

Epistemic Authority in Composition Studies: Tenuous Relationship between Two-Year English Faculty and Knowledge Production

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Despite community college teachers teaching nearly 50 percent of all first-year composition, our experiences and hands-on knowledge are not viewed as scholarly contributions to writing studies. The scholarship of writing studies needs to be expanded through redefining what constitutes scholarly work as well as providing mentoring to two-year faculty who possess critical knowledge on composition and pedagogy.

On a Friday afternoon my colleagues and I, who teach English at a community college in central Florida, are sitting in a classroom on our main campus that has numerous postings from the university that is fewer than twenty miles away. On this particular day, we have invited the local high school English department to join us in a conversation on student research to discuss our struggles, successes, and concerns. There are thirty of us—eighteen high school English teachers and twelve community college teachers. Within this space, three levels of education come into focus as my colleagues and I inquire about the assignments and skills high school students are being taught to better address the needs of our students coming into their first college composition course. As we share with our high school counterparts, we also keep our focus on the university, hoping to prepare our students for the diverse and challenging writing assignments at four-year institutions. Indeed, this rich and rewarding exchange we have with our high school counterparts underscores our roles as “border crossers” as two-year English faculty (Tinberg 339). Howard Tinberg, community college professor and former chair of the Two-Year College English Association (TYCA), states, “We are the educational ‘mestizas,’ the translatable teachers” (338) who shuttle back and forth from the social material reality of high school students—many who are the first generation going to college, non-native English speakers, poor and working-class students, and learning disabled (diagnosed and undiagnosed), struggling as emerging rhetorical writers and readers—to the desired traits of university students—those who need a proficient college level in reading comprehension and rhetorical writing skills to effectively participate in the academic community of interrogating and challenging critical ideas in upper-level courses.

Tinberg's reference to "mestiza" and "border crossers" is borrowed from Gloria Anzaldúa's 1987 book *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Growing up as a poor lesbian Chicana, Anzaldúa metaphorically and literally crossed class, sexuality, cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and geographical borders. At *la frontera*, she was in a distinct and important role, like community college English instructors, who

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can see and experience both worlds. Indeed this is an apt term Tinberg uses to describe two-year English faculty: we are at the borderland that separates high school and university as crossing guards, helping assist and walk along our students as they pursue the first two years of higher education.

And at this borderland, the community college classroom represents the liminal space we occupy as two-year English faculty: we are not a continuation of high school, picking up from the last writing assignment taught in senior year, but we are not seen as an integral part of the university—we are geographically removed from its campus and internal social and political identity. So, then, who

are we as community college professors in constant motion from greeting and meeting incoming high school graduates to guiding and polishing our university-bound students? In "Professing at the Fault Lines: Composition Open Admissions Institutions," Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson and Jeff Sommers argue that community college teachers historically have had to define their distinct role in higher education. Since the inception of junior colleges in 1901 to meet the changing demographic needs with a wave of immigrants coming to the United States looking toward education as a way to achieve the American Dream, community college has played a critical role in the democratization of American society. Two-year institutions are often called "democracy's college" because they provide educational opportunities to individuals who would otherwise be denied access.

Yet referring to community college as "democracy's college" is a contested action. For example, in *The American Community College*, Arthur M. Cohen and Florence B. Brawer state how two-year colleges as a uniquely homegrown twentieth-century American phenomenon are not simply built upon the ethos of second chances. Community colleges were created to serve multiple needs, including a growing demand in a technology-driven economy for relatively cheap and plentiful educated workers, a high rate of high school graduates needing a place to further their education, and research-centered universities wanting to outsource the first two years of college to maintain their prestige and exclusiveness. So although community college is still called "democracy's college," Cohen and Brawer show

that it is has always been a contested ideological space between civic commitment and economic opportunity. Illustrating this contradiction, Darin Jensen, in his dissertation, “Tilting at Windmills,” refers to two-year institutions as Janus, the Roman god of duality and transition. Jensen uses Janus as a metaphor to show the dual and conflicting forces of community college, especially today in an era of neoliberalism, where higher education’s idealism of civic responsibility is being challenged by market-driven justifications. And to extend Jensen’s metaphor of Janus a bit further, Burton R. Clark’s timeless 1960 article “The ‘Cooling-Out’ Function in Higher Education” still showcases how one of these faces hides the depressing reality that every year there are a sizeable number of students entering community college with very weak academic ability and subpar skills and that “alternative achievements,” such as developmental courses and strategies for academic success courses, are not enough to overcome these deficits.

Despite its contested existence, community college has grown over the span of its 130 years from one-tenth of all students attending higher education in the 1930s, increasing to 45 percent in 1945 (Lewiecki-Wilson and Sommers 440) and increasing to 49 percent in 2016 (“Community”). Because of its commanding presence in higher education, Lewiecki-Wilson and Sommers contend:

We want you to see that the “discipline” of composition takes place in the interactions of teachers and students in open admissions composition classes. For this brief space, we thus ask that you reverse the usual thinking about open admissions education. Rather than regarding it as at the “margin” of our profession, we want you to consider the teacher of writing in open admissions sites as central to the historical formation and continuing practices of composition studies. (440)

If we are then at a central site where half of undergraduate students in first-year composition (FYC) are educated, our role as two-year English faculty should be obvious and clear. Yet it is not. As Christina M. Toth et al. note, community college teachers seen as professionals are still questioned. So are we seen as thirteenth- and fourteenth-grade teachers preparing students for university? Yet we teach college-level courses, so we cannot be an extension of our high school counterparts if our college course credits transfer, and indeed they do. The question is not so much our relationship with high school English faculty but rather to our university counterparts: Why are we not seen as their equal?

Standpoint Theory Establishing Epistemic Authority

The response lies in who is seen as having epistemic authority. Marianne Janack in “Standpoint Epistemology without the ‘Standpoint’? An Examination of Epistemic Privilege and Epistemic Authority” states: “Epistemic authority is conferred in a social context as a result of other people’s judgment of our sincerity, reliability, trustworthiness, and ‘objectivity’” (133). Who we trust and whether what they say and write is deemed credible knowledge are based on our perception of them, and our perceptions are shaped by the multiple communities into which we are socialized. Hence, there are always insiders and outsiders. Whether that be a com-

munity of twelve-year-old girls or a community of scientists, there is a certain way of generating and expressing knowledge that conveys one as an insider or outsider.

I turn to standpoint theory (Collins; Haraway; Harding; Harstock; Stenberg) to explore how knowledge is never truly “objective”; who creates knowledge that is meaningful to a community is always grounded in the social material of that community. Standpoint theory comes from feminist scholarship of the 1980s and 1990s

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building upon the social phenomenon of Hegel’s master-slave relation, where the self-consciousness of the slave provides critical insight on freedom and power that the master cannot see and thus fails to recognize. Feminist standpoint theory claims and reifies female agency in male-dominated disciplinary knowledge that has overlooked, dismissed, and ridiculed women’s ways of thinking and knowing as “excessive” and “wasteful” (Cixous et al.). Grounded in works of feminist

scholarship that “have long promoted a different means to agency—one that involves embracing a marginal position as a source of knowledge and authority” (Stenberg 99), standpoint theory examines how a group of people with socially constructed identities views and experiences the world differently and highlights the social conditions a group encounters in power relations, thus emphasizing its shared common experiences. And out of these shared experiences, a group’s way of knowing is constructed. Sandra Harding, leading feminist philosopher of standpoint methodology, argues:

[T]he kind of daily life activities socially assigned to different genders or classes or races within local social systems can provide illuminating possibilities for observing and explaining systemic relations between “what one does” and “what one can know.” . . . Distinct gender, class, race, or cultural positions in social orders provide different opportunities and limitations for “seeing” how the social order works. (383)

Hence, standpoint theory analyzes knowledge that is generated from “historically shared, group-based experiences” (Collins 375). There is nothing objective and universal about it; instead, it is a shared understanding and experiencing of the world based on one’s socially positioned identities.

Feminist scholar Nancy Hartsock notes that standpoint theory is grounded in five claims. First, social relations are shaped by material life. Second, those in power have a “partial and perverse” view of reality looking from the top down; this view is based on how their privileged material lives are structured. Those subjugated, however, have an “inverse” view from those in power, looking from the bottom up. From this perspective, they have a less partial and more inclusive vision on how social relations function. Third, to remain in power, the ruling elite claims

its understanding of reality as the correct and standard way, marginalizing any other view that questions and challenges it. Fourth, because the ruling elite's viewpoint is taken as the status quo, marginal groups must struggle and resist to uncover and express their standpoints. And finally, fifth, standpoints of the oppressed reveal how inhumane social relations have been under the ruling elite, and, as a result, they call for action to address and correct these injustices. Grounded in these five claims, standpoint theory engages diverse standpoints in an ongoing dialogue to challenge and question each standpoint's views and perspectives. This process of interrogation and examination is the search for a more holistic and inclusive view on social relations. Standpoint theory, then, does not search for a master theory; there is no meta-standpoint that has a complete and fully comprehensive view of how the systems of power operate. There are only competing standpoints with partial views. As Donna Haraway notes, "standpoints of the subjugated are not 'innocent' positions" and are therefore "not exempt from critical re-examination, decoding, deconstruction, and interpretation" (191). Thus, standpoint theory encourages the constant interaction among diverse standpoints to better understand how power is situated and who and why one is seen as a generator of knowledge.

Standpoint theory provides a theoretical framework to understand how two-year English faculty have historically been overlooked as generators of critical knowledge. It upholds the five claims purported by Hartsock.

First, because American universities since colonial days have been recognized and respected as sites of legitimate knowledge, their ways of knowing and expressing knowledge—the experiences and viewpoints grounded in the social materiality of their student population, resources, institutional support, and inherited body of literature—have become the dominant ways of knowing for composition studies. Second, as a result, the research and theory generated from these experiences and viewpoints have a "partial and perverse" understanding of the writing challenges in a classroom with profoundly unprepared students with complicated and, for some, harsh lives. In contrast, community college teachers' ways of knowing are "inverse" compared to their university counterparts, having, what I claim, a less "partial" and more "inclusive" understanding of the challenges in FYC. This does not mean, as Hartsock emphasizes in her theory on standpoint, that two-year English faculty have an "innocent" and accurate way of seeing what FYC students need. Not at all. Instead, what community college teachers can present is another perspective, another way of knowing that demands *all* students sitting in FYC be recognized and addressed, that theory and research expands its perspective lens to include students who have historically been overlooked and dismissed.

Third, dominant standpoint theory privileging the experiences of university life continues to support and reify its own existence through major composition

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studies journals where scholarship of application is thin and viewed as lacking intellectual rigor. Tinberg has even questioned, “as a community college teacher who writes often about my classroom experiences I often run the risk of not seeming scholarly enough to pass muster in professional journals” (339). Fourth, community college English instructors are “‘first-contact’ professionals” (Sullivan 378) who deal with the neediest, most unprepared students who are culturally and educationally unsettled by the demands and operations of college; as a result, community college professor Patrick Sullivan claims that we play a distinct role as “activists.” In “The Two-Year College Teacher-Scholar-Activist,” he writes:

It may have always been the case that two-year college English teachers have had to be “activists” in one way or another. After all, since the invention of the modern community college after World War II, we have been engaged in the momentous and historic work of democratizing the system of higher education in America. This has been—and continues to be—noble and important work. The conditions that led to the creation of open admissions institutions are still very much with us, and the need for institutions that work for the public good and promote equity and social justice are perhaps more important now than they have ever been. Can we name another public institution that does as much as the two-year open admissions college to promote the ideals of democracy? (327)

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the limitations and, I would add, social and cultural arrogance of deeming basic and struggling students’ writing unworthy of theory and research. And fifth, it ultimately demands a theoretical and intellectual space that positions two-year English faculty at the center of our discipline that deems our students, despite being ill-prepared for college and vulnerable to the constant social, political, and economic strains of life, important and valuable.

Author of *Repurposing Composition: Feminist Interventions for a Neoliberal Age*, Shari Stenberg underscores this need to reposition, taking what was once over-

looked or dismissed at the margins and placing it at the very center “as a call for repurposing the [academic] institution, for locating possibilities, complexities, and contradictions within it, and then for finding ways to remake it into something else, a something else that is more spacious, expansive and reflexive for all its inhabitants” (15). Her premise, grounded in feminist scholarship on pedagogy and composition as an alternative epistemology, demonstrates how standpoint theory can provide another perspective, another way of being that has value and offers critical insight.

Moreover, feminist repurpose shows how standpoint theory can identify two-year English instructors' local knowledge and locate possibilities by disrupting dominant ways of knowing that appear normal and standard.

Knowledge Makers of Composition Studies

As mentioned above, dominant standpoint theory is grounded in inherited knowledge, legitimized and packaged as canonical literature; graduate students as the next generation of composition teachers are indoctrinated into this way of knowing, upholding this dominant standpoint theory with all its cultural and social limitations and arrogance. This “rite of epistemic passage” is demonstrated in a panel I attended at the 2016 MLA conference in Austin, Texas, on Gerald Graff et al.'s *They Say/I Say*, now in its fourth edition and well received among several English departments nationwide, including the community college where I teach. Both Graff and his coauthor and partner Cathy Birkenstein were panelists. Although I very much enjoy the book, finding its readings current and accessible and Graff et al.'s explanation of composition theory clear and valuable, I am always a bit confused by what they deem as common academic moves. In fact, many of the templates offered in their book I have never seen used in academic essays, and a 2016 article entitled “Do Academics Really Write This Way?” by Zac Lancaster indicates that these so-called common rhetorical moves are not so common after all. When another panelist sarcastically challenged Graff on this point, stating that his book *They Say/I Say* should really be called *Graff Says/I Say*, Graff quickly responded that the theoretical framework of the book is to teach the next generation of students “who we are as academics and how we communicate with each other” as they become “us” as future members of the academic community. His response was predictable—his book purports this—yet still shocking to me: Is that what compositionists are doing? Preparing the next generation of scholars, academics, and teachers to think and write like they do? How many voices, ways of knowing, acts of being are silenced and overlooked because of this? And who are the “we”? Am I part of the “we” as a community college teacher?

As long as the dominant standpoint theory of composition remains squarely on the material reality of university educational life and not on the fragile academic existence of community college students, of whom roughly 68 percent nationwide need to take one or more remedial courses in comparison to 40 percent of university students (“Community”), the next generation of composition professors, whether they are using *They Say/I Say* or not, may end up perpetuating the *Graff Says/I Say* paradigm that claims to successfully become an academic insider one needs to speak and write like them. As a result, they may be alienating many basic and struggling writers who have an extremely difficult time finding a sense of self, a sense of belonging in this discourse.

Darin Jensen and Susan Ely, both two-year English instructors in Des Moines, Iowa, in their article, “A Partnership Teaching Externship Program: A Model That Makes Do,” argue that community college students should be part of

the discussion in introductory composition and theory courses for graduate students preparing to teach FYC. Recalling how they felt overwhelmed and completely unprepared teaching the first time at a community college, they wished they had been exposed to a formal body of knowledge and had explored diverse ways of approaching FYC in their graduate composition and theory class to prepare for the challenges (and rewards) of teaching at a two-year institution. Addressing this epistemic standpoint gap in their introductory graduate course in theory and composition that continues to overlook community college despite it providing “access for millions of unprepared students to engage in democratic education, civic involvement, and greater economic agency being at stake,” write Jensen and Ely, “we began to attempt to meet this need by designing a program that fit our local exigencies” (251). Calling this program “externship,” they work closely with selected graduate assistants, helping them design syllabi, assess papers, and observe classrooms at their two-year institution, as well as introduce them to a theoretical framework that centers literacy with economic and educational struggle to reflect the lives of many community college students. Two of the main texts they assign are Mike Rose’s *Lives on the Boundary* and Adrienne Rich’s “Teaching Language in Open Admissions” to graduate assistants. Jensen and Ely continue to invest time and energy into these externships, despite receiving minimal support from their own institution, being granted no release time and provided with only limited financial support. Moreover, they continue to receive lukewarm reaction from some graduate students who see teaching at a community college inferior or a career killer, having been told by university faculty that four-year institutions are hesitant to hire anyone teaching at a two-year institution.

Jensen and Ely’s efforts to expand the focus of graduate research in composition onto community college students highlights the *TYCA Guidelines for Preparing Teachers of English in the Two-Year College*, which advocates for the inclusion of community colleges in graduate programs that prepare the next generation of composition instructors. My first-time experience teaching FYC accentuates the need for this inclusion. In 2002, I was in the same position as Jensen and Ely and their graduate students: I, too, was completely unprepared for the challenges beyond the average university student writer. And like Jensen and Ely and the graduate assistants they write about, I took an introductory course on theory and practice in composition as a teaching assistant assigned to teach FYC at the university where I was pursuing my doctorate. The course was helpful; it provided me a theoretical framework to understand what I was doing in the class. Rich texts like James Berlin’s *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges* and Sharon Crowley’s *Composition in the University* were extremely insightful on how composing was much more than simply getting ideas down on paper; the texts also provided me a historical understanding of the discipline, underscoring that composition is much more than a service course. Yet there was no focus on basic and struggling writers, although my classmates and I had some in our FYC courses at our university. Toward the end of the semester my classmates and I became less

in awe of the materials we were reading and discussing, as we were at loss how to teach, grade, and counsel our struggling students.

This disconnection between theory and practice was magnified when I first began teaching FYC at a community college, where I went from two or three university students significantly struggling as emerging writers to a class full of basic and struggling writers. I was still grateful for the awareness I was bringing to the class, but I was unsure how to execute the ideas from the introductory course on theory and practice. For example, I remember blankly staring at twenty plus students my first semester teaching at a two-year institution after reading their first set of essays, wondering how I was going to lead them from basic elements of writing that they had not yet achieved (clear sentence structure, cohesive body paragraphs, a developed single-focused argument, and awareness of elementary grammar) to academic writing that includes conversing with multiple voices and perspectives. I recalled David Bartholomae's argument in "Inventing the University," stating how students "have to invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language, finding some compromise between idiosyncrasy, a personal history, and the requirements of convention, the history of a discipline" (5). Yet, how could I ask my students to mimic another way of speaking and writing when many were barely writing clear, developed thoughts in simple sentences in their own voice? What could I say to them? How should I comment on their papers? I wanted to acknowledge their ideas, but it was extremely hard when I could barely make it through a sentence to understand what the focus was. My rich graduate class discussions on composition theory, such as Bartholomae, were not helpful. I was in crisis mode. Instead of seeking insight from the literature I read in my introduction to composition studies, I ran into the chair's office that day and begged for help. He paired me up with a full-time faculty member who had been teaching composition for over a decade. I remember the first words of advice she gave me: breathe and don't forget to find joy in all of this. As I went through those essays that semester, she taught me to not get distracted by the numerous errors and to focus on only one or two concrete major issues the students could handle. A few weeks later she checked up on me, inquiring how I was faring. When I mentioned that Bartholomae was not going to help me through the term, she responded, "Who?" and then chuckled, as if to say to me: "Hon, you need practical tips and strategies, not theory, for our students." What I had to learn quickly was pedagogy situated in "triage"; any community college teacher will tell a new instructor, like me in 2002, that teaching at a two-year institution requires flexibility, reinvention, and numerous repetition, targeting big issues and not getting distracted by smaller ones, no matter how many there are.

Sixteen years later, I am still teaching at a community college, not the one where I began my two-year institution career, but one only four hours north with the same demographics and the same state and federal regulations. In many ways, I never left. It is a population of students that I am so fond of and so grateful to be in the classroom with that I have never wanted to leave. I decided for the 2017 spring semester to take an introductory course in theory and practice again at the

university to which many of my students transfer to see how much the discipline has changed since I was a teaching assistant. The course has given me a comprehensive view of the discipline today. In addition, the literature we read during the semester, such as Victor Villanueva's "Maybe a Colony: And Still Another Critique of the Comp Community" and Suresh Canagarajah's "The Place of World Englishes in Composition: Pluralization Continued," challenges the hegemonic identity of composition studies. These articles show that several compositionists within the discipline have been questioning the dominant standpoint theory of writing studies. Yet the literature and class discussion never focused on basic writers and made only glib remarks on struggling writers that were too neatly packaged in a few sentences or so to be helpful or realistic. Throughout the semester I thought of Tinberg's statement that "[t]o teach at a community college is to be 'in translation' or between places" (335), as I spent the semester constantly translating the theory into a practice that is realistic and achievable for my students. Sometimes I just could not do this. The theory was completely tone deaf to my students' reality.

The semester's exposure to the literature and class discussion in an introductory course on theory and practice in composition has given me an opportunity to see how the discipline has grown and expanded, but it has also shown me how

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community college students continue to be marginalized by the dominant standpoint theory of composition studies. I found the young graduate students in this class to be extremely intelligent, eager, curious, and determined to do well teaching for the first time, for many of them, FYC. And I believe they will do well. But I wonder, if they decide in a couple of years or so to teach at a two-year institution, will they be ready? I do not believe so. They will experience the same cultural and pedagogical shock that I encountered sixteen years ago. This does not have to—and should not—be the case, but as long as the dominant standpoint theory generated by many university professors focuses on the social

material reality of their students and institutions, no matter how inclusive they try to make it, the challenges that two-year institutions encounter on a daily basis are overlooked.

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community college professors to discipline our teaching experiences into theory if we are to become equal knowledge makers and contribute to the discipline of composition studies with an alternative standpoint theory that resists and challenges and ultimately “democratizes” the dominant theory of writing studies?

The *TYCA Guidelines for Preparing Teachers of English in the Two-Year College* highlights the distinct and important roles two-year faculty play as educators and professionals that can add to the body of scholarly work that may not be fully recognized beyond classroom walls. For example, under “Faculty and Working Conditions,” it states, “Notions of professionalism are distinct at community colleges, with teaching, service, and scholarship valued in *different configurations* than at most four-year institutions. When research is encouraged or rewarded, scholarship that directly enhances the institution’s ability to serve its students tends to be most valued” (my emphasis). The passage pinpoints the difficulty two-year faculty encounter when joining the scholarly conversations of composition and rhetoric. Community college instructor’s *raison d’être* is centered squarely on students: how to make the classroom more inviting, lessons more engaging, writing assignments more meaningful, and student-teacher relationships more rewarding. If two-year English faculty are going to join the theoretical conversation and write our knowledge into discipline, the disciplinary focal point must expand so that the “different configurations” on how community college English instructors make knowledge includes the classroom, its everyday interactions, challenges, struggles, and rewards. It is theory grounded in “pedagogy imperative” that “foreground[s] engagement with scholarship” (Toth and Sullivan 249).

There have been extensive calls in the past two decades by leading two-year English faculty scholars, among them Howard Tinberg, Keith Kroll, and Mark Reynolds, for their peers to theorize their research in the classroom and write their experiences and knowledge into discipline (Andelora, “Teacher/Scholar” 586). So where is our scholarly work? Christina Toth et al. argues that there is more knowledge making than what one may think. In their article, “‘Distinct and Significant’: Professional Identities of Two-Year College English Faculty,” Toth et al. state how “much of the teaching knowledge generated by two-year English faculty goes unrecognized or unincorporated within scholarly conversations in composition. This lack of recognition is due, in part, to a lack of understanding about how these professionals take up and enact their professional identities” (90). Based on their personal experience teaching at two-year institutions and interviewing twenty-four full-time community college faculty, their study reveals that two-year English faculty are indeed very involved, that the scholarship is one of “application” and “integration.” Moreover, they write how community college English teachers “interact with professional organizations as they translate knowledge from multiple disciplines across geographical scales” (95). They conclude that two-year English faculty’s knowledge is highly concentrated on the student demographics and on interdisciplinary subject matter, as they reach out to other fields to help them better understand and address students’ writing issues as well as their complex lives.

I see this intellectual commitment among my colleagues. I am lucky to be part of an intellectually engaged powerhouse of thinkers, scholars, and educators. Close to 60 percent of full-time faculty in my department have their doctorates. Two are currently in the process of writing their dissertations, and during this past semester three of my colleagues have published articles, and a few have attended conferences. In addition, I have spent countless hours with colleagues discussing major writing issues, such as how to best teach grammar to basic writers and how to teach citation as a rhetorical device and not as a mechanical tool. To say that we are not participating in the production of knowledge is unfair and not completely true. *But it is not completely untrue.* There is this rich, ongoing conversation among us and among our peers at conferences, but I am not convinced many would see ourselves as scholars of writing studies. Whether it is due to a lack of confidence or institutional support (Sullivan; Andelora; Reynolds; Tinberg), our masters' and doctoral focus is not in composition and rhetoric, but literature, creative writing, education, digital literacy, or, for me, interdisciplinary studies. That is, we embrace our identities as generalists, not specialists. We understand that to best deliver pedagogical lessons and assignments we have to reach across disciplinary lines and tap into many forms of knowledge. But whether we call ourselves scholars or not, the truth remains that many of us are not publishing in writing studies journals. Andelora writes, "Two-year

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English faculty are a vital part of the discipline—they do, after all, teach half of America's undergraduates—yet they lack the time, incentive, and, in some cases, confidence to present their expertise, their rich pedagogical experience to the disciplinary community in a compelling way" ("Forging" 356). As Andelora points out, one of the biggest inhibiting reasons is time—we are starved of free time. Unlike our university counterparts who are teaching one or two courses a semester or year, many of them to honor or graduate students, we teach five to six courses a semester with a range of 125 to 150 academically needy students. That means we have 125 to 150 papers, many with significant writing issues, to read, comment on, conference on, reread, re-comment on, and grade.

We exist in the never-ending cycle of "read-comment-grade." Many of my colleagues and I invest fifty hours a week. Very few of us have a complete weekend free of reading and grading papers. This is not unknown to English faculty, whether they teach at a two-year or four-year institution. As Randall Popken states in his profile of early composition scholar and teacher Edwin Hopkins, who taught at the University of Kansas from 1889 to 1937, in "Edwin Hopkins and the Costly Labor of Composition Teaching," "The material conditions of the profession as it was constructed and endured by many of our professional ancestors resulted from

both institutional realities and idealized goals—and the conflict between the two” (620). This conflict is the role of scholarly work and the tedious labor of grading. This conflict is intensified among two-year English faculty because there is no release time, no institutional support, no resources, and no cultural emphasis on the importance of scholarly work. I am a laborer first, then in my free time I can pursue scholarly endeavors as long as they do not distract me from my cycle of teaching-reading-commenting-grading. For example, I have had to skip my birthday, book club meetings, long bike rides, spring break, family visits, numerous weekends, and sleep to prepare and write this article. Andelora is right when he says that we lack the “confidence to present [our] expertise, [our] rich pedagogical experience to the disciplinary community in a compelling way” (“Forging” 356). There are too many factors working against us to have the mental free space to feel like we can produce something of quality and proudly put our names on it. As a colleague has shared with me numerous times, we learn to live with mediocrity in our scholarly life—knowing that if we had an extra hour, a day, a week, a month, a year we could produce what we want, but we live and write in gaps and produce what we can. For example, one colleague emailed me the following statement in response to my comment to him about having several “half-baked” papers that will most likely never be finished and polished to submit for future publications: “I’m in the same boat. I’m wanting to publish the paper I wrote [last semester for a graduate course in rhetoric], but it needs a good amount of revision, and it would actually benefit from some original research and surveys that I would need to conduct. However, I just don’t have the time or energy to do either at the moment” (Janus).

There is another critical reason why we are not publishing: many of us are not part of the theoretical conversations. For example, my colleagues and I had an engaging conversation last semester when talking about modifications to the grammar lab component on how students, especially those struggling with the basic elements of writing, do not learn grammar in isolation. We see how our students can ace a grammar quiz on, say, comma splices, but when they have to execute this in their writing, their knowledge falls by the wayside. We have the conversations like this one on a practical level, and we have experiential knowledge to substantiate our claims. Yet most composition studies journals would not find this a compelling argument. It would be dismissed as “too general or anecdotal.” This is a fair argument, but many of us only have anecdotal information. And why is this less significant? It reminds me of a comment Gloria Anzaldúa, as a visiting scholar at Florida Atlantic University in spring 2001, said to my classmates and me on the rigidity of academic discourse: “You all are so used to justifying every wise comment your great aunt or mother made by some big shot theorist that you forgot to listen to your relative and see her value.” She called this “kitchen-table conversations” that are devalued in academia unless some critical theorist validates it.

The reality is many of my colleagues, including me, have tangential knowledge in composition studies. Why would we have otherwise? As I mentioned earlier, my colleagues and I have our masters’ and doctoral degrees in other fields. Not a single one of us in our English department has an advanced degree in composi-

tion studies. Instead, we have introductory knowledge in writing studies, like the graduate course I detailed above. Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle highlighted this as one of the major issues why writing studies struggles to be seen as a real discipline in their 2007 article “Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning ‘First-Year Composition’ as ‘Introduction to Writing Studies.’” They suggested that writing studies programs begin to hire candidates with PhDs in composition and rhetoric but later had to abandon that idea, acknowledging there simply are not enough doctoral graduates since the graduate programs offering terminal degrees in writing studies are still limited. It also leaves a lingering problematic and uncomfortable question: What to do with the majority of composition instructors, like my colleagues and me, who have advanced degrees in another field? Is our knowledge, our epistemic standpoint, useless? I am sympathetic to their

Why cannot my colleagues’ and my kitchen-table conversations on critical writing or pedagogical issues be valuable scholarly work in itself?

argument: if FYC wants to be recognized as a rigorously enriching discipline, those teaching it must have a common body of knowledge like any other academic discipline and not be outsourced to many part-time instructors, in addition to full-time teachers, who are each bringing in their own pedagogical and philosophical understanding of the class.

Imagine if biology or sociology, for example, were taught by individuals with different knowledge claims and curricular priorities on how it should be taught. This would be unacceptable. Yet it is still tolerated in FYC departments across the nation. So there is an urgent need for composition teachers to contribute to a growing body of theory. I do not contest this. What I have an issue with is whose body of knowledge? Whose standpoint theory?

Why cannot my colleagues’ and my kitchen-table conversations on critical writing or pedagogical issues be valuable scholarly work in itself? To better understand Anzaldúa’s expression of kitchen-table conversations to effectively attempt to address this question, I want to briefly situate these alternative ways of knowing in the complex and tenuous relationship between theory and practice. I turn to social science to adequately explain this relationship. Although theory can simply be defined as a model and a body of principles that explain how things work, in social science, theory can be divided into six categories: (1) *theory ABOUT practice*: theory that helps us understand practice; (2) *theory FOR practice*: concepts and approaches that have practical application; (3) *theory IN practice*: practitioners learn their craft using current theory; (4) *theory FROM practice*: knowledge is pulled from practice; (5) *knowing IN practice*: practitioners know from doing; and (6) *theory AS practice*: the dual role of theorizing practice while practicing theory (Bredillet et al. 26–28). These six concepts help contextualize kitchen-table conversations in the theory-practice relationship showing how practice informs theory, as theory informs practice; they are interconnected.

Within this theory–practice relationship, kitchen–table conversation alone would not be published. Practices without theory are not viewed as valuable forms of knowledge. To return to the kitchen–table conversations I had with my colleagues on how to best teach grammar, if my colleagues and I were to write an article on, say, anecdotal reporting how grammar taught in isolation is overall ineffective, we would be told (1) there already is a large body of knowledge on this, and (2) we failed to mention any leading theorists who have extensively written about this. Again, this is a fair statement. We are not sharing anything original, and one of academia’s main tenets is to acknowledge previous scholars who have researched and written about the chosen topic before challenging or building upon it. This is the threshold concept of negotiating humility and authority in academic writing that FYC students are taught. But what if that conversation on grammar being taught in isolation was relatively new to us, that some of us were seriously thinking about this issue for the first time? Using an analogy of a structural house to describe how composition teachers generate knowledge, Stephen North, writing on epistemology and composition, states, “Naturally, the structure is huge, sprawling. There are, after all, no provisions for tearing any of it down. Various portions of it can and almost certainly will be ‘forgotten’ and ‘rediscovered’ again and again” (27, my emphasis). North’s depiction here describes how my colleagues and I “rediscover” pivotal issues, such as teaching grammar rhetorically or students belonging to multiple discursive communities, that have been analyzed, discussed, and written on by previous generations of compositionists. This may seem impossible to imagine, especially those entrenched in the field, but let me remind you that my colleagues and I are not knee–deep in composition theory nor its current and cutting–edge conversations. To demonstrate this on a small scale, I asked fifteen full–time colleagues from the current institution at which I teach four basic questions: (1) Have you ever heard of *TETYC* and *TYCA*? (2) Have you heard of Howard Tinberg? (3) How many courses did you take in composition theory? (4) Do you currently subscribe to any writing studies journals? Of the fifteen, two had heard of *TETYC*, and six were aware of *TYCA*; one had heard of Howard Tinberg; ten took one mandatory course in composition studies, and five took additional courses; and *only two* were currently subscribing to any journals in composition and rhetoric. This is a very limited sample of people, but it is my immediate reality. The point here is that many community college professors, like my colleagues and me in central Florida, are not attached to those theoretical conversations because *there is no entry point in our daily teaching lives*. When I am struggling with a lesson or course content and reach out to colleagues, our conversation always focuses on the practicality of the classroom: what we can do now to make any substantial changes. It rarely, if ever, leads to a larger theoretical issue. The immediacy of our teaching world does not lead to that.

In addition, what if we thought we had something important to share with other FYC teachers about our experience and did not refer to previous scholars, because (1) we were unaware of them and (2) we were simply too darn busy to do that type of research? Is this kitchen–table conversation unpublishable? I would argue indeed it would be for most reputable writing studies journals because it

is not seen as “scholarly,” and for those that include some nonscholarly work, it may not be seen as current. And this is the problem because these “rediscovered” kitchen-table conversations that are happening in hallways, in offices, and through emails are how many of us at a two-year institution engage in the discipline of writing studies, but we cannot officially participate on a larger scale because we are not doing it “correctly” based on the dominant standpoint theory, the top-down knowledge claim that values specialized language over subjective claims, research

And because writing studies, unlike many other academic disciplines, is firmly rooted in pedagogy, not including community college professors, who have firsthand experience with the rewards and challenges of students learning to become emerging writers, is problematic and unfair.

over anecdotes, reputable name calling over “I” statements. It lacks the cultural capital—a collection of symbolic elements, such as layout, vocabulary, references, and tone—that validate dominant standpoint theory as desirable and necessary. In *Distinction*, Pierre Bourdieu, writing on *habitus* (system of learned and inherited habits, behaviors, and skills that determine one’s access to power and privilege), stated how “the educational system fulfils a function of legitimation which is more and more necessary to the perpetuation of the ‘social order’ as the evolution of the power relationship” remains intact (170). It presents dominant

ways of knowing and thinking as proper and even normal, as if it is based on objective skills or merits instead of manufactured traits that reify a power hierarchy. I want to emphasize again that I understand why the cultural capital of the dominant standpoint is upheld in many of the professional journals, especially due to the tenuous relationship writing studies has had in academia, seen as the stepchild of English departments. But the consequences have resulted in silencing important alternative voices that have a lot to say. And because writing studies, unlike many other academic disciplines, is firmly rooted in pedagogy, not including community college professors, who have firsthand experience with the rewards and challenges of students learning to become emerging writers, is problematic and unfair.

Generating New Ways of Knowledge in Alternative Spaces

So how can these voices be heard? It may not be a typical twenty- to thirty-page academic essay with twenty-plus sources, but why should it have to be? Yet a researched essay is still a privileged form of knowledge recognized by the dominant standpoint theory of composition studies. There are multiple ways of generating and expressing knowledge outside of the almighty academic essay. An alternative standpoint theory that exposes the false dichotomous relationship between teacher and scholar must create a “new vision that [sees] theory as growing out of practice” (Andelora, “Teacher/Scholar” 586). That is, we find ways of knowing that center

the classroom as a site of potential theory built out of practices through lesson plans, group work, lectures, PowerPoints, and individual interaction. Conducting a survey of 175 TYCA members to identify how they use scholarly literature for their everyday practices, Christie Toth and Patrick Sullivan in “Toward Local Teacher-Scholar Communities of Practice: Findings from a National TYCA Survey” found that among this small sample, “the teacher-scholar ideal appears to be alive and well” (248). Two-year English faculty are tuning into scholarly conversations in writing studies. But the surveyors express a sense of isolation: (1) much of the scholarship does not address their distinct challenges as two-year faculty, and (2) there is not a community to speak back and join the conversation with their “applied, locally situated pedagogical knowledge” (249). Furthermore, Toth and Sullivan found that “two-year college teacher-scholars are not necessarily able to translate their individual scholarly engagement into a collaborative engagement at the department level” (260). As a result, they propose:

Writing studies must begin to think rhetorically about two-year college audiences. . . . For example, how might we use digital technologies to share scholarship in ways that facilitate conversation within departments? *TETYC* could create a monthly podcast featuring interviews with authors of recently published scholarship relevant to two-year college English teaching. (265)

These ways of disseminating knowledge not only include two-year faculty who want something more engaging, immediate, and applicable, but these alternative ways of knowing can also include their practices that may be hard to present in a typical scholarly essay.

Envisioning scholarly work beyond conventional standards can help foster “communities of practice” within English departments to situate knowledge as local, acknowledge the interactive role between theory and practice, and encourage current knowledge of writing studies to become a professional member (Toth and Sullivan 260). It is a way of providing a sense of belonging, a sense of community within departments that many two-year English instructors lack, while providing a platform that recognizes and disseminates pedagogical knowledge and scholarly engagement among faculty. For example, Toth and Sullivan refer to Salt Lake City Community College English department that has shaped its FYC curriculum around threshold concepts; it is a way to encourage faculty to remain abreast of current theory while applying it to the classroom (262). Two decades earlier, Patricia Harkin in “The Postdisciplinary Politics of Lore” also proposed opening scholarly discussion among community college professors by including practices as part of the conversation. She called for two-year faculty presenting videotapes of their applied pedagogical knowledge to a panel of composition scholars and theorists who can act as entry points into larger scholarly conversations. It is another way to engage scholarship with local knowledge. Toth and Sullivan’s and Harkin’s propositions are rooted in standpoint theory showcasing another way of sharing, learning, and validating.

Moreover, standpoint theory that locates knowledge generated from the classroom is necessary because the classroom is, for many of our students, the only

academic space they belong to. As Jonathan Mauk notes about his experience teaching at Gordon Community College, many students are not mentally, emotionally, and physically invested in their institution.

Community college teachers have to provide a third space (Bhabha; Idrus) that includes the multiple discourse communities to which students belong and recognizes the knowledge generated from these locations to bridge the gap between academic and nonacademic lives.

They do not partake in academic life, except attending courses. Coming from a university where a sizeable population of the students lived in dorms, Mauk writes how he was initially shocked at how community college students sat in their cars reading their assignments, eating, or talking on the phone until the class hour grew close and then they would hurriedly walk to class. When that class finished, many would go to their next class, having scheduled their classes in block time so they could be on campus

for one or two days only. And when their classes were done they would hurriedly walk back to their cars and resume with their nonacademic lives. As a result, there was little, if any, intellectual exchange and excitement to their academic lives. Community college teachers have to provide a third space (Bhabha; Idrus) that includes the multiple discourse communities to which students belong and recognizes the knowledge generated from these locations to bridge the gap between academic and nonacademic lives. This third space, Mauk contends, is spatially marking a place of belonging and investing for our students; it's a welcoming geographical location to help them situate themselves in academia and be reminded that they deserve to claim a space there. He ponders:

What happens to writing pedagogy, and the practices of learning to write, in the absence of traditional university geography? When the discourses of composition studies have “trickled down” from or transferred over to community colleges from universities, but have done so largely without the geographical makeup of traditional universities, what happens to writing pedagogy? What happens to the spaces in which the act of writing is conceived? (369)

This is why we use our experiences and knowledge of the classroom as an ideal place to begin disciplining our ways of knowing into theory. If theory is going to matter to our discipline, if it is going to address basic students' needs and acknowledge them as worthy of examination, it has to begin in this third space because for many of our students this is the only place where we will find them. And we are among the few people who will see them on a regular basis and who can potentially have an impact on their academic lives. Privileging the classroom as the site of knowledge making means that composition studies will have to undergo “a vast rethinking of the theory and practices which have grounded the field in its present form” (Mauk 385) and acknowledge diverse ways of knowing as theory that emphasizes that scholarship of application. Our syllabi, PowerPoints, lesson plans,

and group projects are part of the “scholarship of application” or, as Mark Reynolds calls it, “local knowledge.”

The numerous conversations we are having with our colleagues as Toth et al. point out and the vast multidisciplinary journals we read that help inform and generate knowledge can be expressed in bibliographies, op-ed pieces, interviews, teaching narratives, instructional materials, and computer software, among other numerous venues (Vaughan in Reynolds 148). Why must knowledge be generated and delivered in a formal essay for many professional writing journals when many community college teachers create multiple forms of knowledge in this third space? Reynolds states how two-year English faculty’s “knowledge about literacy production and transmission is especially valuable. Their expertise is dealing with nontraditional students, with multicultural audiences, with all the attendant issues of gender, race, class, and ethnicity can be the source of valuable and useful information to all of higher education as student population” continues to grow more diverse (149).

So where can we submit all these diverse ways of knowing intimately about the third space? Both Reynolds and Anelora point out that there are formal academic outlets for community college teachers to explore. Journals such as *TETYC* since 1974 and *Journal of Basic Writing* established in 1978 are two important venues that welcome two-year English faculty writing about basic and struggling writers. There are also regional conferences focusing on two-year institutions, such as regional conferences for CCCC and MLA that began in the mid-1960s. In addition, TYCA within NCTE since 1996 and the Committee on Community College within MLA since 1997 have provided a wider and more visible platform for two-year teachers and scholars (Reynolds 144–45). Anelora notes that TYCA has reached many of its goals aiming to become a viable agency for two-year institutions, especially with its increased membership, exceeding over three thousand, half of CCCC. And in 2005, CCCC in San Francisco sponsored two special reports on community college English faculty as teachers and scholars (“Forging” 356).

Indeed, there is a growing awareness of the important work we community college teachers are doing. But it is still limited. As a member of TYCA and a reader of *TETYC*, I am aware that our syllabi, PowerPoints, teacher narratives, and so on are only being published in a small number of academic journals. The majority of what is being published are the formal and conventional academic papers. Although the focus of these papers is on the needs of our students, it is delivered in a traditional, hegemonic format that upholds the dominant standpoint theory of what constitutes knowledge. Holly Hassel, editor of *TETYC*, and Joanne Baird Giordano, in their article “Occupy Writing Studies: Rethinking College Composition for the Needs of the Teaching Majority,” declare that composition studies needs to “reposition two-year college teaching at the center of our disciplinary discourse . . . [including] contingent instructors . . . to create a broaden and more accurate knowledge base from which to make curricular and instructional decisions and, ultimately, to reshape the profession” (118). How can this be fully achieved if many of us are too overwhelmed, tired, and overcommitted to sit down and write a traditional

academic essay, as well as removed from theory du jour and only slightly familiar with the corpus of composition theory?

Conclusion

I believe there are two concrete ways to include and celebrate alternative forms of knowledge generated by community college instructors in academic journals: *First, acknowledge the multiple forms of kitchen-table conversations in, for example, syllabi, PowerPoints, interviews, emails, blogs, notes, lesson plans, and teacher narratives as serious scholarly work. Second, reevaluate the role of peer reviewers, shifting their role as gatekeeper to one who becomes the gateway, mentoring community college instructors through the process of preparing a manuscript for publication.*

Recommendation I: Acknowledging Alternative Knowledge

The importance of identifying these kitchen-table conversations or alternative forms of knowledge is that some exist in discursive spaces that might be overlooked. For example, last spring semester while taking a graduate course in composition theory, I struggled throughout the term with the content and how to make it applicable. I would come home after each class session and write several-paragraph emails to a trusted colleague about the course work and the theory with which I was toiling. She, in turn, would patiently read them and respond to the articles, summaries, and quotes to which I referred and provide her own analysis on the application for the classroom. Over the sixteen-week course, we spent several hours exchanging emails. Because many of my colleagues and I do not have the opportunity to see each other on a weekly basis due to being on different campuses, teaching remotely, and having conflicted schedules, many of us communicate via email. Several of these exchanges are thought-provoking and intellectually rigorous analyses, reflections, and revelations that constitute serious scholarly work, such as the exchange I had with my colleague regarding my graduate course work. Here is a passage from one of the many emails my colleague sent me on our discussion of Wardle and Downs' call for rigorous writing about writing curriculum during our ongoing sixteen-week exchange:

I want our ENC1101 to be reciprocal with the best in the land. I don't want to offer open access, lower quality credits. And yet . . . students not looking for a four year degree (yet) take ENC1101 here, which is not true for the learners of Wardle and Downs. Do we differentiate or is that instinct that we need to a kind of warped perspective? I can't even pinpoint exactly what I think would have to change, but their admission that this course is "demanding and different" flirts with this fear of mine. It sounds like a course I would like to have taken, but is it utilitarian enough to serve our range of learners? (Kellen)

There is important knowledge here. It demonstrates how we are wrangling with theory on a practical level, always asking the question: How can we apply this to a classroom of basic writers? Further, this email posting above reveals both humility and intellectual commitment to expand our theoretical framework of the

classroom while providing practical tools and concepts that empower our students. Why would this not be scholarly work? I am sure that these exchanges exist among many two-year English faculty. So why cannot the writing studies community recognize these alternative spaces as sites of scholarly work and include them in their disciplinary journals?

Stephen North, in his seminal book *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*, refers to what Anzaldúa calls kitchen-table conversations or what I identify as alternative epistemic standpoint or what North calls Practitioners' lore. Practitioners are teachers in the trenches laboring through a fully loaded schedule and relying on firsthand experiences, as well as shared lessons and tips from seasoned teachers, to demystify and present writing as steps and strategies in order to help students become rhetorical writers. North writes:

Practitioners are for the most part not highly visible in this way [through publication]. They are rather, one might say, Composition's rank and file. Day in and day out, thousands upon thousands of them work at Composition. They do so in a variety of settings: classrooms . . . [;] in writing labs and centers; as hired graders; as consultants. . . . In the process, they draw on, and contribute to, a body of knowledge that I have come to call *lore*: the accumulated body of traditions, practices, and beliefs in terms of which Practitioners understand how writing is done, learned, and taught. (22; his emphasis)

This lore is overlooked as serious scholarly work. In fact, North does not call it scholarly. Instead, he refers to it as institutional practices and rituals that are shared, challenged, and passed down through alternative discursive spaces such as conversations, workshops, syllabi, notes, and departmental meetings. Lore is folk knowledge, knowledge of the people, the lowest rung on the professional ladder of writing studies. In his introduction, North distinguishes the two roles, stating, "the Practitioners . . . want to know What do we do? [technicians] The Scholars . . . try to discover What does it mean? [makers of knowledge] (3). For North, the question *What do we do?* does not lead to scholarly writing; it leads to pragmatic lesson plans and classroom interactions. Further, he contends that the body of knowledge generated from the question *What do we do?* does not heed to scholarly writing. He argues that "despite the efforts of these Practitioner writers, and their obvious influence, writing is, by definition, the medium least amenable to representing the results of Practitioner inquiry" (52). Moreover, "Practitioners must compete for space with Scholars and Researchers. . . . The result is that written Practitioner knowledge very often gets presented with some of the trappings of Scholars' or Researchers' inquiry, with confusion on both sides over just what is being offered, and where its authority finally lies" (53).

The hierarchical professional ladder needs be repositioned from vertical to horizontal, seeing equal intellectual and cultural value in both Practitioner and Scholar, in both two-year and four-year faculty.

The hierarchical professional ladder needs be repositioned from vertical to horizontal, seeing equal intellectual and cultural value in both Practitioner and Scholar, in both two-year and four-year faculty. Yet, this recommendation of democratizing knowledge makers is not without critics. Twenty-five years after the publication of North's *Making of Knowledge in Composition*, Richard Fulkerson critiques North's definition of lore as ambivalent. In his article "The Epistemic Paradoxes of 'Lore,'" Fulkerson argues that lore is too encompassing and too indiscriminate and that it ends up including both "bad" lore as well as "good" lore. He contends, "And if the only validation lore requires is someone saying 'It works for me', then why should it be dignified by the term *knowledge* in the first place? Doesn't knowledge have to have some sort of evidentiary or test validation?" (51). Indeed. He raises a valid point. But he fails to acknowledge that *there is a significant difference between an idea (whether acted upon or not) and lore*; the former is speculative, unexamined, insular; the latter is communicative, analyzed, and open for critique. In *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, North observes how "the Practitioners' community is primarily an oral culture: Practitioners talk about what they know and don't know. . . . They talk to one another, to their students, to administrators, to Scholars and Researchers, to spouses and friends, to anyone who will listen"

I believe a collaborative mentoring system needs to be set up to provide the extra support community college professors need to successfully publish their work.

(32). As a result, "Practitioner story telling is *reciprocal*: an exchange, a duet, not a solo" (32; my emphasis). Reciprocity requires another person responding, critiquing, questioning, affirming, rejecting, celebrating, and so forth. It is from this reciprocity that an idea actualizes into lore; that is, an idea—a very bad or very helpful one—can exist in a vacuum or a hermetically sealed classroom, but lore cannot. In many ways, lore is grounded

in feminist praxis that intersects "theory and practice" and "involves a visible and deliberate set of actions informed by theory, by research, and by evidence" (Launius and Hassel, chapter 5). That is, lore is about "deliberate action" fostered by a conscious effort to rigorously interrogate and act upon theory for social change. Lore, then, is shared knowledge acted upon and directly applied to introduce positive change. And because higher education is facing an onslaught of hyper-marketization, lore as collaborative knowledge that advances social change is critically needed more than ever before.

Recommendation 2: Shifting Peer Reviewers' Role from the Gatekeeper to the Gateway

I believe a collaborative mentoring system needs to be set up to provide the extra support community college professors need to successfully publish their work. This collaborative mentoring relationship is equity-focused. It acknowledges

how mentor and mentee have important special knowledge that can inform each other's own scholarly and pedagogical interests. Ideally, the mentoring program would begin when community college instructors submit their manuscript. They would be assigned a mentor who, as a peer reviewer, would read the submission; instead of judging the work as acceptable or not, the mentor would provide an *entry point* into the theoretical conversation on the topic. So instead of writing to the two-year faculty the typical statement that my colleagues and I have received when we attempted to publish, which feels punitive and judgmental ("Why did you not mention X; she has been writing about this issue for the past X years"), instructors would be introduced by the mentor to a body of theory that would help them strengthen their argument. So the scolding statement "Why did you not mention X?" becomes an understanding and patient one: "X is a great resource for you. Here is an article that I think will help you on page 3 to further develop your argument." Moreover, North warns that if Practitioners' body of knowledge mimics the standard scholarly work that has been produced over the past fifty years, it will fall flat, lacking credibility and sincerity. He states, "For that very reason, . . . *they need to be more methodologically self-conscious* than any of the other communities: to know the limits of the authority the other modes of inquiry can claim, on the one hand; but to know the limits of their own, and work with them" (55, my emphasis). This is why a mentor is needed: as two-year faculty lacking cultural capital with our kitchen-table conversations, we need the guidance and support to help us "be more methodologically self-conscious" with these disciplinary limitations to formally join the scholarly conversations in professional writing journals.

This mentor-mentee relationship would exist remotely through draft revisions, emails, and perhaps even phone calls or chat rooms. It is designed to recognize that two-year English faculty have valuable hands-on knowledge and pedagogical insight. What we need help with is attaching our knowledge claim to an existing body of literature, to plug back into the ongoing theoretical discussions that many of us are not privy to. After working with the mentor and getting the necessary guidance and support, as well as practical advice on what to do with the manuscript if it does not end up published (submit to another journal, share as a part of a workshop on the mentee's campus, present at a future conference), instructors would officially submit their paper to a different set of peer reviewers who would assume their typical gatekeeping role, judging the *kairos* and quality of the manuscript for publication.

In "Standing Up and Standing Together: Feminist Teaching and Collaborative Mentoring," Lisa A. Costello calls this type of collaborative mentoring "feminist" mentoring that "allows for a radical revision of the institution itself to include different kinds of knowledges and ways of being" and "challenge traditional power structures and the distribution of power and resources" (9). That is, it calls for a "cultural shift" in academia that puts value in teaching and publishing as a collaborative process, and not a competitive, every-man-for-himself endeavor. Toth et al. also acknowledge the importance of mentoring, stating:

Similarly, CCC and TYCA could work together to establish explicit expectations regarding the responsibility that university programs have to serve as a resource and hub for collaboration with two-year college English faculty in their regions. . . . As professionals whose job descriptions, workloads, library resources, and travel funding typically allow for greater engagement with disciplinary knowledge making, university faculty can be an important point of access for the two-year college faculty. (636)

Since many of the peer reviewers in academic writing studies journals are university professors with access to the resources mentioned above that keep them abreast of the current theoretical conversations, acting as a mentor as an entry point, guiding the community college instructor through existing bodies of literature, would create opportunities where there is an open exchange of ideas and insight on practice and theory. I see this as a true embodiment of feminist praxis (Launius and Hassel).

This can only be achieved if, as Costello mentioned above, there is a cultural shift in these institutional practices of professional journals that manage and sustain dominant standpoint theory, legitimizing and valuing one way of knowing, thinking, and writing over alternative forms. If there is not a sincere desire to level the playing field and see community college professors as equal counterparts, then peer reviewers will continue to act as gatekeepers, determining who remains shut out. A drawback to this recommendation is what many of us lack: time and energy. In this neoliberal era of teaching where the pace of grading, returning papers, and responding to numerous emails, in addition to attending to administrative obligations, have increased with little, to any, compensation, both two-year and four-year faculty are carving out minutes and hours to dedicate to scholarly work. This mentor-mentee relationship will require more time to read through the drafts and provide clear and extensive resources. But what if this type of mentoring could be recognized as important and intellectually enriching as writing and publishing to showcase one's commitment to current scholarly conversations in the field of writing studies? Would more four-year faculty be able to dedicate those starved hours to do this?

As a result of implementing these two recommendations, I believe more community college instructors may begin to invest in sharing and publishing if we see that *our kitchen-table conversations, our alternative epistemic standpoint, our lore, our local knowledge, have value and are going to be supported, even if that means it still might not be published*. Right now it is unrealistic to expect many of us to spend endless hours researching and writing on top of our forty-plus-hour week teaching and grading, not knowing if our work will ever get accepted. Why would we do this if we are not rewarded to do so—not given more money or time off to do this, and if our annual evaluation is based on how we teach and serve the college through committee work? We need to know that weekends, holidays, and family gatherings we miss to research and write are worth it, that we will have more than a rejection letter or, say, a six-and-a-half-page, single-space critique of how the paper falls short and the numerous recommendations requiring another academic year of missed weekends, holidays, and family time for effective revision. And why would many of us invest more time revising when we are still unsure if the paper will only end up

being saved on our desktop or filed in a desk drawer with ultimately no audience and no venue for a rigorous discussion? North underscores this when he writes, “Without question, the academic reflex to hold lore in low regard represents a serious problem in Composition, and Practitioners need to defend themselves—to argue for the value of what they know, and how they come to know it” (55). Acknowledging two-year faculty’s alternative epistemic standpoint as scholarly work and providing them mentoring are how we can defend ourselves.

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