of opposites" which is analogous, if not identical, with synthesis.

journals that I kept during my first two years of teaching collaborative writing. In order to include student voices in this narrative, I also draw on data from my 2013 pilot study and my 2015 follow-up study: students' final course reflections, self and peer evaluations for the collaborative assignment, email interviews, and survey responses.[19] At the next layer (b), I examine transcripts of conversation with a fellow composition teacher in which I reflect on my experiences teaching collaboration. This intermediate layer proved highly valuable. Seeking out another perspective about my teaching experiences from a valued colleague pushed me to reconsider my earlier interpretations of my experiences.[20] Lastly, this dissertation itself becomes an additional layer (c) of reflection. At this layer, my narrative reconstructions become a far more explicit set of "typified experiences" that could be subjected to criticism and potentially for revision, both in the sense of seeing something again and in the sense of alteration. It is primarily at this layer that I use Burke's frames of acceptance and rejection (as explicated in chapter one) as a way to explore my attitudes toward my prior experiences. The process of analysis at this third layer is itself comic. As William Rueckert (quoting Burke's *Attitudes*) explains, "comic criticism, which approaches life in the way a [literary critic] approaches a poem, attempts to 'provide important cues for the composition of one's life, which demands accommodation to the structures of others lives'" (*Kenneth Burke* 56).

[19] Student participants' responses were all in written form; since the vignettes are presented as dialog within a classroom or office visit, I have very lightly edited participants' wording in order to maintain a conversational register and eliminate typographical errors.

[20] Most teachers engage in informal reflection through conversations with colleagues from time to time, especially when their experiences have been particularly challenging. It might be possible (and perhaps sometimes necessary) to engage in iterative narrative reflection without seeking a colleague's perspective, but I believe it would have been much harder for me to access the broader range of perspectives I was seeking if I had engaged in the process alone.

To facilitate textual analysis of my autoethnographic accounts, I used TagCrowd, an online Word Cloud generator, to zoom in on and compare key words in my vignettes, interviews, and analysis of popular culture texts representing each of Burke's frames from chapter one. I also used InfraNodus to generate phrase networks so that I could look for relationships between terms. While these visualization tools did not generate additional significant data in themselves, looking at my texts in this way helped to de-familiarize them and uncover associations that might have otherwise remained tacit.

Summing Up: Tying these Different Methodological Threads Together

Starting from an empirical[21] framework of knowledge, at the outset I wanted my research project to yield a rational[22] account connecting my data to universal principles as unambiguously as possible. It couldn't possibly have worked—not only because of my relative inexperience, but because the subject itself is one of particulars and not of universals. What the process I document here ultimately yielded was not abstract but practical or productive knowledge,[23] a reasonable and highly flexible way to deal with inherently messy and largely uncontrollable situations, in order to increase the likelihood of bringing about particular ends. As I struggled to interpret students' experiences of collaboration in the composition classroom in light of Burke's comic frame, I found myself reinterpreting my own research process, especially its frustrations and failures, within a comic frame as well. I encountered far greater obstacles than I expected to,

[21] Empiricism might be mappable onto Burke's poetic categories. It is a debunking attitude; it demands proof for everything and therefore "guilt" is inherent.
[22] See Burke 164-165.
[23] Bazerman would likely argue that this recasted frame is also highly theoretical.

doing my work the way I wanted to, far more problems with my own process that resulted not from institutional forces but from the limitedness of my own perspective.

Framing these teaching and research challenges in a comic, rather than a tragic or an antagonistic way, enabled me to "cash in on" (Burke, *Attitudes* 93) my project's problems. I did so by recognizing them as not stemming from purely personal failures nor entirely from intractable systemic obstacles, but rather limitations that are common to the qualitative research process and to the process of learning how to be a researcher. I could thus avoid perceiving myself as "selling out" (*ibid*. 94), either by trying to smooth over the representation of my research to make it seem more legitimate or by abandoning the project altogether. Adopting the charitable attitude of the comic frame allowed me to proceed past my perceived failure. Indeed, it taught me to embrace the messiness and even dare to open it up further to not only self-analysis but to the view of others in the hope that they might take a similarly charitable approach to my work, and in so doing, learn something about our shared disciplinary endeavor. Thus, applying the comic frame has not only helped me make sense of the data at hand but also make sense of the larger process of doing this research and writing project (and, I hope, future projects) as well as mentor my students as they engage in the messy work of research and collaboration.

CHAPTER 3

TELLING STORIES, "SELLING" COLLABORATIVE WRITING

> *The comic frame…considers human life as a project in 'composition,' where the poet works with the materials of social relationships. Composition, translation, also 'revision,' hence offering maximum opportunity for the resources of* criticism.
> (Kenneth Burke, *Attitudes toward History* 173, emphasis original)

Introduction: Striving for Narrative Verisimilitude

The principle of narrative verisimilitude is central to this chapter. While in later chapters of this dissertation I playfully take on and construct my narratives from within one or another of Burke's frames of acceptance and rejection, in this first vignette, I attempt to capture as much as possible the mood of a typical class on the day I introduce the collaborative "My Disciplinary Discourse Community" assignment. I do this in order to construct something akin to a "control" for the subsequent analyses. Even though this narrative is a construction—I cannot say that any specific day of class played out in just this way—it reflects a composite memory that faithfully represents my own perceptions and attitudes about the way a class session like this typically goes. And in terms of situated theory building, my mental construction of how the first day of a collaborative assignment typically goes matters more than the historical fact of how any instance has gone. I write it without deliberate inflection toward one frame or another. In doing so, I hope to give readers a sense of insights I gained from working through this analysis as faithfully as I can make it.

A key finding from this analysis is that in "pitching" collaboration to students, I tacitly invoked an epic frame, and when characterizing my teaching of collaboration to a peer teacher, I tacitly invoked another: the comic frame. The analysis in this chapter made evident how frames operate unconsciously, and demonstrates an opportunity for deliberate, explicitly playful re-framing. I take up that work of playful re-framing in subsequent chapters.

To construct this narrative vignette as well as the ones in later chapters, I begin with my primary documents: relevant teaching materials such as lesson plans and handouts, my own teaching journals, and student participants' project reflections, "self and peer evaluation" forms, and email interviews. I stitch these materials together to form a cohesive narrative, each of which are presented in text boxes as "figures" for analysis. After I'm satisfied with each vignette (whether in this chapter or the later ones), I re-read it with an analytical eye, exploring how my framing of the situation, as well as my perception of how other participants in the narrative are framing the situation, influences my own actions. This iterative process thus not only enables me to develop insights about teaching collaborative writing, but at the same time constructs and tests a generative heuristic for engaging in reflective practice that I proposed in chapter two.

In figure 4, the narrative vignette featured in the text box below, I reconstruct a conversation with my students following my introduction of a collaborative research assignment. While some of the students whom I portray here are research participants whose voices I draw from primary documents, other students are composite characters drawn from several real students I have taught whose voices and experiences, while not fully represented in my data, are important to preserve in order to contextualize some of

the concerns raised by research participants. Following the vignette, I look for clusters of images that suggest what "frame" predominates within the narrative. To further facilitate this reflective practice, I also draw on transcripts of a conversation between me and a fellow writing teacher, Steven Hopkins, in which we discuss why and how I teach this collaborative research assignment. As I explained in chapter two, this conversation constitutes a second, intermediate layer of my reflective process that both functions as an aid to memory and a point of comparison to the narratives themselves. As the present chapter illustrates, there are rhetorically significant differences between the ways I tend to frame my own memories of my classroom experiences, the ways I frame them when speaking about teaching with colleagues, and the ways I frame them (or re-frame them) while engaged in a more formal reflective or analytical process, such as in the context of writing about my research on teaching.

A question that this work raises is whether this methodological process of re-framing our internal narratives about what happens and what we will do in response uncovers pre-existing rhetorical possibilities that our terministic screens prevented us from seeing, or whether we are constructing new rhetorical possibilities. This may seem like a distinction without a difference, but there is, I think, an attitudinal difference between discovering and constructing rhetorical possibilities. The idea of constructing new possibilities through deliberate reflection—what Linda Flower (invoking Frank Fischer) characterizes as "reframing the problem" or "frame reflection"—is embedded in the sociocognitive theory of negotiated meaning making reviewed in the previous chapter (324).

Vignette: Pitching a Collaborative Writing Assignment

Figure 4. Reconstruction of a Typical Lesson Introducing a Collaborative Research Assignment[24]

I press the "mute" button on the console, and the projector goes blank. I look out at my class, whose expressions as I interpret them range from vaguely bored to bewildered to anxious. The writing project I have just introduced will be challenging. From previous experience I know that most of my students have never conducted primary research before; to them, researching for a paper means a trip to the library—or more likely, perusing Google or online databases for sources that support their thesis statements. This project will require library research too, but they'll need to think differently about how they use those sources. Based on past experience, I anticipate that we'll need to spend time unpacking the assignment.

I smile, step out from behind the console, and lean back against it. "This is a complex assignment. We'll spend more time later this week talking about conducting interviews and analyzing texts. What questions do you have right now about the project?" Several students' heads dip behind the large computer monitors lined up along their tables, avoiding eye contact as my gaze roams the room. A few seem to be scrolling through the project prompt we've just reviewed together, though I can't see what's on their screens from here. I allow the silence to stretch a little longer, giving my students time to formulate questions they feel comfortable asking. When Korrie[25] raises her hand, I smile and nod toward her. "Korrie?"

"So, we are supposed to work in groups for this project?" I can hear the reluctance in her voice, and I feel my own shoulders tense slightly in response. Getting students to buy into collaborative writing isn't easy, but I'm prepared to dive into the discussion.

"That's right. Although I will consider individual requests to do the assignment on your own, I strongly recommend working in teams. As you can tell, this project is going to take a lot of work, both in terms of logistics and because of the complex concepts involved. In my experience, working in groups will make it more manageable for everyone. At the end of today's class, I'll organize you into teams based on your areas of study." I shift my eyes from Korrie to roam the faces of her classmates once again. "But first, let's talk a little more about collaboration. How many of you have had group writing assignments before?" Several hands are raised, and I nod. "Good! What were your experiences like? Or even if you've never worked on a group

[24] Student dialog comes from research participants' interviews, project reflections, and "self and peer evaluation" forms, as well as composite characters representing student perspectives drawn from my teaching experience.
[25] Korrie is a composite character

paper before, what concerns or questions do you have about writing together?"

Once again, I let the silence stretch out, just a little longer than I feel comfortable with. I remember that during my first semester teaching, every silence seemed interminable and I rushed to fill it, giving my students few opportunities to process their thoughts or engage in a discussion. Now, I can almost feel the moment when a silence is about to break. I suppress a smile as Tara shifts in her seat and her head emerges from behind her monitor, as if on cue. "Tara? What are your thoughts about collaborative work?"

Tara glances briefly at the students next to her. "I've always despised group projects," she offers wryly. "I'm kind of a perfectionist…I would have my idea of what a project should be and I would get uneasy when others would add their input because it would tweak what I had decided was correct."[26] I can see Emma's[27] and Ben's[28] heads bobbing in agreement above their monitors. I move forward, walking part way down the aisle between the rows of tables, until I can see more of my students' faces.

"Yes," I reply, "One of the hard things about collaboration is creating a shared view of what the final project should be." Salazar raises his hand, and I nod at him.

He looks at me rather than at Tara as he says, "I think it can be helpful to work in groups because we can give each other feedback on any information related to the assignment, so we can make sure we're going on the right track."[29] He leans back in his seat as he finishes.

"That can be especially helpful when the assignment is complex and unfamiliar like this one," I agree. From the corner of my eye, I see another hand raised and turn toward another student. "Go ahead, Abby."

"I'm not a big fan of collaborative work, especially when it comes to writing English papers." Abby shrugs apologetically. "There's always that fear that your partners won't do anything throughout the entire project or they will want to take the project into their own hands and pretty much leave you in the background and not let you participate at all."[30] Carla[31] nods thoughtfully at this last observation, but remains quiet.

"Yeah," Ben chimes in: "I'm barely figuring out how to write papers on my own and now I have to worry about how others' writing will reflect on me."[32]

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[26] "Tara" is a pseudonym; this is a quote from her "self and peer evaluation" form

[27] "Emma" is a pseudonym; this perspective is drawn from my email interview with her

[28] "Ben" is a pseudonym; this perspective is drawn from his course reflection

[29] "Salazar" is a pseudonym; this quote is from his "self and peer evaluation" form

[30] "Abby" is a pseudonym; this quote is from her "self and peer evaluation" form

[31] "Carla" is a composite character

[32] This quote is from Ben's "self and peer evaluation" form

"Or whether or not your teammates will complete their parts of the assignment on time," Matt[33]adds. Around the room, many heads are nodding in agreement.

"Ms. Robinson," I hear Korrie ask, and turn back toward the front of the class where she is seated, "How will we be graded? I don't like having my grade depend on someone else's writing ability, and I don't think it's fair to have to rewrite the whole paper myself just so I can get a good grade if their work isn't up to par."

I nod, suppressing a sigh. I wish that students weren't so focused on grades, but I know some students have a lot riding on their GPAs. Collaborating really does mean giving up some control over the assignment, and that's understandably scary. I hope the scaffolding work I've prepared will help mitigate students' concerns about being graded fairly.

"These are familiar concerns about collaborative writing assignments," I say as I move back up the aisle toward the front of the class. "Although there isn't any single right way to divide up responsibilities in a group project, it is important to distribute work fairly, and to draw on each team member's strengths and abilities to get the most out of the collaboration. In our next class, teams will work on a research and writing plan that will help provide accountability throughout the project."

Now back at the front of the class, I turn again toward Korrie. "At the end of the project, each team member will complete a self and peer evaluation. Part of your project grade will be based on the finished research paper, and part will be based on your own and your peers' evaluation of your contribution to the project." I glance at the clock at the back of the classroom. Although I think it's important for students to share their concerns about collaboration, there is rarely enough time on the first day to address them all, and I hope that some will be answered as we go along. "Thanks, everyone. In the time we have left today, I'd like us to organize the writing teams, and give you a chance to exchange contact information and start talking together about how you will focus your project and who you might want to interview."

Analysis: Tracing Attributions of Motives & My Responses

While I did not deliberately construct this first vignette from within one of Burke's frames, there is no doubt that it, too, embodies the students' and my own tacit assumptions about the motives, or poetic frames, of the agents within the narrative. In

[33] "Matt" is a composite character

this section, then, I analyze what I see as key elements of the narrative that shed light on how my attribution of motives influences my response to the situation.

The first paragraph in the vignette above ended with an acknowledgement of complexity, of tension. My very next gesture is to move out from behind the teaching console toward the students, removing one of the barriers between us. Their own tables and computer monitors remain, as I describe later in the vignette, where I move yet again to transgress the physical barriers of the institutional space. As I will explore later in this chapter, my whole narrative is full of images of me pushing past resistances. Yet in that first gesture, having emerged from behind the teaching console, I immediately leaned against it: a casual gesture meant (so I thought when I performed the action) to dispel tension, both the students' and my own.

A non-technologically-equipped classroom would have a lectern rather than a console, and these teaching consoles are sometimes still called lecterns. But my word choice, though unconscious, is not incidental. Burke argues that objects carry implicit associations, as does the naming of objects. A console is a panel or device for controlling electronics, but its homograph means "to comfort." Leaning against furniture is a casual gesture, but it also suggests an awareness (often felt physically, at least for me, as well as psychologically) of a need for support. I might have leaned against a wall, or the table that sat beside the console. Instead, I leaned on the console, thus re-invoking, whether consciously or not, my authority and its attendant comfort through a physical connection with the classroom's fixed symbol of teacherly authority: the console. This gesture, then, indicates that I was operating from within a frame of acceptance from an institutional perspective.

Having noticed this telling bit of environmental rhetoric, I want to continue analyzing how the classroom space affects the ways that my students and I construct our interactions with one another. My interest in my vignette's "scene" (to use the language of Burke's dramatistic pentad) is partly driven by another ethnographic research project underway in Arizona State University Writing Programs at the time I began writing it in early 2015. In his contribution to the Visualizing Teaching in Action (ViTA) project at ASU Writing Programs, Steven Hopkins worked with members of the faculty to explore the ways that the classroom as a physical space affects pedagogical choices; his December 2014 videography of "classroom constraints" provides a visual representation of a similar classroom to the one I describe here.

The ViTA project, spearheaded by then-director of ASU Writing Programs Shirley Rose, is an ongoing visual ethnography designed to make visible the ecologies of writing classrooms, "the architecture and the way space is used…how teachers and students typically are positioned in relation to one another, and how various technologies…are used in classrooms" (Rose, "ViTA Crosses Borders" 2). Through photographs and video, and with input from the featured faculty and students, the ViTA project makes visible the ways that the "scene" of our teaching writing affects the acts of teaching and writing (cf. Burke's pentad, as he describes in his *Grammar of Motives*). As Rose noted in 2012, writing teachers "'hack' even the most awkward classroom space and make it work for them" (Rose, "We Teach Everywhere" 4). My autoethnographic research suggests that while we teachers certainly exert our agency within the constraints of a classroom's given space, these spaces also exert an unconscious influence over how we construct the scenes of our daily classroom dramas.

In my vignette, I note that students, whose heads "dip," immediately after I ask a discussion question, "appear" to be re-reading the assignment, but that I can't see their faces or "what's on their screens" from behind the "monitors." The second of these two observations suggests a desire to attribute to my students an attitude of acceptance regarding my instruction, while the first and third acknowledge not only that I can't see what they're doing, but also that I can't really know what they are thinking. It's also worth noting my shift of terminology from "monitor," a word with connotations of surveillance and control, to "screen," a word that suggests both privacy and separation.

When two students nod at Tara's negative opinion of collaboration, I move further into their midst, physically closing the distance. I have more power of movement in this situation; the students are stuck in their seats. In fact, the narrative is full of images of movement, both literal and metaphorical: my gaze "roams the room;" I "allow the silence to stretch" and recall having "rushed to fill" such silences in the past. I "move forward…down the aisle" and later "back up the aisle" until I once again reach "the front of the class." I turn toward and away from students. In contrast, students "raise their hands;" we see students' heads "nodding" and "bobbing" in agreement, and their shoulders "shrug." Tara "shifts in her seat" and her head "emerges" just before she speaks; Salazar "leans back in his seat" when he finishes speaking. Was I using my greater power of movement consciously as such? I don't know how conscious it was. I think such movements toward students on my part are a further attempt at identification, but on reflection, I don't know whether my students experience it that way.

The computer lab where I teach on my new campus offers a noteworthy contrast that further illustrates how classroom architecture creates constraints and affordances on

how we teachers frame our relationships to our students and their work. This current classroom has arranged the desks in a "U" with the monitors facing the center of the room; this means I am often looking at the backs of students' heads, but I can see what they are looking at. Note that I use the word "monitors" rather than "screens," here, because these physical objects offer no barrier between me and my students; instead, the classroom configuration invites the teacher to surveil students' computer use in a kind of mini-panopticon. I choose to resist such a role definition, but the physical space limits my ability to completely shirk it. While teaching or leading a writing workshop in this computer lab, I often roam around the room, either on my feet or, more often, scooting around in one of the spare rolling office chairs. Either way, I try to sit down next to students when I talk to them, so that we are "on the same level." We even joke about my use of these chairs sometimes, and when my students are engaged in group work, I invite them to roll around in their chairs as well. The classroom in the vignette above allowed no such physical leveling between teacher and students; even if I had had a spare chair, there was not enough room between the aisles of tables for me to move so freely among my students--yet I still had far more freedom of movement than they did. Thus, I note that my current computer lab classroom affords my students more freedom of physical movement even as the position of their monitors further constrains students' freedom of digital movement.

Reconsidering Tacit Frames: Constructing Alternate Rhetorical Possibilities

It is worth considering how physical and institutional constraints influence the frames we adopt and our roles within them. I would like to say that as a teacher, I operate

from within a comic frame as my preferred pedagogical approach. But I wonder if the epic frame better fits the situation as I have described it in this particular vignette. Did I present myself as one of many fallible humans, with a willingness to seek the resolution of conflict through communication? Or did I present myself as an "epic" teacher, one whose singular virtues will be used for group advantage? Since Burke insists that none of the frames exist entirely separate from one another, the question is one of emphasis rather than exactness (57). Thus, the question becomes not whether I was operating strictly within a comic or epic frame, but rather how considering my interpretation of events from one or the other frame leads to insights about why I responded to the rhetorical situation the way I did, and what sort of responses might become apparent or available if the situation is viewed through a different frame.

"'These are familiar concerns about collaborative writing assignments,' I say as I move back up the aisle toward the front of the class." This physical movement requires me to turn my back on the students temporarily. As I recall, I imagined that telling my students their concerns about collaboration are familiar was another move toward identification, a reassurance that I'm aware of the challenges my students have described and am prepared to help them navigate those challenges. But as I reconsider my physical movements in conjunction with my words, I wonder if it isn't also a kind of dismissal. It's certainly a prelude to literal dismissal, as I move on from the topic, and the class ends shortly afterwards.

Collegial Conversation: Why Teach Collaboration? [34]

Readers will recall from chapter two that part of my methodology included a structured interview between me and my colleague, Steven Hopkins. In the following two excerpts from the transcript of that conversation, I reflect on my experiences teaching collaboration. As the second layer of my reflective practice, this conversation, like my narrative vignettes, invites Burkean analysis.

In the first excerpt below, Steven and I discuss how this collaborative writing assignment arises out of my teaching philosophy. My analysis of this first excerpt shows that the way I frame what I do in my classroom and why varies depending on whether I am speaking to my students or to a colleague, and illustrates that although the two rationales do not conflict, the variations in emphasis between them may shed some light on how I have unconsciously framed the teaching situation illustrated in the vignette above.

Following my brief analysis of that first excerpt, I pick up another thread from my conversation with Steven in which we discuss how my commitment to teaching collaborative writing is grounded not only in the abundant scholarship on collaboration within composition studies, but also in my personal experience as a collaborative teacher-scholar. That experience became a rich source of knowledge from which I could draw in order to mentor students through some of the challenges of collaborative writing. In many ways, this method was more useful than the theoretical or declarative knowledge about collaboration gained from secondary sources.

> *It's already blazing hot outside on this Arizona morning in May. We keep the lights turned off in Steven's office to trick the climate controls into thinking the room is unoccupied, so we won't*

[34] Interview dialog has been edited for length and clarity

freeze indoors. As it is, I'm wearing my elbow-length fingerless gloves and wishing I had worn closed-toe shoes rather than my favorite sandals. I'm seated across from Steven, his impressive microphone and recorder standing between us, my own little handheld audio recorder set aside for today. A long rectangle of light from the doorway partially illuminates our faces. Steven and I shared an office last year, and I'm glad he's agreed to interview me. Despite the formality imposed by the recording setup, we easily fall into a familiar rapport as we talk about teaching.

Steven: I guess start where you came up with the idea to do the assignment.

Rebecca: Actually, I didn't come up with the idea to do the assignment. It was a friend of mine; we were both in TA training and she came up with this great idea for an assignment and she didn't have any teaching experience. I did have some teaching experience and I could see that while it was a really awesome idea, the execution of it was going to be particularly difficult, and so when we decided to collaborate, I suggested that we have students collaborate on doing the assignment…. So the assignment required students to do some secondary research, and also some primary research.

Steven: And which in the sequence in FYC, and your FYC is an argumentative research class?

Rebecca: Yeah. And this was the third assignment.

Steven: OK, so kind of the culmination.

Rebecca: Yeah so they were supposed to do some primary and secondary research, and then synthesize both the primary and secondary research in order to come up with an insight of their own. And because of the complexity of the assignment and also the amount of work involved in doing primary research, we felt that having students collaborate on the assignment would be beneficial, right? It would help them manage all of the components of the assignment. We hoped that it would also help them generate insights because they would be able to clarify the concepts for each other and build on each other's ideas. And that did turn out to be the case for the most part. Although, as we learned from both our own experience co-teaching and from watching and mentoring our students through their own collaborative processes, that collaboration also introduces complications, and it doesn't really halve the work, because the collaboration takes work too, so a big part of the development of that assignment then became how do we teach students how to collaborate, as well as do this difficult assignment.

Steven: What I heard you say is that three of the main benefits of adding a collaborative element to this assignment are first, to hopefully build in the idea of synergy, that by working together they'll come up with better ideas than they would have come up with on their own. Second, that it distributes the work among the people.

Rebecca: Yep.

Steven: And third that they actually practice collaboration, which is a set of skills in itself.

Rebecca: Absolutely, yeah.

Steven: Aside from that, do you feel like there was any other benefit that you were going for by adding the collaborative element to this assignment?

Rebecca: We were trying to minimize the impact on faculty. So the students were doing primary research on campus, and that research involved contacting faculty, and between the two of us there were four sections of twenty-five students each, so that's a lot of students, and so we wanted to sort of minimize the impact that it would have. we didn't want to annoy other people on campus with our students pestering them, you know, so rather than having 100 students doing 200 interviews, that they would be in groups of three or four, so they would be interviewing fewer faculty, or that faculty would be doing fewer interviews.

Steven: What did you expect would happen as you came up with this collaborative assignment? What were you hoping the students would do? Or the experiences they would have?

Rebecca: We expected that they would need some help with the logistics of collaboration, so scheduling things, and dividing tasks, because we didn't expect that they would—and it wouldn't be a productive use of collaboration for everybody to do all the things, right? There are some things that you need to sit down and do together, and there are other things that you need to say, 'OK I'm going to do this part, you're going to do that part, and then we'll get together and share what we learned, and then write a thing.' So we knew students were going to need help figuring out how to parcel up the assignment, and how to create a calendar, like 'this is what we're going to do, this is when we're going to do it, this is when we're going to meet to talk about what we did.'

Steven: So your scaffolding is guiding them through this process, like what you created?

Rebecca: Yeah, part of the scaffolding for the assignment was just helping them deal with the difficult concepts of the assignment itself, and then the other part of it was helping them figure out how to do collaboration. So we anticipated that, and we anticipated that there probably would be some personality conflicts that we would have to sort of help mediate, and we hoped that they would also experience this kind of synergy, right? And what actually happened was, first of all, yes, they absolutely needed help with the logistics of the assignment--in fact, more so than we thought.

Analysis: Re-Creating Collaboration as a Comic Process

Reading the transcript of this interview now, what stands out to me is this: Although this dialogue presents elements both comic and epic, the emphasis is, perhaps unsurprisingly, on the power that my teaching collaborator and I had as teachers to shape

our students' experiences and steer them through difficulties in completing a collaborative research project. As teachers, we expect, plan, know, manage, mediate, and anticipate. That image is one I project to my students as I introduce and address concerns about complex research projects such as the "My Disciplinary Discourses" assignment. In doing do, I aimed to reassure students who typically feel daunted by the prospect of taking on such a complex and unfamiliar project.

In contrast, I described students in reductive terms that perhaps border on the burlesque: as being less able to develop insights on their own, as not knowing, as potentially annoying or "pestering" those they seek to recruit as participants in their research projects, and as needing help to manage the logistics of the project. Such observations of students' capabilities may be (and often are) true, but they are also *partial,* as Burke says, both in the sense of being incomplete and of being partisan (*Attitudes* 55). That is to say, the picture I present to Steven in the conversation above does not account for the assets that students may bring to bear within their collaborative teams and on the final project itself. Yet as I mentor students through designing a shared vision of and a written plan for a collaborative project, I try to draw them into a discussion of one another's relevant personal assets, and to encourage them to draw on one another's strengths and compensate for one another's weaknesses—an essentially comic process that is illustrated in the very genesis of the project itself, as I explain to Steven in the following excerpt from the same conversation:

> **Steven**: I think there's kind of something funny here that you've got kind of a *meta* thing going on where it's an assignment about collaboration and you're collaborating with someone else to come up with this assignment and teach it, so maybe could you describe for me your own collaborative efforts, and I know it's hard to do, but maybe start distributing a little

bit of the work: what did you do, what did they do, where did you kind of decide some of the responsibilities and things like that?

Rebecca: So [Katrina] had drafted the initial assignment sheet, and so we would get together initially a couple times a week and we were working on the whole semester sequence together, right? So we would go through it and we would sort of spitball ideas and one or the other of us would be editing the document. I think usually it was her that was editing the document.

Steven: This document was the assignment sheet?

Rebecca: Initially the assignment sheet, and then we were also developing the course calendar, so what I remember is that a lot of the scaffolding work I was drawing on my prior experience of how to sequence things, and what kinds of things we should do in the classroom versus having them do as homework, but this is the thing about collaboration, in a good collaboration, anyway, there is that synergy going on, it's really hard to tease apart who did what, or who had which ideas. So one of the things that we realized we needed to do, because this project involved interviewing, our students needed help learning how to draft interview questions, and how to conduct interviews. It's scary enough to go talk to a faculty member during their office hours about your own classes, but to be like "I am going to interview you and be a researcher. Or at least we're pretending to be" Right? Because there's still a degree of artificiality to that. So we were trying to figure out, how do we practice interviewing in the classroom, and how do we help students generate interview questions that are going to elicit the kinds of information that they're going to need to complete the assignment. And that was hard for us, because we didn't really have any experience interviewing either. But it became necessary. And it was a really valuable thing for everybody involved, that we went through that process of figuring out how to this or that part of this assignment.

Steven: Okay, so do you feel like there were synergistic insights that you had together that you probably wouldn't have come up with on your own?

Rebecca: Yeah, absolutely.

Steven: Can you think of anything specific? Maybe a moment where you had a synergistic thing where somebody gives half of an idea and you give the other part of the idea and then it builds into something. Do you remember anything like that happening?

Rebecca: I don't know if it was really a moment, but both of us were obviously teaching composition, but we came from different disciplinary backgrounds in terms of our prior study, and so because we were coming at it from different angles and were talking about how to deal with these difficult concepts, we were negotiating those concepts between the two of us, just in terms of our own disciplinary knowledge. What I remember is that there was a moment when we realized that if this synergy is working for us, if we're actually

developing insights about why this work that we're asking students to do is important, in terms of the values and the goals of teaching first-year composition, if we are experiencing these "aha moments" as we're working through why this assignment will work and how it will work, then that synergy is likely to happen for our students as well.

Steven: So you saw parallels between your experience collaborating and what the students could have experienced.

Rebecca: Right, and I think that also, both in terms of positives and in terms of the potential pitfalls, it's hard to make time to schedule meetings, to get together and sit down and talk about this is what we want to do, and when there's disagreements, how you negotiate that is a big part of collaboration. So as we were working through the curriculum we were in that meta-space. We'd be working on it and we'd be like, "Oh! This thing that just happened between us in our collaboration, our students are going to run into that problem, too." And that happened a lot in terms of scheduling and handling disagreement, like negotiating what the work was about. That's big because the students are going to have to create a unified paper at the end of it, and they're going to have to agree at least to some degree on what this is about. At the same time, we also talked about the value of having those different voices. And one of the things that we went back and forth on with this paper was, in the final paper, do we want it to read like a single-authored paper, or is it okay if we can still hear some of that multiplicity of voices. And ultimately we didn't totally agree on that.

Steven: Okay, an idea that I would like you to tease out a little bit, we've talked about a picture of a spectrum of collaboration, that on one end there's like, you googled something and you borrowed something and that became an idea and you take it, right? Technically, that's still collaboration, right? You saw somebody else's idea, but you didn't interact with the person personally, or anything like that. And then at the other end of the spectrum is where you and your collaborator were sitting in a room next to each other, looking at the same document, writing sentences together. That seems to be the far end of this spectrum. And then there's just asking for help, like you were talking about, in the middle. I don't know if there's a question there, but I saw you painting that picture. Can you talk to that a little bit?

Rebecca: Yeah, so this is one of those things that I certainly recognized for myself but then it's also found in the literature. So, for example, Lunsford and Ede, and William Duffy, when they talk about collaboration, Duffy argues that in the field of composition studies we talk a lot about collaboration, but we don't do a great job defining what it is we mean by collaboration. And he talks about the different kinds of, what counts as collaboration? Does googling something and getting an idea and incorporating that idea into your own work, does that even count as collaboration? And is it even worth thinking about that as

collaboration? Obviously, the other end where from beginning to end you're working together side-by-side, whether actually in person or maybe remotely. It's a very integrated process to where in the end product it's hard to point to any part of it and say, "I did this and she did that." That's obviously collaboration. This other thing is maybe less. And then in the middle it gets even more murky. Lunsford and Ede consciously resist deciding where you draw the line between these things: these kinds of activities are collaborative, and these are something else. They talk about that spectrum and they locate the kind of collaboration that they're specifically talking about in a given work, but they don't want to put a lid on what the word "collaboration" can mean. And part of the reason for that is because, as they say, I don't know if this is an exact quote, but that all writing is collaborative all the way down.

Steven: Yeah. And a lot of that comes from Bakhtin, and the idea that every word you use has been used before and carries with it all these echoes of all the other times it's been used (cf. Emerson and Morson 92). Everything is a remix, people say too, as kind of the same idea.

A comic frame serves the goals of collaborative invention in three ways. First, it encourages people to "be observers of themselves, while acting" (Burke, *Attitudes* 171), which allows collaborators to communicate better with one another about the writing process. Second, a comic frame encourages us to cultivate an attitude of humility (ibid. 166) that enables collaborators to recognize one another's strengths and weaknesses in order to "cash in on" one another's strengths and compensate for one another's weaknesses. Third, it invites collaborators to manage their own and one another's weaknesses through acts of symbolic charitable laughter. As I mentioned to Steven, the success of the "My Disciplinary Discourses" assignment resulted from the strengths of my colleague's already well-developed assignment prompt and my prior teaching experience. As we taught together in those first few semesters during my Master's, we frequently made use of one another's complementary skills and knowledge to refine the assignment and resolve logistical and conceptual difficulties as they arose. But just as

importantly, we also consciously and continually reflected on our own collaborative process in order to construct rhetorical spaces in which to mentor our students in their own processes of collaboration.

Steven's calling my attention to the "meta" relationship between my collaboration with Katrina and our teaching our students how to do collaborative research. Yet in the narrative vignette (which reflects my early experience over several semesters teaching this assignment), I did not share these insights with my students, nor did I explain to them the ubiquity of collaboration in professional contexts, and the value of learning to navigate collaborative projects in a low-stakes classroom setting as preparation for the future. In short, I did not preface my invitation for a class discussion with an explanation of why I was asking my students to write collaboratively, even though I had predicted that this might be a sticking point for some of my students. By not pre-emptively inviting them to consider the value of collaboration as a professional skill, I unconsciously put myself in a "defensive position." In chapter five, Steven and I further discuss how we have learned "sell" collaboration to our students. While I can't control the stories my students tell themselves about my class and their experiences in it, as a teacher I do have some power to offer a frame through which my students could view collaboration's seemingly-inevitable frustrations and messiness as well as its potential for community-building and greater accomplishment than can be achieved by one person working alone. But such an offering must be consciously designed—something I did not recognize when I first began teaching collaborative writing.

Conclusion: Considering the Dangers of Adopting an Epic Teacher Role

My purpose in creating and analyzing these narratives is not merely to think back on my prior experience and thinking about teaching a collaborative research assignment. It is, as Paul Lynch urges, to ask "*how shall we cultivate experience in order to foster growth?*" (20, emphasis original), not to produce "a single answer;" for, with Lynch, I recognize not one but many possible answers (ibid.). One answer—the one I develop in this dissertation—is to use Burke's poetic categories as a heuristic for analyzing past experiences in ways that might open up future rhetorical possibilities rather than remaining simply constrained by perceived rhetorical exigencies. That is to say, when we unconsciously frame a situation in a certain way, that framing creates an exigency which seems to call for a certain type of rhetorical response. But if we can re-create the situation from within a different frame, the exigency takes on a different character, and thus other rhetorical responses become possible. This kind of poetic re-framing is, then, a way of "discovering the available means of persuasion," as Aristotle says (24).

From my present vantage point, it seems to me that there is some wisdom in adopting an epic role as a teacher (as I did when introducing a potentially daunting and unfamiliar research assignment, for example), but danger as well. I have said that I think I do so unconsciously, as a response to my perception that students feel considerable anxiety both about conducting primary research (even on a very small scale) and about collaborative writing assignments. By adopting the role of an epic hero, I suppose (whether correctly or not) that I mean to present a reassuring figure in the face of such daunting uncertainty. I am asking them to sail into rough waters, and signaling that I have been there before, I know the path, and I have the "talismans" necessary to carry us

through to the other side. Perhaps the epic frame is so compelling for a teacher because, in a metaphorical sense, the classroom exists in "primitive, non-commercial [or pre-commercial] conditions" (Burke, *Attitudes* 34) in which teachers, like epic heroes "mediate between" (36) students and the god-terms of academic discourse.

The danger of such a position is that, as Burke says, "the epic is designed then, under primitive conditions, to make men 'at home in' those conditions" (35). To put it another way, when a teacher embraces the role of an epic hero, it reinforces a dependent relationship that students must ultimately overcome if they are to take ownership of their own development as writers, learners, and professionals. Therefore, whether I attempt to move from a predominantly epic to a comic frame on the first day or later in the project, it is worth consciously undermining my epic teacher role, of allowing my students to see my comic foibles as well as their own, and cultivating a classroom collaborative mindset that we are all in this together. Such a position is, in fact, nearer the truth. I learn constantly from my students, not only from reading the research reports they produce but from walking beside them as they learn to navigate the always-surprising complexities of working with each other to produce a coherent text.

CHAPTER 4

MENTORING THROUGH TRAGIC CONFLICTS IN COLLABORATION

Introduction: The Affordances of Playful Re-Framing

Surely "methods matter," so what are the unique affordances of this project's methods? In this dissertation, I combine autoethnography with Burke's frames of acceptance and rejection and with Flower's concept of situated theory building. In constructing the narrative vignettes that form the basis of this dissertation from primary data and my own recollections, I become able to subject these narratives to analysis, not of what "really happened," which is unrecoverable, but of the language I use to interpret my experience: language that then creates and constrains my available rhetorical responses. By choosing to conduct this analysis in the context of a dissertation, I invite fellow scholars and teachers to draw on this "rich store of error" (Burke, *Attitudes toward History* 172), as well as their own narratives, in order to test my method of engaging in productive reflection and situated theory building about teaching writing.

In chapter three, I constructed my first vignette to reflect, as closely as possible, my recollection of how a class session in which I introduced the "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment typically went. As I preview in that chapter, in this and the next chapters (chapters four and five), I deliberately and playfully adopt one of Burke's poetic categories, or "frames of acceptance and rejection" to inflect my recollections of other events connected with that assignment—events in addition to those taken up in chapter three. By deliberately "playing up" a particular frame, I compose a problem space in which to explore the ways a given frame affords and constrains potential rhetorical

responses. In this chapter, I describe an instance of failed collaboration through two student conferences: one with two members of a project team, and another with the third member of that team. Burke's tragic frame serves as the lens through which I analyze the chapter's vignettes.

Because a tragic frame emphasizes blame and demands some kind of sacrifice to restore the polluted social order, I have chosen to use only composite characters in these narratives in order to protect actual students and avoid portraying any one real student as victim or perpetrator. While some of the perspectives these characters express are derived from my primary data, I use no direct quotes, and my construction of these composite characters from multiple experiences over the course of several semesters is intended to protect the identities of real students with whom I have worked. I have encountered situations like the one I describe in this chapter many times, though (thankfully) they don't always turn out as they do here. Furthermore, my use of composite characters enables me to more freely "play up" the tragic aspects of my narratives in order to explore how narrative framing affects my perception of available rhetorical responses.

The Tragic Frame

In *Attitudes toward History,* Burke recommends the comic frame as the one generally best suited for human society, yet his later work increasingly focused on the tragic frame's influence on human interactions. Elizabeth Weiser has argued persuasively that Burke's shift in emphasis toward the tragic was influenced by his experiences during the Second World War. I contend that despite his apparent later emphasis on the tragic, Burke's overall project remains essentially comic because, as he notes, the act of

engaging in dramatistic analysis is itself comic, in the sense that it uncovers our common weaknesses and seeks to remedy them through language as social action rather than more violent means. Indeed, in his 1984 afterword to the third edition of *Attitudes,* Burke himself notes that he "recently received some comments from a friendly colleague who classes [Burke's] position as essentially 'tragic.' And it is so in the sense that the 'comic' attitude, quite like the 'tragic' attitude, subscribes to this basic view of life as an education: We learn by suffering" (415). Furthermore, he argues that "the critical analysis of 'tragic' motives is in essence 'comic'" (ibid. 349). Thus, while reiterating his allegiance to the comic frame, Burke accepts the tragi-comic duality of his body of work and explains, in part, why Burkean scholarship tends to focus on and contrast these two attitudes, comparatively neglecting the others he articulates in *Attitudes.*

A tragic frame enables acceptance of the reigning symbols of authority by punishing and sometimes expelling those who offend against them. In contrast, the comic enables acceptance by recognizing common fallibility, not just of an offending agent but of society, its systems and members as well. The perspectives that tragic and comic attitudes offer about human motives—malice on the one hand and mistakenness on the other—seem deeply opposed, if not mutually exclusive. And Burke himself admits that frames other than the comic can be useful (*Attitudes* 107). One or more of the other frames might more effectively yield desirable outcomes in a given case (or to accept probable outcomes as desirable). Yet both the tragic and the comic are frames of acceptance, not frames of rejection. Tragic acceptance must be sustained through a continuous cycle of blame, punishment, and reconciliation, but comic acceptance comes as a result of charitable recognition, forgiveness, and accommodation which seeks by

acknowledging one another's faults to compensate for them—what Burke terms the "comic correctives" (ibid. 166) of his method of "perspective by incongruity" (ibid. 173). In other words, it is because the comic fool's fallibility is common to humanity that we are able to identify with and forgive it. Purification through comic victimage understands that we are all fools, where "we" includes ourselves, other individuals, and society.

To facilitate my analysis as it unfolds in this chapter, I draw on Burke's dramatistic life cycle. As described in his *Grammar of Motives,* this cycle begins with a state of order, which is then disrupted through some act that pollutes the state of order. Such pollution produces guilt and division from society that requires purification and redemption. Purification is achieved through a guilty party's appeal to victimage, mortification, transcendence, or some combination of the three. To this life cycle, Burke adds his dramatistic pentad: the **act**, or rule-breaking behavior; the **agent**, who performed the act; the **agency**, or means by which the act was performed; the **scene**, or location and situation in which the act took place; and the **purpose**, or what the act was intended to achieve (not to be confused with its **motive**). A narrative can be analyzed using Burke's dramatistic pentad to identify which of these five elements supplies the dominant motive for an act that breaks the social order, thus giving us a cue as to what sort of frame might best suit our need to craft an appropriate rhetorical response: whether that be a frame of acceptance, a transitional frame, or a frame of rejection. But more than that, the process of engaging in a dramatistic analysis forces us to consider a variety of ways of seeing the same act, and thus achieving "perspective by incongruity" (*Attitudes* 173). That process requires a rhetorician to recognize the limitedness of their singular, unaided, default perspective: a recognition that orients them within a comic frame.

It's important to note that Burke's terms are ambiguous by design (cf. *Attitudes* 57). As he notes in the introduction to *Grammar,* "we take it for granted that...there must remain something essentially enigmatic about the problem of motives, and that this underlying enigma will manifest itself in inevitable ambiguities and inconsistencies among the terms for motives. Accordingly, what we want is not terms that avoid ambiguity, but terms that clearly reveal the strategic spots at which ambiguities necessarily arise" (Burke, *Grammar* xviii, emphasis original). Furthermore, the five terms of the pentad are not "necessary 'forms of experience'" but rather "the necessary 'forms of talk about experience.'...our concern is primarily with the analysis of language rather than with the analysis of 'reality'" (ibid. 317, emphasis original).

A Minor Tragedy of Collaborative Composition

Before presenting the two narrative vignettes that I explore in the remainder of this chapter, it will be useful for me to sketch out the context in which the events I describe play out. For the "Disciplinary Arguments" curricular unit that I study here, I organized first-year writing students into teams of three or four students based on their majors. When there were not enough students in a single major (as is often the case), I relied on Michael Carter's metadisciplinary categories to assign students to groups where I anticipated there would be some overlap in the epistemological and rhetorical values of faculty in their majors.[35] As a teacher I have found that such semi-heterogeneous groups of students often produce more interesting insights in their final papers than their more

[35] Early in the project, in fact, I assigned students to read Carter's "Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Writing in the Disciplines" to help them begin to think about how different academic fields might value various kinds of evidence differently, and how "the research paper" is not a cohesive genre but a set of overlapping but nevertheless discipline-specific meta-genres.

homogeneous peers' project groups. Beyond that, when possible I tried to organize students into groups based on what I knew of their personalities and writing abilities. Within the range of students enrolled in the course, I tried not to make the groups too demographically or scholastically homogeneous or heterogeneous, but various constraints did not always make it possible for me to form groups in as balanced a way as I would have liked. The three composite characters in my narrative vignette form a semi-heterogeneous group of students.

Because not all the groups would be made up of students whose shared major offered a ready source of identification, the first scaffolding assignment of the unit is a written research plan. In these research plans, teams identify the scope of their inquiry, articulate one or two research questions relevant to the assignment prompt, list specific assignment tasks and roles that team members have agreed to take on, and provide a tentative schedule of regular team meetings and internal group deadlines for specific phases of the project. The goal of the research plan, which I explain in its assignment prompt, is to help student teams to develop a "shared vision" for the project and to negotiate specific group expectations up front. While students often find it necessary to adjust their research plans partway through the project, this initial planning stage remains an important means for students to construct a shared collaborative identity. Some of the students in my study found that a much more flexible plan worked better for their team, and others found that a detailed plan helped them to maintain focus and accountability and to negotiate conflicts when they arose.

Another important component of the "Disciplinary Arguments" unit is my draft conferences, which is the setting of both vignettes described in this chapter. Once

students had collected most of their primary data and begun transcription and analysis, but prior to turning in their graded "first draft" for peer review, I required each project team to meet with me for a 20-minute conference about their project. In order to accommodate all my students, I canceled two days of classes. To get attendance credit for those class periods, students were required to come to their conferences on time and prepared with a partial draft of their paper, plus two or three written questions or concerns they had about their draft.

As I noted earlier, this chapter concerns a failed collaboration between a group of three students: composite characters based on real students and real experiences I have had over the course of several years teaching the "Disciplinary Arguments" unit. Matt is a non-traditional student, a business management major with prior workplace experience that he occasionally contributes to class discussions. Korrie is a traditional student, a self-styled high achiever taking a heavy course load as a marketing major. Carla is an L2 student working nights and weekends as she pursues a degree in communications.

As you read the following vignette (see figure 5), note the ways that Matt and Korrie frame their narrative in tragic terms. The dramatistic ratio of AGENT-ACT dominates their accounting of the problem their team is having, with the agent as the dominant of the two terms. In their view, Carla is the source of the problem, not just through her actions (or lack thereof), but in terms of the kind of student they perceive her to be: one who is essentially not like them. As Burke notes, "in the motives we assign to the actions of ourselves and our neighbors, there is implicit a program of socialization. In deciding *why* people do as they do, we get the cues that place us with relation to them" (*Attitudes* 170, emphasis original). Because Matt and Korrie have constructed a tragic

version of events, they make an appeal to me, their teacher, as the reigning symbol of authority presumably able to mete out a suitable tragic punishment. Though I attempt to re-frame the situation in more comic terms as I dialogue with Matt and Korrie, my attempts are ultimately unsuccessful—I remain caught up in my students' tragic framing, able only to contrive a delay of judgment.

Vignette: Conferencing with Matt and Korrie

Figure 5. First Composite Narrative of a Student/Teacher Draft Conference

The morning of the first day of conferences, I settle into my office cubicle and, since only the top of my head is visible over the cubicle wall, I pin a big sign on the fabric barrier facing the door so that students will know where to find me.

When I pull up Google Sheets to check my conference schedule for the day, I notice that one group of three students have not signed up for a conference together. Instead, Matt and Korrie have signed up for one 20-minute spot, and the third student, Carla, has not signed up. Since there are still a few more minutes before my first group of students is scheduled, I check my email and see a message from Carla expressing worry about the conference, her attendance (she's missed several classes so far), the project, and her team. She was absent the day I distributed the conference signup sheet, she can't meet at the time her team selected because she's working, and she told her teammates that—is there another time we could meet? I quickly shuffle around in my schedule and find a time to meet with her the following morning before my graduate seminar begins.

By late afternoon, I'm flagged from back-to-back student conferences, but encouraged so far by the quality of students' questions and the interesting data they've collected. At the end of a brief break, I check my Google Sheet to see who's next: it's Matt and Korrie.

As they enter the office I share with several other graduate teaching associates, I see Matt and Korrie glance over at one of my colleagues, who is working in his own cubicle, head bowed, with headphones on so that he can work without distraction through my student conferences. The other desks are currently empty, my fellow TAs off at seminars or teaching their own classes. I greet Matt and Korrie, invite them to pull up a couple of chairs around my cubicle, and remind them of the purpose of the conference. There's a moment of shuffling as Matt pulls out his laptop to show me their partial draft. It's not much of a draft, but it's enough to fulfill my conference requirements. I give them a bit of feedback about focus and organization; they're surprised to learn they're allowed to use section headings in MLA format. When I ask to see their written questions, they fidget.

"Actually," says Korrie, "We want to talk about something else."

"We're having problems with our group," Matt adds.

It's Carla, they tell me. She's never at team meetings, she's slow to respond to emails, and although she found a scholarly article and did one of the interviews, they don't think her data or the section of the paper she drafted is usable; it doesn't fit with what they envision the project to be.

"I basically had to rewrite her section entirely," says Matt. "It was," he pauses, "not good. Not up to my standard of how I think a college research paper should be written."

"This project doesn't seem to be a top priority for her. We're working really hard, but she is just not pulling her weight."

I "hmm" with what I hope is a moderate amount of sympathy, conscious that although they need—and may deserve—affirmation for the collaborative challenges they're dealing with, Carla's email suggests that there may be more to this dynamic than they've let on. Taking sides would not only be premature, it would probably not do anything to repair their working relationship. "I'm trying to remember what your research plan said about the focus of your project and who would do what. Let's take a look." Rather than having Matt pull up his version, I open the version the team submitted online, which includes my feedback. I note that from their account, Carla has done what she agreed to do (even if it wasn't exactly what they were hoping for), but that the scope and research questions section of their research plan was unclear, and that my feedback had asked them to clarify the team's shared vision for the project's direction.

"Yeah, um." Korrie acknowledges. "The two of us seem to be on the same wavelength as each other when it comes to this project because our majors are more similar,"

Matt nods as Korrie continues, "but Carla seems to have a different idea. It's hard to get her on track or explain the project to her because she doesn't come to the team meetings."

"I know she works a lot, and that probably makes scheduling hard," I begin, and Korrie leaps into my pause.

"Well, especially with my course load, I can't meet at any of the times she suggests because I have class or it's my study time."

"I work too," Matt chimes in. "But getting a good grade in this class is a priority for me, so I make time for our meetings."

"Have you tried talking with Carla before or after class?"

"I can't," Korrie says, "because I have classes before and after your class and I have to get all the way across campus."

Matt shrugs. "At this point I feel like I've already done most of her work. I don't know if there's much point in talking to her now." He pauses, and his face tightens. "You know, in my job when we had team projects, if someone wasn't pulling their weight, we could talk to the manager and that person could get kicked off the team or fired. I just don't feel like she should get the same credit when Korrie and me did all the work. I don't feel like my grade should be dragged down because someone else's work isn't good."

Despite my efforts to sustain an attitude of professional concern, I'm teetering toward frustration. "I get that, but as you know, Matt, in the workplace what matters most in the end is that the project gets done, not making sure that everyone does the same amount of work on it. Sometimes things happen, and someone or something falls through, and you just have to get the work done anyway."

Matt murmurs grudging agreement.

"It sounds like that's what you're trying to do, and I'm glad," I continue. "I can see that you're a hard worker with high standards. And, you know, this isn't exactly the same situation as a workplace project. This is a class and we do care about the end product, but our purpose is for students to learn and demonstrate your learning in the final paper. And Carla has done the work that your group agreed she would do, even though what she came up with didn't fit what you had in mind."

Both Matt and Korrie leap to the defensive. "Well—" "Yeah, but—"

Rather than let them continue, I say "Remember that if the project gets done and it meets assignment requirements, that's what your grade is based on. From what I can see, I think you will be able to do that. And part of this project is a self and peer assessment of team members' work on this project, so you will have a chance to have your say about that part of your project grade. But let me talk to Carla, and we'll see—" I trail off.

I'm not entirely sure what we'll see. I don't want to suggest any possibilities to Matt and Korrie just yet. I'm not even sure what possibilities there might or should be. "I'll see what she has to say about it. Let's meet again before class on Friday. Korrie, I know you've got a heavy course load. What time would work for you?"

After a few moments of calendar checking, the three of us have agreed on a time for our follow-up appointment and the two students walk out, murmuring discontentedly to one another. I take a couple of deep breaths to re-center myself, put on a smile, and greet the next group of students.

Analysis: Teasing Out Tensions in Three Versions of One Small Tragedy

Through writing the tragic narrative in figure 5, I can see more clearly the multiple perspectives at play. Though the events are the same, these two students and I are constructing this human drama in very different ways.

Blame and Judgment in Two Versions of the Tragedy.

There are at least two competing stories about what the problem is, and we haven't even gotten to Carla's story yet. The conflict in the beginning is the problem with their team that Matt and Korrie bring up, but in the act of talking about it, another problem (or point of tension) arises: two competing perspectives about the nature of what the problem is and what's at stake.

The dramatistic ratio of AGENT-ACT dominates Matt and Korrie's accounting of the problem their team is having, with the agent as the dominant of the two terms. Carla

is the source of the problem, not just through her actions (or lack thereof), but in terms of the kind of student they perceive her to be: one who is essentially not like them: not a good writer, not someone for whom school is a priority. The "scene" of Carla's "crime" is the semester-long required freshman writing class that they all have to pass and my "Disciplinary Arguments" research assignment, with its requirements and deadlines, in particular. This scene implies constraints that are important to consider in terms of the various players' motives and the available means of purification. According to Matt and Korrie's version of events, the "purpose" of Carla's offending act is, as Matt suggests, to "get the same credit when Korrie and me did all the work." In Matt and Korrie's version of events, an appropriate rhetorical response would require that Carla be cast out from their collaborative community that (according to them) is only in a state of disorder because of her presence within it.

In contrast, the version of events I tried to suggest in my conference with Matt and Korrie implies that the broken "rule for living" is the team's collective failure to create and sustain a functional collaboration: an act that implicates Matt and Korrie rather than Carla alone. According to this version of events, the team's inadequate research plan and poor communication constitute the "agency" through which the "sin" of failing to collaborate is accomplished. My version constructs the scene somewhat differently from Matt and Korrie as well, by virtue of my role as a teacher of many students with a different understanding of institutional goals and constraints (while I'll explore further in the second vignette below). I infer from the students' account that the purpose of their act—the "sin" of failing to collaborate—is to produce what they (somewhat mistakenly) consider a good college research paper in order to get a good grade. Thus, I interpret their

motive as a hubristic hyperfocus on grades, at the expense of the rich collaborative learning opportunity I had attempted to engineer.

This version of events could have been framed in either comic or tragic terms. In the comic version, the focus would remain on the process of learning together; errors would be forgiven because all involved would understand that learning occurs when students are asked to push past the limits of their own abilities, that some degree of failure is expected and correctable, and that everyone involved bore some responsibility, not only for their own failures, but for the success of the collaborative community and their project. On the other hand, the tragic version would seem to call for a punitive rhetorical response involving chastisement and potentially the receipt of poor grades. Ultimately, I was unable to get Matt and Korrie to "buy into" a comic version; instead, I felt caught up in their tragic framing, though my version of the tragedy was differently inflected.

The "rich store of error" (*Attitudes* 172) in the above narrative doesn't have to end with examining just the students, though. In the comic spirit of analysis, I would not wish to identify Matt's and Korrie's hubris without allowing the critical eye to reflect back on me. After all, I was the one who had engineered the collaborative situation, who was responsible for instructing them in how to accomplish the project I had set, and for assessing their work. I must therefore admit the likelihood that some failing of mine had led to—or at least contributed to—these students' dilemma.

Deferred Judgment in a Third Version of the Tragedy.

Thus, a third possible version of events deserves exploration. In this version, I was the agent; my assignment was the act; the pedagogical scaffolding I provided (or failed to provide) for these students was the agency; the scene was more or less the same; and my purpose was to provide students with a rich collaborative learning opportunity in which to explore the epistemological underpinnings of their respective majors—a purpose perhaps too ambitious given the constraints of the scene. In this third version of events, the dramatistic ratio would be AGENCY-SCENE, or perhaps AGENCY-PURPOSE, and the "sin" created by a disparity between the three—the means I could muster being inadequate to the situation I had (at least in part) concocted. Within a tragic frame of acceptance, as the instructor of record I would have to bear the guilt in this version of events, regardless of whatever institutional, professional, and interpersonal constraints I could point to in my defense, because I was the one who gave them the assignment, provided the class instruction, assessed their work, and ultimately recorded their grades. Indeed, a handful of my students' course evaluations have suggested that their anonymous authors saw my collaborative research assignment in just this way, though they lacked the institutional power to see that I was punished—a dismal evaluation was the closest they could get.

Although these three competing narratives differ significantly in their interpretations of the same events, all three remain essentially tragic in their focus on who is to blame. In my conference with Matt and Korrie, each time I attempted to suggest that Carla may not be the only one at fault, Matt and Korrie jumped to their own defense, and by the end of the conference, I was left feeling that my own resources were indeed

inadequate to the situation. It is difficult for me looking back, and it was even more difficult in the context of such a student conference, to imagine a version of this narrative that shifted the focus from one of blame and penalty toward more charitable ground, especially when I had not yet heard Carla's version of the story, to which I now turn in figure 6.

Vignette: Conferencing with Carla

Figure 6. Second Composite Narrative of a Student/Teacher Draft Conference

A little reminder pops up on my tablet, and I set aside my last-minute graduate seminar reading cram session. I wasn't really paying that much attention to the text anyway; my mind is on the situation between Matt, Korrie, and Carla; it's for my meeting with the latter that my reminder was set. The usually-cheerful Carla attempts a bright smile as she greets me, but it quickly fades. I can see the tension in her shoulders; my own muscles mirror it, but I make my greeting warm and reassuring. Her accented speech pours out rapidly, echoing the same concerns she expressed in her email: her work schedule, her grades, her team being mad at her. She feels bad that her schedule is making things harder for Matt and Korrie, and she doesn't want their grades to suffer because of her, but she doesn't have any choice; she has to work, she has to pick up her daughter from day care, it's hard to get a babysitter. I listen, impressed by all the competing obligations Carla is juggling. Soon she turns to the project at hand.

"I would go to the team meetings when I could, and I told them I can't meet at the times they set, but they set them anyway. I know they are busy too. That's why I said I would do one of the interviews by myself. And I found an article I thought would be perfect for the project; I wrote my part of the paper like I said I would. I know it was a little bit later than I said but I sent it to them as soon as I could, but no matter what I do they say it's not right, it's not good. They don't want nothing I do for the project. They didn't even tell me we had a conference with you, I only knew about it because I saw the announcement about class being canceled." By now, Carla is crying.

I hand her a tissue, then move the box closer to her. She gratefully takes a few more tissues to dab at her eyes and nose. Several minutes have passed, and I have hardly said anything so far. I am thinking hard about what to do, how to be fair to all three students, and whether I should even try to have them keep the team together. To give myself more time to think, and in the hope that it will help Carla recover her composure a little, I offer her one of the little chocolates I keep at my desk.

Eventually, I say, "This is a really hard situation. I can tell you've worked hard on this project. But it sounds like your team is having some serious communication problems." I can't suppress a wry smile at my understatement.

Carla nods, attempts her own smile, and tries to say something, but it comes out a choked sob at first. "I'm doing my best. I worked hard on my part of the paper. I'm not

the best writer, I know. My English isn't the best. But I am a good researcher. I thought I was doing the research right. They just didn't like what I wrote. I know it needed to be edited because of my English, but they don't even want to use it. They said my article I found didn't fit. Maybe I don't understand the assignment but I thought my article was what you wanted. I don't understand why they think it's all wrong. Maybe they think I'm not smart because my writing isn't good. I was doing what I thought the paper was about. They just have their own idea of what the paper should be. They don't ever listen to my ideas."

She pulls out her laptop and shows me what she wrote. Her self-assessment of her own writing is more or less accurate; it's disorganized and the language shows many typical markers of a second-language writer, but her writing is about as on-topic as several of the students' drafts I've seen in my conferences so far, and it's a fairly substantial chunk of writing. Maybe what she wrote wouldn't fit in with the draft that Matt and Korrie were writing, but Carla's understanding of the assignment's purpose and requirements seems on par with many of her classmates' at this point in the writing process—just not her team's. I tell her so, and she sighs in some relief.

"I can see a few possibilities for how to move forward," I tell her. "One is, I could schedule a meeting with you and Matt and Korrie and we could work out how to revise your group paper's focus so that it fits both your work and theirs. I think that could reasonably be done in the time you have before your final draft is due."

Carla's crumbling face and posture tell me that this possibility does not appeal to her; I doubt it would to Matt or Korrie either.

"Another possibility is that you split off from the team completely and write your own paper with your own data and they write theirs with their data." Carla seems encouraged by this idea until I say, "That would mean that you and they would have to collect and analyze the other required data to fulfill the assignment, which would be hard to do in the time you have left. Not impossible, maybe, but hard."

Carla nods thoughtfully, clutching another tissue tightly in her hands. Though I suspect it's the option the three students would have chosen if left to their own devices, this possibility raises other concerns for me. However fractured their work together on the project so far has been and however much Carla's work has already been discounted, it would be difficult to fully disentangle her contributions in the draft so far from Matt's and Korrie's. I have concerns about academic integrity, and about how fair it would be to Carla to have her work even further discounted by her peers. Given how little time remains before the final draft is due, I doubt either Carla or Matt and Korrie could produce work that was more than barely satisfactory, and given that I would have authorized the late-stage change of plans, I don't know how I would grade such final drafts fairly. Plus, I want to salvage whatever I can of the collaborative aspects of the assignment.

But our time is short, so instead of explaining all this context to Carla, I boil it down to a third potential solution to her team's problem: "Another possibility is that you could all share the data everyone on the team has collected so far, but you could write your own paper and they could write theirs together. Each of you could decide how to use the data the others collected based on the focus of your own papers." I'm figuring out how this third possibility might work as I talk. "To avoid plagiarism, you would have to credit them as co-authors and they would have to credit you. You would write your own name in

the MLA heading, and then write 'with' and then their names. That would indicate that they had contributed, but that you are the main author, and vice versa. Does that make sense?"

"I guess?" Carla says. Contradicting your professor is hard, I think, especially one-on-one like this. I look at her inquiringly, saying nothing. "Sort of. Not really," she finally says. I try to explain it another way, and she seems less unsure, more willing to give it a shot.

It's far from ideal, but I'm starting to think this third option is the best way to move forward. Still, I say, "Matt and Korrie should have a say in what we decide to do. Let's see if we can arrange a time to all meet together and discuss it."

"I don't think they want to meet with me," Carla says ruefully. "They don't even reply to my messages anymore."

"Maybe not," I say with a grimace, "But I'm the teacher, and sometimes that makes a difference."

My efforts to schedule a meeting with all three students together prove unsuccessful. I suspect that, in addition to legitimate scheduling conflicts, none of them are eager to face each other. Instead, I have my previously scheduled follow-up meeting with Matt and Korrie, in which I go over the three possibilities I conjured in my meeting with Carla, and I urge them to accept the third option of limited co-authorship but separate final papers. Initially, they seem as bewildered by the idea as Carla did, but once they're sufficiently reassured about the fairness of how I will grade their papers, they accept my judgment.

I let Carla know of our decision via email, satisfied that she'd already expressed willingness to accept this third option in our earlier meeting, and invite her to talk with me again when she has questions about the project.

In the end, both papers basically fulfill the purpose of the assignment, though neither is a stellar example of it. In his team's revision letter, Matt—who took on all the editing duties himself—raises the possibility that he could have written a more polished final product had he been able to do the project on his own. But in the end, he admits that he found the process of revising multiple voices to have a singular voice a learning experience, and he's satisfied with the final paper he and Korrie wrote, given the circumstances. None of the three students complains about their grades.

Analysis: An Appeal to Victimage in a Fourth Version of the Tragedy.

Like that of her team members, Carla's version of events (see figure 6) operates within an essentially tragic frame. The addition of her narrative presents a more nuanced picture of blame and justification. In this narrative, the essential dramatistic ratio is SCENE-ACT, and the scene is the dominant element. Carla's expression of guilt is implicitly an acceptance of blame, but she mainly appeals to circumstance, not her

personal character, as the cause of her failures to contribute sufficiently to the group project. While the situational constraints she appeals to are real, so is the problem she finds herself at the center of, and pointing to a cause does not necessarily lead to an obvious solution. As Linda Flower notes in her "Difference-driven Inquiry," "in the frequently assigned group projects, a team member with a demanding work schedule could be a liability" (323), which did turn out to be the case for Carla's team.

Furthermore, a tragic narrative which emphasizes the constraints of the situation rather than the agent, their agency (or means of carrying out the act), or the act itself opens up a far more complex rhetorical problem space that does not lend itself to straightforward or rapid solutions such as the specific circumstance of a research project with a deadline in a semester-long required FYC course, where grades will have an outsized impact on students' GPAs (since they will be based on fewer credits overall), and may significantly impact student retention and degree completion. Carla's status mirrors that of what Flower's Think Tank ended up calling "Independent Students" (325) whose financial and scheduling pressures create academic difficulties that aren't realized until well down the road, when one or more of those challenges reaches a crisis point. Thus, a tragic narrative in which we identify the scene as the determining element can be demoralizing for a teacher whose institutional resources are limited (especially if that teacher is a graduate student TA or a contingent faculty member), let alone for the students involved.

One way for this kind of tragedy to reach its completion—purification and restoration of the established order—is for the offender, though perhaps recognized as being "sinned against" as well as "sinning," to be made a scapegoat and cast out of the

group project, and/or to receive a failing grade for the project or the class, and/or falling into poor academic status, and—as too often happens—potentially falling out of their academic program altogether. Such a solution would enable the teacher and the institution to express sympathy for the lost student while appealing to academic standards as the higher principle that necessitated the chain of events leading to the student's attrition. It would also enable the other students in the project group to feel justified in their own ruthless adherence to what they perceive to be those same academic standards at the expense of their peer's educational opportunity.

This perspective was unacceptable to me. Although I remained caught up in the students' tragic framing, unable to shift the emphasis of our shared unfolding narrative toward a more comic version I would have preferred, I still wanted an alternative that enabled all parties to maintain faith in the academic institution and their own scholastic endeavors, to have a fighting chance of completing the research project and earning a passing grade, and if possible, to learn something more about collaborative writing along the way. Thus, none of the three possibilities I suggested to Carla allowed her to shoulder the full burden of guilt for the collaborative failure. Our shared guilt required shared penance: an adjustment from all parties in terms of how the project would be completed and assessed.

Even as I constructed possibilities in the moment, I left these encounters feeling ambivalent about the way things happened. Thus, as I review my own accounting of four versions of the same story, one question that arises for me is this: What is it about this situation that, although I recognize the many constraints that led to this breakdown of a collaboration that I could not, and possibly should not, have tried to completely control,

still leaves me feeling a sense of guilt, feeling **not good** about what happened? (Burke's definition of man being "goaded by the spirit of perfection" [*Language as Symbolic Action* 16] seems apt here). And second, how might further reframing it be transformative; that is, how might I draw on this "rich store of error" (*Attitudes* 172) not as a source of guilt for my failing as a collaborative mentor, but as a "representative case" containing "*a genuine aspect of the truth"* (ibid, emphasis original), from which to draw insights that might help me address similar concerns in the future?

Perhaps what fuels my continued ambivalence is the sense that a tragic framing so often demands some degree of relinquishing or subsuming of human agency, whereas a comic framing invites us to embrace the messiness of a multiplicity of agencies. Burke's observation in the afterword to *Attitudes* comes again to mind: "that the 'comic' attitude, quite like the 'tragic' attitude, subscribes to this basic view of life as an education: We learn by suffering" (415). Both the tragic and comic frames are frames of acceptance. In the events described in this chapter's narrative, what is being accepted, or needs to be, and why? What would render that thing acceptable in a productive way? The "reigning symbols of authority" in this situation might be organized hierarchically, thus:

- Academic Standards (educational attainment and integrity, however defined)
- Institutional Policies (designed to maintain, or at least maintain the appearance of, those standards)
- Grades (which ostensibly measure the achievement of academic standards)
- Course Objectives (which are used to produce and justify grades)
- The Teacher (a role as well as a person)
- Her Curriculum (which serve to instantiate course objectives)

This list might be constructed differently. One might include more, fewer, or different items, and one might organize them differently. Rather than being definitive, they are

suggestive of the institutional intersubjectivity that reigning symbols of authority construct, and how ordinary they become (what Burke might call a bureaucratized "cow path" (*Attitudes* 225-228). Of course, these symbols only need to be accepted if one wants to participate in traditional academia. But there are powerful social and economic incentives for participation. For an individual, rejecting these symbols of authority may be quite costly, especially for a faculty member who has invested considerable time, energy, and personal identity in academic pursuits. On the other hand, for many minority students, the cost of continuing to accept the academic status quo might come to be higher than rejecting it. And if, as those of us who make our careers in academia believe, the benefits of helping more students to make academic pursuits a part of their identities is inherently worthwhile, then it is worth considering whether any of these symbols of authority, as currently constituted, might be counterproductive, and further, how they might be altered without bringing down the whole structure. A comic frame can enable such incremental changes because it embraces fallibility, and its "perspective by incongruity" (*Attitudes* 173) suggests that because of difference—because, while we are all fallible, our failings are not identical—a multiplicity of perspectives can compensate for individual **and institutional** failings, at least to some degree.

Burke's comic method thus resembles Flower's "difference-driven inquiry," which revolves around her "situated" or "working theories" and the need to both create and examine texts that represent different narratives, different perspectives on problem spaces. Flower's work also acknowledges that her approach to public discourse, and indeed any singular given approach, might not be as effective as multiple approaches operating synergistically ("Difference" 322). Similarly, Burke notes that there are

circumstances that warrant each of his given frames. For example, some cases of plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty probably warrant adopting a tragic frame of acceptance. And I have felt justified in proceeding from within a tragic frame when reprimanding students who consistently flout classroom policies clearly outlined in the syllabus, on the principle that sometimes group advantage does take priority over the individual. It may be that in a situation such as the one I describe in this chapter, some element of the tragic attitude is inevitable. Yet I remain unsatisfied with its predominance.

One possible reason for this dissatisfaction may lie in the interplay between my memories of my own collaborative work as a teacher, and the collaborative situations I saw playing out among my students. In the following interview dialog with fellow graduate TA Steven Hopkins, we explore the influence of these collaborative experiences on our pedagogy.

Collegial Conversation: Co-constructing Rhetorical Responses to Tragic Tensions of Collaboration

During this collegial conversation, my attention was drawn to five strategic spots of ambiguity in which I might construct alternate rhetorical responses in the future. The first three spots locate puzzles that my limited agency as a teacher cannot fully overcome, but the last two reveal points of agency and give language to a broader variety of rhetorical responses than I had originally considered.

Spot One: What Are the Relative Merits of Collaborative Synergy vs. Independence?

Steven: You talked about how you felt like by you [and Katrina] physically practicing collaboration, you were preparing yourselves to teach collaboration during the semester.

Rebecca: Yeah.

Steven: Okay, good, and then, I guess the feeling of distributing the work and a lesser workload between you and your collaborator. Do you feel like that happened? Or it was more work? That was one thing you brought up.

Rebecca: Yeah. You know, I don't think we ended up doing more work than our colleagues who were just developing their curriculum on their own. But I don't know that we ultimately ended up doing much less either [because the collaboration itself takes work]. I think it may have actually been more like the same, but it felt like less. And I think part of that is because, for me at least—I know for some people, for some of my students especially, collaboration is just frustrating, but for us, it wasn't just sharing the work, but the collegiality. We kind of became buddies, and we could be mutually supportive, and that continued not just during the curriculum development, but as the semester progressed. We continued to get together and talk about what was going on in our classrooms, and troubleshoot for each other, and I don't know that that would have happened, or that would have been as rich of an experience had we not been teaching the same curriculum and working together on the same curriculum.

Steven: Like built-in support.

Rebecca: Yeah, so that was really valuable. And that doesn't always happen. So now I'm going on to a different experience in my second semester here at ASU. They had lower than expected enrollment, so they had to pair up some of the TAs. We were supposed to collaboratively teach, but, because this happened late-stage and the pairings were dictated by someone else, the teacher I ended up team-teaching with, we did not share a vision, so we tried to negotiate, "Okay, so what's this collaboration going to look like? Because we're supposed to be sort of team-teaching?" We ended up deciding that we would each teach our own curriculum [that we had already developed], but the second teacher would be there [in the classroom] as an assistant who would help with group work, or help with grading, or step up if one of us is better at teaching research or summary or something like that. So we would do a little bit of trading off teaching, but it wasn't the same kind of closely synergistic experience of [my first collaborative teaching experience], and that created real frustrations for us and for our students. On the other hand, that was also the semester that I had a mass on my thyroid. I had to get surgery at the end of February, and I was out of commission for the better part of March because of complications related to the surgery. And [my co-teacher] was able to step in and teach my class. He didn't teach

it the way that I would have taught it because we didn't develop the curriculum together, but having somebody there who had been there since day one was still really valuable, and in that emergency situation I sure was grateful for that. What initially seemed like a weird and frustrating situation kind of saved my bacon.

Steven: So let's continue down that path that you're already starting on there. How is it different developing curriculum by yourself than developing curriculum collaboratively?

Rebecca: For me, I almost don't want to say that I've ever developed curriculum by myself because even my very first semester teaching as an adjunct, which was [less than a month after I finished my undergraduate degree,] I ran around to all of my former professors and said, "Show me your syllabi; what textbooks do you like? Tell me about your writing assignments, like, what's the logic there?" I talked to them, and then I made my own syllabus. All of that decision-making fell on me, but I was still trying to get whatever insight I could from colleagues. And even as an experienced teacher, to a greater or lesser degree I think all the work that I do as a teacher is collaborative, but most of the time I am the one that's designing the syllabus and creating the writing sequence and teaching the class. And on the one hand, that gives me more freedom to do things the way I want to do it. And that can be kind of exhilarating, to be like, "I want to try this new thing that nobody I know is doing. I know other people are doing it, but I don't know those people. I don't know how it's going to turn out, but we're just gonna try it." I'm much more comfortable doing that now than I was when I was just starting out as a teacher. Having the freedom to do that and to not have to negotiate that with somebody, that's nice. On the other hand, I miss that synergy.

Steven: I'm gonna push that though, okay? What's nice about it? See if anything else comes out about that.

Rebecca: Yeah. So what's nice about not having to negotiate changes?

Steven: Do you feel more proud of the work at the end of the day? Or is it just that you have more freedom to do what you want to do, or…?

Rebecca: No, I don't think I feel more proud of it. I don't have that kind of possessiveness, but I guess we do get very attached to our own ideas. And in that process of negotiation, sometimes you have to give up your pets. You have to let go of that and say, "You know what? Maybe this actually isn't the better idea." Or "Maybe I still think this would be a better way of doing it, but it's just not that important." Right? You've got to pick your battles. So in that sense, I feel possessive of my ideas, not in the sense of being proud of them, but sometimes I would rather do things my way, and you can't always do that in collaboration. If you try and always do that, the collaboration absolutely will fail. You can't be married to your ideas in a collaboration, you have to be married to the collaboration. You can't force synergy to happen, but I think there are ways to make it

more likely to happen. And that has to be the goal, so like, “how can we find the synergy?” As opposed to being like, “This is how it needs to be.”

Spot Two: How Is Collaboration in the Classroom Different Than “Real World” Collaborations?

Steven: I really like your insight of how making collaboration a choice is a way to kind of manufacture intrinsic motivation. Because for the people who choose it, then they're faced with the cognitive dissonance of, 'I made this choice to collaborate with this person and so I need to make it work,' whereas if somebody's forced into the situation then there's automatic resistance.

Rebecca: I also remember, [in] the classes I was teaching, I've had some [classes] that were all undergraduates that were traditional students, but I've had others where they were non-traditional students, so they were coming back from having been in the workplace. And when I taught the collaborative assignments, a couple of them came to me and said, “you know, we have this group of three or four students and it's really working well between me and so-and-so, or between the three of us, but this one person, it's not working, and in the workplace we could kick that person out, right? Like we could say 'you're off the team' or 'you're fired.'” And they were saying this from a position of authority, like “I know how to do collaboration in the workplace.” But the rules are different in a classroom, because what happens if an assignment is required to be collaborative and there's a student [who is] not working out with the group, does the group have the power to 'fire' that student, and then what happens to that student and their grade, if they get 'fired' from their group? And what makes that more complicated, and I saw this more than once, is that often times the student that it's not working out with, it isn't that they're not a good student, it's that there are personality conflicts, or that the student is, for example, it happened more than once with a non-native English speaking student, so they were being perceived as being dead weight by the group. And I had some of those students [who] came to me and complained and said, 'I want to make this work, I am trying to contribute, but they keep shutting me out.' Right? 'They won't let me.' And so as a teacher, that's a really difficult thing to figure out, that I don't know how to map that onto, sort of, how can we help students prepare to transfer whatever insight they're going to gain from the collaboration that they did in the classroom to handling collaborative efforts outside the classroom. I don't know, but it's a problem that I keep coming back to.

Spot Three: How to Facilitate Fairness in the Face of Necessary Collaborative Compromise?

Steven: Anything else that you've wanted to talk about?

Rebecca: Maybe in terms of expected outcomes versus the final product. The same insight that [Katrina] and I had, that our expectations and the final product aren't the same, our figuring out how to be okay with that[36]—our students had to go through that process too. And for our students, and a little bit for us, too, a lot of that anxiety was centered around the issue of, how's this gonna be graded? I talked a little bit before about the issue of 'getting credit' vs. 'taking credit.' So if there's a student who doesn't 'pull their weight,' some of the other students—sometimes the students didn't care, right? As long as they got a good grade they didn't care if a student didn't pull their weight. They might have been a little bit resentful that they had to do more than what they felt like was their fair share, but as long as they got the grade they wanted, it was OK. Other students were more committed to making sure that everybody in the group contributed to the final paper, so the final paper that they turn in is not as good as what they feel like they could have produced on their own, and maybe doesn't get the kind of grade that they would want. So they're unhappy about that.

Steven: Because they made compromises.

Rebecca: Yeah. Both of them made compromises, different compromises that reflect different priorities. As a teacher, one of the ways that I accounted for that was that I had a collaboration grade based on students' evaluation of their collaboration, so they would evaluate other members of their groups and they would turn that in anonymously. I would give them a rubric and say, "Based on these 5 factors, how would you evaluate your peers." So the students who maybe didn't 'pull their weight,' which is—that type of idea or that language came up a lot, and it was puzzling to me for the reasons that I already talked about, that some students are perceived as 'not pulling their weight' for reasons that are not actually related to their contributions or ability, right?

Steven: It could be something as easy as English proficiency or something like that.

Rebecca: Right, so that's complicated for me and I didn't want to make their grade solely based on their peers' perception of them, so you have to do some monitoring of the groups yourselves, but you can't see all of the interactions that they have. So it was important to tell my students, "You have some say in your grade and the grades of your peers that you're collaborating with," to try to make it more fair, because they're super concerned

[36] See Chapter 3

with fairness. And I think, on the one hand I wish students weren't obsessed with grades. I want them to have other motivations besides grades. On the other hand, given the realities of college life and the consequences that grades can have for them, I get it, and I think that it behooves me as a teacher who does assign collaboration to find ways to be more fair about how I grade collaboration. But there are still always students who are gonna be mad because they didn't get the grade they want because they perceived that one of their partners was dragging them down, and students who feel like even though they got the grade that they wanted, they had to do more than their fair share of work to get it.

Steven: Grades is a very complicated part of this whole equation.

Rebecca: And one that doesn't really come up—You know how we talked about intrinsic versus extrinsic collaboration and classroom versus workplace collaboration.

Steven: There's no analog for [grades] in the "real world."

Spot Four: How Might We Decenter Grading as a Symbol of Authority?

Steven: I did contract-grading type situation for my collaborative-heavy class that I taught last semester.

Rebecca: How did that work?

Steven: So what we did, I wanted to set up what I call them is 'transparent assessment methods' right? The idea is basically pass/fail. You did something or you didn't do something. And so the big thing that they were doing, they worked together to create an event. It was an mp3 public sound experiment type of thing that they had to do, and if the event happens and an artifact exists, something that's publicly available that shows that it happened: if those two things happen then everyone in the class gets a B-. So everyone's grade is elevated to this point where you don't have to think about them. Part of my thinking with that is the idea that once you reach a certain amount of money, happiness increases to a certain point and there's no marginal increase in happiness after a certain point, right? I think it's like $70,000, and it changes depending on where you live. So I tried to choose a grade level where it's guaranteed up to a point, where people just feel comfortable. If people wanna get a B- then good for them, they can do whatever it takes. So then I had homework assignments, I had pop quizzes, I had an end-of-the-semester portfolio, and an end-of-semester reflection. So then if they wanted to get better than a B-, they had to work hard to complete these four things so they could raise their grade depending on their effort in those other areas. I think it worked pretty good.

Rebecca: What about for collaborations specifically?

Steven: Well there was a caveat that if there was somebody in your group who was not "pulling

their weight," a petition could be made, and their grade would be based entirely on their homework effort, so the things that they did. So they could be taken out of that contract situation.

Rebecca: I see.

Steven: Nobody took advantage of that. And I think there probably were situations where it might have been beneficial for a group to have done that, where there was somebody who kind of dropped out, or their absences really hurt the group and stuff like that, but nobody ended up taking advantage of that. I reminded them of it several times, so they didn't do that. I haven't turned in final grades, but I did have end-of-the-semester performance reviews where I sat them all down and I said, "Well this is where you're at. You completed the event so you start here based on your homework grade and these things. This is about where you're at if you do well on these last assignments, this is probably the grade you're sitting at." And I didn't meet a lot of resistance and a lot of argument from them, so they kind of had their final grade to some extent determined two and a half weeks ago before they turn in this last assignment.

Rebecca: So do you feel like it was successful, you would do contract grading again?

Steven: Oh yeah. I mean I really like how it kind of tables that conversation. It's like, if they can just feel safe, you know, where they don't have to worry about it, they can pay attention to the collaborative situation, and know "If this person's not doing the work, I can do the work I wanna do, we're gonna get B-minuses, so we're fine. I don't have to feel all this stress all the time." That opens them up to be more willing to do other kinds of work and to put in more effort, and I'm pretty sure I did see that. I didn't directly ask them about how their grading situation affected their performance. I don't know if they even really could have given me insights towards it, that much, but it worked okay. It worked good. It was really cool, because at the end-of-semester performance review things that I was talking about, when I was talking with them about their reflections on the course, so much of what we're talking about is what they learned about how they interpersonally react, or act, with other people, and their own insights into how they act as leadership and how much they need leadership, or they need to be in a leadership role, or they need to be a follower and they don't feel comfortable in a leadership role. So these kinds of things I was talking about with them at the end of the semester, the things that they learned were these really personalized lessons that they taught themselves because they were in such a deeply collaborative experience that they learned about how they interact in groups and what to expect from themselves and how to carry that forward into employment situations, or whatever, and so I felt really good about that, that those were the conversations we were having. I wasn't nit-picking their sentences, or things like that.

But they had discovered things about themselves and their personalities that I think are gonna be really beneficial to them.

Spot Five: How Might We Cultivate Comic Playfulness by Constructing the Classroom as a "Sandbox"?

Rebecca: I was going to ask, because my students, part of their final project was a summary of the group work, so this was connected to this idea of them grading each other, but also grading themselves. So I specifically asked them to talk about what roles they took on, what roles they saw other peers taking on, the dynamics of the group, and so on, and so it specifically prompted them for those kinds of insights.

Steven: And I think giving them that vocabulary to talk is really important for them to reflect on their experience.

Rebecca: So important. And that's something that my colleague and I didn't have when we first started teaching that collaborative assignment. We didn't know how to teach students how to talk about collaboration, and so teaching professional writing and the literature of professional writing really helped me develop my understanding of collaboration a ton.

Steven: So much of my understanding of how academic writing is different from writing in the professions is just the idea of power hierarchies and power dynamics and interpersonal relationships play such a bigger role in how you're going to craft an email, or how you're going to meet the expectations and values of an audience. So much of it is just interpersonal, so that's why I really wanted to push that kind of relationship in pretty much everything I talked about.

Rebecca: The downside of doing that, the one hesitancy that I have, something that happened in my students' reflections about that project was that it was roughly evenly split, which I was not expecting, between students who had a clear team-leader who was mutually agreed upon or took charge, and they had a hierarchical relationship, and students who were just sort of an anarchistic commune. There wasn't a difference in terms of the quality of the work that they did between the two types of groups, and so I was like, "Do I want to impose a hierarchy on collaboration, or do I want to try and encourage a non-hierarchical collaboration, or do I want to let groups sort that out themselves?"

Steven: I took the third approach, just let them figure it out, and so many interesting things happened. There was a group that was in charge of making the actual MP3 file, and I had a student who was extremely confident in their abilities to produce the MP3 file, and so he took the entire work load on himself. And then it turns out that it wasn't even him that was really good at making MP3 files, it was his roommate, so it's like basically this enormous part of our class project, just through how the group interacted with each other,

got put on the roommate of somebody in the class. And we were trying to iterate the process, and have them do this multiple times, have multiple MP3s, so finally it got to a point where they had created an MP3 file that we could play for the class, and the MP3, it wasn't great. Like, the guy who made it kind of fundamentally didn't understand some of the things about what we were doing. Um, he was an international student so he had a very thick accent, I think that, you know, was hard for a lot of people to think through and deal with. But it was so hard because his confidence in his abilities basically eliminated any work that anyone else in the group could do, so they all kind of sat around and like, 'what are we supposed to do,' so they started trying to like, make a website or figure out ways to distribute the MP3, while this guy and basically his roommate created this thing, and then it wasn't even that great of a product to end with, and so there was that dynamic that was really interesting to watch.

Rebecca: Was there a moment where they realized that the product wasn't going to be as good as they were...

Steven: That was interesting, too, because we played the mp3 file for the class and everyone heard it, and this is actually a pretty cool collaborative peer review thing if you want to use it. I would make a Google doc and make a table, and I would take the last four digits of people's IDs and I'd put it in one column, and then say, "Okay, as you're listening to this mp3 file, find the box next to your number and just give feedback." So they can give anonymous feedback in real time while the file is happening. And so they know where they're supposed to write, but nobody connects any of the IDs to anybody else, so in real time, they're listening to the mp3 file and people are being, not brutal, but they're being very honest about how they feel about this mp3 file, and the mp3 group, they're saying, "Oh, this wasn't the mp3 file. We were just trying to figure out how to distribute it." So to them it was more important how people accessed the file than the file itself, but I think that might have been a coping mechanism, where they saw how bad the feedback was and so they distanced themselves from it. "Oh, that's not even the real mp3 file." And so I think they learned a lot from getting that feedback, but just that whole dynamic of that one student taking all that responsibility, the whole mp3 group feeling responsible for it, and then the product not being that great was really a kind of crazy thing to watch them deal with. I love those situations. Things just fall apart, and the students fumbling and I feel like that's why you mentioned earlier why I think of writing classes as sandboxes. I love that I can create a situation where that fumbling can happen and they're not gonna lose a job. They're not going to not be able to feed their family, or something like that because they failed. I would much rather have them have these catastrophic failures in my class and learn how to regroup and pivot and do all these other things they need to do to make something happen after this fall. I love that that can happen inside my class, and

that they can feel those feelings and learn how to deal with them and anticipate them later and learn how to avoid them in the future.

Rebecca: I agree with that, and I think that the fact that you do contract grading really facilitates that. I think that in my classes, the traditional grading model often gets in the way of students being okay with stuff happening that way. It's gonna happen regardless, but I would have students who were panicking. They would come to my office and they were freaking out because they had a scholarship, or maybe they were on academic probation and if they didn't get a good grade in this class they were not gonna be able to enroll next semester. Things like that where it can feel unsafe, even though we know, even in a traditional grading model it is much safer to have those kinds of failures in a classroom than it is in the workplace. But it doesn't feel that way to our students. And so as a teacher, and a teacher of collaboration, helping students to negotiate failure as part of the collaborative process, and beyond the collaborative process, just negotiating failure in general, has become really important to me. That if this collaboration doesn't go well, or if you don't get the grade that you wanted or expected on it, it's not the end of the world. And actually it can be something really valuable and powerful to you.

In this conversation with Steven, he and I come to identify grades as the "symbol of authority" that creates the most tension for collaborative pedagogy. While we lack the institutional authority to jettison the question of grades altogether, we are able to explore possible ways of adapting the local situation of our own classes to accommodate both institutional requirements to assign grades to our students' work, and the need to "lower the stakes" so that students feel free to take risks with their projects and practice working within a team without worrying about how potential pitfalls might be reduced to a simple letter grade with the power to propel or impede their academic progress.

This collegial conversation also suggests that one way to make a comic frame operational when I am otherwise caught up in someone else's tragic one is to create and sustain spaces somewhat removed from the situation in which to dialog with others about it at a metacognitive level, to explore not only the perspectives of those directly involved but also those of colleagues and students engaging in entirely different collaborative

negotiations. Flower's model of deliberative discourse creates a space for such dialog with the stakeholders themselves, but in some cases such participation might be especially difficult to implement, such as the compressed timeframe of an FYC course, with students for whom commitment to such a deliberative process would add another burden to their already-strained reserves of time and intellectual energy. In the case of Matt, Korrie, and Carla, I was unable to get them even to sit down in the same room together to attempt such a dialog; they relied on me, as the most visible "symbol of authority," and as the one possessing institutional power to change the situation, to devise a solution. To do so, I had to turn from the particulars of their situation and consider potential solutions in light of other "representative cases" of academic collaboration. Additionally, such collegial conversations are an invaluable resource not only for understanding what has happened in my classroom, but for exploring what I might do differently in the future.

Whose version of a story we accept as the "essential" one may depend on what sort of rhetorical response we assume will be most effective. In other words, instead of considering how a particular attitude toward or framing of a narrative might guide a potential response, we might construct a narrative using a frame that seems to justify a response we've already chosen. The advantage of reflection after the fact is that it enables us to examine whether our narrative and our response were appropriately aligned and sufficiently effective: in other words, whether they led to desirable outcomes, regardless of which came first. And because language is a kind of symbolic act, we can examine the motives that led us to construct our narratives in the ways we did. As Burke notes, "a frame becomes deceptive when it provides too great plausibility for the writer who would

condemn symptoms without being able to gauge the *causal pressure* behind the symptoms" (*Attitudes* 41). In other words, we must hold the frames lightly, recognizing them as frames, and our reasons for adopting them, lest we be deceived by them.

Of the four versions of Carla, Matt, and Korrie's failed collaboration that I have explored in this chapter, some versions suggest more straightforward, simpler solutions for me as a teacher than others, and some have more exculpatory power for various participants than others. I could choose to focus simply on a version that enables me to declare myself, as a teacher, "not guilty," and point to institutional constraints or my students' intransigence as the "real culprit." On the other hand, I could choose to prioritize Carla's experience (whose plight as a second language learner putting herself through college I was sympathetic to) over the objections of her teammates, and insist that Matt and Korrie make more of an effort to work with her. I might also have chosen to focus on Matt and Korrie's academic ambitions, since they more straightforwardly aligned with traditional notions of academic standards than did Carla's halting efforts to "play the game" of academic research and writing. Or I might have blamed myself alone for having constructed an assignment in which a crisis such as this was bound to happen; this version of the narrative would presuppose that my job as a teacher included preventing such difficulties, and it would incline me to let all three students "off the hook," in terms of their grades, for their failed project.

Any of these tragic approaches would have led to a solution that enabled me to maintain, by sacrificing some other principle or person, an attitude of acceptance toward academia. Burke's comic attitude, however, encourages us to strive for "maximum consciousness" (*Attitudes 171*) rather than straightforward interpretations of any given

situation. Such complexity does not demand perfect solutions. Comic ambivalence would have us embrace imperfection not with tragic resignation but with playful recognition of the range of possibilities that exist within a state of imperfection.

Conclusion: Grappling with Complexity and Imperfection

As a teacher, I should resist the urge to try to construct a "perfect" collaborative situation for my students, because there isn't one perfect kind. Different situations and different compositions of groups call for different kinds of collaboration, and it is impossible for me to foresee and plan for all possible variables. What is needed, then, is not a static, technical framework for collaborative problem solving, but an adaptive one capable of absorbing and adapting to challenges as they arise, not in the pursuit of perfection but a further recognition of complexity, and with the admonition not to take ourselves or the situation too seriously (or too lightly). This difference between "technical" and "adaptive" problems is pivotal in Flower's "Difference-Driven Inquiry." In fact, it is the adaptive problem that calls for the work of deliberating across difference. This concept is useful to me as a teacher considering multiple narratives. The solution that Carla, Matt, Korrie and I ultimately agreed to was just such an imperfect attempt to grapple productively with complexity. Where I end up with this narrative of failed collaboration is, then, neither tragedy nor comedy but a kind of tragicomedy.

Instead of trying to construct classroom collaborations in which the tragic frame never arises, this chapter suggests that although the constraints of a given situation might incline us toward a given attitude and therefore even seem at times to compel a singularly commensurate rhetorical response, we can nonetheless draw upon our own rhetorical

resources to adopt, “try on,” or construct a more serviceable perspective that opens up alternative possibilities from which to choose. But we cannot force others to “buy into” our alternate attitude. We can invite, we can attempt to persuade, but we cannot force them, nor do I think it is wise to attempt such an imposition.

CHAPTER 5

MONSTERING COLLABORATIVE PEDAGOGY

Introduction: Navigating a Monstrous "Cow Path"

In this chapter, I deliberately draw upon Burke's grotesque frame (*Attitudes* 57-69) in order to come to new terms with a connected series of online altercations I had with a colleague over my pedagogical commitments to teaching collaborative writing. In the following vignettes, both Dylan[37] and I are operating within a grotesque frame: that is, we are framing each other and the situation in a grotesque way. The vignettes below include both screen shots edited to protect participants' identities side-by side with metacommentary in the form of my own internal dialog. These metacommentaries were written long after the original exchanges, and while I have tried to recapture the substance of what I was thinking and feeling as I responded to Dylan's comments, I have allowed myself to freely play up the grotesque nature of my original experience. It was

[37] Research ethics guidelines concerning the use of social media data are evolving. For many users, social media occupies a blurred position between "public" and "private." In order to adhere to these ethical standards, I include the conversation threads figured in this chapter without obtaining explicit consent for this particular use from those quoted based on the following factors:

First, this dissertation is a work of autoethnography, and these conversations represent pivotal moments for my thinking about and practice of teaching and researching. If there were other, equally illustrative events that I could use in place of these, I would have used them.

Second, all the data included in this work was posted to my personal Facebook timeline, as responses to my own posts. This establishes that those participating understood this not to be a private conversation with me, since they were aware that strangers (a broad intersection of Facebook friends of mine but not of theirs) would be able to read and respond to their comments.

Third, all participants in these conversation threads were college-educated adults with a reasonable degree of understanding of privacy issues surrounding social media use.

Fourth, I anonymized the data to the degree possible by blurring profile pictures, using pseudonyms, and changing the privacy settings on the relevant posts to be viewable only by me. The possibility remains that a participant could be recognized by a reader previously familiar with them and with the incidents in question; however, that would likely only be the case if the reader had already seen the conversation in its original context.

Fifth, due to my efforts to anonymize and contextualize the data, there is minimal possibility of harm.

surprisingly easy to do, which suggests that the grotesque frame is a natural fit for my perception of these events. I have grouped the vignettes in this chapter into episodes based on a series of events that occurred over a period of several months. As with other chapters, I interweave the vignettes with a Burkean analysis of each episode. Following these vignettes, I share an excerpt from my guided self-interview, in which Steven Hopkins and I attempt to tease out some of the complicated issues involved in requiring students to participate in collaborative projects.

The grotesque distorts; it is important to remember that the episodes shared in this chapter do not represent a picture of either Dylan's or my own full humanity. And social media's technological affordances—the ways that it encourages certain kinds of reactions by its algorithmic filtering of content, and its tools for "liking" and responding to others' messages—create a grotesque "cow path" (Burke, *Attitudes* 228), or in other words, social media encourages a tendency to adopt a reductive and grotesque frame toward our own and others' reactions to the messages we share. That is not to say that our adoption of a grotesque frame was caused by our medium of communication. However, it is worth considering the ways in which our communicative tools influence the kinds of interactions and attitudes that seem most available to us. When we understand the affordances, tendencies, and constraints of our available means of communication, we become more able to consciously choose how and when we use these available tools to facilitate specific kinds of conversations and make them more productive.

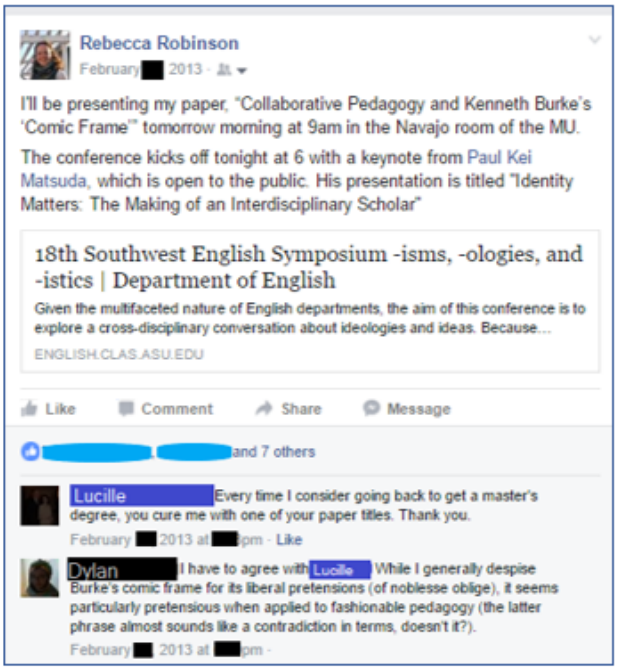
As you read the following three vignettes (figures 7, 8, and 9), I invite you to view them through a charitable, comic frame toward all parties. I offer these narratives as tools for practicing a rhetorical act of reflecting and re-framing. By noting key moments

in the narrative in which participants appear to adopt rhetorical attitudes unreflectively, we begin to recognize the possibility of making other choices; in other words, of adopting other attitudes and thus opening ourselves to more productive rhetorical acts. Recognizing such choices in the present cannot change the past; but like Lynch, I suggest that by rhetorically engaging with the past, we prepare ourselves to better approach similar rhetorical situations in the future. The excerpt from and analysis of my guided self-interview with Steven that follows the vignettes help to illustrate how reflection can facilitate such rhetorical engagement with the past.

Vignette: First Encounter

Figure 7. Screenshot and Metacommentary of the Author's First Facebook Exchange with Dylan

The TA office I've occupied for the past year reminds me a little bit of my old job working in a call center. I can see the tops of a few of my colleagues' heads bobbing above the walls of their cubicles as they work on lesson plans, grade unending piles of student papers, or trawl library databases for their graduate seminar papers. A few speak to their FYC students in lowered voices. I, however, am currently occupied by drumming up support for the 18th Southwest English Symposium, for which I'm both a committee member and a presenter. It might not look like I was working if you were to glance over my own cubicle wall to get a peek at my old laptop, though: I'm on Facebook.



Lucille's response amuses me; as the wife of a professor and an old friend, I understand the mixture of admiration and exasperation in her comment.

But I'm floored by Dylan's comment. "Liberal pretensions?" "Fashionable pedagogy"? Our time as master's degree students overlapped by one year; he hasn't seen any of my work for three years. How does he know anything about its content, or about my motives?

I toss off a quick reply, not wanting to get distracted from the excitement of this conference, which my fellow committee members and I have worked on for months.

I hope he'll pause and reflect on the etiquette due a fellow scholar in a public space. His reply is equally quick.

I really don't want to get more specific right then and there. It's Facebook! Most of my friends, like Lucille, are not academics. Those who are, if they are interested, could come to my conference presentation or ask me privately for a copy of my paper. Anyway, I don't want to have an adversarial conversation about my research in *any* context on the eve of a presentation.

The conversation ends there (or so I think). The conference, and my presentation, are a success. I get good feedback from the attendees, and I start thinking about the next steps for my project.

Analysis: Tracing the Incongruous Binary of Sympathy and Disgust

Burke says that the grotesque frame, as one of his two "transitional frames," comes to the foreground during "periods marked by great confusion of the cultural frame, requiring a radical shift in people's allegiance to symbols of authority" (*Attitudes* 57-58). According to Burke, the grotesque frame fixates on and wallows in incongruity and subjectivity; he calls it a "mystic" attitude (57). The term evokes most strongly a sense of monstrous distortion, but one despite which sympathy may still be possible. Indeed, it is the tension between disgust and sympathy that creates the impression of the grotesque. And it is this fixed tension between disgust and sympathy that leads Burke to call the grotesque a "transitional" frame, which is neither fully accepting nor fully rejecting, but somewhere in between.

The markers of the grotesque in the vignette shown in figure 7 are discernable at both levels: in the original exchange captured in Facebook screenshots, and in my metacognitive asides. Dylan, then a graduate student, "despises…liberal pretensions" and describes collaborative writing as "fashionable pedagogy." The grotesque tension here lies between Dylan's exaggeratedly expressed distaste for specific academic theories and his flouting of what I perceive as the social norms of the profession on the one hand, and his continued position as a member of academia on the other—a position without which his critique would be rendered relatively toothless.

My own asides illustrate this latter point; Lucille's comment is no less critical and no better informed than Dylan's, but my response to it is one of bemusement rather than affrontedness. The grotesque tension I feel toward Dylan's response is evident in my attempt to quickly brush it aside rather than engage, for engagement would require that I

either accept Dylan's position as a fellow colleague and invite further criticism of my work or reject his status as a colleague outright, dismissing his authority to level a critique on any basis. Instead, I merely obliquely remind him of what I think are the "rules of engagement" in professional academic discourse: namely, that the critic be familiar with the work being criticized.

Vignette: Second Encounter

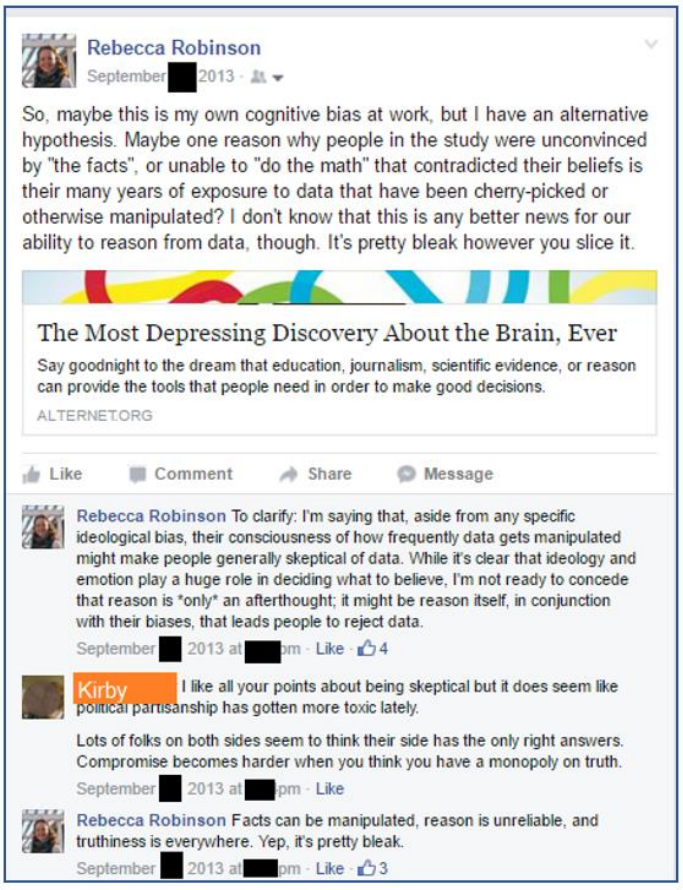
Figure 8. Screenshot and Metacommentary of the Author's Second Facebook Exchange with Dylan

I had all but forgotten about Dylan's comments until, several months later, the spectre rears its head again. It's near the beginning of the Fall semester; I'm in the final stretch of my PhD course work and mulling over possible dissertation projects. In the hybrid Professional Writing course I'm teaching, we're still in the midst of the employment unit. I take a break from grading my Professional Writing class's "job advertisement analysis" assignment to read an article that a friend had sent me. The article is interesting, and since it's relevant both to teaching and to political discourse, I decide to share it on Facebook.

It all starts off normally enough. I'm framing my post in a way that I think will prompt responses from my academic friends, but is still open to discussion from philosophy-and-science-minded friends outside of academia.

I pre-emptively try to prevent my response to the article from being misunderstood by presenting the issue as complex and multifactorial.

But it's not long before I offer a more reductive summary of my argument.



Soon Dylan chimes in. He and I don't interact as regularly as we used to, but this is the sort of discussion he likes, so I'm unsurprised.

Dylan [redacted] I don't find it depressing at all--it's just another argument (justification? piece of evidence?) against organized ideology (as opposed to theory, fact, hypothesis, etc.), political, religious, or otherwise (in politics it's ideology, in religion it's "faith"--the belief in something despite all evidence to the contrary). People don't usually form ironclad ideological beliefs on their own--they constantly check for agreement in their beliefs from peers and trusted authority figures, and adjust their own beliefs to match.

Ever watch Penn & Teller: Bullshit!? My favorite is the recycling episode in Season 2; I've never been able to strike a good balance sheet on recycling anything other than metals. But I've yet to persuade anyone to stop recycling paper, plastic, and other bullshit using facts and reason.

I don't think it's so much skepticism of how easily data and evidence can be manufactured; most people don't treat every contrary fact or claim like it's a tree octopus (http://www.dailymail.co.uk/.../Endangered-tree-octopus...). It's who the evidence is coming from--i.e., it's not "I'm skeptical of that evidence," it's "I think you're either an idiot or a liar (or a propogandist from the other side or the devil)."

You might find it more depressing that I disagree with your hypothesis that reason, as opposed to social conformity, is part of the mechanism in this study. But look on the bright side--how many folks have you met who still claim something is true after they've read about it on Snopes.com? And remember just last year all those Romney supporters who were shocked on election day to find that, "WTF? All those liberal polls were actually right?!" Nothing leads folks to reason more than finding out that the friends and authority figures they trusted most were dead wrong.

On a related subject: Couldn't stop thinking about your paper on using Burke's comic frame to deal with folks who disagree with your belief in collaborative learning. Just sayin'.

September [redacted] 2013 at [redacted] am ·

As I read his comment, at first, I'm intrigued; I take the time to click through and read the sources he shares.

Then I start to feel uneasy; this is just the sort of misunderstanding of my position I'd tried to avoid.

Wait, *what?* "To *deal with folks* who disagree with your belief"? He never even read that paper!

OK, I <u>think:</u> forget all the other stuff going on in this conversation. He's once again misrepresenting my research and teaching in a semi-public forum, and while I'm now doubly sure that I don't want to talk to him about my research, I don't want other people to get the wrong idea about what I do and why. I take a minimalist approach in my reply.

Rebecca Robinson Just a little correction: my paper is actually about using Burke's comic frame to facilitate collaborative projects, not to deal with people who disagree with my "belief in collaborative learning" (I don't actually know what "collaborative learning" is. Learning is social. Collaborative endeavors are a necessary fact of life. This is why we do group projects in my classroom.)

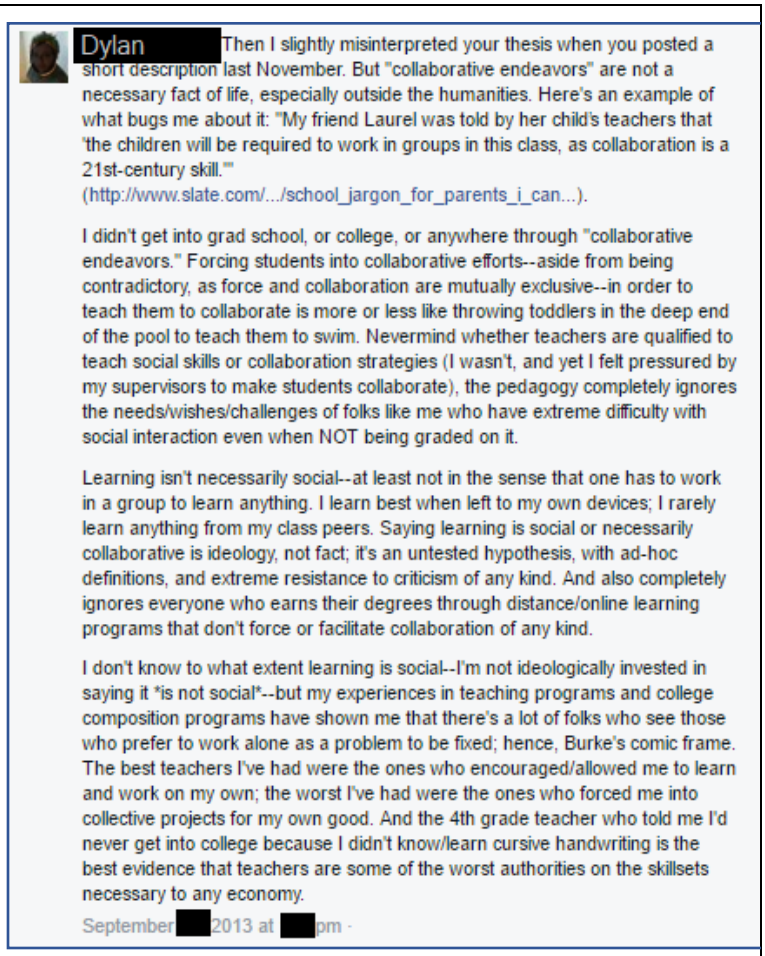
September [redacted] 2013 at [redacted] pm · Like

"*Slightly* misrepresented?" Ugh. Once again, I click through and read the article Dylan links to. It's generic venting about public education with one throwaway reference to collaboration.

As I continue to read his comment, I start to feel like a scapegoat for some bone Dylan wants to pick with education and academia generally.

And it seems like he's prepared to dismiss any possible reply I might make as "extreme resistance to criticism of any kind."

I recall that in that "November" conversation (since deleted), Dylan assumed that the application of Burke's comic frame, by attributing error to foolishness rather than malice, was an essentially condescending, manipulative rhetorical practice.



Dylan [redacted] Then I slightly misinterpreted your thesis when you posted a short description last November. But "collaborative endeavors" are not a necessary fact of life, especially outside the humanities. Here's an example of what bugs me about it: "My friend Laurel was told by her child's teachers that 'the children will be required to work in groups in this class, as collaboration is a 21st-century skill.'" (http://www.slate.com/.../school_jargon_for_parents_i_can...).

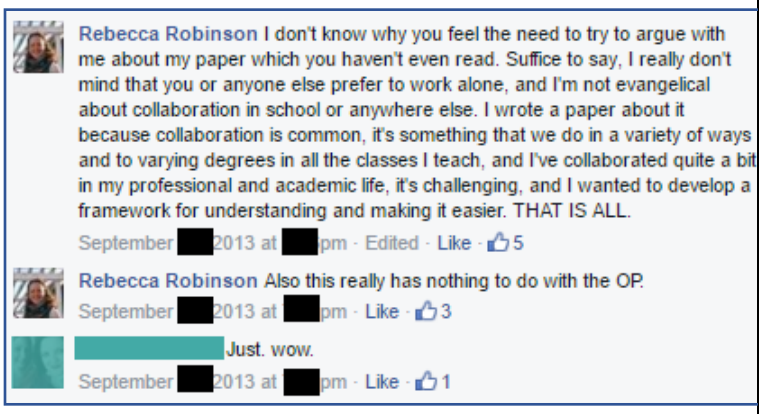
I didn't get into grad school, or college, or anywhere through "collaborative endeavors." Forcing students into collaborative efforts--aside from being contradictory, as force and collaboration are mutually exclusive--in order to teach them to collaborate is more or less like throwing toddlers in the deep end of the pool to teach them to swim. Nevermind whether teachers are qualified to teach social skills or collaboration strategies (I wasn't, and yet I felt pressured by my supervisors to make students collaborate), the pedagogy completely ignores the needs/wishes/challenges of folks like me who have extreme difficulty with social interaction even when NOT being graded on it.

Learning isn't necessarily social--at least not in the sense that one has to work in a group to learn anything. I learn best when left to my own devices; I rarely learn anything from my class peers. Saying learning is social or necessarily collaborative is ideology, not fact; it's an untested hypothesis, with ad-hoc definitions, and extreme resistance to criticism of any kind. And also completely ignores everyone who earns their degrees through distance/online learning programs that don't force or facilitate collaboration of any kind.

I don't know to what extent learning is social--I'm not ideologically invested in saying it *is not social*--but my experiences in teaching programs and college composition programs have shown me that there's a lot of folks who see those who prefer to work alone as a problem to be fixed; hence, Burke's comic frame. The best teachers I've had were the ones who encouraged/allowed me to learn and work on my own; the worst I've had were the ones who forced me into collective projects for my own good. And the 4th grade teacher who told me I'd never get into college because I didn't know/learn cursive handwriting is the best evidence that teachers are some of the worst authorities on the skillsets necessary to any economy.

September [redacted] 2013 at [redacted] pm ·

I try to compose a reply that simultaneously conveys how monstrously unprofessional his whole line of attack is, while also addressing what I think might be his underlying concerns about collaboration and cutting off the potential for prolonging the discussion. Any opportunity to talk about the article I linked to has long passed; it feels as though I'm defending my professional life instead.



Rebecca Robinson I don't know why you feel the need to try to argue with me about my paper which you haven't even read. Suffice to say, I really don't mind that you or anyone else prefer to work alone, and I'm not evangelical about collaboration in school or anywhere else. I wrote a paper about it because collaboration is common, it's something that we do in a variety of ways and to varying degrees in all the classes I teach, and I've collaborated quite a bit in my professional and academic life, it's challenging, and I wanted to develop a framework for understanding and making it easier. THAT IS ALL.

September [redacted] 2013 at [redacted] pm · Edited · Like · 5

Rebecca Robinson Also this really has nothing to do with the OP.

September [redacted] 2013 at [redacted] pm · Like · 3

[redacted] Just. wow.

September [redacted] 2013 at [redacted] pm · Like · 1

Ultimately neither Dylan nor I have the last word; instead my PhD peer mentor, who has been following this exchange on my Facebook timeline, monosyllabically expresses her astonishment at what has gone on. Privately, I ask her about the incident, and we have a chat about my work, because I'm really shaken. I fear that this won't be the end of it. And I'm not wrong about that.

Analysis: Teetering on a Transitional Tipping Point

The same grotesque tensions are evident in figure 8's longer vignette as in figure 7, but with increased intensity on both sides. Dylan speaks of "forcing students into collaborative efforts;" he characterizes my application of Burke's comic frame as a tool used "to deal with folks who disagree with your belief in collaborative learning," by "those who see those who prefer to work alone as a problem to be fixed." These criticisms, again, were not based on having read the research in question—instead Dylan draws them from a mixture of personal experience and mainstream "debunking." The grotesque, Burke says, "comes to the fore" under circumstances that "give more prominence to the subjective elements of imagery than to the objective, or public, elements" (59-60). It is perhaps likely that the absence of agreement between Dylan and me about the "objective, or public, elements" that serve as both matter and motivation for our discourse contributed to our failure to come to terms.

Another element marks this interaction as operating within the transitional frame of the grotesque, rather than a tragic frame of acceptance or a burlesque frame of rejection: both Dylan and I continue to couch our positions in terms of our relationship to the "reigning symbols of authority" (Burke, *Attitudes* 58) through our use of scholarly terminology and syntax. Despite my feeling like a "scapegoat"—a term that points toward a tragic framing—I do not accept that role, nor does Dylan insist upon it. If he had, he would not have attempted to engage with me using the trappings of academic discourse. When I think about this incident as a drama to be "framed," what seems to be going on here is not that Dylan is using me as a kind of metonym for his impending

rejection of academia, but that my position in the field and as his peer creates a locus of tension in which the grotesque drama can play out.

Furthermore, even when we use real names and photos as avatars, social media such as Facebook tends to distort identities through reduction and exaggeration. Thus it becomes fertile ground for grotesque framing. As I review Dylan's lengthy comments now, I can recognize his attempts as well as mine to invite the other to see not just the grotesque caricatures of the present argument, but the vulnerable human experience that grounded his position: experience that, at the time, I was unable to acknowledge or respond to. By unconsciously adopting a grotesque framing, we missed an opportunity for more productive engagement.

Vignette: Final Encounter

Figure 9. Narrative Vignette Describing the Author's Last Facebook Messenger Exchange with Dylan.

Nearly a year after that first argument with Dylan, I log in to my Facebook account to see that he has posted an article to my timeline. (I can no longer recall the publication; I believe it was something with a business angle). The article describes how you can manipulate clients and customers using rhetorical tricks to change their perspective and tap into their motives. In his post, Dylan says that he saw the article and was reminded of the conference presentation that I'd posted about several months back—is *this* what my research is about? Once again, I'm flabbergasted. I post a reply in which I try to explain again that he's wildly misconstrued my research, which is really about analyzing my own and my students' narratives about what is happening in collaborative research and writing situations so that we can choose more productive rhetorical responses, but I'm frustrated and defensive. I don't know how well I get my point across. I don't know why Dylan keeps bringing the subject up in this way. It feels like a public, and personal, attack.

Rather than drag it out any further on my Facebook timeline, I decide to send him a private message asking him one last time not to treat my Facebook timeline as a forum for attacking my research and teaching, not to present a distorted version of it simply in order to criticize it. My private message is emotional and accusatory, and it ends with a flat declaration that "I have no interest in discussing collaboration with you, in any forum, least of all Facebook."

Dylan's prompt reply indicates surprise—he had not perceived my previous responses to his Facebook comments as requests to stop discussing my research. But he indicates that he's quite willing to comply.

I'm puzzled by his insistence that this is the first time he's heard me ask him to stop misconstruing my research on Facebook. Is it possible that he also misconstrued all my prior messages expressing frustration about his behavior? I search for and review those archived conversations. It does seem that I never explicitly told him to stop; I didn't think I needed to. While doing so, I notice that his name has turned black, and the most recent article he posted to my timeline (along with our frustrating exchange about it) is gone. It seems that he has deleted that post and blocked me. I feel a little bit of regret, but mostly I'm relieved! To make doubly sure this will be the end of it, I return the favor and block him. Later, I hear through a mutual friend that he has left academia.

Analysis: Shifting Allegiances

One way to view the overall narrative in this chapter would be as an instance of failed collegiality. That is certainly how I perceived it at the time, and still do, to a degree. But, as we often tell our students, failure can be an opportunity for learning. To learn from a demoralizing experience like this one, I draw on Burke's frames of acceptance and rejection as tools for analyzing the texts of my own experience.

Two "radical shift[s] in…allegiance" (Burke 58) are especially apparent in figure 9's narrative: first, and most prominent, there is a radical shift underway in my relationship to a (now former) colleague. The reasons necessitating such a shift are not

entirely apparent, but some can be inferred. As I later learned, Dylan was becoming disaffected generally with academia (this is the second of the two radical shifts underway), and he left the profession around the same time that our exchanges were taking place. This shift in allegiance away from academia on Dylan's part may explain some of the reasons why he felt no need to adhere to what I perceived as the norms of professional courtesy in a public forum, or perhaps his inability or unwillingness to abide by such norms was part of what led to his disaffection from academia. In any case, this and other conversations illustrate a tension between his desire to "cut through the BS" of academic theory-building, as he saw it, and my desire to explore how to make practical use of rhetorical theory.

Had Dylan not "come out swinging," so to speak, with a gross distortion of my scholarly work in the first place, perhaps I might have been willing to share my conference paper with him. Perhaps his deep skepticism of collaboration and rhetorical theory might have enabled him to give me useful feedback; perhaps it would have benefited me as a theorist and teacher of collaborative writing. But that door is closed. A grotesque framing, being transitional, cannot be sustained except through an especially passive form in which social realities are ignored and subjectivity reigns (Burke 70). In this instance, a transitional frame gave way to an attitude of rejection.

The grotesque makes a "cult of incongruity" that "comes to a focus in the oxymoron," in which "*one thing* is seen in terms of *something else*" and "we get changes of identity" (ibid. 58-64). Because the grotesque cannot exist without incongruity, it tends to reify an "us-them" dichotomy. What makes the grotesque transitional is that it requires the tension of oxymoron to sustain itself, whereas frames of acceptance and rejection

resolve the tension by collapsing the self into an "us": acceptance by finding ways to continue identifying with the reigning symbols of authority, and rejection by division from them.

Layering Collaborative Conversations

I turn now to the second layer of my inquiry: excerpts from my transcribed conversation with a fellow Teaching Associate, Steven, in which we again take up questions about the ethics and efficacy of requiring students to engage in collaborative research projects. Although it's evident that at the point of this conversation, I still saw my interaction with Dylan primarily as having operated within a grotesque frame, the process of reflecting itself enables me to consider what might be "coercive" about teaching collaboration when student's don't have a choice. Although I reject Dylan's argument that Burke's comic frame is an essentially condescending, manipulative rhetorical practice, I must note the ease with which Steven and I adopt capitalistic metaphors of "pitching" collaboration to students as a practice that will reward them in the future. Such language seems to resonate, at least to some degree, with Dylan's cynical characterization. So there are really two tensions in my exchange with Dylan: first, our differing beliefs about the merits of collaborative writing projects; and second, our radically different understandings of Burke's comic frame.

It may be that Dylan, like many others, has conflated the comic with humor, specifically of the burlesque category. The difference between the comic and the burlesque frames is that the latter is outward-directed; it invites the observer to see others as foolish, but not oneself. Its strategy is "reduction to absurdity," and it admits "no

mitigating circumstances" (Burke, *Attitudes* 54-55). Indeed, there is a thin line between burlesque and grotesque, as Burke notes: "The grotesque is not funny unless you are out of sympathy with it (whereby it serves as unintentional burlesque)" (*ibid.* 58). The comic frame, however, requires that we not only take into account possible mitigating circumstances, but also that we turn the lens back on ourselves—that we recognize human foibles in ourselves as well as in others (ibid. 171). I would rather inhabit a charitable, comic frame than the sort of debunking frame that dominated my final interactions with Dylan, not least because through it, I can recognize that there is some legitimacy in his resistance to collaboration within the context of a classroom. By reflecting on an otherwise thoroughly unpleasant experience, I can learn something from my former colleague that will make me a better teacher of collaborative writing.

Collegial Conversation: Collaboration as Choice or Coercion?

Steven: Are there certain kinds of people who can collaborate and other kinds of people who can't? Because you've had good collaboration experiences and bad collaboration experiences. Does it come down to personality? I guess is what that question is really asking.

Rebecca: I don't think that there are people who can collaborate and people who can't collaborate, except that there are people that I know who are unwilling to collaborate. So it's not that they couldn't do it, but for a variety of reasons, they don't want to. They're not willing to let go of their own ideas, maybe, or they feel they want to have full possession of the final product. Maybe they're concerned about getting or taking credit. You know, I had an argument on social media with another former colleague of mine who hates collaboration. He hates everything about collaboration. He thinks it's morally repugnant for teachers to force students to do collaborative work, and he's never had a good experience doing collaboration as a student. He felt like, in talking to me about teaching students how to facilitate collaboration, he felt that those tactics were manipulative, and it just kind of blew my mind, because I was like, "Collaboration happens all the time, in every profession." I feel like you don't have a choice about whether or not to collaborate. Everybody is going to have to collaborate to some degree just to get through their careers.

But I do see his point in the sense that in a hierarchical situation like a classroom where it's an artificial construction, right? Like my own experience, the first collaboration that I had as a teacher, we chose each other. We weren't forced to do collaboration. The director of composition said, "you can do this or not. I encourage you, if you see somebody else is doing work that's similar to yours that you explore the possibility of doing a collaboration, but it's not required." And we had that sort of similarity. We recognized, and we chose it.

Steven: There was more of an intrinsic motivation to make it happen.

Rebecca: Right. Whereas the second time that I was co-teaching, it was extrinsic. I got an email over Christmas break that said, "Oh, our enrollment's too low. We need to combine some sections. Would you be willing to co-teach with this other TA?" And I was like, "Okay, sure." And it didn't work very well, because we didn't have any sort of intrinsic motivation for collaboration. In the classroom, there are ways that you can try and synthesize that. Depending on the type of assignment, you could give students the option to collaborate, or not. Sometimes, though, the assignment just needs to be collaborative. And then there's questions about, do you let students self-organize, or do you create groups, and all of those create all kinds of problems. But I think that if we're drawing the connection to--what's the relationship between collaboration as it happens in the classroom vs. outside of the classroom? I think it's probably true that most of the time, collaboration that happens beyond the classroom tends to have more intrinsic motivators than what happens in the classroom. But at the same time, I know from prior experience that you don't necessarily get to choose which team you're on in your workplace. You don't necessarily get to choose which projects you're on in your workplace. Sometimes you are thrown together into groups and you have to make a thing that works. So I think there's value in practicing both kinds of collaboration. Certainly, though, I would much prefer the first kind, the intrinsically motivated, where people gravitate together of their own will. Those collaborations work best.

Steven: I really like your insight of how making collaboration a choice is a way to manufacture intrinsic motivation. Because for the people who choose it, they're faced with the cognitive dissonance of "I made this choice to collaborate with this person and so I need to make it work." Whereas if somebody's forced into the situation then there's automatic resistance.

Steven: So I don't know if this is even a question. This is probably just what I'm thinking about. I think three ways that we've come up with that the classroom is an artificial social situation that doesn't translate when you're talking about collaboration are: grades, the motivation to gather, and the third one that I just came up with is the idea that it's a semester-long situation. So I think there's a very real possibility that many students, if

their group work isn't going well, will just check out and be like, "Well, I only have to deal with this for five more weeks and then I move on to a different class and it's done." You don't have that benefit in a work environment. So there are ways that you have to attenuate the kind of collaborative skills that you're teaching to students in a classroom environment. And I think I try to be as transparent as possible with my students about that, saying, "Look, this is fake. You guys got grades. We're not real friends. You guys didn't choose to be here together. All of this is fake. So the things you learn in my class you have to take it with a grain of salt, but also I really want you to think hard about what's happening here and how that's going to translate to your life afterward, because you can gain some meaningful skills and practice some meaningful things.

Rebecca: I think that transparency is really important to this idea of transfer or translation. And that goes back to how we pitch collaboration to students. As you were talking about the artificiality of it and how it doesn't really map onto the real world workplace, that was a challenge for me because whenever you say, "You're going to do this project as a group," then you have to justify *why* to students. Because the model that they're familiar with and that we're familiar with is single authorship—whether or not that's the reality for the most part in the world, which it's not. In the humanities, single authorship is the norm, but for the most part elsewhere, single authorship is not the norm. But students are familiar with fiction and humanities-type work, which is single-authored. And because of all the reasons you talked about with grades, I think, being the dominant one, doing group work is a huge risk for students, and so you have to justify, "Why am I making you do this?" So initially, one of the reasons I brought up was because collaborative work is so important everywhere else in the world. And then I got pushback from students who were non-traditional, who said, "I don't have to do this kind of group work in my career." Or students who were anticipating and saying, "Yeah, but this isn't really like…" And so how do I justify it to students? And part of that is just saying, "I know; this is artificial. It's a sandbox. So how do we figure out what pieces of this do you think you're going to be able to take with you into another situation?" We're not gonna lie and say that workplace collaborations are in any way the same as classroom collaborations. But still… I almost feel like you have to…It's almost like [crosstalk] evangelizing. Yeah, a sales pitch.

Steven: It's a sales pitch. Exactly.

Discussion: Re-examining the Tensions of Collaborative Commitments

The excerpt from my guided self-interview above illustrate a quite different framing of the issue. Having had space to reflect, my grotesque framing of Dylan's motives remains present, but I'm able to move toward nuance. I suggest several possible reasons why people won't (rather than can't) collaborate:

1. They might not be willing to let go of their own ideas
2. They might want to have full possession of the final product
3. They might be concerned about getting or taking credit
4. Collaboration in a pedagogical context is (or may be) coercive, which engenders resistance

None of these possible reasons, the first three of which are based on my experience working with students on collaborative research projects over the course of several semesters, reflects the generosity of a comic framing. Yet by the end of my response to Steven's questions, I'm able to make a productive connection between Dylan's criticism and my own experiences, both successful and unsuccessful, as a collaborative teacher: that collaboration imposed externally tends not to go as smoothly or effectively as collaborations entered into for more intrinsic or organic reasons.

Could I have had this kind of productive, more nuanced conversation with Dylan on Facebook? Perhaps, but several factors made it unlikely. Nuanced conversations on social media are notoriously difficult. The combination of a mixed, semi-public audience; the distancing effect of asynchronous, text-based communication; our conflicting perceptions of social media's purpose as a mechanism of communication; the somewhat precarious nature of both Dylan's and my positions within academia at that point in time; and, as previously mentioned, the algorithms of social media which habituate intense reactions—all of these factors contributed to an environment where grotesque framing is

more likely than not. And this suggests that some rhetorical contexts are better than others for engaging in productive criticism and reflection. As a scholar-teacher, I wonder how I can deliberately construct such spaces for myself and others.

Conclusion: Technological Cow-Paths and their Teaching Implications

At present, composition classes typically take place within three kinds of classrooms: traditional face-to-face, computer-mediated face-to-face, and online—the latter usually but not always mediated via a Learning Management System (LMS) such as Blackboard or Canvas. Many courses also use some kind of hybrid between the three. In my experience, few students or professors engage in LMS-mediated interactions in the same way they do on social media. On the contrary, the challenge for online instruction is to encourage students to engage in meaningful interactions via discussion boards at all.

It is worth considering whether we default to reductive frames such as the grotesque in online environments simply because of the absence of physical presence, as is often assumed, or whether such imaginative "cow paths" arise from the ways that social media algorithms use data such as "likes," "shares," and "comments" to influence human behavior as an unintended byproduct of "the attention economy" (cf. Goldhaber, among many others). If the latter, then professors and LMS designers would do well to hesitate before implementing software designed to increase student engagement using social-media-like interactive tools. If the former, professors and LMS designers might consider how to imitate "presence" in online environments, and perhaps even how to do so in ways that encourage attitudes of comic humility. The questions I raise here are ultimately beyond the scope of this dissertation to answer. But they do suggest that a

Burkean heuristic for engaging in reflective practice might be productively used by more than just individual scholar-teachers in the context of course development and delivery.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: FURTHER APPLICATIONS FOR ITERATIVE REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

In this dissertation, I have drawn on the scholarship of rhetoric and writing studies to show how a conscious, deliberate process of reflecting on and theorizing about our teacherly experiences can aid us in seeing more available paths and for making more effective rhetorical choices in our pedagogical practices. Flower's sociocognitive research explores the concept of "situated theory building" ("Teachers") or what in her more recent work she calls "working theories" ("Difference"), particularly with an eye toward charting specific paths to support deliberative discourse among folks otherwise unaccustomed to talking to and learning from one another. Lynch's principle of practical knowledge offers a compelling case for the value of teacherly "lore" in the process of pedagogical iterative reflection. Burke's theory of poetic frames explores how the narratives we construct about ourselves, others, and why things happen in the ways we do are subject to rhetorical analysis, and that such analysis can enable us to make better use of experience. How could such ideas—situated theory building, practical knowledge, and Burke's poetic frames of acceptance and rejection—help teachers like me translate our experiences through rhetorical reflective practice into more expansive and grounded options in the daily decisions we make?

In pursuing this question, my aim in this dissertation has been to draw together and extend these ideas in order to create and practice a heuristic for engaging in iterative narrative reflection specifically in the context of teaching and learning. In theorizing practical knowledge, Lynch portrays a post-pedagogy that uses practices such as moral

casuistry as potential guides to support a similar line of inquiry. According to Lynch, casuistry is an explicit process of "case-based moral reasoning" that is "particularly useful in situations where two duties, obligations, or values conflict…. Casuists begin with the particular rather than with the rulebook" (21, emphasis added); nevertheless, when practicing moral casuistry, "our improvisations are shaped by our principles" (ibid 24). Lynch's definition echoes that of Burke, who describes moral casuistry as a process of introducing "new principles while theoretically remaining faithful to old principles" by taking advantage of linguistic ambiguities via dead metaphors and "metaphorical extensions" (*Attitudes* 229-230). Thus, as Lynch argues, casuistic reasoning requires us to be "in dialogue with what we believed prior to our new experience, or to check that new experience against what we believed" (25). Such a dialogue between experience and principle (and vice versa) is at the heart of this dissertation. Yet Lynch does not go so far as to suggest a method for engaging in the kind of "Tuesday morning" questioning he advocates. Flower's difference-driven inquiry works well in the context of public deliberation, where it is possible (though never easy) to bring many voices to the table to listen to one another and work out acceptable plans for future action. In the context of teaching, however, various institutional constraints make such a model for deliberation impractical in many cases for faculty to practice on an ongoing basis. And that is where Burke's methodology comes in.

Burke's "perspective by incongruity," his term for the methodology of analyzing frames of acceptance and rejection that he describes and practices in *Attitudes*, is a type of casuistic stretching. The process of iterative narrative reflection that I have practiced in this dissertation represents one way that writing teachers and other faculty can train

themselves to consider multiple perspectives as they seek insights from examining their past experiences in order to develop working theories that may guide their future actions. This iterative narrative reflection is grounded in dialog between one's past experience and present understanding, guided where possible by engaging with the voices of other stakeholders through student reflections and collegial conversation. Such a practice, grounded in Burke's frames of acceptance and rejection, may be particularly useful for faculty who assign collaborative student work, where social tensions within student groups are especially likely to throw a wrench into our carefully designed curricula. As we engage in this process of reflection, however, comic humility should compel us to remember that our narratives, however well-considered, represent only an interpretation of those other voices, and of our own, and that other interpretive possibilities exist.

Supporting Iterative Narrative Reflection in a Faculty Development Workshop

In that spirit, I have constructed the rest of my conclusion as a description and a set of resources for a ninety-minute faculty development workshop that invites participants to practice the same kind of reflection and theory building that I have demonstrated in this dissertation. It can be readily adapted to the first-year writing classroom, as I explain below. The following two resources for the faculty workshop are included at the end of this chapter:

The first resource is a lesson plan that outlines the content and structure of the workshop. In brief, participants would be asked to come prepared with a short narrative of their own about a recent teaching experience that did not go as planned. According to the approach I'm advocating, at the beginning of the workshop, a facilitator would

provide a brief lecture accompanied by a set of PowerPoint slides summarizing Burke's frames of acceptance and rejection, his poetic categories, and their relevance to the practice of teaching and learning.

The second resource is a two-page handout. On one side of the handout, readers will see a brief narrative vignette like the ones I have included in this dissertation. The vignette in the handout is drawn from an entry in my own teaching journal from about a decade ago. I chose this narrative in particular because it represents a formative teaching experience from very early in my career, and because it involves issues and voices that continue to be a source of tension not only for me, but for the college writing profession in general. Thus, it presents a rich opportunity for additional iterative reflection and theory building. The other side of the handout provides a table listing eight of Burke's poetic categories, with key terms generated in a brainstorming session with a few members of my current department at a writing retreat, and "exemplars" that help illustrate and provide participants for cues for identifying and understanding each of them. Using this handout as a guide, workshop participants will be encouraged to support one another through collegial conversations, much as Steven's interview with me helped me to tease out my prior assumptions and intentions, as well as my responses to developing challenges as I taught the collaborative "My Disciplinary Discourses" assignment.

As I explained in chapter one, popular cultural narratives permeate our consciousness and exert persuasive power over the ways in which we construct ourselves and others. Thus, the handout draws on examples and terms from literature, film, and other popular cultural touchstones likely to be familiar to workshop participants. These

examples serve both to illustrate Burke's poetic categories and to demonstrate that they continue to influence our cultural imaginary. Utilizing these resources, workshop participants will be engaged in the goals of the workshop: to analyze their own teaching narratives and try out the affordances of "perspective by incongruity" by revising their stories using an alternate framing to discover what rhetorical possibilities they can uncover when they interpret their experience through a different frame.

Paired, iterative reflection is central to this activity, as it was to my own autoethnographic method. Because the most productive reflection occurs when our expectations are frustrated, and because we often perceive such frustrations as failures, such a workshop would involve shared vulnerability among participants. Thus, while the first part of the faculty development workshop aims to briefly introduce participants to the heuristic and engage them in guided practice with a brief narrative other than their own, the bulk of the workshop I have conceived enables participants to share their own teaching narratives with a single colleague, whose role, like Steven's interviews in my own autoethnographic process, would be to help the active participant to discover the way they have framed the narrative they brought to the workshop and how that framing constrained their potential responses. Further, the workshop is designed to encourage participants to engage in playful re-framing of their stories: a comic process that not only reveals the limitations of a single perspective, but may also lead them to see new rhetorical possibilities obscured by their original framing.

Supporting Iterative Narrative Reflection in the First-Year Writing Classroom

Although I initially conceived of this heuristic as a tool for teachers and scholars engaging in reflection and situated theory building, I also believe that it could be productively adapted for use with students in the context of a first-year writing class for the purpose of inviting students to think metacognitively about their own experiences and theories of writing. Specifically, a writing-about-writing focused class (or unit within a class) might assign students to read Liane Robertson, Kara Taczak, and Kathleen Blake Yancey's article, "Notes toward a Theory of Prior Knowledge and Its Role in College Composers' Transfer of Knowledge and Practice," in which the authors identify "three models of transfer," the last of which, "critical incidents," describes what can happen when a student's efforts attempting to utilize their prior knowledge within a new situation "either do not succeed at all or succeed only minimally." Robertson et al. argue that "the set-backs motivated by critical incidents can provide the opportunity for conceptual breakthroughs" in which students "re-think what they have learned, revise their model…and write anew." It is the transformative "re-seeing" that turns a failure or marginal success into an operative "critical incident" ("Notes"). Having read Robertson et al.'s article, students would be assigned to write about a time that their own attempt to transfer writing knowledge from one domain to another did not work out the way they expected. Then, either individually or in groups, students would use the Burkean frames to analyze their thinking about what went wrong and why. Finally, students would write a follow-up essay in which they practice thinking in a new way about the same failed writing experience. Such a process would, theoretically, enable students to "let go of prior knowledge" (Robertson et al.) that did not serve them well in a subsequent context,

"re-think what they have learned" (ibid.) about responding to rhetorical situations that are never exactly alike, and "revise their model" (ibid.) so that they can adapt more successfully to the requirements and possibilities of future writing situations.

Reviewing My Burkean Heuristic for Iterative Autoethnographic Reflection

Ultimately, my work in this dissertation demonstrates that Burke's "attitudes toward history" can be used not only as a method to analyze broad cultural and political narratives, as Burke does; but also that these attitudes—operationalized here as iterative narrative reflection—are valuable as a conceptual tool for analyzing the stories we tell about what happens in our classrooms and why. Nor is the utility of Burke's frames as a heuristic for reflection and situated theory building limited to academic contexts; it also has implications for how we might think and re-think about the intimate, personal narratives of our everyday work and lives.

Each of the three narratives I explored in this dissertation—the class discussion about collaboration from chapter three, the failed student collaboration from chapter four, and the strained series of encounters with a former classmate in chapter five—illustrate a fundamental social tension that Burke theorizes with his paired terms, "identification" and "division." That is to say, our desire to belong, to gain or keep those social allegiances that help us to define ourselves in relationship to others and to the institutions within which we work, continually runs up against the lived reality that we are apart from one another. Faced with such conflicts, we construct narratives that enable us, if only temporarily, to manage unresolvable contradictions in our experience (cf. Burke, *Attitudes* 92).

The stories we tell about ourselves and others constitute rhetorical acts, albeit usually unconscious, that both create and constrain our available means of response to situations as they unfold. Through a process of reflection, grounded in the Burkean autoethnographic methodology I have constructed, we can subject those stories to rhetorical criticism much as we might do with any other text, and in so doing to "seek to clarify the ways in which any structure develops self-defeating emphases" (Burke, *Attitudes* 259). That is to say, any single frame will have the limits of its usefulness tested by the vagaries of experience. But unlike other texts, our own narratives, woven from experience, can be unpicked and re-written: not in their particulars, but in the attitudes with which we imbue those particulars with meaning and motive. As Burke puts it, "the critic's tests, whereby [she] gets [her] own patterns of selectivity, choosing to stress some distinctions and to negate other possible distinctions, is the pragmatic test of use for social reasons" (ibid. 200). In other words, as Bazerman has noted, the test of a successful "heuristic for action" is whether "we do better with [its] guidance than without" (103). As we create, critique, and re-create our stories about what happens when we encounter others in the comic dance of fallible human relations, we open up new rhetorical possibilities for productive action.

Faculty Development Workshop: Reflective Re-Framing

Resource One: Lesson Plan for a 90-minute Faculty Development Workshop

Figure 10. Lesson Plan for Faculty Development Workshop

Pre-Workshop Faculty Preparation:

Ask participating faculty to prepare for the workshop by writing up a brief narrative (about 1-3 pages) about an experience with students during class or office hours that did not go the way they expected it would. Have them bring a printed copy of their narrative to the workshop.

Workshop Materials:

- Medium-sized room with movable desks/chairs and a projector
- A handout for each attendee that includes a brief overview of the frames for analysis and a narrative vignette of my own (see below)

Introduction (15 minutes):

Give a brief lecture about reflective re-framing based on Burke's frames of acceptance and rejection, answer questions (i.e. clarification of terms for frames).

Group Activity (30 minutes):

- Have faculty read the vignette provided on the back of the handout and analyze it in small groups to discover which of Burke's frames it seems to emphasize.
- The facilitator (or facilitators) will circulate during this activity to answer questions faculty might have about doing the analysis, but resist providing further information about the situation described in the narrative.
- Debrief questions:
  - Which of the eight frames seems most evident in the way the teacher framed her narrative of what happened during her class discussion?
  - How might that frame have influenced the way she responded to the situation as it developed during the class discussion?

Paired Activity (40 minutes):

- Faculty exchange narratives with a partner and use my handout to analyze one another's stories.
- Partners should write a brief note of feedback identifying which of the poetic frames their colleague's narrative seems to emphasize.
- Then, together with their partner, they will pick a different frame (ANY of them) and rewrite the narratives from within another frame.
- Discuss what different "rhetorical possibilities" seem to open up when the event is viewed through this different frame.
- Circulate during this activity to answer questions faculty might have about doing the analysis, and to help prompt discussion of ways to re-frame the narrative if they seem stuck

Closing (5 minutes):

Invite colleagues to practice this kind of reflective re-framing on their own from time to time, especially when they feel caught up in an otherwise confounding teaching situation.

Resource Two: Burkean Frames Handout for Faculty Development Workshop

Figure 11. Burkean Frames Handout and Sample Teaching Narrative (2 pages)

> "In the motives we assign to the actions of ourselves and our neighbors, there is implicit a program of socialization. In deciding *why* people do as they do, we get the cues that place us with relation to them."
> -Kenneth Burke, *Attitudes toward History*, p. 170

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">FRAMES OF ACCEPTANCE</th></tr>
<tr><th>Epic</th><th>Tragic</th><th>Comic</th></tr>
<tr><td>Key Terms:
battlefield, climb, cosmic forces, difference, extraordinary, glory, hegemony, hero, idealism, impersonal forces, individual vs. "other", larger than life, primitive, single-minded, strength, transcendence through personal virtue, unity, villain, vision</td><td>Key Terms:
adversary, cosmic forces, fall, fear, hierarchy, individual vs. society/law, malice, moralistic, natural law, order, perfection, personal & impersonal forces, pride, principle, punishment, purification, rigidity, scapegoat, sin, single-minded, "submit or die," transcendence through suffering</td><td>Key Terms:
chaos, charity, complexity, difference, error, fertility, foolishness, generosity, growth, humility, imperfection, "laughing with," mistakes, opposition, personal forces, "perspective by incongruity," reconciliation, reveling, shrewdness, sociality, transcendence through recognition, transformation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Epic Exemplars:
John Keating (Dead Poets Society), Professor X (X-Men), Beowulf, Superman, Luke Skywalker (Star Wars)</td><td>Tragic Exemplars:
Hamlet, Willy Loman (Death of a Salesman), Anakin Skywalker (Star Wars prequels), Milton's Satan (Paradise Lost)</td><td>Comic Exemplars:
Benedick and Beatrice (Much Ado), Elizabeth Bennet (Pride and Prejudice),
Han Solo (Star Wars)</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="3">TRANSITIONAL FRAMES</th></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Grotesque</th><th>Didactic</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Key Terms:
anti-heroic, body horror, cancer, cyborg, demonic, diminution, disruption, distortion (of proportion or kind), exaggeration, incongruity without laughter, inhumanity, insanity, loss of control, less than human, monstrous, moralistic, paralysis, paranoia, post-humanity, revulsion, rigidity, simplistic, ugliness, viscous fluidity</td><td>Key Terms:
artificial, bare, blatant, bold, censorious, condescending, confrontational, control, doctrinaire, explicit, forced, hierarchical, ideology, indoctrination, manipulation, moralism, overt, persuasion, propaganda, rules, scrupulosity, scrutiny, spelled out, teacher, telling, theatricality, unmasked, unsubtle, used for ends other than itself</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Exemplars:
Professor Snape (Harry Potter), Kafka's Metamorphosis, Darth Vader, gargoyles, cyborgs</td><td>Exemplars:
Aesop's Fables, the parables of Jesus, John Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="3">FRAMES OF REJECTION</th></tr>
<tr><th>Elegy</th><th>Burlesque</th><th>Satire</th></tr>
<tr><td>Key Terms:
admiration, complaint, denial, distancing, eulogy, fatalism, idealism, loss, longing for a past "golden age," mortality, mourning, nostalgia, passiveness, pensive, personal, refusal, rose-tinted glasses, wistfulness</td><td>Key Terms:
bodily/carnal/scatological humor, caricature, clowning, dwarfing, exaggeration, farce, gimmicks, "laughing at," mockery, name-puns/nominalization, pantomime, pratfalls, pranks, reduction, sneering, voyeurism</td><td>Key Terms:
anger, black humor, clever, critical, cutting, cynicism, deconstruction by reduction, exaggeration, incisive, outward-directed, pointedness, "punching upward," sass, subversion, unsubtle, wit, wryness</td></tr>
<tr><td>Elegiac Exemplars:
Mr. Holland (Mr. Holland's Opus), Don McClean's song "Vincent"</td><td>Burlesque Exemplars:
The Big Bang Theory, Doc Brown (Back to the Future), Yoda (Star Wars)</td><td>Satiric Exemplars:
Stephen Colbert, Trevor Noah, John Oliver, Jonathan Swift</td></tr>
</table>

Sample Teaching Narrative:

Today in my first-year writing class, we talked about the concept of "multiple Englishes." The basic concept is that there are many dialects, or "correct" forms of English, but some have more social power than others. I gave my students a basic overview last time, assigned them to read the CCCC *Statement on Students' Right to Their Own Language*, and to write up a response to it in preparation for today's class discussion. In today's discussion, even though many students wanted to affirm diversity (or at least pay lip service to it), they were all fairly insistent that we have to have a "standard English," for various reasons.

I noticed that two black students, Tanika and Jamal, who always sit together in the back of the classroom, had a side conversation going on throughout most of the hour. As usual, Tanika spoke up in the class discussion and was insightful and willing to challenge her classmates' ideas. And as usual, Jamal said nothing aloud. I wondered what they were saying to each other. I figured it was on topic, that they were paying attention to the discussion, and that what they were talking about together was critical (in the positive sense of the word), but I chose to let them decide how much to participate.

Bill was observing me today, though, and he was sitting right next to them, so after class, I asked him whether he had heard what Tanika and Jamal were saying. He said he had. As I had assumed, they were commenting on the class discussion, and one of the things that Bill heard them say was that they were certainly not going to speak out in "this crowd" (meaning a class full of white students who clearly have never had to deal deeply with the issue on a personal level). But the most interesting thing he told me he heard them say had to do with a moment in the discussion when Craig, a white student, argued in favor of upholding Standard English because it is the responsibility of the speaker to know and select the "appropriate dialect" for an occasion, as a matter of *etiquette*. By way of analogy, Craig said that when you enter a house, you follow the customs of the household; as a guest you do not expect the host to assume your customs in his own house. Without giving other students a chance to reply, I responded to Craig that since "Standard American English" is the privileged dialect in this country, used on TV, in print, and business (as Tanika had observed earlier), then by his analogy those who were born in the US but who speak a different dialect are placed in the position of permanent "guests" in their own country. I could see in Craig's eyes that he was surprised by the implications of his own statement, and I felt the discomfort of the room (some of it was my own). And I moved on, just like that, and I knew that I had simultaneously made a breakthrough and missed an opportunity. At the back of the room, Bill overheard Jamal mutter "Why'd you let that fool off the hook?"

It's true that we barely scratched the surface of the issue of who decides what "standard English" is, and what that means for those whose dialects differ significantly from the standard. I suppose I backed off because I felt like the discussion was in danger of getting out of control. I'll probably continue to struggle with this. I am not as comfortable as I should be—I am not yet willing to push my students as far as they should be pushed, or as good at creating a space where they feel willing to push themselves—when it comes to issues of race and prejudice (and a lot of other things, I suppose). It's new territory to me, too.

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APPENDIX A:

IRB FORM AND APPROVAL FOR 2013 PILOT STUDY

SOCIAL BEHAVIORAL APPLICATION HUMAN SUBJECTS

PROTOCOL INFORMATION

Protocol Title: Date: 1/31/2013

Collaborative Curriculum Design, Implementation, and Outcomes for ENG 102 Studio Pilot "Disciplinary Arguments" Research Paper

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI)

Please note that the PI's CV and human subject's protection training certification must be attached with this application.

Name and Degree(s):

Dr. Shirley Rose

Department/Center:

Department of English/Writing Programs

Mailing Address:

Box 870302

Tempe, AZ 85287-0302

Mail Code: 0302

Email: Phone: Fax:

shirley.rose@asu.edu 480-965-3898

University Affiliation:

☒ Professor

☐ Associate Professor

☐ Assistant Professor

☐ Instructor

☐ Other: Please specify. ("Other" categories may require prior approval. Students cannot serve as the PI)

CO-INVESTIGATORS (CO-I)

- A Co-I is anyone who has responsibility for the project's design, implementation, data collection, data analysis, or who has contact with study participants**.**
- If the project involves medical procedures or patient care that the PI is not certified or licensed to conduct, a responsible physician or other certified or licensed professional must be included as a Co-I. The application must include a copy of supporting documentation for this individual (CV, license, board certification etc).

Name	Study Role	Affiliation	Department	Email/Tel/Fax	udent (yes/no)
Rebecca Robinson	Co-investigator	ASU	English	rjrobin3@asu.edu	yes

PROJECT FUNDING

1a) How is the research project funded? (A copy of the grant application **must** be provided prior to IRB approval)

☒ Research is **not funded** (Go to question 2)

☐ Funding decision is pending

☐ Research is **funded**

b) What is the source of funding or potential funding? (Check all that apply)

☐ Federal ☐ Private Foundation ☐ Department Funds

☐ Subcontract ☐ Fellowship ☐ Other

c) Please list the name(s) of the sponsor(s):

d) What is the grant number and title?

e) What is the ASU account number/project number?

f) Identify the institution(s) administering the grant(s):

PROJECT SUMMARY

2. Provide a **brief** description of the **background, purpose, and design** of your research. Avoid using technical terms and jargon. Describe all interactions with potential study participants (e.g., how identified, how recruited) including all of the **means you will use to collect data** (e.g. instruments, measures, tests, questionnaires, surveys, interview schedules, focus group questions, observations). Provide a short description of the tests, instruments, or measures**.** (If you need more than a few paragraphs, please attach additional sheets.) **Attach copies of all instruments and questionnaires. FOR ALL OF THE QUESTIONS, WRITE YOUR ANSWERS ON THE APPLICATION RATHER THAN SAYING "SEE ATTACHED".**

Background:

One of the principal purposes of first-year composition is to introduce students to the basic strategies of academic discourse, to prepare them for the kinds of reading and writing that will be expected of them in future course work, including being able to understand and criticize the historical, cultural, and rhetorical practices, values, and assumptions that inform various kinds and modes of communication both in the academy and generally. However, it is well established that the kinds of reading and writing, the strategies of argument, and the kinds of evidence considered acceptable, vary, sometimes considerably, from one academic discipline or profession to another. Furthermore, there is a tendency within the university to see the work of writing programs as primarily a "tool" at the service of other disciplines, rather than as having value in its own right. The "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment is designed to introduce students to the idea that different disciplines have different standards of argument and evidence, and to prompt them to identify, analyze, and critique those standards, and the assumptions about what constitutes "proof" that underlie them. Because the assignment requires students to engage in dialog with faculty in other departments, an important corollary is determining whether there is a correlation between university faculty's perceptions of First-year Composition and the goals of the assignment, as well as ASU Writing Programs' goals for FYC overall.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the process of implementing the "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment, and its supporting curriculum. Specifically, we will look at Writing Programs teachers as learners, discovering how to collaborate with each other and to facilitate collaboration among students and faculty from other departments to increase understanding of the role Writing Programs seeks to play in illuminating the standards of argument and evidence across disciplines. We will look at how student learners begin to grapple with and negotiate notions of "proof" as varieties of informed judgment rather than a

simplistic dichotomy of opinions vs. facts, as well as how they develop communication and collaboration skills necessary for the completion of an assignment of this nature. We will also look at how the perceptions of faculty from other departments about the work of Writing Programs are influenced by having first-year compositions students involve themselves in this kind of work.

Design:

Research will be conducted across five sections, of up to 50 students each, of the English 102 Studio Pilot during the Spring 2013 semester. Six teachers will be teaching or co-teaching these sections.

As part of the "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment, students will be organized into groups, based on their majors, which will collaboratively investigate the argumentative forms, strategies, and evidence accepted in various disciplines by interviewing faculty and analyzing peer-reviewed journal articles.

Research will examine participating teachers' process of collaboratively implementing the "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment and its curriculum; students' process of collaboration and writing of the assignment; and participating university faculty's perceptions of the assignment's value.

Data collection:

Participants will be recruited via email and/or Blackboard from among the eight English 102 Studio Pilot teachers, English 102 Studio Pilot students, and a selection of university faculty interviewed by students for the purposes of the "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment.

Data will be gathered in the form of interviews of teachers, students, and participating university faculty; surveys of students and participating university faculty; written teacher reflections; student writing such as drafts, final papers, and reflections; recordings of weekly meetings of teachers; and recordings of group meetings with students and teachers.

STUDY DURATION

3a) What is the expected duration of the study through data analysis? (Include a timeline, if applicable). This study will begin immediately upon approval and conclude on September 30, 2013

b) When is the expected date that you wish to begin research? (MM/DD/YY) 3/1/2013(must be after submission date) Note: Protocols are approved for a maximum of 1 year. If a project is intended to last beyond the approval period, continuing review and reapproval are necessary. Research cannot begin until you

have received an approval letter.

IRB APPROVAL

4a) Has this project been reviewed by another IRB? ☐ Yes ☒ No (If yes, please complete the information below and attach a copy of the IRB approval materials).

b) What is the name of the institution?

c) What is the current IRB approval date/status of IRB application?

STUDY SITES

5. Where will the study be conducted? (Check all that apply)
☒ On campus (Please indicate building(s) and room number (s) when known) Interviews and meetings of ENG 102 Studio Pilot teachers will occur on campus, in meeting rooms TBD in the Durham Language and Literature Bldg. Interviews of students and campus faculty will occur on campus in locations TBD by interviewees.
☒ Off campus (Please provide location and letter of permission, where applicable) Email exchanges between ENG 102 Studio Pilot teachers and students, and writing completed by students and teachers on the course Blackboard sites, and online survey responses (via SurveyMonkey) will be included in this research.

SAMPLE SIZE/DURATION

6a) What is the expected number of individuals to be screened for enrollment? 250

b) What is the **MAXIMUM** number of subjects that you plan to enroll in the study? 250
c) What is the approximate number of: 125 Males 125 Females
d) Indicate the age range of the participants that you plan to enroll in your study. 18 to 99
e) What is the expected duration of participation for each subject? (at each contact session and total)

15 minutes for survey responses administered to students once near the end of the semester
15 minutes for survey responses administered to campus faculty who were interviewed by English 102 Studio Pilot students as part of the "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment, once near the end of the semester
1 half hour long interviews of 6-10 students
1 half hour long email interviews of 6-10 students
1 half hour long interviews of 4-6 faculty from various departments at ASU who were interviewed by English 102 Studio Pilot students as part of the "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment
1 hour long interview (focus group) of up to 8 English 102 Studio Pilot teachers
1 hour/week recordings of teachers' meetings (these meetings will occur regardless of research)
1 hour long recordings of student group workshops pertaining to the research and writing of the "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment (these meetings will occur regardless of research)
Variable time spent by teachers recording reflections on paper or digitally, depending on individual teacher's interest, but expected frequency of 1 entry per week for 6 weeks.

SUBJECTS

7a) Will the study involve any of the following participants? (Please check all that apply if your study specifically targets these populations)

☐ Children (under 18) ☐ Pregnant women

☐ Prisoners or detainees detained or imprisoned ☐ Persons at high risk of becoming

☐ Decisionally impaired ☐ Patients- what is the status of their health?

☐ Fetuses ☐ Native Americans

☐ Non-English speakers (Include copy of all materials in language of participants and certification of the translation and back-translation: http://researchintegrity.asu.edu/humans/forms)

b) If **any** of the above categories have been checked, please state how you will protect the rights and privacy of these individuals. N/A

The surveys and interviews will focus purely on the success of the assignment and the writing generated during the course.

c) Please provide the rationale for the choice of the subjects including any inclusion criteria. N/A

Subjects will be drawn from students enrolled in Tempe Studio Pilot sections of English 102, the teachers assigned to these sections, and university faculty interviewed by students for the purposes of completing the "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment.

d) Will any ethnic/racial or gender groups be excluded from this study? If so, provide the rationale for the exclusion criteria. No

RECRUITMENT

8a) Describe the process(es) you will use to **recruit participants** and inform them about their role in the study. (Attach copies of any recruitment materials.)

b) Will any of the following be used? (Check all that apply and attach copies)

☒ Internet/Email
☐ Newspapers/radio/television advertising
☐ Posters/brochures/letters
☒ Other

Invitations to participate in this study will be sent to students via email and an announcement in Blackboard, both of which will be the same message, attached below. The co-investigator will also visit classrooms to invite students to participate. Teacher participants will be recruited from among teachers who have already accepted assignment to the participating sections, who will be invited in person as well as sent an email of invitation. Each email and announcement has been attached.

c) Does any member of the research team have a relationship (i.e., teacher, coach, physician, therapist, service provider, etc) with individuals who will be recruited for this study or with institutions that will be used to recruit for this study? If yes, describe this relationship in detail and explain how the research process will avoid any potential problems (e .g, coercion or appearance of possible coercion in recruiting) or conflicts of interest arising from this investigator's dual roles.

Principal Investigator is Director of the Writing Program in which all teachers are employed. Director's involvement in teaching in the Tempe Studio Pilot lends credibility to the project.

Co-Investigator is a colleague of the collaborating teachers, original designer of the "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment, and participated in the development of ancillary teaching materials. Co-Investigator's involvement in designing and teaching lends credibility to the project because she shares a stake in the success of the curriculum.

DECEPTION

9a) Does the proposed research require that you deceive participants in any way?
☐ Yes ☒ No

b) If your response is "yes," describe the type of **deception** you will use, indicate why it is necessary for this study, and provide a copy of the debriefing script. NA

COMPENSATION

10a) Will any type of compensation be used? (e.g. money, gift, raffle, extra credit, etc)
☒ Yes (Please describe what the compensation is) ☐ No (go to question 11)
In-person Interviewees will be offered a free Jimmy Johns combo meal.
b) Explain why the compensation is reasonable in relation to the experiences of and burden on participants.
Time spent on interviews is about the same as usually taken for lunch.
c) Is compensation for participation in a study or completion of the study? (Note: participants must be free to quit at any time without penalty including loss of benefits).
☒ Participation ☐ Completion
d) If any of the participants are economically disadvantaged, describe the manner of compensation and explain why it is fair and not coercive.
Free lunch is likely to be appreciated, but none of the participants are likely to be so economically disadvantaged that they could not afford to pass up an offer of a meal.

INFORMED CONSENT

11. Describe the procedures you will use to **obtain and document informed consent and assent**. **Attach copies of the forms that you will use.** In the case of secondary data, please attach original informed consent or describe below why it has not been included. Fully justify a request for a waiver of written consent or parental consent for minors.

(The ASU IRB website has additional information and sample consent and assent forms.)

Students and university faculty participating in the online survey questionnaire will give consent through checking a box stating "I am 18 years of age or older and I agree to take the survey. I understand that if I am uncomfortable

answering any question, I can choose not to complete the survey at any time by simply closing my browser window" at the bottom of the first page of the survey, immediately following an explanation of the survey's goals.

A print consent form will be given to students to sign at the time the assignment is introduced to the class, prior to collecting copies of writing assignments pertaining to the "Disciplinary Arguments" papers and recording interviews and/or weekly workshop sessions. (Student Information Letter)

An electronic consent form will be given to faculty prior to conducting and recording interviews. (Faculty Information Letter)

Teachers will be given a print consent form to sign prior to data collection for teachers' reflective journals, or recording of curriculum planning meetings or the focus group. (Instructor Information Letter)

Students participating in email interviews will be recruited via email, in a message detailing confidentiality and consent.

Copies of forms are attached.

RISKS

12a) What are the potential risks of the research? (Check all that apply)

☐ Physical harm
☐ Psychological harm
☐ Release of confidential information
☐ Other

b) Describe any potential risks to human subjects and the steps that will be taken to reduce the risks. Include any risks to the subject's well-being, privacy, emotions, employability, criminal, and legal status.

In the final study, quantitative data from the responses of students will be anonymous. Students and faculty who have been interviewed will be identified by pseudonyms unless they have requested that their actual names be used. If student texts are used in reports from the study, the authors' names, and names of faculty interviewed by students for the purposes of the "Disciplinary Arguments" paper, will be provided only if they request that their real names be used. Otherwise, pseudonyms will be used.

BENEFITS

13a) What are the potential benefits to the individual subject, if any, as a result of being in the study?

No benefit will be gained except additional insights gained through reflection.

b) What are the potential benefits, if any, to others from the study?

Developing understanding of effective teaching strategies and delivery methods for college writing instruction. Increasing the visibility and value of Writing Programs work to the university community.

DATA USE

14. How will the data be used? (Check all that apply)

☐ Dissertation ☒ Publication/journal article

☐ Thesis ☐ Undergraduate honors project

☐ Results released to participants/parents ☐ Results released to employer or school

☐ Results released to agency or organization ☒ Conferences/presentations

☒ Other (please describe): Portfolio paper, curriculum design

It is anticipated that the results may be used by the co-investigator for a portfolio paper to be completed in partial fulfillment of PhD requirements, and that said report may be submitted for conference presentation and/or publication. Results may also be used to improve curriculum development.

PROTECTION OF CONFIDENTIALITY

15a) Describe the steps you will take to ensure the confidentiality of the participants and data.

The only primary identifying information that will be collected is participants' names, and names will only be collected incidentally, e.g. when attached to assignments submitted for course credit, or when names are used by participants during recorded interviews. Only pseudonyms will be used in the reporting of data, unless requested otherwise by the subjects. Subjects will be informed of confidentiality procedures as part of the informed consent process.

b) Indicate how you will safeguard data that includes identifying or potentially identifying information (e.g. coding).

Interviews, focus groups, curriculum planning meetings, and workshop sessions will be recorded and the audio recordings will be maintained securely by the co-investigator until June 30, 2013, at which time they will be destroyed. The transcripts of these recordings, as well as copies of student writing collected as part of this research, and copies of weekly instructor reflections, will use pseudonyms, and only the investigators will have access to the list of students, instructors, and faculty corresponding to each pseudonym. Once the data from interviews, focus groups, workshops, and writing samples are linked via pseudonyms, these master lists will also be destroyed.

c) Indicate when identifiers will be separated or removed from the data.

Identifying information will not be collected in connection with the online surveys. The names of the interviewed students, instructors, and faculty will be kept separate from the interviews themselves on the master list.

When written assignments are collected, a master list will be created of names and pseudonyms. Real names will be removed from the documents and

replaced by pseudonyms, and the master list will be destroyed once the data are linked via pseudonyms.

d) Will the study have a master list linking participants' identifying information with study ID codes, and thereby, their data? If so, provide a justification for having a master list. (Note: In many cases, the existence of a master list is the only part of a study that raises it above minimal risk, that is, places participants at risk.)
Yes.
Having a master list of interviewees and writing samples will allow the researchers to correlate writing samples with interview responses.
e) If you have a master list and/or data with identifiers, where on campus will the list and/or data be kept? (**Data sets with identifiers and master lists, whether electronic or in hard copy, should be securely stored on an ASU campus except in unusual circumstances (e.g., research conducted out of the state or country).)**
The master list will be maintained securely on campus in a locked location by the principal researcher.
f) If you have a master list, when will it be destroyed?
The master list will be destroyed once the data from writing samples, interviews, focus groups, curriculum meetings, and workshops are linked via pseudonyms, before or on June 30, 2013.
g) How long do you plan to retain the data?
Student writing will remain on the Blackboard site. Electronic copies of student writing will be maintained by the co-investigator, in a password-protected folder until the project has been completed. Transcripts of each interview, workshop session, focus group, and curriculum planning meeting will be electronically stored in a password-protected folder until June 30th, 2013. Participants' names will not be included in these transcripts unless they have requested that they be identified by name. Data from the surveys will be maintained by the co-investigator.

h) How will you dispose of the data?
Survey responses will be shredded upon completion of the project. Audio recordings will be destroyed and then discarded. All digital files will be deleted.

i) Where on campus will you store the signed consent, assent, and parental permission forms (If applicable)? (**Consent, assent, and parent permission forms should be securely stored on an ASU campus)**

Completed forms will be digitally stored on a flash drive locked in a file cabinet in the Writing Programs Director's campus office. Hard-copy forms will be shredded.

INVESTIGATOR INTERESTS

16a) Has the Principal Investigator filed a current annual conflict of interest questionnaire with the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance? It is the

COEUS module at: http://researchintegrity.asu.edu/coi x☒ Yes ☐ No

b) Do any of the researchers or their family members, have a financial interest in a business which owns a technology to be studied and/or is sponsoring the research?
☐ Yes ☒ No (If yes, please describe and disclose in the consent form.)

c) Are there any plans for commercial development related to the findings of this study?

☐ Yes (If yes, please describe.) ☒ No

d) Will the investigator or a member of the investigator's family financially benefit if the findings are commercialized?

☐Yes (If yes, please describe.) ☒ No

e) Will participants financially benefit if the findings are commercialized?

☐ Yes (If yes, please describe.) ☒ No

BIOLOGICAL MATERIALS

17a) Will biological materials be collected from subjects or given to subjects? ☐ Yes ☒ No (If no, please skip to question 18)

b) Provide a description of the material (blood, tissue, vectors, antibodies, etc.) that will be used:

c) If the study involves human blood, do you have the required ASU Biosafety disclosure on file? ☐ Yes ☐ No(If yes, what is the Biosafety Disclosure number.)

d) Will any of the material being used in the study come from a third party?
☐ Yes ☐ No (If yes, attach copy of the Material Transfer Agreement if required.)

e) Does this study involve transfer of genetic material of animal tissue into humans? ☐ Yes ☐ No

(If yes, please cite the ASU Institutional Biosafety Disclosure number).

TRAINING

18) **The research team must verify completion of human subjects training within the last 3 years.** (http://researchintegrity.asu.edu/training/humans)

CITI training – Provide the date that the PI and Co-I's completed the training:

Co-Investigator completed training on 1/31/2013

If you completed **NIH** training prior to 9/15/10 this will be accepted. Provide a copy of the certificate.

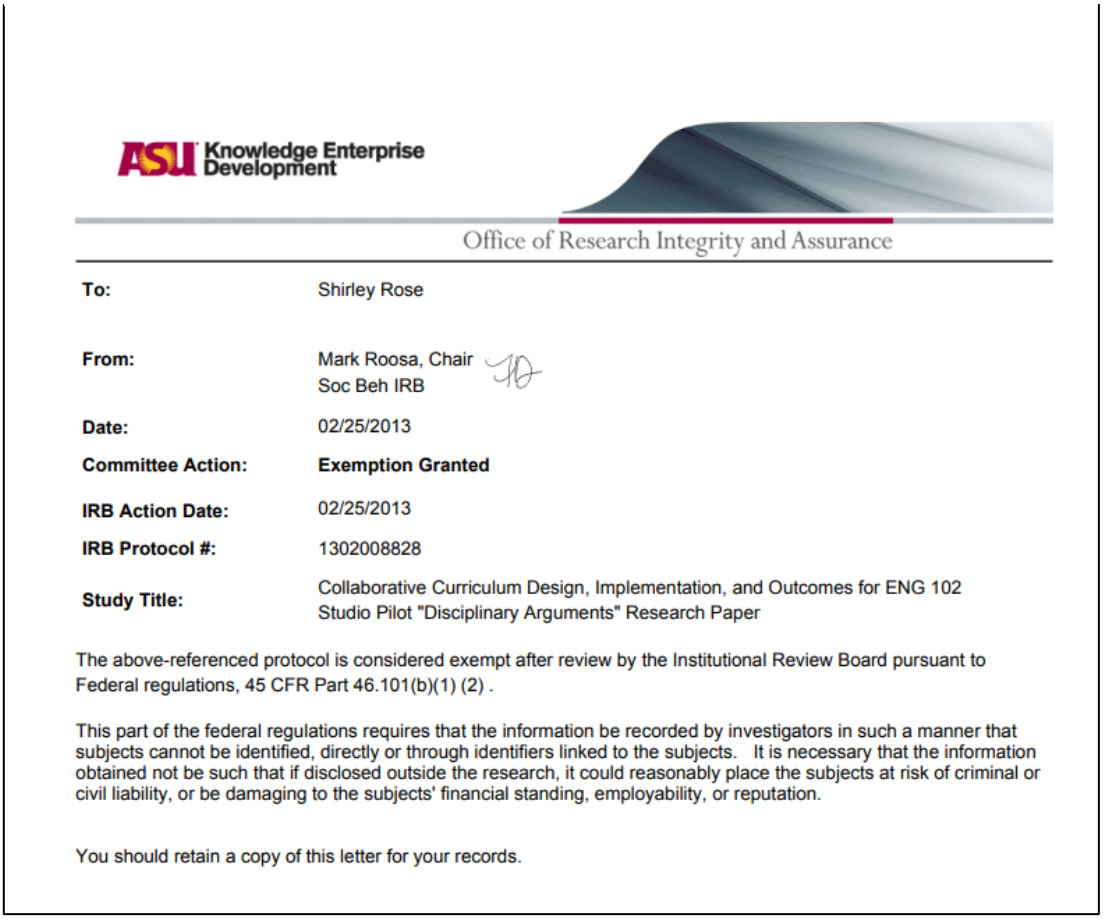
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

In making this application, I certify that I have read and understand the ASU Procedures for the Review of Human Subjects Research and that I intend to comply with the letter and spirit of the University Policy. Changes in to the study will be submitted to the IRB for written approval prior to these changes being put into practice. **I also agree and understand that informed consent/assent records of the participants will be kept for at least three (3) years after the completion of the research**. **Attach a copy of the PI's CV unless one is already on file with the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance.**

Name (first, middle initial, last):

Shirley K. Rose

Figure 12. Sceenshot of 2013 IRB Study Approval Letter



ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To:	Shirley Rose
From:	Mark Roosa, Chair Soc Beh IRB
Date:	02/25/2013
Committee Action:	**Exemption Granted**
IRB Action Date:	02/25/2013
IRB Protocol #:	1302008828
Study Title:	Collaborative Curriculum Design, Implementation, and Outcomes for ENG 102 Studio Pilot "Disciplinary Arguments" Research Paper

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(1) (2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX B:

IRB FORM AND APPROVAL FOR 2015 STUDY

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY	**SOCIAL BEHAVIORAL INSTRUCTIONS AND TEMPLATE**		
	NUMBER	DATE	PAGE
	HRP-503a	12/10/2019	169 of 188

Instructions and Notes:

- Depending on the nature of what you are doing, some sections may not be applicable to your research. If so, mark as "NA".
- When you write a protocol, keep an electronic copy. You will need a copy if it is necessary to make changes.

Protocol Title

Include the full protocol title: Collaborative Curriculum Design, Implementation, and Outcomes for English 102 "Disciplinary Arguments" Research Paper

Background and Objectives

Provide the scientific or scholarly background for, rationale for, and significance of the research based on the existing literature and how will it add to existing knowledge.

- Describe the purpose of the study.
- Describe any relevant preliminary data.

Background:

One of the principal purposes of first-year composition is to introduce students to the basic strategies of academic discourse, to prepare them for the kinds of reading and writing that will be expected of them in future course work, including being able to understand and criticize the historical, cultural, and rhetorical practices, values, and assumptions that inform various kinds and modes of communication both in the academy and generally. However, it is well established that the kinds of reading and writing, the strategies of argument, and the kinds of evidence considered acceptable, vary, sometimes considerably, from one academic discipline or profession to another. Furthermore, there is a tendency within the university to see the work of writing programs as primarily a "tool" at the service of other disciplines, rather than as having value in its own right. The "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment is designed to introduce students to the idea that different disciplines have different standards of argument and evidence, and to prompt them to identify, analyze, and critique those standards, and the assumptions about what constitutes "proof" that underlie them. Because the assignment requires students to engage in dialog with faculty in other departments, an important corollary is determining whether there is a correlation between university faculty's perceptions of First-year Composition and the goals of the assignment, as well as ASU Writing Programs' goals for FYC overall.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the process of implementing the "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment, and its supporting curriculum. Specifically, we will look at Writing Programs teachers as learners, discovering how to collaborate with each other and to facilitate collaboration among students and faculty from other departments to increase understanding of the role Writing Programs seeks to play in illuminating the standards of argument and evidence across disciplines. We will look at how student learners begin to grapple with and negotiate notions of "proof" as varieties of informed judgment rather than a simplistic dichotomy of opinions vs. facts, as well as how they develop communication and collaboration skills necessary for the completion of an assignment of this nature. We will also look at how the perceptions of faculty from other departments about the work of Writing Programs are influenced by having first-year compositions students involve themselves in this kind of work.

Design:

Research will be conducted in one section of English 102 during the Spring 2015 semester.

As part of the "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment, students will be organized into groups, based on their majors, which will collaboratively investigate the argumentative forms, strategies, and evidence accepted in various disciplines by interviewing faculty and analyzing peer-reviewed journal articles.

Research will examine the participating teacher's process of implementing the "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment and its curriculum; students' process of collaboration and writing of the assignment; and participating university faculty's interactions with students and perceptions of the assignment's value.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Describe the criteria that define who will be included or excluded in your final study sample. If you are conducting data analysis only describe what is included in the dataset you propose to use.
Indicate specifically whether you will target or exclude each of the following special populations:

- Minors (individuals who are under the age of 18)
- Adults who are unable to consent
- Pregnant women
- Prisoners
- Native Americans

Undocumented individuals

Subjects will include students enrolled in one section of English 102, the instructor of record for that section, and up to 8 faculty interviewed by students as part of students' completion of the "disciplinary arguments" paper.

No special populations will be targeted or excluded.

Number of Participants

Indicate the total number of participants to be recruited and enrolled*:* 34

Recruitment Methods

- Describe when, where, and how potential participants will be identified and recruited.
- Describe materials that will be used to recruit participants. **(Attach copies of these documents with the application.)**

The instructor of record has given preliminary verbal consent to participate; once IRB approval has been obtained she will sign a consent form. Student participants will be recruited via an in-person visit to the classroom from the Co-investigator, Rebecca Robinson; a selection of university faculty interviewed by students for the purposes of the "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment will be recruited via email by Rebecca Robinson. Information and consent forms are attached.

Procedures Involved

Describe all research procedures being performed and when they are performed. Describe procedures including:

- Surveys or questionnaires that will be administered. (Attach all surveys, interview questions, scripts, data collection forms, and instructions for participants.)
- What data will be collected including long-term follow-up?
- Lab procedure and tests and related instructions to participants
- The period of time for the collection of data.
- Describe the amount and timing of any compensation or credit to participants.

If the research involves conducting data analysis only, describe the data that that will be analyzed.

Data will be gathered during the Spring 2015 semester, between January 22, 2015 (or immediately upon IRB approval) and May 10, 2015. Data collection will include interviews of the instructor of record, students, and participating university faculty; surveys of students and participating university faculty; written teacher reflections; student writing such as drafts, final papers, and reflections; and recordings of class sessions with students and teacher.

Anticipated time spent by participants is broken down as follows:
Up to 12 75-minute long recordings of ENG 102 class sessions pertaining to the research and writing of the "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment (these meetings will occur regardless of research)
Variable time spent by the instructor recording reflections on paper or digitally, with expected frequency of 1 entry per week for 6 weeks
Variable time spent on student writing for the "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment (this work will be done regardless of research)
15 minutes for survey responses administered to students once near the end of the semester
30 minutes for survey responses administered to campus faculty who were interviewed by English 102 students as part of the "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment, once near the end of the semester
Up to 1 hour for student interviews of up to 8 faculty from various departments at ASU as part of the "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment
30 minutes each for interviews of up to 8 students and 1 instructor
30 minutes each for email interviews of up to 8 students

In-person interviews of students by the co-investigator will be offered a free Jimmy Johns combo meal. This compensation is justified because time spent on interviews is about the same as usually taken for lunch. It is fair and not coercive because free lunch is likely to be appreciated, but none of the participants are likely to be so economically disadvantaged that they could not afford to pass up an offer of a meal.

All data collection instruments are attached.

Risks to Participants

List the reasonably foreseeable risks, discomforts, or inconveniences related to participation in the research. Consider physical, psychological, social, legal, and economic risks.

There are no reasonably foreseeable risks, discomforts, or inconveniences related to participation in the research. Reasonable precautions will be taken to protect confidentiality and respect participants' time and wellbeing.

Potential Benefits to Participants

Realistically describe the potential benefits that individual participants may experience from taking part in the research. Indicate if there is no direct benefit. Do not include benefits to society or others.

Participants may benefit from additional insights gained through reflection.

Prior Approvals

Describe any approvals – other than the IRB - that will be obtained prior to commencing the research. (e.g., school, external site, or funding agency approval.)

None

Privacy and Confidentiality

Describe the steps that will be taken to protect subjects' privacy interests. "Privacy interest" refers to a person's desire to place limits on with whom they interact or to whom they provide personal information.

Describe the following measures to ensure the confidentiality of data:

- Where and how data will be stored?
- How long the data will be stored?
- Who will have access to the data?

Describe the steps that will be taken to secure the data (e.g., training, authorization of access, password protection, encryption, physical controls, certificates of confidentiality, and separation of identifiers and data) during storage, use, and transmission.

Quantitative data from the responses of students will be anonymous. Students and faculty who have been interviewed will be identified by pseudonyms unless they have requested that their actual names be used. When student texts are used in reports from the study, the authors' names, and names of faculty interviewed by students for the purposes of the "Disciplinary Arguments" paper, will be provided only if they request that their real names be used. Otherwise, pseudonyms will be used.

Survey data and recordings of interviews and class discussions will be stored in a password-protected digital folder on a removable drive, which will be stored in a lock-box by the co-investigator for not more than five years.

Student writing will be submitted to Digication and Blackboard in fulfillment of course requirements, and collected by Writing Programs for research and assessment purposes, will remain permanently stored there and accessible by Writing Programs administrators, as well as by researchers who obtain authorization to access it, including the co-investigator.

Consent Process

Indicate the process you will use to obtain consent. Include a description of:

- Where will the consent process take place
- How will consent be obtained

Non-English Speaking Participants

- Indicate what language(s) other than English are understood by prospective participants or representatives.
- If participants who do not speak English will be enrolled, describe the process to ensure that the oral and/or written information provided to those participants will be in that language. Indicate the language that will be used by those obtaining consent.

Waiver or Alteration of Consent Process (written consent will not be obtained, required information will not be disclosed, or the research involves deception)

- Review the "CHECKLIST: Waiver or Alteration of Consent Process (HRP-410)" to ensure you have provided sufficient information for the IRB to make these determinations.

Participants who are minors (individuals who are under 18)

- Describe the criteria that will be used to determine whether a prospective participant has not attained the legal age for consent to treatments or procedures involved in the research under the applicable law of the jurisdiction in which the research will be conducted.

The co-investigator will visit the English 102 classroom to recruit student participants, who will sign printed consent forms, which include a statement that they are over the age of eighteen. Anonymous surveys also include a statement that participants must be over the age of eighteen.

The co-investigator will email selected university faculty whom students have arranged to interview as part of the "Disciplinary Arguments" assignment, in order to obtain consent to use recordings of those interviews as part of this study. Faculty will indicate their consent by replying to the recruitment email with a statement that they agree to participate.

The participating English 102 instructor of record will sign a printed consent form.

Informed consent and surveys are attached.

Process to Document Consent in Writing

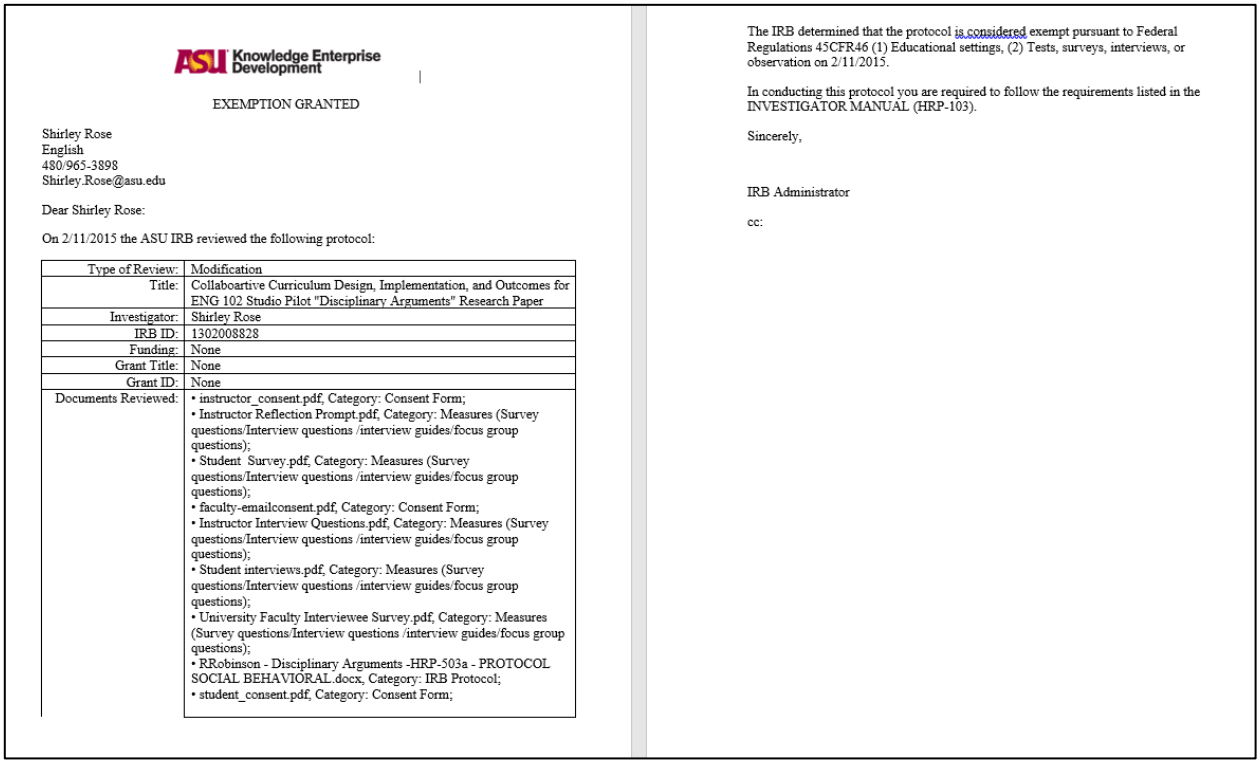
If your research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to participants and involves no procedures for which written documentation of consent is normally required outside of the research context, the IRB will consider a waiver of the requirement to obtain written documentation of consent.

(If you will document consent in writing, attach a consent document. If you will obtain consent, but not document consent in writing, attach the short form consent template or describe the procedure for obtaining and documenting consent orally.)

See above.

Training
Provide the date(s) the members of the research team have completed the CITI training for human participants. This training must be taken within the last 3 years. Additional information can be found at: http://researchintegrity.asu.edu/training/humans
Co-investigator Rebecca Robinson completed CITI training on 1/31/2013. Principal investigator Shirley Rose completed CITI training on 4/26/2011. She was informed that CITI training is now valid for 4 years.

Figure 13. Screenshot of 2015 IRB Study Approval Letter



ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Shirley Rose
English
480/965-3898
Shirley.Rose@asu.edu

Dear Shirley Rose:

On 2/11/2015 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Modification
Title:	Collaboartive Curriculum Design, Implementation, and Outcomes for ENG 102 Studio Pilot "Disciplinary Arguments" Research Paper
Investigator:	Shirley Rose
IRB ID:	1302008828
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• instructor_consent.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Instructor Reflection Prompt.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Student Survey.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • faculty-emailconsent.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Instructor Interview Questions.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Student interviews.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • University Faculty Interviewee Survey.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • RRobinson - Disciplinary Arguments -HRP-503a - PROTOCOL SOCIAL BEHAVIORAL.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • student_consent.pdf, Category: Consent Form;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (1) Educational settings, (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 2/11/2015.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc:

APPENDIX C:

IRB FORM AND APPROVAL FOR 2016 AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY	**SOCIAL BEHAVIORAL INSTRUCTIONS AND TEMPLATE**		
	NUMBER	DATE	PAGE
	HRP-503a	04/12/2016	176 of 188

Instructions and Notes:

- Depending on the nature of what you are doing, some sections may not be applicable to your research. If so, mark as "NA".
- When you write a protocol, keep an electronic copy. You will need a copy if it is necessary to make changes.

1 Protocol Title

Include the full protocol title:

Scholarly Re-vision: Using Burke's Poetic Frames as a Heuristic for Rhetorical Reflective Practice

2 **Background and Objectives**

Provide the scientific or scholarly background for, rationale for, and significance of the research based on the existing literature and how will it add to existing knowledge.

- Describe the purpose of the study.
- Describe any relevant preliminary data or case studies.
- Describe any past studies that are in conjunction to this study.

This study employs autoethnographic methods, through the lens of Kenneth Burke's frames of acceptance and rejection, to rhetorically reflect on one scholar's experiences as a researcher, teacher, and writing program administrator. The purpose of this rhetorical reflective practice is to gain insight into the ways in which a scholar constructs or represents her own and others' motives in order to navigate social situations and engage in core practices of academia. Such rhetorical reflective practice enables scholars to construct what Linda Flower calls "situated theories" that inform future action. In keeping with autoethnographic methods, this inquiry, while focusing primarily on the scholar's own experience, will engage in conversation with colleagues and analyze textual artifacts in order to illuminate the social contexts in which she works.

A prior study, "Collaboartive Curriculum Design, Implementation, and Outcomes for ENG 102 "Disciplinary Arguments" Research Paper" (ID: 1302008828) will be discussed in the current project, and findings from that study will be reported in the dissertation.

3 **Data Use**

Describe how the data will be used. Examples include:

- Dissertation, Thesis, Undergraduate honors project
- Publication/journal article, conferences/presentations
- Results released to agency or organization
- Results released to participants/parents
- Results released to employer or school
- Other (describe)

Data from this study will be used in a dissertation, journal articles, and conference presentations.

4 **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

Describe the criteria that define who will be included or excluded in your final study sample. If you are conducting data analysis only describe what is included in the dataset you propose to use.

Indicate specifically whether you will target or exclude each of the following special populations:

- Minors (individuals who are under the age of 18)
- Adults who are unable to consent
- Pregnant women
- Prisoners
- Native Americans
- Undocumented individuals

No special populations will be included in the study sample.

5 **Number of Participants**

Indicate the total number of participants to be recruited and enrolled*:* 10

6 **Recruitment Methods**

- Describe who will be doing the recruitment of participants.
- Describe when, where, and how potential participants will be identified and recruited.
- Describe and attach materials that will be used to recruit participants (attach documents or recruitment script with the application).

Rebecca Robinson will recruit participants via email and/or verbal request. The recruitment script is:

> "For my dissertation, I am conducting an autoethnographic study of my experience as a researcher, teacher, and writing program administrator. Would you be willing to assist me with my research by asking me interview questions, which I have written, and to participate in a conversation about my experience? It should take about an hour."

7 **Procedures Involved**

Describe all research procedures being performed, who will facilitate the procedures, and when they will be performed. Describe procedures including:

- The duration of time participants will spend in each research activity.
- The period or span of time for the collection of data, and any long term follow up.
- Surveys or questionnaires that will be administered (Attach all surveys, interview questions, scripts, data collection forms, and instructions for participants to the online application).
- Interventions and sessions (Attach supplemental materials to the online application).
- Lab procedures and tests and related instructions to participants.
- Video or audio recordings of participants.
- Previously collected data sets that that will be analyzed and identify the data source (Attach data use agreement(s) to the online application).

Each interview should take approximately one hour, and all interviews will be completed by July 31, 2016. Interviews will be audio recorded.

The primary set of interview questions is attached. Because the questions are designed to stimulate memory and facilitate conversation, follow-up questions may be asked during the interview.

8 **Compensation or Credit**

- Describe the amount and timing of any compensation or credit to participants.
- Identify the source of the funds to compensate participants
- Justify that the amount given to participants is reasonable.
- If participants are receiving course credit for participating in research, alternative assignments need to be put in place to avoid coercion.

No compensation will be provided.

9 **Risk to Participants**

List the reasonably foreseeable risks, discomforts, or inconveniences related to participation in the research. Consider physical, psychological, social, legal, and economic risks.

There are no foreseeable risks, discomforts, or inconveniences to participation in this research.

10 **Potential Benefits to Participants**

Realistically describe the potential benefits that individual participants may experience from taking part in the research. Indicate if there is no direct benefit. Do **not** include benefits to society or others.

Participants may gain insight into their own processes of researching, writing, teaching, and writing program administration, and may learn about institutional procedures and practices, as a result of the interview and conversation.

11 **Privacy and Confidentiality**

Describe the steps that will be taken to protect subjects' privacy interests. "Privacy interest" refers to a person's desire to place limits on with whom they interact or to whom they provide personal information. Click here for additional guidance on ASU Data Storage Guidelines.

Describe the following measures to ensure the confidentiality of data:

- Who will have access to the data?
- Where and how data will be stored (e.g. ASU secure server, ASU cloud storage, filing cabinets, etc.)?
- How long the data will be stored?
- Describe the steps that will be taken to secure the data during storage, use, and transmission. (e.g., training, authorization of access, password protection, encryption, physical controls, certificates of confidentiality, and separation of identifiers and data, etc.).
- If applicable, how will audio or video recordings will be managed and secured. Add the duration of time these recordings will be kept.
- If applicable, how will the consent, assent, and/or parental permission forms be secured. These forms should separate from the rest of the study data. Add the duration of time these forms will be kept.
- If applicable, describe how data will be linked or tracked (e.g. masterlist, contact list, reproducible participant ID, randomized ID, etc.).
- If your study has previously collected data sets, describe who will be responsible for data security and monitoring.

The Principal Investigator and Co-Investigator will have access to the data.
Interviews will be audio recorded and stored on a password-protected folder on Rebecca Robinson's hard drive.

Audio recordings will be stored for five years.
Printed consent forms will be collected and stored in a filing cabinet by the Co-Investigator for five years.

Participants will have the option of using pseudonyms. If pseudonyms are desired, information linking pseudonyms to real names will be deleted once the recordings have been transcribed.

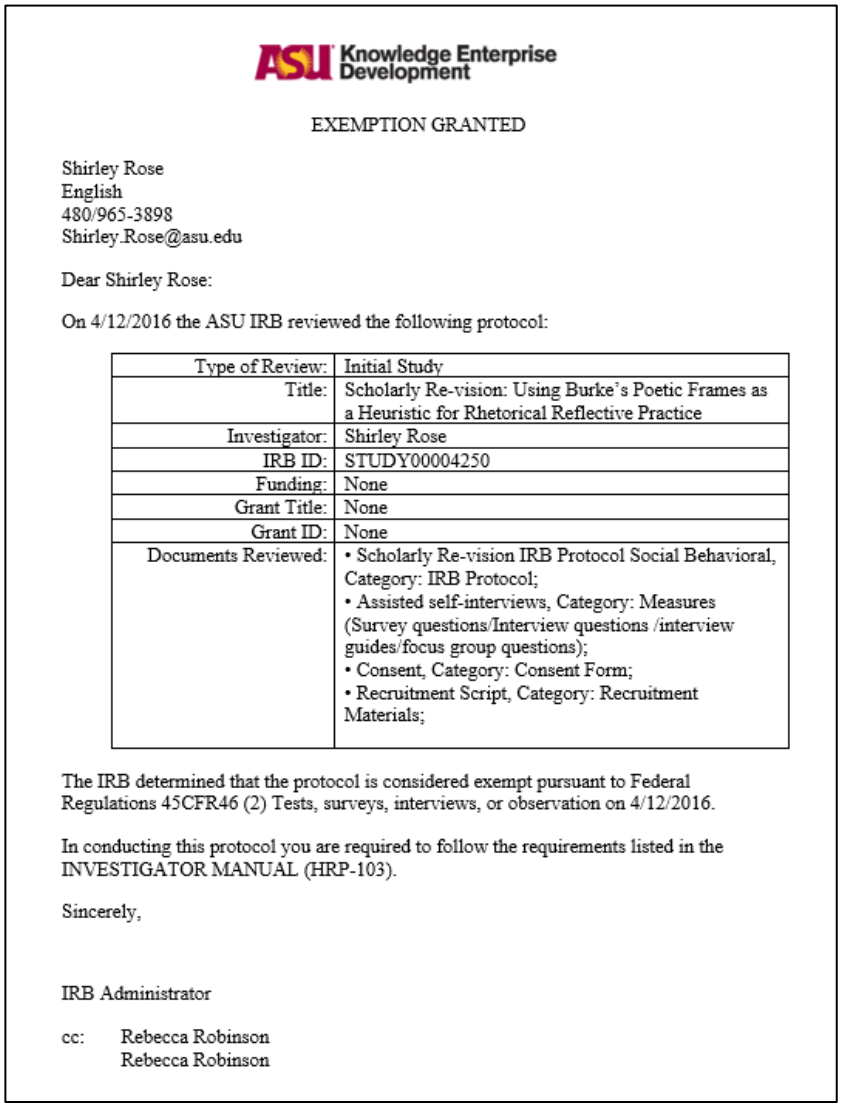
12 **Consent Process**

Describe the process and procedures process you will use to obtain consent. Include a description of:

- Who will be responsible for consenting participants?
- Where will the consent process take place?
- How will consent be obtained?

• If participants who do not speak English will be enrolled, describe the process to ensure that the oral and/or written information provided to those participants will be in that language. Indicate the language that will be used by those obtaining consent. Translated consent forms should be submitted after the English is approved.
The co-investigator will be responsible for obtaining consent from participants. Consent forms (attached) will be signed immediately prior to recording the interviews.
13 **Training** Provide the date(s) the members of the research team have completed the CITI training for human participants. This training must be taken within the last 4 years. Additional information can be found at: Training.
P-I Shirley Rose**:** 3-30-15 Co-I Rebecca Robinson: 1/31/2013

Figure 14. Screenshot of IRB Approval Letter for 2016 Autoethnographic Study



ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Shirley Rose
English
480/965-3898
Shirley.Rose@asu.edu

Dear Shirley Rose:

On 4/12/2016 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Scholarly Re-vision: Using Burke's Poetic Frames as a Heuristic for Rhetorical Reflective Practice
Investigator:	Shirley Rose
IRB ID:	STUDY00004250
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Scholarly Re-vision IRB Protocol Social Behavioral, Category: IRB Protocol; • Assisted self-interviews, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Consent, Category: Consent Form; • Recruitment Script, Category: Recruitment Materials;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 4/12/2016.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Rebecca Robinson
Rebecca Robinson