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Writing out the storm : trauma and the work of composition.

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WRITING OUT THE STORM: TRAUMA AND THE WORK OF COMPOSITION

By

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B.A. University of California, Los Angeles, 2001
M.A. University of New Mexico, 2006

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to family and friends who have supported me through this process. It is also dedicated to my students, who have inspired, instructed, and challenged how I think about writing in and beyond the university. Their influence is evident throughout this work.

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ABSTRACT

WRITING OUT THE STORM: TRAUMA AND THE WORK OF COMPOSITION

Scott L. Rogers

March 22, 2011

The discourses of "trauma" and "post-trauma" have become pervasive in
representations of life as it is lived in contemporary globalized culture. As new media
technologies make the world more accessible, we become accustomed to overwhelming
social, political, and personal circumstances, and we come to see "trauma" everywhere,
all the time. My dissertation project responds to the presence of "trauma" in the writing
classroom, as it appears purposefully in pedagogies designed to respond to it, and as it
appears naturally through the interests and experiences of students and teachers who
come into contact with national, natural, or personal disaster. Specifically, I question how
ideas about "trauma" and "post-trauma" circulate in composition and rhetoric studies
from other disciplinary sites like psychology, history, and trauma studies, as well as how
these ideas are changed when invoked by composition and rhetorical scholarship.
Drawing on theories of cultural and civic rhetorics by scholars such as Ralph Cintron,
Steven Mailloux, and Nedra Reynolds, I investigate tropes of disaster and recovery across
theses diverse disciplinary boundaries. My goal is to assess the strengths and limits of
"posttraumatic" writing pedagogy that rely on these tropes and encourage students to
respond to disaster through personal writing or variations on service learning education.

Both of these approaches, I argue, can result in a "musealizing" of lived experience (Huyssen), or passively recording the painful details of students' social and political lives at the expense of critical understanding. Such a view of experience ignores the social and material circumstances that initiate and sustain the conditions which make some individuals and groups more susceptible to "trauma" than others.

I ground my investigation in a study of published articles, classroom archives, and personal interviews that record the experiences of teachers and students working at New Orleans area universities in the semesters after Hurricane Katrina. Through the middle chapters of my project, I focus on instructor narratives of post-Katrina life and classroom work, as well as archived student writing from several courses in the University of New Orleans' "Writing after Katrina" Archive. These interviews and archival documents reveal how public, institutional, and disciplinary pressures resulted in policies and practices that reinforced an unreflexive turn toward expressive or service-oriented writing. More often than not, these pedagogies are justified in terms of student "need" (i.e. students need to tell stories in order to heal or students need to serve their communities in order to feel part of them). Importantly, while these records reflect the need for a better understanding of how writing classrooms might respond to disaster, they also show how some instructors and students challenge the urge to prioritize narratives of victimization. My project concludes by teasing out alternatives and positing an approach to critical writing pedagogy that offers strategies for teachers and students working in the context of disaster to resist the dominance of the musealized narrative through intersections of experience, empathy, and civic engagement.

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INTRODUCTION

" 'Cultures,' like personalities, are descriptive tropes, lent conviction by their power to

illuminate the activities of individuals or groups and organized by our assumptions

concerning people and society" (Cintron 12)

"A New Orleans credo: When life gives you lemons—make daiquiris."

(Rose, 1 Dead in Attic)

The first time I saw New Orleans was on a clear, warm day in March of 2006,

about seven months after Hurricane Katrina made landfall on the Gulf Coast. According

to my hosts (two administrators in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of

New Orleans), the first order of business that day was to see the city and what had

become of it. As I took what they were already calling the "Katrina tour," I was horrified

by the extent of the damage in many places and puzzled by the lack of it in others.

Having no context for how the city was supposed to look—save those images of revelry

perpetuated in mainstream media before the storm and those of devastation perpetuated

afterwards—I found myself asking a lot of questions about what had changed, where, and

who had been most affected. Often, my hosts would laugh at my being overwhelmed by

some sign of destruction and explain that, in New Orleans, a lot of things looked post-

Katrina before anyone had heard of Katrina. New Orleans is a place where devastating

histories of racial and economic inequity live on the very surface of the city. Adversity is

a way of life in the Big Easy and the city's residents "recover" with the expertise of a

people who have grown accustomed to having to do it. In many ways, Katrina (and Rita not long after) was just one more episode in the history of a city long plagued by "signs" of destruction. In fact, roughly the same "Katrina tour" I took that spring morning—a three hour car ride through Mid-City, Lakeview, New Orleans East, St. Bernard, and the Lower 9th Ward—is now marketed by Gray Line tours as the "Hurricane Katrina Tour," a tour of "America's Worst Catastrophe" (Grayline.com). Six years after the storm I imagine much of that tour still confuses tourists visiting the city. They must wonder, as I did, which parts of the city are post-Katrina and which parts are just New Orleans.

During subsequent visits to the city over the next few years, I came to know many of the faculty members in the University of New Orleans (UNO) writing program. In conversation, we often spoke of social conditions in the city that offered consistent challenges to UNO's composition classrooms. Rampant economic inequity, struggling primary and secondary education, and limited resources were problems long before Katrina struck and became dramatically worse during the fallout from the storm. It was during these conversations that I began considering the extent to which the conditions that pre-date "traumatic" events shape how trauma is lived and, more importantly, how trauma is represented in the classroom. Further, I wondered, as a trauma becomes more pervasive in the discourses of popular and academic culture, how do ideas about trauma and post-traumatic experience shape the way we teach, write, and learn in academic and community settings. Drawing inspiration from the work done by teachers in New Orleans during the very worst of circumstances, I fashioned this project as a way to assess the uses and limits of what Lynn Worsham calls "post-traumatic pedagogy" and to consider

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how ideas about writing and learning change in the context of specific large-scale social, political, and material catastrophe.

Before I proceed any further, I feel it is important to emphasize that I am an outsider to this story. I was not a teacher in the New Orleans area after Katrina, nor have I worked in the context of other large-scale disasters. I have, however, witnessed the devastating effects of long-term social and economic marginalization on students coming into the University of New Mexico from barrios and pueblos where their parents had never even dreamed of a college education. I have worked with students at the University of Louisville who stumble into nine o'clock composition classes following long nights loading trucks at the local UPS shipping facility; the only job available that will fund a post-secondary education on part-time hours.

I tell these stories not as a way to justify my work or to show that I too have seen students struggling. Rather, I tell them because they point toward an essential problem in the way we think about writing education that has everything to do with New Orleans, with Katrina, and with post-traumatic pedagogy. Too often we, as a discipline and as practitioners within that discipline, adopt a disembodied view of writing education that fails to see the classroom, the university, and the community as intersecting spaces in which students live, work, and learn. That is, we fail to respect the "cultural ecologies" (Kells) that we inhabit with our students; ecologies composed of social, spatial, political, linguistic, and material structures that fashion opportunities for some and restrict them for others.

My goal in this project, then, is to examine the importance of these ecologies, particularly in circumstances where we would hope to offer response to the large-scale

social trauma and the smaller, "insidious" traumas of everyday life (Brown). To idealize the writing classroom as a safe or de-politicized space apart from specific material and social contexts is to take a great risk, particularly for those students for whom the university has never been a particularly safe space. Where we ask our students to ignore the conditions that sustain and perpetuate the traumas in their lives, we ask them to disengage with the discourses of power and influence that shape how and where they live. In a very real sense, we deny them one potential avenue for responding to structures of power and authority in their lives. On the other hand, when we assign post-traumatic writing projects in our classroom, we also risk reifying a vision of culture that suggests the university and the writing classroom are the only place where intellectual, critical, and revolutionary engagement with experience can occur. This impossible contradiction is at the heart of my work.

All this said, I do not claim to offer a singular vision of history here. Mine is not *the* account of writing pedagogy in the city of New Orleans during the semesters following Katrina. There are other articles, other reflections, other studies that began this conversation well before I started my work—I cite many of them throughout this project. This is just one account of what I saw happening and, more importantly, it is an opportunity to think about how this event (and the changes that followed from it) can help us think about our work as writing teachers more generally. We are always already working in social and historical contexts that see teachers and students living in precarious situations when inequities in access and power lead to the conditions that facilitate traumatic experience. This is not to say that trauma is inevitable, but inequality most certainly is.

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This project emerges from a general turn in the Humanities that sees issues of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder function as a metaphor for experience in late capitalist society. The extent to which Western culture is identified in popular academic circles as a "wound culture" (Worsham) has been noted by many scholars (Fassin and Rechtman, LaCapra, Worsham). However, scholarship that attends to issues of trauma very often fails to account for the contextual circumstances that shape how that trauma is experienced. In particular, it fails to account for the effects of social marginalization that lead to discrepancies in how trauma is experienced by individuals and groups within specific historical settings. In such cases, trauma functions as a lens for coming to terms with experience, but only so long as experience refers to a form of "universal" suffering (as defined by the dominant). Efforts to universalize trauma as a force which binds us all together attempt to validate the pain of the marginal subject through recognition and empathy, but the persistent elision of material and social contexts undermines these efforts as they fail to account for conditions which always already render the marginal subject as a victim to circumstance rather than an agent in their own lives. Working through painful experience, then, becomes a process of re-articulating the self in terms of the dominant iterations of what selfhood can mean, rather than in the terms of the cultures with which an individual holds interest and affiliation. In History in Transit, Dominick LaCapra warns that such cases of universalizing experience are increasingly common amidst a now decades-old boom in trauma and memory. He suggests that a responsible engagement with the discourses of trauma must move beyond "mere psychologizing" and

"oblivious" subservience "to the quest for heritage or narrowly self-serving forms of identity politics" (112).

I suggest that this universalizing impulse has migrated into composition studies and underwrites most "post-traumatic pedagogy" (Worsham), or any attempt to use the writing classroom as a forum to offer response to "national, natural, or personal" traumas (Goggin and Goggin). While focused post-traumatic pedagogy is a recent development, it emerges from a number of discussions that have long existed in the field—including expressivist pedagogy, cognitive psychology, and the social roots of basic writing. Scholars as wide-ranging as Peter Elbow, Mina Shaughnessy, and Mike Rose are invoked in relation to post-traumatic writing pedagogy. As I conceive of this conversation, however, its functional origins in the field may be traced to Wendy Bishop's "Writing Is/As Therapy" (1993) and Richard Miller's "Faultlines in the Contact Zone" (1994). These widely influential articles reflect the two poles of post-traumatic pedagogy I identify in the first chapter of this project. On one side there is an overt expressivist influence, often aligned with Peter Elbow, which positions personal writing about traumatic experience at the heart of the writing course (Anderson and MacCurdy, Berman, Bishop, Bracher, MacCurdy). On the other side there is a focus on the social constructedness of the writing classroom that reflects intertextual writing pedagogy by scholars such as David Bartholomae (Borrowman, Hesford, Miller, Stuckey, Worsham).

Throughout my project, I use this continuum as a generalizable record against which we might usefully consider the writing strategies employed by teachers, students, and programs in post-Katrina New Orleans. My interest is in determining how pre-existing disciplinary ideologies shape specific forms of literacy "sponsorship" in the

writing classroom. Deborah Brandt identifies "sponsors of literacy" as "any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, and model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold, literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way" (19). In the context of such a large-scale disaster as Katrina, the terms and effects of such sponsoring activities change dramatically. Conventional expectations for classroom writing are often superseded by a perceived need on the part of teachers to help students come to terms with their experience of trauma. How teachers interact with commonplace disciplinary strategies and pre-existing programmatic goals offers us a great deal of insight into how the work of composition changes in the wake of critical events. Further, how the social and material contexts of living and working in New Orleans (or in exile from the city) affected the classroom strategies employed by these teachers complicates the urge to conform post-traumatic writing pedagogy to a notion of the universal self in pain.

I adopt a cultural rhetorical reading strategy in order to view the field of composition as a "culture"—fragmented and in flux—situated within diverse material, social, and political circumstances in universities and communities around the country. This method allows for the observation of various ideas and strategies across multiple and overlapping discursive sites—including the classroom, the program, the university, the community, and the discipline. I consider how "tropes, arguments, and narratives" (Mailloux) are used to represent intersections of potentially traumatic social, political, and historical events with writing and the writing classroom. In outlining a practice of cultural rhetorical theory, Thomas Rosteck calls for "a mode of analysis and interpretation that might complicate and enrich our capacity to understand the interaction

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between texts and the wider context in which they function ... what is needed in our practice is a perspective that would understand both that rhetorical discourse represents the shared meanings of a particular society *in history* and that such discourse is itself a cultural practice that *shapes history*" (229). Such a practice organizes "mosaics" of culture to allow for the tracing of discursive strategies (tropes, arguments, and narratives) across diverse texts and across various times and places.

I use cultural rhetorics to determine how, where, and why scholars and practitioners in New Orleans after Katrina aligned themselves with specific pedagogical strategies in the forms of consistent tropes of post-traumatic pedagogy that appear throughout disciplinary work. I argue that we can understand their process of selection and the lived experiences that shaped that selection using Ralph Cintron's suggestion that people living at the margins of dominant culture reflect conditions of "in-betweenness" (12). This situated understanding of the self occupying multiple subjectivities is at once conditional and characteristic of people for whom dominant discourse has the simultaneous power to grant and restrict access to agency in any given situation. For Cintron, the condition of "in-betweenness" led to an analysis of "the proliferation of images and representations that circulated" through the Latino community that is at the heart of his book Angels' Town. His interest was in attempting to understand "what might structure the perceived attractiveness or unattractiveness of a given image or representation for a particular person" (13). Similarly, I see Cintron's notion of "in-betweenness" as a way to explore liminal spaces where teachers and students working in and from exile and dislocation draw on available resources to construct representations of their own experience. The resources from which they choose—disciplinary, popular,

community, administrative—reflect the movement of tropes, narratives, and arguments related to post-traumatic pedagogy. How they choose from these available resources tells us much about how they wish to situate themselves as agents. While some align themselves firmly with one form of post-traumatic pedagogy or another, others articulate challenges to the commonplace practices available to them.

I want to make clear that, while this project is not a philosophical or psychological inquiry into the nature of trauma, it is also not attempting to disparage such inquiries or the people who align their work with them. There is a long tradition of delegitimizing stories of trauma that lie outside of officially recognized clinical or social definitions. While the descriptive characteristics of trauma have remained stable over time, their application has varied dramatically. PTSD, for example, did not appear as an official category for diagnosis until 1980 and only then were connections made between the traumas of war and civilian life (Herman, van der Kolk et al.). Judith Herman calls this an "underground history" (2) where official definitions of trauma have existed in conflict with the lived experience of individuals considered outside the recognition of mainstream psychology. For these marginal individuals and groups, membership in specific social and political groups "means a constant lifetime risk of exposure to certain trauma" (Brown 108). With this troubled history in mind I do not want to diminish the experiences of teachers and students who live and write under conditions which they identify as traumatic. Rather, my interest is focused specifically on how discursive constructions of trauma have shifted over time, how popular ideas about trauma circulate in the discipline, and how trauma comes to define certain kinds of experience for teachers and students in specific social and historical contexts. I question, along with Didier

Fassin and Richard Rechtman, "this phenomenon whereby, in less than twenty years, the notion of psychological trauma has imposed itself on society in such a way as to become the central reality of violence" (22). Composition studies has not escaped this imposition of trauma discourse. My project examines how terms for trauma are invoked, assigned, revised, challenged, and rejected in writing about student writers and in the work of student writers themselves.

<p align="center">*****</p>

Chapter one offers a snapshot of post-traumatic pedagogy as a cultural, political, and pedagogical idea circulating in composition studies. I suggest that scholars and practitioners of post-traumatic pedagogy align themselves along a continuum of disciplinary ideology and practice that I describe (for convenience) in terms of expressivist and social constructivist discourses. I choose these poles for two reasons: first, the ongoing "debate" over student subjectivities, as articulated by Elbow and Bartholomae, is often marked as the framing conversation for scholars interested in post-traumatic pedagogy; and second, I respond to what I see as a productive tension between the urge to tell stories about experience and the social and material contexts which shape how, where, and to whom those stories are told (and valued). From this larger conversation, I isolate three specific tropes, arguments, and narratives used by participants in discussion about post-traumatic pedagogy: Teachers working as or like therapists, trauma as inevitability in student writing (and, by association, student experience), and trauma as a readily available "teachable moment." In most cases, the invocation of these tropes is aligned with an expressive orientation that asks students to pursue essential truths in their lives and to come to terms with the singular events which

have left them "traumatized." But the urge to represent students as victimized by experience, rather than dynamic definers of experience elides important social, material, and personal complexities accompanying traumatic circumstances. I suggest that these larger trends for trauma-focused publications in the field can be explained using Andrea Huyssen's description of "musealizing" discourses, which reflect a dominant cultural shift toward unreflexive archivization at the expense of dynamic political engagement. Importantly, my interest is not in simply marking the rightness or wrongness of a given approach or perspective; rather I want to observe how and where scholars position themselves as a way to consider the pervasive influence of memorialization in contemporary culture, as well as the uses and limitations of attempting to account for "traumatic" experience in the writing classroom.

In Chapter two I extend my discussion of post-traumatic pedagogy and its disciplinary and cultural alignments to a specific historical situation—writing instruction in New Orleans in the semesters following Hurricane Katrina. I examine narratives by New Orleans-area writing teachers collected from first-hand interviews I did in 2008 and 2009, as well as from disciplinary publications where these teachers have shared their experiences. From these narratives we come to recognize a tension between the mediated spectacle that emerges during large-scale national trauma like Katrina and the lived experiences of individuals and groups before, during, and after the storm. I question how control over public discourse creates opportunities for teachers (and students) to author narratives of experience that engage with this tension and assert cultural and social agency. Teacher narratives of action and inaction, I argue, can be understood as "sponsoring" (Brandt) certain kinds of political and social activity in the context of the

storm and its aftermath. The changing conditions of life and work in New Orleans motivated these teachers to align themselves with pre-existing strategies reflected in the continuum of post-traumatic pedagogy discussed in chapter one. How they select from these strategies and how they adapt them to materially and historically situated circumstances shows them accommodating and resisting hegemonic order—sometimes at the same time. I explain this tendency to both accommodate and resist based on contextual circumstances in terms of Ralph Cintron's conditions of "in-betweenness." Where we see in post-traumatic pedagogy a majority of scholars positioning themselves at one extreme or another—*either* distinctly expressive *or* unrelentingly intertextual—the unique historical circumstances of Katrina make it clear that we must also consider how *both* expressive *and* intertextual writing strategies may have a place in this discussion.

Chapter three continues my discussion of social, political, ideological, and material states of "in-betweenness" exhibited by New Orleans area instructors by examining some writing produced by students at the University of New Orleans in the fall of 2005 and the spring of 2006. These documents offer a way to develop and complicate the narratives offered by New Orleans area instructors in chapter two. By tracing the tropes and narratives of musealized culture in actual course documents and by analyzing the discursive structures of student work, I arrive at some sense of how implicit and explicit gestures of hegemonic or resistant "in-betweenness" were present in these classrooms. I suggest that the post-traumatic writing implicitly and explicitly solicited by teachers in the writing assignments I examine again perpetuates a condition of "in-betweenness" (this time for students as well as teachers) by attempting to balance community engagement and/or student situatedness with common disciplinary

expectations related to conventions of discourse, genre, and style. Student writing about experience is developed in tension with the disciplinary expectations for college writing with varying results, as some students simply reiterate the commonplace trauma narratives of dominant middle-class discourse and others challenge the relevance of trauma narratives for defining their experience.

Chapter four outlines a revised way of looking at contextualized trauma writing—a way that is intertextual and materially situated. I suggest that scholars and practitioners interested in formulating response to trauma might adopt an approach to writing pedagogy that stresses pre-existing contextual factors that shape how trauma is experienced, to what extent, by whom, and where. More specifically, I consider how the musealizing practices of post-traumatic writing pedagogy can be resisted, in favor of a situated writing pedagogy that views experience at an intersection of discourse, community, and civic participation. In developing this approach, I work through the idea of community—centering on situated, social materiality—as an "ideal" that can drive successful post-traumatic "strategy." What I hope to begin strategizing in this chapter, is a conceptual frame for thinking about program and course design that is not exclusively post-traumatic, but which can accommodate potentially post-traumatic contexts. Drawing on work by composition and rhetoric scholars in service learning, public writing, and intercultural rhetorics, I consider the theoretical implications of service and community writing in terms of Huyssen's musealization and critiques of multicultural discourse by Terry Eagleton and Paul Gilroy. The chapter ends with a sustained analysis of one example of what Gilroy calls "convivial" scenes of writing, where local practices are imbued with the social and political authority to respond to structures of power and to

resist legacies of discriminatory discourse. My goal here is to establish a flexible and situated framework that might help scholars and practitioners of writing education formulate ethical and critical response to the traumas experienced in their communities, including large scale disaster and pervasive social traumas associated with racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, and so on. I end with an analysis of the New Orleans Neighborhood Story Project (NONSP); a community program in New Orleans' 7th Ward that serves as a model for the kind of situated, social writing that I think constitutes the most promising post-traumatic pedagogical framework.

CHAPTER ONE
REPRODUCING 'TRAUMA' IN COMPOSITION STUDIES

Trauma can be a single incident or a series of incidents; it can be a broken finger received playing football or a psychic wound caused by the violent death of a close family member" and while we may often "speak of one who has been 'traumatized' by some terrible experience…no one can reach adulthood without some moments of trauma.

(MacCurdy The Mind's Eye 161)

But the indiscriminate generalization of the category of survivor and the overall conflation of history or culture with trauma, as well as the near fixation on enacting or acting out post-traumatic symptoms, have the effect of obscuring crucial historical distinctions; they may, as well, block processes that counteract trauma and its symptomatic after effects but which do not obliterate their force and insistence—notably, processes of working through, including those conveyed in institutions and practices that limit excess and mitigate trauma"

(LaCapra Writing History, Writing Trauma xi)

In Lester Faigley's 1995 book Fragments of Rationality: Postmodernity and the Subject of Composition, Faigley begins with an anecdote about celebrated author Don DeLillo, who observes a "growing awareness of randomness, ambiguity, and chaos" (3) beginning in 1963 (the year of JFK's assassination) and continuing into the present. Faigley draws on DeLillo and postmodern theory in order to reconsider how a culture-wide shift in "the structure of sensibility" (4) has affected composition's sense of itself as a discipline over time. According to Faigley's argument, a sort of "cultural schizophrenia" permeates late capitalist Western culture, including work by composition scholars and practitioners, compelling them to form camps on either side of a debate over the constructedness of

individual and social subjectivity. For compositionists, this "schizophrenia" has typically

resulted in one of two general views on students as subjects: either they embody the

Cartesian consciousness, "coherent…capable of knowing oneself and one's world" or

they reflect the postmodern subject of consumer capitalism, "one who can change

identities at will because identities are acquired by what one consumes" (Faigley 16).

Faigley suggests these poles reflect a "fault line" in the discipline, where compositionists

disagree "over the subjectivities that writing teachers want students to occupy" (17).

This "fault line" is present in another, related discussion which appeared in *CCC*

in 1995, the famed "debate" between David Bartholomae and Peter Elbow. In subsequent

years, Bartholomae and Elbow have become ideological figureheads for disciplinary

conversations aligned with broadly conceived ideas about social-constructivism or

expressivism, both of which are addressed in Faigley's book and both of which he

acknowledges were already overwrought. Where Bartholomae and Elbow reflect shifts in

how the field views and responds to student experience, Faigley situates students and

their experience within a larger modernist/postmodernist debate. Taken together, these

positions have resulted in an increased awareness of the cultural tension that fosters a

view of students as equally constitutive of and constituted by conflicting discourses.

Since 1995, the ideological activity that results in such "faults" has been

complicated by new communication technologies and pervasive media. We have become

increasingly implicated by our experiences of global capitalism and social struggle, just

as we are replete with their representative images (e.g. 9/11, Hurricane Katrina,

environmental destruction, or sectarian violence). These images are replayed again and

again in diverse contexts. We have, according to Andreas Huyssen, become obsessed

with "present pasts," or the globalization of memory connected to the late 20th century

movement toward alternative histories that include marginalized groups ("Present

Pasts"). In particular, histories of struggle, pain, perseverance, and destruction dominate

our cultural consciousness. Many scholars in and beyond composition studies, including

Huyssen, Peter and Maureen Daly Goggin, Dominick LaCapra, and Lynn Worsham,

argue that an obsession with pain, turmoil, and suffering has become the central

characteristic of our historical moment.

As a result, we have come to question our ability as writing teachers to formulate

adequate response to the social and cultural circumstances that affect lived experience. It

is time we take stock of how circulating discourses about "national, natural, and personal

traumas" (Goggin and Goggin) change the nature of where and how we do work in the

writing classroom. More importantly, we should be questioning how the now decades-old

shift toward unstable postmodern subjectivities and the concomitant boom in mediated

representations of public and private suffering necessarily alters attempts to represent

ourselves and our students both in our disciplinary discourse and in public forums.

The "fault line" exposed by the work of Faigley, Bartholomae, and Elbow reveals

a shift that has become paradigmatic for much composition scholarship. This ongoing

and discipline-wide conversation about processes and products, student subject positions,

authorial voice and discourse communities circulates in and around the discursive site

that Lynn Worsham calls "post-traumatic pedagogy." Modeled on Faigley's account of

our disciplinary history, this chapter attempts to reconsider how our thinking about

composition theory and history (as it plays out in our publications and in our classrooms)

might change in light of the present obsession with "trauma" and "post-traumatic"

experience. Influenced by the popular turn toward testimonial writing and the social,

political, and environmental crises that are a constant in media discourse, much

contemporary composition scholarship adopts the postmodern turn and the "debate" over

subjectivity as critical exigency, parsing out "trauma," emotion, politics, and place in

terms of where they fall on a two-sided equation of the social or the expressive.

In this chapter, I contend that the disciplinary conversation called "post-traumatic

pedagogy" and the social, historical, and political discourses of "trauma" and "post-

trauma" are inextricably tied together. To advance this claim, I need a strategy for

organizing networks of textual resources and conceptual frames that can accommodate

movement in and around traditionally isolated disciplinary work. A cultural studies

approach, according to John Trimbur, offers compositionists a way to simultaneously

view theoretical and practical trends as constituted by and constitutive of our disciplinary

conversations. In "Composition Studies: Postmodern or Popular," Trimbur explores a

historically unsituated conception of postmodernism at work in the field—a "postmodern

free-for-all" (118)—that has seen scholars draw in elements of cross-disciplinary

conversations without attending to any of the circumstances that complicate theories of

postmodernism. He advances the cultural studies model as a way to talk about

fragmentary post-modern subjectivities without the "powerlessness" and "cultural

imprisonment" that tend to result from such ideological positions (125). Cultural studies,

for Trimbur, works "to balance the semiosis of contemporary life against the lived and

living experience of individuals and groups" (127). This approach rejects the idea that

people are mere consumers of media and culture rather they also act as "active

interpreters of their own experience [using] the cultural practices and productions they

encounter differentially for their own purposes" (127). In this project, Trimbur's notion

of individuals constituting and constituted by discourse allows us to start thinking about

networks of scholarship as indicative of unique cultural practices occurring within the

larger culture of composition studies and within larger university and community

settings. Scholars and practitioners who align themselves with expressive, post-traumatic,

or psychoanalytic pedagogy, for example, articulate by practice the terms and limits of

those fields by fostering conflict and collaboration between common composition

practices and extra-disciplinary practices drawn in from other places.

I extend Trimbur's articulation of cultural studies in composition by incorporating

strategies emerging from the ongoing discussion about cultural rhetorics. Specifically, I

want to resist the tendency to view "cultural" sites—in and beyond composition studies—

as notable for their distance from the disciplinary mainstream. Vorris Nunley suggests

that cultural rhetorics become washed out and de-politicized when they are rendered

"excessive" in relation to disciplinary structures (CCCC presentation). This is particularly

the case when "culture" attempts to represent those groups marginalized by race, class,

religion, or sexuality, and can only do so by highlighting how such groups deviate from

the norm. My interest is in explaining how we talk about marginal communities of

interest and affiliation and how scholars and practitioners of "post-traumatic pedagogy"

use available cultural resources to represent these communities. Cultural rhetoric and its

attention to "mosaics" of culture (Rosteck), including scholarly publication, disciplinary

trends, program identification, individual pedagogy, and cross-disciplinary conversations,

expose structures of power that permeate social and textual production. Cultural

rhetorical analysis, then, offers us a chance to consider the generation of our disciplinary

representations of marginality, the discursive resources used to create those representations, and the hegemonic relations that inform and that are informed by the cultures we would elect to study.

Specifically, I will be looking for the various tropes, arguments, and narratives (Mailloux) used by participants in discussion of "post-traumatic pedagogy." In many cases the urge to represent students (and ourselves) as victims rather than dynamic definers of experience elides important social, material, and personal complexities that result from the invocation of the baggage-laden discourse of "trauma". However, my interest is not in simply marking the rightness or wrongness of a given approach or perspective rather I want to observe how and where these proponents of post-traumatic pedagogy position themselves as a way to consider the pervasive influence of trauma discourse in contemporary culture, as well as the uses and limitations of attempting to account for "traumatic" experience in the writing classroom.

To help me highlight both scholarly processes (ways of thinking, working, responding) *and* scholarly products (textual production via publication), I turn to Paul Gilroy's critique of multicultural thinking in Postcolonial Melancholy and Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner's notion of "the problematic of experience." Both put concerns about representation, power, and experience at the heart of their work. Gilroy draws our attention to a lack of reflexivity in well-meaning academic work that fails to account for institutionalized and overlooked biases in every aspect of culture (what he calls "racialized thinking" in his own discussion of race, class and British postcolonial subjectivities). Notably, he situates this problem at the point where "enthusiasm for praxis combines with hostility toward reflection" and "racial politics becomes policy or

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therapy and then simply ceases to be political" (17). Similar suggestions might be made about any scholarship rushing to "teach" class, gender, sexual, and/or emotional politics, all of which intersect under a larger rubric of asymmetrical relationships exposed by "traumatic" circumstances. The urge to engage with "traumatizing" asymmetrical social and historical relationships between individuals and groups can result in a lack of reflexivity that, as we shall see, renders all marginal politics as powerless.

Similarly, in their discussion of critical ethnographic practice, Lu and Horner examine this moment where interest or affiliation with marginal groups becomes "praxis" (in terms of both classroom pedagogy and research) and they warn against a similar lack of reflexivity. Like Faigley, Lu and Horner highlight the many assumptions scholars and teachers make about the experiences and locations of students/subjects marginalized by differences of power, rather than considering how representations of these individuals and groups reflect whom the teacher/researcher might want them to be. Reconsidering various iterations of experience as they appear in our pedagogy, then, allows us an opportunity to "redefine the meaning and the use of experience" (Lu and Horner 258) by managing a tension between research and pedagogy that might see the interest in personal experience rendered more responsibly. Posttraumatic pedagogy too often prioritizes the "trauma" (the ineffable experience) and not the conditions that give rise to it. This work could be more focused on a critical nexus of experience and discourse, in locations where history, context, and ideology are prioritized equally with representations of experience. Wrapped up in this consideration, then, is the ethics of representing dynamic populations—including students, teachers, and the communities with which they hold affiliation—as well as any changes that may occur to these populations as a result of this

work (Lu and Horner). Change ("working through") is a stated goal for the majority of posttraumatic pedagogies. Hence it is imperative that we consider what influence these strategies might have on students, teachers, the university community, and affiliated communities beyond the walls of the classroom. How does classroom-based writing about "traumatic" experience change students' relationships with their home communities? How does it challenge or reform programmatic goals for writing instruction?

Though I contend it has become troublesome, "trauma" remains an important frame for experience in contemporary Western society. So, as Faigley suggested of "postmodernism" in 1995, we cannot avoid the term but we can insist on reflexive, contextualized uses in our classrooms and scholarship. My analysis considers the movement of "trauma" through composition discourse, marking similarities and differences, inclusions and omissions, that allow speakers to face not only the local, political, and personal realities of their own experiences, but to turn (if they should choose to do so) such experiences into critical and practical exigency.

Composition as Musealization—Posttraumatic Pedagogy and a Crisis in Representation

Embracing "trauma" as a master trope for experience in the late 20th and early 21st century is largely the result of what Huyssen has called the "musealization" of culture. This tendency toward a globalized discourse of historical "trauma" (for Huyssen, originating with the Holocaust) motivates local and national movements to memorialize and record the details of all experience at all times, with emphasis on those details connected to painful personal, social, and political experience. Huyssen views this urge to

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memorialize (in academic and popular culture) as a bulwark "against obsolescence and disappearance," a move to "counter our deep anxiety about the speed of change and the ever shrinking horizons of time and space" (33). We see this most commonly in traumatic "subplots" that collapse time and space via connection to central traumatic themes operating at various levels of our local and national discourse, for example, historical restoration projects, national heritage sites, the mass marketing of nostalgia, autobiography, or "self-musealization" through accessible digital technologies like Facebook or Youtube (Huyssen 25). The result, as Dominick LaCapra has argued, is that we prioritize the painful and we come to see "trauma" everywhere in everything (History 112). With new strategies for memorialization comes a desire for new ways to study them. But, as Huyssen reminds us, the important question should not be whether or not traumatic histories "migrate into other, unrelated contexts;" rather we should ask whether and how these tropological migrations "enhance or hinder local memory practices and struggles, or whether and how [they] may perform both functions simultaneously" (26).

If we follow Huyssen's assertion, the value of this inquiry is not simply in acknowledging if and where "trauma" became a key term in composition scholarship and pedagogy, rather we should work to understand what is lost or gained when "trauma"—as a public or private event—is invoked in relation to the work of writing instruction. Throughout this chapter I examine tropological movement into and out of "post-traumatic pedagogy." I question how this focused conversation, within the larger project of composition studies, makes use of disciplinary and non-disciplinary resources in its articulation of alternative ways of thinking about students, teachers, writing, scholarship, research, and experience.

This conversation about post-traumatic pedagogy began with scholarship that drew our attention to social and historical inequities in areas related to literacy, access, and marginalized subjectivities (Heath, Rose, Shaughnessy, Smitherman, and Stuckey to name a few), but the debate over marginal experience and authorial subjectivity has become a political and practical short-hand for much post-traumatic pedagogy. Bartholomae/Elbow, in particular, constitutes the origin story for many scholars interested in articulating expressive or social/cultural responses to "trauma". As such, it is an important place to begin considering how a move toward the musealization of experience governs relationships between teachers/researcher and students/subjects. Of course, it is important to note the problems inherent in identifying the history of the discipline, Composition (big C), through the arguments and experiences of individual scholars and teachers of composition working in specific times and places (little C). Tom Fox calls this phenomenon "macropolitics in microcontexts," or a tension between what compositionists feel they "should" do and what actually happens in programs and classrooms around the country ("Proceeding"). But the manner in which individual scholars working on posttraumatic pedagogies align themselves with, resist, confuse, or critique iconic disciplinary stances related to personal or academic iterations of experience has everything to do with how experience is constructed in their classrooms and in their scholarship. These alignments reveal the disciplinary "fault lines" that enable us to turn our attention to representations of students and teachers and away from abstractions about "trauma" and/or experience.

In essence, the Bartholomae/Elbow "debate" questioned how we teach writing, where, and what effects these strategies have on students. Further, both authors expressed

concerns about the power and politics that govern flexible and dynamic identities

students and instructors construct in the classroom. In post-traumatic composition studies,

this conversation is most often used as a valorization of Elbow's expressivist stance or a

rejection of the social-epistemic position attributed to Bartholomae. It is less common to

see Bartholomae's position in this debate invoked as anything less than an attack on

personal writing and expressive genres. The assertion that the writing classroom is a

historically "situated" space that is "noisy, intertextual" (Bartholomae "Writing" 66) and

contingent on cultural and political dynamics that govern relationships among

institutional structures (students, teachers, programs, university communities), is typically

represented as an unsympathetic turn away from student experience and agency (Bracher,

MacCurdy, Valentino).

While many threads emerge from post-traumatic pedagogy's use of

Bartholomae/Elbow and the larger social-epistemic/expressivist debates, the concept

most important to this analysis is the sense in which Bartholomae and Elbow come to

exemplify a generalizable continuum for the field of composition. At one end we see the

so-called social-epistemics who draw on postmodern conceptions of the subject to assert

cultural contingency and the absence of an essential individual voice; language, ideas,

experience are all dialogic. At the other end we find the so-called expressivists who

encourage student discovery of voice and individual identity as a way of accessing

contextual community; language is negotiated, but ideas emerge from within. I am

generalizing here as a way of setting up opposition and emphasizing the extent to which

that opposition is often rather uncomplicated. In plotting their work along the

Bartholomae/Elbow continuum, amidst varying levels of cultural contingency and

personal discovery, proponents of post-traumatic pedagogy reflect a few important dilemmas facing writing instruction in the context of "trauma."

First, there is a common contrast between the classroom as an "ideal" discourse community or as a "real" intertextual space. Trimbur has offered a compelling argument for why this binary is so appealing to scholars and teachers formulating response to traumatic experience. He asserts that Bartholomae and Elbow stumble into a vision of the writing classroom as a surrogate for dwindling middle-class life. Composition instructors are here implicated within a discourse that attempts to "naturalize the historical role of the teacher as a stand in, *in loco parentis*, to enact the drama of the middle-class family" (Trimbur 192). Trimbur accuses Bartholomae and Elbow of constructing a notion of the writing teacher as "demanding yet devoted father" or "permissive suburban dad," respectively. Important critiques by feminist scholars have taken up similar arguments, exploring how a domesticated classroom—standing in for middle-class family life— renders writing instructors "handmaids" (Tuell) or nurturing maternal figures (Schell) who work to quell conflict rather than develop it. In subsequent, post-traumatic iterations of Bartholomae/Elbow, Bartholomae becomes emblematic of the emotionally repressed writing instructor, while Elbow emerges as a psychoanalytic father figure, guiding teachers and students toward self-discovery. Of course, neither Bartholomae nor Elbow occupies such simplistic positions in his work.

A second dilemma concerns where and how post-traumatic writing proponents position the contrast between the social (the "real") and the expressive (the "ideal") as a solution to theoretical and practical problems facing students and teachers in the wake of overwhelming social, political, and historical events. Bartholomae sees the work of

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writing instruction occurring in specific times and places, encouraging students and

teachers to account for historical, social, and rhetorical conflicts that contribute to who

we are and how we live. Elbow, on the other hand, advocates a largely de-contextualized

and non-rhetorical view of the writer and of experience; one in which the goal is to allow

students to identify and/or recover the self first and then the world. In arguing that

students inevitably experience more than they are able to write down, he betrays a view

of experience as ineffable, as always already more than can be put into words. Such a

marked contrast between experience as contingent and experience as essential reflect

what Lu and Horner, following Elspeth Probyn, identify a tension between "ontological"

and "epistemological" levels of experience. The ontological is that which is focused on

individual consciousness, where experience is validated by sensory experience and

individual memory. The epistemological, on the other hand, marks relationships between

"the articulated and the lived" (261), where experience is negotiated by the terms of

culture. Epistemology allows for the politicization of ontology in that it attends to

differences between what is lived and what might be said in any given context. In the

version of trauma studies most often invoked by scholars in the Humanities, traumatic

experience is referred to in terms of its ineffable or unspeakable nature (Caruth, Felman,

Laub). This accounts for the allure of Elbow's project. Bartholomae accuses Elbow and

those working in his vein of attempting to work outside of history, in a "classroom free of

the past" (64). But post-traumatic approaches that begin from Elbow's escape from the

(traumatized) self are obsessed with the past and how the individual makes sense of his or

her own history. What their perspective omits, however, is the rhetorical and tropological

nature of painful experience: all experiences are constructed at an intersection of

ontology and epistemology, a dynamic network of individual, culture, and historical relationships between the two kinds of experience.

It would be easy enough to assert that proponents of post-traumatic pedagogy who begin from a point of resistance to Bartholomae's claim that personal writing is a "corrupt and tempting genre" are too idealistic, too focused on the individual consciousness and student ontology. In accusing Bartholomae of constructing students as victims they fail to account for the powerful positions available to students confronting experience through the texts and terms of culture. Bartholomae, like Faigley, views students as simultaneously constituted by and constituting the discursive environments in which they are working. Further, more often than not, post-traumatic scholars and teachers overlook Elbow's own insistence that the work of self-discovery does not simply require painful or "authentic" experience. Rather, Elbow says that all "writing is a struggle and a risk," not that it must reflect experiences of struggle and risk associated with suffering (81).

Composition scholars interested in how "trauma" and painful experience can function in the writing classroom organize approaches that result in de-contextualized snapshots that emphasize pain over context. This work prioritizes a view of written representation that favors "authentic" experience and "true" narrative over socially-situated, discursive work (ontology over epistemology). Faigley's analysis of the Coles and Vopat collection What Makes Writing Good has shown that very often when we talk about "authentic" student voices we mean only those student voices expressing emotionally charged, honest "confessions" of painful experience (Fragments 121). Drawing on Foucault's assertion that the "confession" has become a primary vehicle for

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the "production of truth," Faigley reveals a tendency on the part of writing instructors to view subjectivity as something unified, as a standard by which student experience will be judged. At the heart of this questioning is a power dynamic that can undermine attempts by well-meaning teachers to pursue therapeutic goals in their writing classes. Such a view of authenticity overlooks the role of social mediation in language and how we depict and make sense of lived experience.

Further, the musealizing discourse of post-traumatic pedagogy fails to account for the intersection of institutional power and therapeutic goals. Following Freud, Lynn Worsham suggests that this results in a "fetishizing" of traumatic testimony in which classroom testimony is rendered without any struggle over meaning. For Worsham, these approaches substitute popular and pleasurable narratives for the difficult and often "unspeakable" work of "mourning" (aligned with Freud's use of the term). Such narratives lean on genre characteristics that offer the power to "compose—and, indeed, impose—a sense of order, sequence, causality, coherence, and completion" (178). I would add that even when this desire for closure is not built directly into a confessional assignment, material constraints in the university, including classroom units, grading and assessment, and course duration ensure that students cannot help but feel the pressure of closure in their work. Faigley warns that in this context either students will write the painful stories that they think we want to read or they will come to see language as reflective of, as opposed to constitutive of, experience. Such stories will appear to be valuable only when they satisfy the market for painful narratives (in the academy and in other forums). Further, this desire for student confession results in a view of the composition classroom as cut off from the social, political, and material relationships of

students' lived experience. If they do not confess to us—the argument goes—they will have no other space or opportunity in which to do so.

Tropes, Arguments, and Narratives of Posttraumatic Pedagogy

Instructors draw on the Bartholomae/Elbow debate as a way to generate their own responses to trauma, but in doing so they often rely on a popular tendency toward traumatic confession and the economy of traumatic and post-traumatic writing that makes "expressive" writing the more desirable practice. Ultimately, I want to move us toward a more balanced understanding that begins from Bartholomae's intertextual writing and reading, where students work in dialogue with their surroundings. Such an approach affords students opportunities to examine the social, political, and economic conditions that sustain traumatic events and shape post-traumatic representations.

For many composition scholars, trauma's fragmented "unspeakability" (Herman) opens a flexible space in which interested teachers situate "trauma" at the center of real and idealized courses, having students address various personal, social, or political implications of painful or overwhelming experience. It further offers them a widespread and recognizable frame for describing experience in their own lives and the lives of their students. However, by attempting to represent traumatic experience or to aid others in representing their own traumatic experience, language always already becomes metaphorical and tropological (Winslow). Worsham claims that "trauma" itself has become little more than a trope, "an enabling fiction and an explanatory tool for 'managing unquiet minds in an overwhelming world'" (quoting Kirby Farrell, "Composing" 171).

It is this coming together of tropological language and the "overwhelming world" that I discuss for the remainder of this chapter as I analyze a few of the common tropes and arguments composition scholars and practitioners invoke in their attempts to articulate various posttraumatic pedagogies. I consider three characteristic stances I see recurring and overlapping across diverse teaching locations and strategies:

- Arguments over whether writing teachers are or are not therapists (and, by relation, whether writing has inherent healing qualities);
- Whether or not writing teachers can really avoid dealing with painful writing by students;
- And "trauma" asserted as a "teachable moment."

While I began this project intending to isolate only the problems with various attempts to introduce "trauma" into the classroom, I have come to understand that the popular use of the idea—"trauma"—is seemingly as pervasive as the experiences we commonly use it to describe. It may seem very simple (it once did to me): teachers are not therapists, the classroom is not primarily a space for comfort, and writing is communication, not lamentation. I still maintain that "trauma," as both the malady that afflicts and its own means for recovery, should be introduced carefully in classrooms not already dedicated to fictionalizing experiences or creating narratives of the self. However, after working with writing teachers in New Orleans and reading the work produced by their students, I see questions of "trauma" as an influential part of the social, political, historical, and geographic contexts that we are working in, whether we call ourselves expressivist, social-constructivist, or otherwise.

Teachers *like* Therapists

"Well, yeah. I'm not a therapist. I don't feel qualified to deal with this, but I don't want to shut her out and tell her never to bring it up again. I mean, how do I respond to a paper like this? Ask her to go into more detail in this paragraph? That doesn't seem right. I can't deal with the paper as a piece of writing. I don't want to hurt her in any way. I'm concerned about her fragility" (Payne Bodily Discourses xvii).

Underlying any explicit or implicit link between writing teachers and therapists is a long-held notion that writing has inherent healing qualities, that the act of telling stories (and giving structure to memory) inevitably serves a psychic and/or social healing function. This idea emerges largely out of studies of post-traumatic stress disorder which began emerging in the late 60's and early 70's (Herman, Van der Kolk). Along with group therapy, writing down the narratives of one's "trauma" became an important form of testimony, a way to organize and make sense of painful experiences so that they might be discussed and integrated into the sufferer's experience. The assertion that writing constitutes a direct conduit to one's emotional experience, that writing equals life and that one's life might best be understood through writing goes back further than that. In drawing the major tenets of trauma theory into composition studies, many proponents of post-traumatic pedagogy rely on this connection between writing and healing as an important warrant for their work. But the key question ought not to be whether writing has healing qualities, rather how such work renders teachers as therapists and what version of public culture it maps onto the university and the classroom. How does this sense that writing will inevitably lead to catharsis and authentic healing result in loss of control over reflexive and critical moves that are so important to academic writing? Further, how might it undermine the different (though not unrelated) forms of healing that writing can offer when used by trained professional therapists or self-motivated creative writers?

In books like <u>Risky Writing</u> and <u>Empathic Teaching</u>, Jeffrey Berman offers a useful way for considering the trope of teachers working as therapists. Berman suggests that the relationship between students and "empathetic" teachers is less fraught with peril that that of analyst and analysand. The latter relationship is predicated upon a power relationship that casts one individual as the potential curer of the other. In making such a suggestion, Berman does not argue that there is no power relationship at work in the classroom, but that teachers have more flexibility in democratizing the space and attempting to work with and not on students. Berman posits a notion of "teacher *like* therapist" that can challenge any potential social and political repercussions deriving from unequal power relations in the classroom while at the same time invoking a "beneficial" parallel between writing and therapy.

In addition to connections between writing and healing, key arguments for writing teachers working "like" therapists focus on several commonplace aspects of composition studies: small classroom sizes, process over product, and the exclusion of emotional experience from the cultural studies model of writing instruction (indeed, from much of contemporary university instruction). These characteristics echo the ways of thinking that motivate both trauma studies and popular culture's understanding of "trauma." Specifically, we see that intimate environments, like one-on-one or group therapy, offer the best chance for meaningful connection between testifier and witness, that psychic healing relies on a constant process of "working through" traumatic experiences, and that, generally, the academy and institutions of authority reject the emotional lives of human beings. While these ideas may be perfectly appropriate in some circumstances, we should

worry when they arrive in composition studies uncomplicated by the theoretical turmoil that plagues them in their disciplines of origin.

A short example from Berman's book <u>Risky Writing: Self Disclosure and Self-Transformation in the Classroom</u> will help to clarify the tropological migration of "trauma" into writing studies. Berman describes an assignment sequence from a 300 level expository writing course he taught at the University of Albany which addressed the social and political complications of personal and public shame. Countering Wendy Hesford's suggestion that teachers must critique student attitudes toward race and ethnicity (when those attitudes reflect intolerance or hatred), Berman claims that this stance vis-à-vis one's students generally results in defensiveness on the part of students, rather than understanding. Students, he says, will struggle with being identified—*ipso facto*—with a dominant or subordinate group. Berman points to Elizabeth Ellsworth's difficulties with critical pedagogy as an example of how direct politicized contact with diversity can lead to such problems (117).

In his example, Berman explores how a series of reflective assignments compelled students to engage questions of ethnicity and diversity by identifying tensions within their thoughts on race and racism in their own lived experience. In this way, the public discourses of racism and oppression may be engaged through confrontations with personal shame—which, for Berman, is more likely to result in positive change for the students. The first two assignments ask students to explore pre-conceived ideas about heritage and identity by thinking in terms of cultural stereotypes and racial, gender, or cultural identifications. Notably, Berman suggests, at this point in the sequence, most students focus only on positive aspects of their cultural experience by highlighting

unproblematized points of pride (128). Their identity transformations remain speculative and playful, rather than overtly reflexive.

A final assignment asks students to write an essay in which they disclose "fears, contradictions, and tensions associated with diversity" (129). To frame this assignment, Berman distributes an extensive prompt which begins with his own narrative of "ambivalence" toward the topic of diversity. His confession offers a model and attempts to establish solidarity with the students. Functionally, the assignment builds on previous work in its suggestion that "the most powerful essays [from previous assignments] explored aspects of race, class, gender, and religion that are highly conflicted, involving feelings of embarrassment, guilt, shame, and confusion" (129). Berman writes to his students:

> "I suspect that, like me, most of you feel ambivalent about an aspect of your identity, whether it be race, class, gender, or religion. If so, I hope you are willing to write one more essay on diversity's dark side. Please try to be as honest as possible in your essay, particularly when acknowledging aspects of your identity of which you are not proud. Don't be afraid to reveal your vulnerability and anger...Please make this the best writing of your life!" (131).

Berman requests permission to read some papers anonymously in class, adding "If you do not like this topic, you may write on another" (131). He suggests that these essays "proved to be more introspective and candid than the first and second" in that students were engaging more with "problematic aspects of diversity" (132). For Berman, these were not the kinds of "superficial" reflections compositionists often complain about receiving from students. They were "richer, deeper, and more truthful" (145), reflecting "conflicted portraits" of students gazing inward at "darker emotions" associated with their cultural heritage (132).

In Berman's work we see a full representation of the teachers "like" therapists trope. An implicit assertion of cooperation and intimacy between Berman and his students is reflected in these assignments, which rely on the small classrooms and closed environments long championed by compositionists as one of the discipline's great assets. The argument goes that students are more likely to invest personally in writing courses because of small classes and the popular notion that writing is, or should be, personal. Students recognize "group" dynamics and workshop pedagogies and they are familiar with an increasingly memoir-driven and self-help oriented trade book culture. Hence emotional topics are useful for getting students interested in writing, for challenging their ideas about what writing is, and for helping them to deal with lived experiences that may be difficult for them. The writing teacher working "like" a therapist is attuned to all of these things—motivation, critique, and empathy.

Of course, Berman is not alone in arguing for teachers "like" therapists. In her 1993 article "Writing is/as Therapy? Raising Questions about Writing Classrooms and Writing Program Administration," Wendy Bishop claims that students themselves identify the "need" to write for therapeutic purposes. She marks how students "tell us of the many ways they 'use' writing for personal knowledge, savoring their texts and sharing them with friends and lovers" (504). For Bishop, disciplinary discomfort with a confluence of emotional writing and emotional students reflects the true reason we rely on "safe" academic prose. Invoking Donald Murray's suggestion that "all writing is autobiographical," she claims "a life in writing must of necessity consider writing as a process of self-discovery and the writing classroom as a site of such exploration" (505).

Other scholars, like Wendy Hesford, resist the expressivist orientation of Bishop and Murray, but echo the assertion that autobiography, as an embodiment of those ideas and experiences over which students feel they have expertise, makes for useful writing pedagogy (Framing Autobiography). Taking an intertextual approach to writing, Hesford claims that autobiographical writing is not a means for "self-discovery," but a way for students to challenge "autobiographical scripts," or those narratives of history that reify static cultural ideas about identity. Recent work by Gesa Kirsch expands this idea by situating students' spiritual lives in tension with ideas about post-traumatic culture. Kirsch develops a strategy for having students write what she calls "spiritual autobiographies," which like Hesford's anti-script autobiographies, ask students to engage personal subjects in tension with public/cultural ones ("From Spiritual Autobiography"). Kirsch insists, however, that personal writing should not be conceived of as a way into public writing, but as an integrated whole with the various public and group concerns that students have. Further, the potential for personal growth that might come from this writing should not be understood as being confined to the writing classroom, but rather is synchronous with work done in all the disciplines in and the communities outside of the academy.

But much post-traumatic pedagogy—both expressive and intertextual—is too reliant upon the implication of safety in the classroom, assuming that students will desire this kind of relationship with their classmates and their instructor. While Hesford, for example, rejects the idea of classroom therapy, instead choosing to look at autobiographical writing as a construction/re-construction of the self through a negotiation of experience, cultural "scripts," and material circumstances, she too relies on

the discourse of trauma studies to explain her position as "critical witness." For Hesford,

bearing witness is a risky, interventionist practice intended to influence the lives of

students in diverse cultural situations (xxviii). It is an admirable goal, but how can we be

sure that students desire a witness or that they lack this kind of relationship in their lives

outside the structured walls of the academy?

Berman insists that avoiding direct critique of confessional work helps to ensure

productive relationship between teacher/analyst and student/analysand. But avoiding

critique is not to say that student writing is beyond critique nor is it meant to divest the

work of serious meaning—quite the opposite actually. For Berman, dead authors cannot

be injured, whereas living ones can. Like Bishop, Berman situates his idea of writing

teachers like therapists against Bartholomae's critique of personal writing pedagogy (64).

He calls on teachers to balance the role of instructor and advocate by encouraging

students to confront difficult topics and providing an empathetic ear. Berman also argues

that, while avoiding potentially damaging critique of experience in risky writing, teachers

should focus their attention on technical aspects, including diction, grammar, syntax, tone

and organization. This is an argument we seen often in post-traumatic pedagogy—assign

experience; grade only the formal aspects of writing (Bishop, Berman, Harris,

MacCurdy). Berman himself says he spends a third of every class period working on the

"technical aspects" of writing (Risky Writing 35).

It is in this sense of a firm distinction between the texts that students produce—

filled with grammar mistakes, argumentative flaws, and so on—and the experiences from

which those texts are derived, that we see the teacher "like" therapist trope working on

the assumption that the process movement lends itself to post-traumatic pedagogical

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orientations. In fact, Mark Bracher claims that process writing creates the exigency for this entire discussion. Like the "talking cure," which fulfills the aims of psychoanalysis by working through psychic conflict via a dialogue between analyst and analysand, the "writing cure" takes advantage of the fundamentally discursive and revision-oriented nature of writing to help an individual writer "discharge" affect, to "form it, structure it, define it in a way that gives…both a means of control over the affect and also the sense and confidence that we can control the affect instead of being overwhelmed by it" (Bracher 147; see also Judith Harris "Rewriting the Subject"). But it is difficult not to view these approaches as equal parts do-it-yourself therapy and writing education. Classroom writing is explained as a means for engaging with self-discovery and/or psychic recovery, rather than as a means of inquiry. Expressive-leaning post-traumatic pedagogy adopts the stance of popular psychology that says the self is healed in isolation, rather than in relation to the social. To be cured means to find oneself ontologically, but not necessarily to situate oneself epistemologically.

Mariam MacCurdy makes this hierarchy between analyst and analysand more explicit by drawing on work by physicians and therapists who discuss the neurobiological effects and social repercussions of "trauma." She explains that unstable and "iconic memories" created by trauma often work as a tool by which powerful official discourses (medicine, psychology, history, law) silence marginalized groups. Further, she develops the critical/theoretical extensions of this scientific research (Caruth, Laub, Lifton) to emphasize how language provides access to these "iconic" memories. Where memory may occur naturally "tied to sensory, iconic representations" (162), it may also be elicited by a therapist or other individual acting as "witness" to the experience of the event.

Therefore, the specific language used by the teacher—in class or in assignment prompt writing—directly mediates the shaping and production of the trauma in student writing. An expressive teacher, then, will elicit very different kinds of student work than a teacher practicing social constructive pedagogy. Moreover, their respective "cures" will be quite different as one seeks psychic unity while the other seeks social situatedness. This polarity becomes dangerous when we recognize that dominant discourses are already restricted for non-dominant groups. The "expressive" cure—predicated on self-discovery—offers the greatest reward to those who already live within the economy of confessional narratives and who are stable enough politically and economically to benefit from unsituated reflection.

According to MacCurdy, re-experiencing traumatic events is the heart of recovery and such re-experiencing does, can, and should occur in the writing classroom. Trauma theory, for MacCurdy, helps us understand that students address personal subjects in ways we deem careless or "nonchalant" because their memories are fragmented and incomplete after trauma. She parallels the healing work of testimony with writing instruction and our desire to "help writers reproduce the sensory images which aid in effective personal essay writing" (167). When done unreflexively, then, posttraumatic pedagogy may participate in a de-politicization of experience and mark student subjectivities as distinct from what they do as scholars in the university. This is troubling for students living and working outside of dominant discourse. By situating the technical aspects of writing as distinct from the content of the writing, for example, Berman eliminates the politics of the discursive encounter and denies students any agency they may draw from rhetorical constructions of their own painful experiences in relation to

discourses of power. Bishop's "life in writing" works in a similar way, in that it relies on a hegemonic conception of the author as an emotional lightning rod. This writer taps into "authentic" experience and reveals it to herself and the world. But, too dramatic a prioritization of experience, rather than the terms in which that experience is constructed, results in rendering of students and their instructors helpless in the face of various social and historical circumstances. Further, the discourses available to some students do not allow them to formulate meaningful response to their experience as their social and political affiliations render them outside the dominants consideration of the stories that actually matter. Many students, particularly students from low-income neighborhoods and underrepresented populations, are students about whom stories are told, but not from whom stories are solicited.

Countering the impulse to validate "authentic" experience, Lu and Horner insist that careful attention to the politics of experience can "draw attention to material consequences of discursive practices" and thus highlight hierarchies of power evident in various discursive circumstances. The prioritizing of the experience over the discursive and cultural factors that create and sustain it contributes to what Lu and Horner identify as a general elision of student needs and desires. For students, turning teachers into therapists (or individuals working in the mold of therapists) has potentially dire consequences. It assumes not only that students need therapy—i.e. that they are ill or wounded somehow and in need of therapeutic contact—but also that they want therapy (or what they understand therapy to mean), that they have come to university in order to confess and not to learn something. While this work is not necessarily mutually exclusive, most posttraumatic pedagogy has yet to work out a feasible way to bridge this

gap. Berman's use of "like" over "as" certainly goes some way toward alleviating the pressure on instructors who feel implicated by a discourse of therapy, but it does very little for student writers who may or may not want or need this kind of attention.

Not only does post-traumatic work overlook important contextual factors, it also indicates a tendency toward the fetishizing of personal/popular narratives. The painful becomes that which is worth recording and that which has something valuable to teach. Resulting from this is an inevitable urge by students to tell more painful stories, because it is what the culture wants and, more importantly, it is likely what they feel their instructor wants. The writing teacher like therapist role easily morphs into the writing teacher as mother, housewife, psychologist, etc. In the hands of the untrained (or undertrained) writing instructor, the graduate student teacher or the adjunct with the heavy teaching load this domesticated classroom devalues the academic function of the writing classroom and, in doing so, devalues the instructor too.

Returning to Berman's assignment, the relationship between "good" writing and dark, emotional context comes quickly into focus. Berman constructs an implicit link between one's personal emotional state—"ambivalent" about "identity"—and "diversity's darker side," suggesting that all students in any context will (or should) have a negative view of who they are and where they come from. Perhaps more importantly, it suggests that they will or should be willing to share it. Further, Berman constructs a second implicit link between "honest" writing, the "vulnerability and anger" that shroud it, and "the best writing of your life." To a student in a classroom, working to figure out what the teacher wants, how, and when, there can likely be no confusion about the kind of writing Berman is calling for. Faigley explains that "shared assumptions about

subjectivities ... shape judgments of writing quality" (114). "Taste" dictates what makes writing "good" and makes for an evident hierarchy between what is acceptable in a classroom and what is not. But, as Faigley explains, there is no fundamental truth that emerges from painful narratives, rather students reflect a knack for skillfully "assembling a series of subject positions" (125) that may reflect as much of their instructor's worldview as their own.

While Berman gives his students the opportunity to opt out of this difficult assignment—"if you do not like this topic, you may write on another"—he doesn't say how many students did not like it, whether or how those students were uncomfortable with it, or if any students actually opted out. Further, he doesn't explain what the alternative might be. I admire Berman's willingness to give options, but like so many posttraumatic classroom strategies, Berman's overlooks the pressure on students to perform in certain ways in classroom contexts. This sequence of assignments would have been at the center of the course for some time. This is indicated not only by the length of time it would take to discuss and compose three written responses, but also by Berman's request for permission to read these papers aloud (anonymously) which situates this work at the center of classroom discourse. We should wonder, then, to what extent a student would feel comfortable resisting the prompt. His sequencing of assignments not only shapes the order in which assignments are prompted, produced, and graded, it also outlines the appropriate process of discovery. It is a version of socially situated thinking that forgoes sociality, as students must fall into an order that leads them to ontological constructions of personal discovery unshaped by the actual conditions in which they are writing.

Berman's stated and unstated desire to see students produce narratives about painful personal experience works not against what he calls the "culture of critique," but firmly in step with it. To elicit trauma stories, to write and revise them, to share them in public with students who may or may not have been prepared for this kind of classroom exercise, is an act of memorialization. Entertaining a notion of the writing teacher "like" therapist inevitably brings this problem about as students, despite their instructor's very best intentions, will likely come to see the turn toward pastness and personal suffering as something desirable, in and out of the classroom. Berman claims that this classroom shaming can interrupt the pressures of popular culture by encouraging students to come to terms with their identity, their bias; but rendering such confrontations through the lens of personal narrative only exacerbates the drive to confess.

The assertion that students "need" to write in order to work through trauma amounts to a very heavy decision wrested from the authority of the student themselves. The problem recalls for me Joseph Harris' critique of Ira Shor's <u>When Students Have Power</u>. While Harris shares much of the politics of Shor's work—just as I share the realization that bad things happen to students and that some will wish to write about these things—the prioritization of "shift in consciousness" over "changes in practice" doesn't help students to account for and/or resist the discursive constructions of experience that facilitate and maintain their so-called traumas ("Revision").

Confessional Writing is Inevitable

"I hadn't asked to bear witness to this personal tragedy. It made me feel uncomfortable, worried I'd say the wrong thing, frightened to say nothing. I realized, though, that these private revelations from students were not going to go away" (Valentino 2).

A second example of the migration of trauma into composition studies appears in arguments for the inevitability of personal or post-traumatic writing in composition classrooms. That so many proponents of posttraumatic pedagogy take the stance that writing about suffering is inevitable reflects LaCapra's warning about a tendency to see trauma everywhere, all the time. In such dire contexts, the argument that confessional writing and the need to confess are ever-present in student work is a convincing one. But, I suggest that the underlying warrant here—that present, contemporary life is somehow more traumatic than in the past or that traumas (large and small) scar all members of society—contributes to a problematic vision of universalizing trauma that reaffirms generic and de-politicized versions of memorial culture. It is apparent that, as social attitudes toward the role of confessional writing in dominant discourse have changed and become more marketable, the urge to see trauma everywhere has become more widespread.

I have already argued that pressure resulting from circulating discourses about painful experience and a general leaning toward the "confessional" in popular culture inevitably makes its way into our classrooms. The question, then, is not one of presence but one of emphasis and how such discourses are used to frame student subjectivities. A pervasive cultural tendency to value the personal confessional narrative has made some compositionists, even those dedicated to writing as process, turn their attention from writing processes to the disclosures that such processes facilitate. This focus on disclosure results in specific and potentially troubling representations of students as damaged or in need of intervention.

Again, arguments for the pervasiveness of trauma writing arrive in response to accounts of mainstream composition theory that resists overtly emotional writing in favor of culturally situated, academic prose (e.g. Bartholomae). Mark Bracher responds to Ann Murphy's critique of psychoanalytic paradigms working their way into composition studies by suggestion that Murphy's two key critiques—that writing teachers are not trained to do psychotherapy and that psychoanalytic pedagogy is no more or less likely to "ignite volatile passions" (8)—are built upon misguided assumptions about the goals and means of the psychoanalytic writing teacher. Regarding training, Bracher says that the therapeutic relationship between analyst and analysand is built upon a voluntary relationship; the testifier testifies when he or she is ready, and not before. Regarding the likeliness of other pedagogies to elicit emotional work, Bracher suggests, along with many others (including Bishop, Blitz and Hurlbert, MacCurdy to name a few), that students will confess whether they are prompted to or not. They'll confess when they feel they need to. An important question, however, is whether they do so because they feel traumatized by their experiences or whether they are simply writing what they know will be valued by their teachers and, very often, their families and communities as well.

Dan Morgan, in his 1998 article "Ethical Issues Raised by Students' Personal Writing" situates confessional writing amidst an increase, culturally, in both painful experience and our desire to talk about these experiences. He writes:

> These students' topics and concerns, and their life experiences and points of view, reflect what has been occurring in our society at large. Our students write about violence and substance abuse and broken families because they're writing about what they have lived and witnessed firsthand, what they care most deeply about. Their crises, past or present, mirror the condition of our society, reflect what has become more and more ordinary. And writing about

> profoundly personal issues comes easily to our students because
> we live in a pervasive culture of public self-disclosure, as talk
> shows, tabloids, daily newspapers, books, and movies will attest.
> In our popular culture, private issues are no longer private and
> public self-disclosure seems to have become a means toward
> personal validation (324)

This is, I think, a telling passage built upon an interesting assumption about how "society" behaves. Morgan appears to assert that we all have equal access to the discourses valued by "society," that such discourses serve us all equally, and that we are all comfortable telling trauma stories both because we are all traumatized and we are all accustomed to telling them. Further, he suggests that media reflects what is actually "happening" in the world and that students are not simply re-writing what they know to be popular, attractive, etc. There is no debate here over "the condition of our society" or the extent to which any set of "conditions" has become "ordinary." The underlying suggestion here that students' personal writing reflects an important trend in culture should encourage us to consider how, when, and why we solicit it.

Like Morgan, Marilyn Valentino (whom Morgan cites extensively) argues that painful experiences always emerge in student work. She situates teachers in therapist roles by suggesting that we must "pay close attention" to various "warning signs" articulated by students via their writing "because, as writing instructors, we are often their first contact" (2). Further, she implicates a culture that is, according to her, increasingly emotionally taxing on students who "have dealt with the effects of poverty, divorce, abuse, death, and mental illness for years" (3). Valentino concludes that to ignore the presence of this kind of writing—when it is present—and instead simply focus on various aspects of writing is to be "negligent." Part of a teacher's role is to create an "atmosphere of trust in which students can express feelings and attitudes freely without

threat of condemnation or personal judgment, we have an ethical and legal responsibility

to respond effectively and refer students to other professionals if necessary. It is not

expected that we must 'cure' or solve these problems" (6). She goes on to suggest several

practical strategies for coping with confessional writing in the classroom, including

alternative assignments, "reflective" commenting practices, and developing relationships

with campus health services.

In many ways these stances illustrate why scholars like Bartholomae and Faigley

have such strong feelings about confessional writing in the composition classroom.

Follow the logic underwriting both Morgan and Valentino and we run the risk of marking

many (or all) students as "broken wing" products of a "broken society" (Morgan

321/324). Our culture tells us that to address trauma, one must confess and "work

through" experience. We should, however, be mindful of Foucault's assertion that the

impulse to confess typically appears unconnected to structures of power. Foucault writes:

> The obligation to confess is now so ingrained in us, that we no
> longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us; on the
> contrary, it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret nature,
> "demands" only to surface; that if it fails to do so, this is because a
> constraint holds it in place, the violence of a power weighs it
> down, and it can finally be articulated only at the price of a kind of
> liberation (History of Sexuality 60).

Viewing confession as inevitable, then, may betray a view of students as static subjects,

affected by experience, but not complicit in constructing, understanding, and /or resisting

that experience. That is, they arrive with "broken wings" in need of caring (or

"empathic") teachers to mend them. Whether the teacher believes they can mend students

themselves, or they insist on showing students how to make the repairs, the resulting

pedagogy, too often, situates students on a road to ontological completion and a functional return back to who they "really are."

MacCurdy offers a view of trauma in the classroom drawn from this same notion of pervasive trauma (the most common psychiatric condition in America, she observes) and the necessity for teachers (in particular writing teachers) to address it. She emphasizes that our relationship to our students has changed with time and that "we cannot assume that the children and young people that we see looking back at us in our classrooms have pristine pasts unhampered by traumatic moments that can affect education" (The Mind's Eye 55). Specifically, MacCurdy cites September 11th as a tipping point for cultural conceptions of trauma; with a survey of psychiatric counselors citing up to 9 million individuals feeling traumatic effects of witnessing the mediated (or, in some cases unmediated) events of September 11th, she suggests, trauma is referenced in public conversation like never before.

For MacCurdy, pervasive trauma discourse constitutes an opportunity to intervene in student relationships with public trauma by enacting what Dori Laub describes as the process of living through testimony via a shared bond between the teller of trauma and the listener. It is this act of witnessing that MacCurdy says frightens us as writing teachers, but which can help students to gain access to "authentic" experiences which may then be articulated via "iconic image rather than voice-over narrative" ("From Trauma to Writing" 159). This end, MacCurdy suggests, is a goal for all writing pedagogies, whether oriented toward trauma or not.

While I agree with MacCurdy that trauma is more consciously a part of public discourse than ever before, I do think there is some need to problematize the construction of teachers and students in this discussion. MacCurdy's suggestion that instructors assume a stance of witnessing towards their student's confessional writing not only makes often underpaid and largely undertrained composition instructors responsible for the reenactment of middle-class nurturing but also turns them into healers responsible for the psychological well-being of their patients according to specific popular notions of what it means to be "well" (read: normal by hegemonic standards of psychic and social normality). Both can be dangerous. Labeling students "broken" by their experiences conceivably results in a situation by which those students who do not identify with these characteristics are silenced (or forced to tell stories their instructor wants to hear). And those students who do have traumatic stories to tell may be discouraged when they realize that their experiences do not comply with the middle-class fantasy of the university that governs this relationship. More than anything however, this conception of students as confessors and teachers as witnesses searching for an "iconic" and "authentic" image betrays a notion of experience as ontological; language works as a conduit for "experience" but does not participate in its construction.

We see this ontology in an example from MacCurdy's book In the Mind's Eye, in which she tells the story of a student called "Melissa," who wanted to write a narrative of her rape for MacCurdy's writing course. MacCurdy insists that an early version of this paper seemed "incomplete;" it was reliant on what MacCurdy calls "narrated" and "not image driven" language (84). Characterized by vagueness and the absence of detail, this kind of writing keeps student writers from the truths of their experiences and restricts

"healing" from beginning. MacCurdy outlines how she motivated Melissa to move beyond this all too common problem. She says: "I asked Melissa…to go back to the images that the moment produced to find the specific details that drive personal essays" (87). MacCurdy suggests that the incompleteness of the narrative tipped her off to something deeper in Melissa's experience that was not making it into the paper: "I had focused on the text, while knowing that it would also lead back to the life" (87). We should, I think, be uncomfortable with such clean divisions between text and life.

Students are represented as incapable of constructing, understanding, or resisting the terms and conditions of their experiences until they are given voices by their well-meaning instructors. The assertion that "iconic" images are at the heart of what we desire in student writing is, perhaps, linked to a common complaint challenged by much work on response and assessment which sees instructors calling for "specificity" in their marginal notes without offering the textual guidance required to aid students in delivering it. What's more, the "iconic" subject operates without concern for rhetorical situation aside from that constructed within the author's memory, so choices related to tone, audience, and evidence are de-prioritized in favor of ideas like truth, honesty, and authenticity associated with experience.

Richard Miller suggests something similar in "Faultlines in the Contact Zone" when he claims that "unsolicited oppositional discourse" often reflects common public political stances and that the classroom should take up "the work of articulating, investigating, and questioning the affiliated cultural forces that underwrite the ways of thinking" that emerge in student writing. Miller buys into a vision of confessional writing as inevitable but, he insists, we should not cave into a social tendency to musealize

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student discourse by favoring only the emotional and the painful. It is clear, however, that many do. For Miller, the fundamental question is not to teach or not to teach trauma but whether and how we can address the issue of traumatic experience in light of polarized/polarizing arguments for *either* academic *or* expressivist pedagogies. He suggests we look at "writing as a place where the personal and the academic, the private and the public, the individual and the institutional, are always inextricably interwoven" (31). Miller's suggestion that conflict and struggle ought to shape pedagogical response to trauma complicates MacCurdy's vision of the student/teacher relationship as one endeavoring to locate whole "truth" out of student narratives produced under a whole host of complex social and material conditions. Teaching after trauma requires that teachers make decisions about how to direct students in articulating their own "truths" and how those "truths" are shaped by multiple and overlapping contexts.

It is worth noting that Melissa, the student in MacCurdy's example, wrote a second essay in which she realized the rape memory was a false one compensating for the pain of aborting a child conceived consensually with her boyfriend. While Melissa appears to have arrived at a "true" narrative and thus was able to heal, MacCurdy describes few safeguards built into this pedagogical relationship. Students may feel forced to re-visit and re-envision painful memories in the event that their instructor feels that their prose is not "honest" enough, that it is somehow "incomplete." This notion of vagueness indicating hidden experience is at odds with some research which suggests cliché in student writing (particularly about class and marginalized identity) is an attempt to assert control over master narratives. This "incompleteness" may be misconstrued as

hiding pain when, in actuality, it is evidence that the student is struggling to grow as a socially situated writer and thinker.

Trauma as a "teachable moment"

Maybe this was a teachable moment—that label applied to so many classroom failures or near-failures. Maybe. (Borrowman)

In this final (and perhaps most common) trope, we see post-traumatic pedagogy reformulated in response to specific national, natural, or personal traumas. Ranging from the September 11th attacks to flooding to domestic violence, the approaches I identify with "teachable moments" are notable for teachers' attempts to aid students (and very often themselves) in coming to terms with "overwhelming" circumstances beyond the scope of normal day to day living. But, this is a slippery slope and very often the circulation of ideas about trauma in this scholarship and practice results in two significant ideological stances that must be worked out—first, the assumption that extreme cases equal extreme culture (what Worsham calls the articulation of a "wound culture") and second, that traumatic events will be equally influential and important to all individuals touched by them.

The notion of the "teachable moment" offers teachers a readily available "rhetorical situation"—instead of the "false" one so often lamented by writing teachers in classrooms. It seems particularly useful in the context of major events, but more localized examples also work (see Ellsworth, Hesford). The notion of the "teachable moment" is, of course, a commonplace throughout the university and beyond, referring generally to unexpected or unsolicited moments in a classroom when a lesson may be communicated or made clearer because of specific cultural, political, or historical cues. Notably, such

lessons generally fall within the parameters of a course; they are naturally occurring expectations. But the teachable moment attaches the expectations to a context that encourages students to increase their valuation or to refine their understanding because the lesson has been motivated by way of a dramatic link to larger social concerns. So, a student's troubled reaction to a reading, confusion over difficult prompt or heated discussions about current events may all constitute teachable moments that will lead to important lessons about critical writing or reading.

In Shane Borrowman's collection <u>Trauma and the Teaching of Writing</u>, several contributors articulate the sense that September 11th was a game-changer (so to speak) in that it altered the rhetorical situation of the classroom such that it made "normal" class discussion impossible until the tragedy had been addressed. I want to consider how this work reflects a need for historicized, situated writing instruction after large-scale disaster in order to avoid easy (and inadvertent) moves to generalize traumatic suffering by glossing important differences that render some individuals or groups more vulnerable than others and that ensure the conditions that give rise to and perpetuate traumatic circumstances.

In his introduction, Borrowman presents the vision of the teachable moment as a central motivation for the collection. Expressing a "personal shame" associated with his own inaction in front of his students on September 11th, Borrowman suggests that a failure to engage with such an important historical and social event does a disservice to students because it does not acknowledge how trauma inalterably shapes the work of writing instruction. He says that he cancelled his afternoon business writing class "rather than proceeding with business as usual or discussing the events that were unfolding" (1).

Other contributors report a similar narrative of regret as, either by choice or by administrative requirement they assumed their students "would be in no better condition to learn than [they were] to teach" (2).

As a result of avoiding classes that day, Borrowman questions his identity as an instructor—"it shames me now that I didn't do more; I can find no point in the story of my memories on which to hang my image of myself as a strong, capable instructor, an instructor able to take his students in hand and to help them understand the world in which our classroom is a part" (2). He concludes that it is a general "lack of preparation" for traumatic events that inhibits instructors from taking control of the teachable moments. His collection, he suggests, is "on one level" meant to address this lack. While September 11th may be rare in scope, Borrowman points out that it is not unique—"there have been shared traumas in the past, as there will be others in the future, and teachers have always faced these traumas concurrently with their students" (3).

While I agree with the turn toward contextual factors that shape how students experience events like September 11[th,] this notion of trauma as "teachable" is built upon a definition of trauma as all-consuming and universally afflicting individuals and groups through direct or mediated interactions. Trauma as a crucial "opportunity" elides differences between being affected, saddened or shocked by an event and being traumatized by it. Ultimately, this description seems much more about Borrowman than his students; who is to say they needed his guidance? Perhaps what was taught (or able to be taught) was that there are limitations to what a classroom, teacher, and university can or should do.

A. Suresh Canagarajah, writing about scholarship on the periphery of dominant culture where poverty, war, or historical oppression complicates academic work, observes how things like access to resources (power, paper, etc.) and marginal status become part of what these individuals are doing in their scholarship in a given time and place ("Non-Discursive Requirement" 446). Canagarajah's own work reflects this as he so often draws on his experiences working in a country plagued by violent struggle in making arguments about discursive and non-discursive practices which have little, immediately, to do with violent struggle. Notably, for Canagarajah, this negotiation of contextual conflict and scholarly work happens outside the periphery as often as it does inside.

I would suggest that Canagarajah's point might be relevant to resisting the troubling tendencies in the "teachable moment" trope. Do students and teachers face dramatic experiences beyond the scope of "normal" living? Yes, of course they do. But does this experience necessitate a complete revision in the goals and objectives of the work taking place in the academy? I think it does not. This is not to say that there is no place in academic writing for "working through" the troubling memories of a personal or public trauma. In this sense, I agree with Lynn Worsham who, in her "theory of pedagogic violence," articulates a Foucauldian relationship between discipline and violence, including the "symbolic violence of teaching and learning," as well as the actual violence that finds its way into classrooms ("Going Postal" 215). Worsham suggests that many of the kinds of pedagogies I've discussed simply reiterate the control of the dominant over various forms of expression. Real social change must begin with "decolonization…at the affective level" (216) and the success of such a project relies on

the recognition that the primary work of pedagogy is "to organize an emotional world, to inculcate patterns of feeling that support the legitimacy of dominant interests, patterns that are especially appropriate to gender, race, and class locations" (223). Worsham's notion of affective decolonization would situate students in the post-traumatic classroom in relation to social patterns of experience, while acknowledging that each student (and the group with which they hold affiliation) works from different intersections of these social patterns. This "organization" is fundamental and, I would argue, is best achieved by way of critical, rhetorical, and situated literate engagement with personal and public experience.

In Patricia Murphy, Ryan Muckerheide, and Duane Roen's contribution to Borrowman's anthology, Roen narrates his experience as an administrator brought into a university discussion designed to help students deal with the "aftershock of 9/11" (78). His "particular focus" on this committee was "to provide faculty with resources to engage students in the 'teachable moments' in the weeks following 9/11" (78). Sensitivity, Roen states, was an important aspect of this problem, balancing "our academic responsibilities with our responsibilities to students' well-being" (78). His description of students as shocked, saddened, and in need of older adults to "trust" reflects the general tone of the article which begins with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and explores how traumatic circumstances necessitate attention to lower-level needs (in particular, safety). Roen reports that students said they had difficulty completing work, needed extra time for assignments because "family tragedy consumed their time and emotional strength," and some didn't feel safe being outside after dark (78).

Roen emphasizes the need to help students grappling with "horrible events" to use knowledge for "higher-level thinking." He encourages faculty to ask specific questions that can help to facilitate critical thought about the events—"we can seize upon such moments to engage students fully in learning that will serve them not only in the academic realm of life, but also the professional, personal, and civic realms." He adds, "when we ask students to apply rhetorical principles, they learn how speaking and writing can lead to constructive solutions to even the most difficult problems" (79). But, as is the case with many of the chapters in Borrowman's anthology, Roen argues for the necessity of having students face the tragedy, but does so by discussing international politics alone, abstract infringements on civil liberties and national xenophobia. He concludes, "[w]e must remember that students are goal-oriented, driven, passionate, and interested. We must prioritize the desire to help students understand more clearly how they fit into the world. We must ask students to be engaged in current controversies and to constantly deconstruct who we are as a nation and what privileges we enjoy" (82).

While I would echo Roen's urge to rhetoricize trauma and to treat it as a site of political conflict and meaning making, the implication here is that students are (or must become) driven toward our goals for citizenship that they may not choose for themselves. Further, such a view emphasizes that all students are working from and toward the same social and political orientations. This notion of trauma as "teachable" is problematic because it universalizes pain and suggests that students need help understanding what's happened to them (in some cases they may, but not always) and it assumes that telling trauma stories will serve them all in the same ways. The "teachable moment" becomes a

sense of time stopped around a given event, as though the event itself or subsequent moments do not continue.

Richard Marback makes a similar claim in his chapter, arguing for pedagogy that explores how the excessive mediation of public images about September 11th alternately forces our attention to the tragedy but limits our ability to understand it. Marback suggests "that the events and aftermath of September 11th so dominate our lives, so assert themselves on our considerations of who we interact with, where we are, and what we do, demonstrates something about the phenomenology of attention and circumstance that has bearing on the attention we ask our students as writers to pay to audiences, contexts, and purposes" (54). We see here Marback making a specific move to frame September 11th as an inescapable, teachable moment, one intimately tied to our goals as writing teachers (audience, context, purpose) but also intimately tied to our lived experiences ("dominating our attention"—this means everyone, students, instructors, administrators). National trauma obstructs and challenges our ability to process information and to make meaning—the very activities Marback suggests are at the heart of the composition classroom. Events like September 11th challenge "us to evaluate who we become through lives lived in a world of mediated representations, compelling us to imagine what we can make of ourselves through our rhetorical activities, and leading us to locate occasions for purposeful writing within the dynamics of mediated representation and individual rhetorical activity here and now" (67). Because he clearly believes that what goes on in student lives mediates how they read and write, Marback concludes that his students might have better responded in more personal, depoliticized fashion, but the end result of this approach might be little more than a therapy session.

Conclusion

Peter and Maureen Daly Goggin, in their contribution to Borrowman's anthology, offer something closer to a complete critical, reflective intervention into post-traumatic pedagogy. They recognize that trauma is more than trope, more than teachable moment. As an event and as a means for coming to terms with that event it uncovers asymmetries that give rise to and sustain the initial trauma. In this sense, it must be considered rhetorically, but not as a singular rhetorical event.

To access the rhetoricity of trauma, Goggin and Goggin draw on LaCapra's distinction between "Writing Trauma" and "Writing about Trauma." Writing Trauma is striving for the objective representation of the past, chronicling what happened to the individual or group, where, and when. Writing about Trauma is an effort to "give voice" to the past, to come to terms with traumatic experience (Goggin and Goggin 36). For LaCapra, unconcerned with writing pedagogy, these contrasting ideas develop a productive tension between the historiographic project and the work of (trauma) theory, which struggles to make sense of painful histories. It was intended as a response to scholars like Cathy Caruth who emphasize the theoretical turn of traumatic testimony and overlook historical, political, and social contexts (La Capra <u>Writing History</u>).

Goggin and Goggin, adding their voices to an anthology designed to respond to the terrors of September 11th, move to situate LaCapra's rhetoricized vision of trauma firmly in writing classrooms affected by disaster. They question the efficacy of our common practices in light of such circumstances and the ethical responsibilities of teachers to students, "when the discursive practices and texts generated by surrounding

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trauma can themselves constitute a trauma" (40). To answer these questions, Goggin and

Goggin extend LaCapra's discussion to include two new conceptualizations of post-

traumatic work. The first, "metadiscourse on writing (about) trauma" offers writing

instructors an opportunity to work with their students to explore relationships between

writing and trauma. The second, "writing during trauma," includes "all those discourses

generated during a time of trauma that are not necessarily directly related to the trauma

but cannot help but be affected, and in some way respond to, and be shaped by, the

trauma" (36). This last approach offers the most possibilities for revising our current

understanding of post-traumatic pedagogy and for envisioning a disciplinary identity that

negotiates traumatic circumstances rather than either rejecting them or embracing them

wholesale. By considering the many discourses generated during times of trauma,

including the stories students and teachers tell, the social and political contexts in which

they tell them, the revisions and omissions required to make them accessible (or desirable

to the public), as well as historical and rhetorical tools necessary to understand how these

stories function and where, this approach begins to develop a reflexive space in which

any instructor or program challenged by practical or theoretical questions about trauma

might begin their work. The goal here is to imagine pedagogy in which students focus on

the contexts of trauma and not their own personal reactions to that trauma. When they can

see that writing involves positioning oneself in response to pre-existing conversations

about the trauma, the people who have suffered the trauma, and the conditions that allow

the trauma to continue, they can then organize a reflective and productive response to

personal experience.

But, as I conclude this discussion, I would echo Worsham's request that we should "first do no (further) harm" (181). She reminds us that while traumatic circumstances function as "preeminently rhetorical situations"—they beg to be verbalized and analyzed—they are, at the same time, a-rhetorical, in that they constitute experiences that are fragmented and uncertain within the mind of the individual. They can never be recalled "authentically." And this confusion expands across communities as multiple iterations of traumatic events, along with conflicting and overlapping investments in the contexts for and politics of those events, vary widely.

"Trauma," as a pervasive circulating cultural idea, must be revised in the context of the writing classroom. It is simply too imprecise, too overwrought, and there is too much at stake for students and teachers working at once on the project of writing and the daily expectations for living. Unreflective posttraumatic pedagogy risks rendering students and teachers who have suffered some kind of public or private trauma, or who, based on their social standing, are commonly associated with it, victims of circumstances that are beyond their control. This tendency participates in the popular conception of painful storytelling as somehow more "real," fetishizing victimization while doing nothing to account for or to alleviate the conditions that sustain or initiate it.

The discourse of marginality that comes to define "traumatized" individual—be they student, teacher, or otherwise—operates as a "regulatory mechanism" similar to what Inderpal Grewal has called the "state project" of transnational multiculturalism. Grewal suggests that official narratives come to dominate the life of the marginal subject—"produced through census, laws, regulations of immigration and those 'protecting' minorities to create racialised and gendered subjects who see themselves as

'America' at some points and as different kinds of Americans at other times and places" (538). In composition classrooms, student subjects are implicated by the circulation of popular discourses about trauma; they are inevitably rendered victims in the "wound culture" (Worsham). They are also kept outside the discourses of recovery as socially, culturally, and materially unable to resist (even to come to terms with their experiences without assistance). Further, these individuals may come to recognize themselves in and through these roles via "strategies of self-identification and difference through practices of belonging to groups and communities," many of which are dictated by dominant consumer culture (Grewal 538). For Grewal, a critical example that has much to do with our project here is the "risky" or "at risk" groups that have dominate education discussions since the 1970's (539). These are groups who pose some kind of risk to the majority power group or those who fall under the protection of the dominant, who must be looked out for. In much posttraumatic pedagogy, these communities are precisely the ones represented as "at risk" for trauma. The prominence of the ideology of boot-strap progress and the discourse of self-improvement indicate how far and wide this problem has spread.

CHAPTER TWO

REVISE AND RECOVER: SPONSORING WRITING (BEFORE, DURING AND) AFTER THE STORM

"[O]ne can try another path: one can try another path: one can analyze the microbe-like, singular and plural practices which an urbanistic system was supposed to administer or suppress, but which have outlived its decay; one can follow the swarming activity of these procedures that, far from being regulated or eliminated by panoptic administration, have reinforced themselves in a proliferating illegitimacy, developed and insinuated themselves into the networks of surveillance, and combined in accord with unreadable but stable tactics to the point of constituting everyday regulations and surreptitious creativities that are merely concealed by the frantic mechanisms and discourses of the observational organization."

(de Certeau 96)

Chapter Seven of Michel de Certeau's The Practice of Everyday Life begins with a description of New York City from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center. Described as a "texturology in which extremes coincide," this vision of the great metropolis from the top down foregrounds "extremes of ambition and degradation, brutal oppositions of races and styles, contrasts between yesterday's buildings, already transformed into trash cans, and today's urban irruptions that block out its space" (91). From such a vantage point the wholeness of postmodern life is visible, comprehensible, and comfortable. The immensity of the physical structure (like the late capitalist ideological structures it represents for de Certeau) manages the distance between "us" and "them"—the high and the low, the foreign and the domestic, the powerful and the powerless. The destruction of the World Trade Center (some 17 years later) was not only

material, but also social, spatial, and emotional. De Certeau identifies a voyeuristic

pleasure in "seeing the whole" from a distance: "it transforms the bewitching world by

which one was 'possessed' into a text that lies before one's eyes" (92). But what happens

when this distance collapses and the spaces between "text" and life become less

distinguishable?

De Certeau's account of his experience of viewing the city from the World Trade

Center observation deck ends with an unfortunate premonition and an "Icarian Fall" back

to the dark, crowded spaces of the street. This "fall" brings us face to face with the stark

reality of life lived not in magnificent and hierarchically organized abstractions

("imaginary totalizations produced by the eye"), but in the "unrecognized poems" (93) of

daily, lived movements and ideas. After September 11th, many scholars marked an actual

shift in how we view this contrast between the street and the abstractions of dominant

culture. Perhaps most notably, Slavoj Žižek has suggested that September 11th brought to

light the tension between the "real" violence of life in globalized culture and the

"spectacle" of the mediated event itself. From this tension, a social and political distance

is revealed separating "Us from Them, from their reality…the real horror happens *there*,

not *here*" (Welcome 13). But where Žižek wants primarily to articulate the "haunted"

psyches of privileged America, de Certeau remains at street level, working to identify

unplanned and unsolicited "practices of space" that slip "into the clear text of the planned

and readable city" (93).

Taking my cue from de Certeau, I am electing to "try another path" and consider

how post-Katrina rhetorical pedagogical acts were "insinuated into the networks of

surveillance" (96). I examine work by teachers (Ch. 2) and students (Ch. 3) as indicative

of the tension between power and powerlessness, between the mediated spectacle of a post-Katrina New Orleans and the lived experiences of individuals and groups before, during, and after the storm. I question how control over public discourses in various times and places allows for the authoring of narratives of experience and for opportunities (however rare) to assert cultural and social agency in difficult circumstances. Depending on the social and material context of the subject(s), agency may involve submitting to and/or resisting the mediated spectacle of the storm and its aftermath.

In "The Subject Supposed to Loot and Rape" Žižek focuses his ongoing discussion of dematerialized dominant fantasies and the chasm between "Us" and "Them" on post-Katrina New Orleans. For Žižek, the idea of a "subject supposed to…" reflects the idea that some beliefs about people and the places they inhabit function from a safe distance. Popular depictions of "orgies of violence," most of which never occurred, represent an imposition of racialized thinking (the expectations that certain groups will naturally commit certain kinds of acts) onto the largely African American working poor population in New Orleans. Žižek suggests "the reality of poor blacks, abandoned and left without means to survive, was thus transformed into the specter of blacks exploding violently, of tourists robbed and killed on streets that had slid into anarchy, of the Superdome ruled by gangs that were raping women and children" ("Subject"). Importantly, this social/discursive environment reflects part of the critical context within which New Orleans area teachers were working before Katrina, during (in exile), and after (for those who elected to return).

Such fabrications, based on cultural myths exposed by large-scale "trauma," are not mere discursive representations. They have material effects on the individuals and

groups objectified by fabrication and the individuals and groups that believe them. In his

book, <u>Come Hell or High Water</u>, Michael Eric Dyson suggests that "[t]he most glaring

feature of their circumstance suggests that Katrina's survivors lived in concentrated

poverty—they lived in poor neighborhoods, attended poor schools, and had poorly

paying jobs that reflected and reinforced a distressing pattern of rigid segregation" (6). As

representations of both storm and city spread around the nation, concerns about race and

class slipped conveniently into commonplace notions about cities and communities that

are poor or black or otherwise marginal. Rather than fostering a dialogue on race and

class in America (which seems perpetually "about to" happen), the national stories of

Katrina were largely about victimization or deviance, about the people who "choose" to

live in certain kinds of places and how they tend to get what they deserve (Giroux,

Kellner).

As teachers of writing and as residents of New Orleans on August 28th 2005, the

instructors whose experiences I discuss throughout this chapter were (and continue to be)

situated within this network of representations and its effect on the lived experiences of

those living and working in post-Katrina New Orleans. How, where, and to whom these

instructors choose to reinforce and/or express resistance to dominant narratives has

important material consequences for the academic and non-academic communities to

which these scholars hold affiliation. Their own narratives of action and inaction

constitute a "sponsoring" of certain kinds of political and social activity in the context of

the storm and its aftermath. For Deborah Brandt, "sponsors of literacy" are "any agents,

local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, and model, as well as

recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold, literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way"

(19). "Sponsors" are often individual agents, but the term is also used to refer to any

social and ideological structures that shape how individuals interact with language and

power—this includes institutions like universities or writing programs, as well as the

genres and expectations that we identify with those institutions. While "sponsorship" has

been used in any number of ways, Brandt's original goal was to understand "who or what

underwrites occasions of literacy learning and use" and for what "causes" these sponsors

have undertaken their work (19). As a situated social practice, literacy education is

granted value based on the time and place in which it is sponsored. It is ongoing and

occurs at every level of culture. Embracing or resisting dominant cultural narratives,

speaking out or remaining silent, are political acts performed by instructors in university

classrooms (and in communities outside of the university) every day. In the context of

large-scale catastrophe, these acts of sponsorship have massive consequences, as

powerful hegemonic structures (martial law, forced removal, reconstruction) are thrust

into plain sight as indicators of order or recovery.

For the purposes of this chapter, Brandt's "sponsorship" affords me an

opportunity to begin working through several overlapping concerns. First, I observe how

post-Katrina narratives by writing teachers exhibit social and political pressures which

shape how, where, and to whom these teachers "sponsored" literate practices. The

changing conditions of life and work in New Orleans motivated these teachers to align

themselves with pre-existing pedagogical strategies that resemble the poles of post-

traumatic pedagogy discussed in chapter one (Bartholomae ↔ Elbow). How they select

from these strategies and how they adapt them to materially and historically situated

circumstances shows them accommodating and resisting hegemonic order—sometimes at the same time.

Second, I examine how "sponsored" practices reflect various states of what Ralph Cintron (following Arjun Appadurai) has called a state of "in-betweenness" where a rootedness to space and community comes into conflict with circulating dominant discourses and the material repercussions of displacement and "trauma." The instructors featured here are alternately influenced by and influencing disciplinary discussions, university administrations, city/state/federal government, popular media, classroom habits, student desires, lived experience, community involvement, material circumstances, and so on. "In-betweenness" is a useful metaphor for thinking about how these teachers identify their own work with the continuum of post-traumatic pedagogy. Where we saw in chapter one that the majority of composition scholars interested in post-traumatic writing choose positions at one extreme or another—*either* distinctly expressive *or* unrelentingly intertextual—this unique historical circumstances makes it clear that we must also consider how *both* expressive *and* intertextual writing strategies may have a place in this discussion.

Finally, I argue that by looking at intersections of "sponsored" practices and "in-between" experiences we can begin to formulate an ethically sound, materially situated understanding of post-traumatic pedagogy and how it might be used to respond to "trauma" in specific contexts.

On Reading Katrina Rhetorically

In considering sponsorship practices from post-Katrina New Orleans, I draw on diverse reading practices. It is not enough to view published and unpublished materials by scholars and teachers as singularities. We must account for how these views both reflect and influence ongoing discussions about the city, its people, the storm, and its aftermath. We need what Thomas Rosteck, in his articulation of a cultural rhetorical theory, describes as a "practice" that can understand "that rhetorical discourse represents the shared meanings of a particular society *in history* and that such discourse is itself a cultural practice that *shapes history*" (his emphasis 229). My goal in fostering such a "practice" here is to manage the tensions among "official," "practical," and "mixed" representations of experience. Raymond Williams marks the distinction between the "practical," or what is actually being lived in a given time and place, and the "official," or accounts of life offered in dominant social narratives (Marxism and Literature). Practical lived experiences are typically excluded by the dominant as being outside the range of normal, which the dominant gets to dictate. "Mixed" experiences are those that, according to Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner, reflect a tension between the practical and the official. For instance, student writers sometimes articulate their literacy development as a negotiation between "readily available terms for their lives" and a desire for "'something more' than 'just a job'" (Lu and Horner 266). Importantly, Lu and Horner remind us that these articulations of experience and desire have a "processural quality"— they are perpetually unstable (266).

My analysis over the next two chapters, then, will consider the extent to which narratives by teachers and students (in formal and informal locations) reveal ongoing negotiation between practical/everyday experience and official representations of that

experience. For this chapter, I collected thirteen interviews with writing and

communication instructors at New Orleans area universities, including the University of

New Orleans (UNO), Tulane, Xavier, Delgado, Southern University of New Orleans

(SUNO), and Loyola.[1] Following conventions of interview methodology, I initially asked

all of these participants to answer a similar set of questions. But, following the

suggestions of Andrea Fontana and James H. Frey, I attempted to carve out a space for

these scholars and teachers to tell the stories they wanted to tell.

Examining the historical, material contexts of teachers in and around New

Orleans, I am most interested in the rhetorics of the everyday, those accounts of life that

shed light on daily activities, ongoing adversities, and long-term interests and affiliations.

Inspired by the ethnographic work of Ralph Cintron, I want to examine this discursive

setting as a "system of contentions" (xi) in which the goals, interests and experiences of

instructors are always already in tension with university administration, the desires and

expectations of students, the support of communities outside the university, and the

educational standards set by city, state, and national government. From these overlapping

systems of contention, teachers make choices about how and what they will teach in their

classrooms from an available set of pedagogical strategies. Invoking intertextual/social

approaches to writing (such as Bartholomae) or expressive/personal approaches to

writing (such as Elbow) reflects the situatedness teachers feel in relation to the various

overlapping social contentions. In such a context, we can interpret pedagogical acts and

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[1] I had some difficulty in accessing a large sample size for this project. Interviews were conducted in the spring and summer of 2009 and many of the instructors at area universities either had not returned or had since left again; many because of the ongoing stresses associated with recovery. When I mentioned my difficulties soliciting participants to some of the instructors who did choose to participate, they said they were not surprised and that many people, even four years after the fact, had trouble reflecting on their experiences.

personal narratives as "rhetorical gestures" that reflect "mixed" experiences (Cintron).

Cintron describes this as a condition of "in-betweenness," where variables of domination

and subordination intersect in the specific choices individuals and groups make in

representing their own lived experiences. Similarly, John Duffy urges us to think beyond

convenient boundaries of culture to the spaces and places in which words become

"enmeshed with other words" and symbols "derive from opposing symbols" ("Letters"

226). In such locations, we see the rhetorics of the everyday, where "mundane

interactions continuously shape and refract [individuals'] understanding of themselves

and the world, as well as their positions and identities within it" (Nystrand and Duffy ix).

These "mundane interactions" are in perpetual tension with dominant social and political

structures; this tension results in Cintron's condition of "in-betweenness."

Nedra Reynolds, who echoes de Certeau's description of everyday spaces at the

"street" level, offers terms for "dwelling" and "displacement" that help us read situated

discursive production by participants within and across the social, cultural, and political

borders that provide frameworks for their lives. Reynolds talks about our disciplinary

obsession with borders and the ironic lack of attention to the kinds of places "constructed

by those borders" (6). This oversight, by way of habitual attention to the mainstream,

results in exclusion and difference. She suggests: "We share with students and colleagues

the everyday realities of material conditions and physical spaces of campuses and towns,

buildings and streets" (7) and writing/composition (not necessarily in the classroom) is

what helps us to organize these relationships. For Reynolds, this kind of "dwelling"

together is the condition in which individuals and groups live (bodily and socially) the

mixed experiences of a given time and place. It is the intersection of composition and

location, the many instances in which we construct and re-construct the spaces in which we live and the ways in which we inhabit those spaces. "Displacement," on the other hand, is the condition in which some people or groups are "restricted from their homes" or "feel excluded from certain places because of the landscape, the built environment, the inhabitants, or the force of their own preconceptions and expectations" (9). In post-Katrina New Orleans, feelings of displacement might refer to many different things, from material loss or physical removal, to terminations handed down unceremoniously by institutions, to impoverished students (and, in some cases, faculty) being rendered "disposable" by the dominant (Giroux). In the context of these displacements—physical, social, emotional, and/or political—people go about adapting and developing new activities, in the classroom and in the community. They compose new forms of dwelling that challenge, revise, or reinterpret traditional structures of academic dwelling and the assumptions about displacements and deviations from standard practice that are supported by those structures. Dwelling and displacement intersect with "in-betweenness" as metaphors for the material/spatial conditions of being caught in-between the various publics with whom individual teachers share affiliation. How teachers situate themselves pedagogically and ideologically—reflecting conditions of "in-betweenness" brought on by conflicting social and political contentions in their lives—shapes how they "dwell," materially, in a given time and place.

I read the published and unpublished narratives of dwelling and displacement as dynamic networks of public and personal discourse that result in important forms of literacy sponsorship, both in the classroom and beyond it. Katrina Powell's work on working-class mining communities expands "displacement" from an expression by

individuals and groups to a tug-of-war between those groups and the institutions of power which render them "displaceable" (148). After Hurricane Katrina, the tragic racial politics of American cities like New Orleans were brought quickly into the public eye. But efforts by the media to shed light on the tragedy resulted in the hyper-valorization of narratives either of African American aggression (the subject supposed to loot and rape) or victimization (the subject supposed to be on welfare). Even well-meaning representations tend to use this binary as a convenient tool for entering the conversation. The media's obsession with the race question (and their ironic failure to deal with it in a meaningful way) turns other stories of displacement, destruction and recovery—including stories by African Americans—into silent excesses to the "real" story of Katrina. Powell's condition of "displacement" emphasizes the "displacee's rhetoric as a necessary aspect of understanding processes of displacement in general" (149). The voice that speaks and the voice that is spoken for together tell the story.

When dealing with articulations of place, trauma, displacement, and recovery it is important to adopt reading strategies that resist the rhetorical domination of participant narratives. It is easy simply to read the teachers and their students as victimized by their experiences. But to do so would be to overlook important social and political contributions they make to their personal and communal recovery efforts, as well as to the larger narratives of the storm and its aftermath. Further, it would mean ignoring the agency inherent in narrativizing experience and sharing it with others. I agree with Min-Zhan Lu, who insists that we must be vigilant against the habitual reading practices we bring to a text (any text) when we read ("Politics of the Personal"). She explains, "instead of using 'our' norm … to evaluate a writer's decision to bring in or not bring in certain

aspects of the personal and that writer's decision to write or not write the personal, we need to treat these decisions as political acts by examining them in relation to the social, historical contexts of their productions and reception" (54/5, see also Ratcliffe "Rhetorical Listening" and Royster "When the First Voice You Hear"). My goal, then, is to avoid the potential danger of speaking for my subjects or evaluating their experiences based on how near or far they fall in relation to the median of "normal" composition scholarship (or, at least, my version of that scholarship). [2]

A brief word on the ethics of this sort of endeavor. I realize that in situating myself as researcher, I am always already assuming a position of power over my data and, by relation, the voices of those participants who have taken the time to work with me and to invest in my work. Thomas Newkirk's and Gesa Kirsch's warnings about how even the most well-intentioned case study and ethnographic projects become inevitably fraught with certain "contradictions, fissures, or gaps" (Kirsch "Methodological Pluralism" 248) are well taken. In response, I turn to Bruce Horner's materialist critique of post-modern, feminist, and critical ethnographic practices in "Critical Ethnography, Ethics, and Work." It is not enough to be "multi-vocal" or to be "self-reflexive" (two stances I have claimed here); we must likewise account for the material conditions that enable or prevent the work we are attempting to do. I acknowledge, then, the privilege of distance. As an outside researcher, I have none of the personal, institutional, or community conflicts that can arise after large-scale disaster. I acknowledge the privilege of resources, writing as I am from a Rhetoric and Composition program that offers me the

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[2] Here, I owe a debt to Gesa Kirsch and Joy Ritchie who warn against the silencing that may result when one reports participant narratives ("Beyond the Personal"). But I also draw inspiration from Wendy Hesford's reminder that those of us doing people-focused research face a particularly nasty dilemma— while to silence is unthinkable, to leave silent is, perhaps, just as bad (Framing Identities).

support and the opportunity to conduct this kind of work. Where a composition specialist in New Orleans may not have this level of institutional support to study her home institution (or may no longer have it, based on changes to material conditions after the storm), I have the economic support to conduct research far from my home and the institutional recognition to draw attention to it in the academic community. However, the goal of materially conscious and socially responsible research should not be to provide access for participants to speak (even though an outside researcher, untouched by local events may do this), but to "secure the material conditions" in which the researcher and the participants can speak together in a dialogue (Horner 30). As such, I try to avoid too much direct critique in favor of allowing teachers to speak for themselves. Critical insights arrive in juxtapositions and contrasts, as well as in my efforts to highlight key ideas introduced by the teachers themselves.

<p style="text-align:center">**********</p>

For Brandt, literacy is an "unstable currency" because, as a social practice, it is always negotiated by its value in given places at given times (7). This value is dictated by the specific material conditions of production and reception related to literate practices; its cultural capital is never static. It is important, then, to understand the fluctuating values given to literacy and literate work in the context of disaster when the importance of reliable communication, community, and infrastructure (or, in the case of Hurricane Katrina, the absence of these things) becomes most notable.

Of course, sponsorship is ongoing at all levels of culture and the sponsor and the sponsored do not necessarily have to agree on the terms of sponsorship (or what

communicative practices are being sponsored). In fact, Brandt suggests, the sponsored often aren't aware that this relationship is occurring. They simple go to school, design classroom activities, or participate in public discussion about education in ways that seem "normal." But this sense of the normal is always already operating within a framework of sponsorship set out by those in power, who set the terms of what constitutes the "official," but not necessarily that which is "useful" to individuals and groups (Brandt 19). At different levels of culture we see subjects in conflicting relationships with official and unofficial sponsorships. In the case of university education, sponsors include federal and state standards boards, university administration, program and unit leadership, faculty and staff, as well as students themselves. Of course, the interests and actions of those in power will exert pressure on the actions and reactions of those without power. But this pressure is inevitably dialogic, in the sense that choices made by social actors at any level of culture may function both to sustain and to dismantle (or re-compose) hegemonic social order.

It is to the maintenance and resistance of discursive and social hegemony that I look in this analysis of narratives by teachers and writing program administrators living and working in New Orleans in the semesters immediately following the storm. I examine the mundane stories of life as it was lived during challenging circumstances, as a way to resist the urge to tell stories of high drama and high trauma (though they are both evident and relevant in this context) because I think the stories of "day to day experience" (Robinson) offer us more useful tools for considering representations of life and work in these classrooms and communities. Telling only trauma stories, as is so often the inclination in popular and scholarly discussions, limits the social and political relevance

of the work these individuals were doing and obscures the lasting value of what they learned in doing their work.

Post-Secondary Education in New Orleans before and after August 29, 2005

To understand how instructors sponsored literate practices in Post-Katrina New Orleans, we should first consider the social/political context of education in the city before, during, and after the storm. According to Amy Koritz and George Sanchez, education in New Orleans can be historically understood in terms of "broad structural inequalities and palpable history of racism and political corruption in the region" (2). In 2004, Louisiana had the second highest poverty rate in the country, with 37% of its black residents considered impoverished (Koritz and Sanchez 2). In the city of New Orleans this figure was consistent. While 28% of the city population was impoverished before the storm, it is the disparity in poverty by region that is most telling. New Orleans parish, which includes the French Quarter, Uptown, Mid-City, Central City, Lakeview, Gentilly, the Bywater and the 9th Ward, as well as New Orleans East, was 73% black before the storm and of that population, 34% were considered impoverished (Miron and Ward).

Within this economically and racially segregated context, the schoolchildren of New Orleans have languished in one of the more chronically under-supported school districts in the country (Casserly, Darling-Hammond, Zamani-Gallagher and Polite). Michael Casserly, in his article "Double Jeopardy: Public Education in New Orleans Before and After the Storm," suggests that the school children of New Orleans were victimized equally before and after the storm. Prior to Katrina, they "were isolated racially, economically, academically, and politically in public schools that were financed inadequately, maintained poorly, and governed ineptly" (Casserly 197). 75% of the 120

New Orleans public schools were on academic warning status and 35% had not made

sufficient progress under the national No Child Left Behind act (Casserly). These schools

were 93.4% African American before the storm, in contrast with 47.8% African

American enrollment in schools around the rest of the state (Casserly, Fleener et al.).

Some 80% of the New Orleans school population qualified for lunch support, compared

to 60.7% statewide and 35.2% nationally. High school juniors and seniors in New

Orleans Public Schools (NOPS) scored well under the national average on ACT exams

and elementary and middle school students scored, on average, 10% lower on Louisiana

state proficiency exams (Casserly).

Koritz and Sanchez thus emphasize the importance of city contexts in

understanding how and where people live, and why they were more or less adversely

affected by the storm. This sense of geography is equally important to understanding the

student populations in area post-secondary institutions, which include: Delgado

Community College, Dillard University, Loyola University, Nunez Community College,

SUNO, Tulane University, UNO, and Xavier University. As nationally recognized

private institutions, Tulane and Loyola serve a student population made up largely of out-

of-state students with both the academic preparation and economic stability to thrive in a

competitive university environment. UNO is a major urban research university with a

diverse student population and numerous undergraduate and graduate programs. Dillard,

SUNO, and Xavier are three historically black universities that reflect diverse points on a

spectrum of reputation and resources, with Xavier serving a more economically and

geographically diverse student population, while Dillard and SUNO largely serve

communities of New Orleans and southern Louisiana (Akbar and Sims). As two-year

colleges, Delgado and Nunez serve almost entirely local populations, including large numbers of non-traditional students.

But student populations are only part of the story of what happened at these institutions. Geography shapes the range and degree of devastation in the neighborhoods where these universities reside. The three HBCUs are located in historically less-desirable, low-lying areas of the city. These were neighborhoods already struggling with economic and political marginalization and Tom Bonner, the former chair of Xavier's English Department, suggests they were "disproportionally affected" by the storm ("Facing the Flood" 18). SUNO, which sits in the lowest part of the city near the industrial canal, was under eleven feet of water for several weeks and flooded again after Hurricane Rita in September of 2005 (Koritz and Sanchez). The campus was almost completely destroyed, with no electricity, gas, or drinking water for three months (Akbar and Sims). For years afterward, SUNO has operated out of an assortment of rehabilitated, temporary buildings and FEMA trailers. Dillard University, in a more centrally located area of Gentilly, was also largely flooded and fared only slightly better. The campus took up to eight feet of water and remained closed for a year, though classes were resumed in the spring semester at a makeshift campus set up in the Hilton Riverside Hotel, site of the 2008 CCCC meetings (Koritz and Sanchez, McDonald "In the Wake of Katrina"). While Xavier's campus did flood, the level of destruction paled in comparison to the other two HBCUs and by January of 2006 courses were resumed on campus. To accommodate the lost time, Xavier held their "fall" semester between January and May 2006, and their "spring" semester between May and August, opting to eliminate summer school instead of a full semester (personal interviews, McDonald "In the Wake of Katrina").

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Other post-secondary institutions in New Orleans, including UNO (located on Lake Ponchartrain in Lakeview), Delgado (in Mid-City), and Nunez (in Chalmette), were all significantly damaged by the storm, the flooding, and/or evacuees searching for shelter in the aftermath. UNO resumed its fall semester a few weeks after the storm at a satellite campus on the North Shore of Lake Ponchartrain and via online classes. The main campus had been heavily damaged by the storm and flood waters, and had also been a National Guard evacuation and staging area. They re-opened in the spring semester of 2006 in a ghostly Lakeview community that was largely abandoned. Delgado took 3 to 6 feet of flood waters in 20 of its 25 buildings including the library, which was completely destroyed (McDonald). Nunez was similarly affected, with only a few buildings suitable for use by the spring semester (Robinson). Both Delgado and Nunez were immediately active in establishing online courses and temporary locations for class meetings in the fall (McDonald).

Tulane and Loyola, located on neighboring plots in Uptown New Orleans, both suffered wind damage and loss of basic services, but neither campus flooded. [3] Classes on both campuses resumed almost immediately, though Tulane was forced to provide temporary housing for their students and faculty on a rented cruise ship (McDonald).

The financial impact on every university, regardless of damage, was significant and each university maneuvered economically, politically, and culturally to recover from the aftermath of Katrina. Some of these adaptations were and continue to be controversial. At most of these schools it was necessary to begin recovery from a

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[3] The downtown Tulane medical facility flooded completely and its recovery or replacement remains a divisive political issue in the city to this day.

distance, as all administrative officials, faculty members, staff, and students were evacuated from the city for some time. Technology, in the form of cell phones, text messaging, and email became the link among displaced, but interconnected, parts of university communities and programs as they set about the work of recovery (Akbar and Sims, Bonner). And it is perhaps this distance and dislocation that makes much of the widespread budgetary cutting and ideological shifting appear so unsympathetic. [4] Private schools like Tulane, Loyola, Dillard, and Xavier were faced with rebuilding costs, shrinking endowments, and dwindling enrollments (their primary source of funding) in the immediate aftermath of the storm. Tulane laid off 230 faculty members, including 180 at the downtown medical center and 50 at the uptown campus, as well as hundreds of part-time faculty and support staff (McDonald). Entire programs were eliminated, including the graduate degree in English. The Newcomb Women's College was collapsed into the university, and a new Undergraduate college, focused on service and civic learning, was formed (Esmail et al., Johnson Personal Interview, McDonald). Loyola laid off 19 professors (McDonald), as well as several contingent faculty members, including two full-time and two part-time instructors in the English department (Greene). Dillard, which along with Xavier had a tougher time securing recovery funds, lost 59% percent of its faculty and staff after the storm (Akbar and Sims). Xavier's administration declared *force majeur* in September, a throwback to Napoleonic laws still on the books in Louisiana, that enabled them to invoke financial exigency to void all contracts with all faculty, tenured and non-tenured, and all staff. Faculty members who were to be kept on,

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[4] It is worth noting as well that the schools and programs I discuss here were able to hire back many, in some cases all, of the faculty they were forced to eliminate after the storm. I emphasize only the losses here as a way to frame the living and working condition of the remaining teachers in those semesters immediately after the storm.

initially about 50%, were offered new contracts (Bonner, Greene). Un-retained faculty, who in many cases were unaware that they had been laid off, were not paid for their final month until spring semester.

The public institutions faced similar budgetary cuts due to limited state funds, dwindling enrollments, and rebuilding costs. SUNO in particular was vulnerable to dissolution. McDonald observes that, as a state funded HBCU, a weakened SUNO appeared to be nothing more than "a relic of segregated education and an unnecessary duplication of academic programs offered at UNO," despite its importance to the African American community (10). In an effort to remain economically viable, SUNO eliminated 19 programs, but added 7 new ones focused on vocational work, including business entrepreneurship, medical records administration, human development and family services. Its faculty was reduced from 161 to 91, [with 55 of the 70 lost furloughed], a 45% loss overall (Akbar and Sims, Esmail et al., McDonald). As with most of the other schools, increased workloads and responsibilities fell to those faculty and staff who remained. Delgado and Nunez both primarily laid off contingent faculty members even though their enrollments increased in the wake of the storm; the increase was largely due to the low cost of tuition and to vocational programs that offered free online courses (Greene). At Delgado, in the writing program alone 30 adjunct instructors were eliminated, with 8 hired back over the next year. Similar cuts were made across programs at UNO, with all contingent faculty laid off, accounting for some 45 sections of first and second semester composition (Greene). All eight New Orleans area post-secondary institutions received some form of censure from the American Association of University

Professors for their handling of emergency preparation, faculty and staff terminations, or program restructuring (Bonner, Greene, McDonald).

Within this difficult context the pedagogical response by instructors was complicated by long-term shifts, not only in the missions of their universities, but also in the student populations they had traditionally served. The flooding from Hurricane Katrina had resulted in a disproportionate change in the city's population, as poor residents (largely African American) who had initially been unable to evacuate the city were removed during recovery and relocated to cities around Louisiana and the United States (Miron and Ward). As a result, schools that traditionally served poor and marginalized populations were, themselves, disproportionately affected. Much of the part-time and future student populations were in exile and those who did return faced unimaginable economic, emotional and material hardship. For those who stayed, those who evacuated, and those forcibly removed, pursuing advanced education was often a bridge too far. This was particularly the case for African American students for whom "being black, and poor, and from New Orleans" was "taxing mentally, emotionally, and physically, especially considering that movement usually involves not just individuals but families with elders and children in tow" (Miron and Ward 165; also see Haney et al.).

The NOPS faced a massive loss in tax revenue as some 300,000 students didn't return in the immediate aftermath of the storm (Zamani-Gallagher and Polite). Similar losses were felt in the city's post-secondary institutions where total enrollments dropped from 45,000 in August of 2005 to 30,000 in January of 2006 (McDonald). SUNO and Dillard lost nearly half their student populations and have slowly been gaining them back. Delgado lost 35% of their enrolled student population (McDonald). UNO lost more than

half its student population and has been slow to regain its pre-Katrina numbers as many students have left the city to attend colleges like Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond LA, which saw a large influx of evacuees, many of whom did not return to the city (Louth). All told, as many as 54,000 students dropped out of New Orleans area universities for at least a semester after the storm and many dropped out for the entirety of that year (Akbar and Sims). Any attempt to understand the pedagogical response to Katrina and its aftermath must take into account these constantly shifting, emotionally, culturally, and historically dynamic circumstances. Simply put, the social and material realities of life in and around the city were irrevocably altered and what it meant to "sponsor" literacy or education changed along with them.

Esmail, Ergle, and Das suggest the long-term changes to area universities can be organized into several overlapping themes that recur in narratives by teachers and administrators. Some of the more salient changes include: the locations and types of courses offered (including increased use of satellite campuses and temporary spaces, expanded use of online instruction, and focused vocational or service curriculum), changes in funding and policy, and changes to teaching methods or outcomes linked to the material conditions of working in New Orleans. This last theme is of greatest importance here as material circumstances provide the most important contextual factors governing how and where literacy sponsorship may occur. As Esmail et al. explain, many of the comforts and even the tools of academic work were removed for some time after Katrina:

> Many students and instructors lost their residences and their possessions. Hence, both may be desperately attempting to find a place to live and to replace lost educational materials. Computers

were lost and, with that, the ability to type documents or send documents on the Internet. Projects stored on disk were damaged and/or lost. Books and lecture notes were destroyed. (199)

Such material complications contribute not only to difficulties in accomplishing work as it had been done prior to the storm, but also to psychological stress and anxiety (over financial loss, evacuation and relocation, and emotions tied to resuming life in the city), dissatisfaction with relief and recovery efforts, and changes to the form and function of education (Ladd et al.). Such anxiety, dissatisfaction, and change are all reflected consistently in the narratives by writing instructors.

Narratives about Teachers and Students in Context

Throughout published and unpublished accounts of writing instruction after Hurricane Katrina, composition scholars and practitioners have referred to an urge or duty to "teach Katrina" or not to "teach Katrina." How this urge or duty played out was reliant on many of the material and social factors described above, perhaps most importantly the institution and institutional culture with which each instructor was (or is) affiliated.

Material circumstances associated with evacuation, displacement, return, and recovery contribute to this sense of an inescapable rhetorical situation. Disaster on such a large scale clearly affects everyone, though importantly, it does not affect everyone in the same ways. Teachers occupying similar roles at different institutions have markedly different accounts of the storm, the exile, and the aftermath. Nonetheless, across these narratives of post-Katrina writing pedagogy, there is a pervasive sense that because they (meaning both students and teachers) cannot escape the influence of the storm on their lives, they (students specifically) will need to write about it.

Thomas Bonner, the former chair of the English Department at Xavier, who was in charge of recovering the program from exile and returning it to campus (and also an instructor of developmental writing courses), remarked on the level of displacement that complicated efforts to reinstate the sense of community that binds a program or department together:

> ...by November we were pretty much in touch with each other, this faculty. We were discussing things like, how do we deal with these students who had this incredible experience. And one of the things about it is that, some of the students were here on campus when the water was coming up and had to be evacuated from the city...with the city under water. There was a sense of a traumatic experience and how do we address that, particularly in areas where student expression is a central part of the academic experience. Early on there was this notion of building into the program opportunities for students to write about what had happened to them.

He added,

> I was completely aware that I wanted to draw on their most recent experience, because I figured that, one, they would want to talk about it, two, they probably needed to talk about it; and three, it was a very practical thing, because any writing teacher is always searching for topics that are accessible to beginning writers. (personal interview)

Diane (pseudonym), a senior faculty member in Xavier's English Department who was among the first faculty members back after the storm, marked how students, like their teachers, were bound up in the material conditions of recovery: "Many of them, or some of them anyway, they lost their homes themselves, the local students. So, they were just busy trying to put their lives back together again. Or they were here and their families were staying elsewhere; families were broken up, divided" (personal interview). These experiences and the conditions that shape them were an immediate concern for many teachers in post-Katrina universities. At UNO, where the student population was among

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the hardest hit, this conflict among displacement, personal and material recovery, and reintegration into the academic environment was even more tensely reflected. Karen (pseudonym), an administrator in the first-year writing program at UNO, explained the institutional limbo experienced by so many faculty and students, as well as the toll it eventually took on success and retention rates:

> ...We kept being told that we were going to find out about the elevation levels and the rules about rebuilding and those sorts of things. And in the fall we still believed it. By spring, we started to figure out they weren't going to do any of that and people had to start doing something. So, a lot of the kids just came in and said, you know, I can't go to school anymore, my family is rebuilding three homes. And I think that for our students, I mean, one of the things that made it much easier for those of us who were faculty was that most of us aren't from here. So, we had family elsewhere and we had support elsewhere. But for most of our students, because New Orleans is a place where nobody ever leaves... They were here, their parents were here, their grandparents were here. So, everybody in their family... they didn't have anybody to support them because they were all in the same boat. So I think that was hard. I really do think that spring was the hardest times for everybody. (personal interview)

Linda (pseudonym), a long-time composition instructor at Delgado College, explained a similar feeling of dislocation among her students—many of whom were non-traditional and from the Lakeview, Mid-City, and Lower 9th ward neighborhoods. But, she also suggested this desperation gave way, at least at her institution, to a re-formed sense of commitment to education. This is likely tied to the fact that many of Delgado's students lost property and the means for supporting themselves, where students at some other institutions had few personal losses or, in many cases, were not from the New Orleans community at all. As a result, the return to school, to education, might have represented for students an opportunity to recover a life that had been stalled by material destruction. Linda explained:

>...immediately after the storm it was the survivors. It was the students who had gotten through, somehow, whether they lost anything or not they came back... willing to do just about anything we asked. But they were also distracted and grieving, and struggling with home repairs...a lot of them were older students whose own homes had been ruined. It wasn't a parent's; it was their own. And so, I guess it felt like we were muddling through that initial period. And then, this semester and last semester, it seems like we have, in some ways, students who are willing to work a little harder. They're a little more serious. (personal interview)

She went on to say that regardless of pedagogical intentions—i.e. whether one intended to teach Katrina or not—the influence of material circumstances on classroom activities seemed unavoidable:

>Back then, [in the fall of 2005 and spring of 2006], I think it was more about the practical aspects of it, 'I don't have any money to get any books, because I don't have a job'...'I can't do my homework because I don't have a computer or my computer doesn't work'...'I had internet access but the phone company came and ripped up the wires to fix the wires in another part of the subdivision, so I have to go to the library to do my homework.' Library lines for computers during that time were tremendous. So we had to be flexible about due dates and about, really, just about everything...And getting textbooks was a huge frustration. If the student had enough money to get the textbook there were shipping delays because UPS was not going to deliver to an area that was shut down, that they thought wasn't accessible...so, it was difficult, in just simple matters, to get the books or whatever students needed. (personal interview)

These narratives of students and teachers working in the context of post-Katrina New Orleans, either in the city or from exile make clear why various alignments with post-traumatic pedagogies become such a priority. Where teachers elect to articulate a response to traumatic event and/or traumatic experience, they draw on common tropes of writing after or writing about post-traumatic experience. We have seen so far the trope of inevitability and necessity—students need to write about experience in order to control it—and the pervasiveness of material conditions and constraints on how, when, and why

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teachers teach. These narratives reveal how teachers draw on social and political conditions of "in-betweenness" as they make choices about how they want to live and teach (to "dwell") in the classroom, university and community.

Narratives of "In-Betweenness"

Before we discuss specific strategies articulated in response to the storm, it is worthwhile to consider how instructors explain the specifics of their own circumstances after Katrina and the extent to which disrupted social, emotional, and institutional norms, in concert with material conditions, resulted in various forms of displacement and dislocation. The ways in which instructors identify and explain feelings of displacement within the university and/or the community potentially contribute to how they align themselves with pre-existing composition pedagogy and how assumptions built into that pedagogy influence practice. Further, they reflect where their work begins to deviate from tradition and the agentive opportunities they seek as teachers situated amidst multiple and overlapping social structures. I highlight these narratives not in an effort to sensationalize experience. Rather, I hope to articulate—by drawing on these narratives of "in-betweenness"—the larger, felt sense of the storm and the extent to which it might be useful to consider "role conflict" in the wake of disaster, or what Kristen Barber explains as the "rational, unemotional academic self" conflicting with the "highly emotional hurricane victim self" (Barber et al. 109). These conflicts govern, in part, how instructors teach students after "trauma" and how they represent themselves and students in both formal and informal narrative.

Thomas Bonner offered an account of his own evacuation and recovery that focused on difficulties with basic communication. He began with a month-long exile in

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North Georgia, reconnecting with administration and faculty via the internet and telephone. He explained, "September involved answering the basic questions of life, death, injury, property loss, and work interruption. Thankfully, no one [in the department] suffered death or injury" ("Facing the Flood" 21). Following the South Central Modern Language Association (SCMLA) conference in Houston that October, where faculty members were able to reconnect, Bonner returned to the city to begin the process of reassembling a faculty that had been displaced not only by the storm, but also by the university's declaration of financial exigency which had enabled them to terminate all contracts (including tenured faculty) and re-hire as needed or as possible. This work of reassembling a functional academic department, he told me, took place largely in two mid-city coffeehouses where Bonner had access to power and wireless, which he did not have in the donated apartment where he was staying. He described those early months as follows:

> When we came back here at the very beginning of November I was staying in someone else's apartment out where I live now, because our house had been flooded for two and a half weeks, three weeks really. It was a wreck. So, the campus was closed. I basically used a coffee house that had computer hook-ups to be in contact with administrators. The university administrators were all over the place… and English faculty were spread coast to coast. Students were spread coast to coast. And we did not have, at the outset, a way to be in touch with each other. Nothing like this had ever happened before. (personal interview)

A colleague of Bonner's, Diane, echoed his sense of dislocation in leaving, returning, and attempting to return to "normalcy" (though she rejects the use of that word):

> We came back here in January and I suppose the biggest thing…you know, I have to go back, because for the first month or so I didn't know if I had a job. I didn't know if I'd have a paycheck at the end of September.

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So that was a consideration. My daughter and son-in-law moved in. My
husband lives in Grand Coteau. So I was back there, the kids were back
there, and I'm used to being here [in New Orleans] on my own for a larger
part of the time. So, that was quite an adjustment. I got a paycheck at the
end of September, but every month there was a query whether or not one
would have a job or a paycheck, because there was very little
communication with the university. You probably know this,
but...everybody was just scattered...people were all over the country, even
the leadership team. But then a number of us met at SCMLA...we met
there and so that was quite an emotional time, seeing people that we hadn't
seen for several months. (personal interview)

Diane's account reflects a feeling of distance like Bonner's. Out of contact with friends

and colleagues, working amid unfamiliar social circumstances and uncertain about the

institutional security of work when and if the city ever re-opened, faculty members

experienced disruption in even the most commonplace and mundane processes for

preparing a semester.

Helen (pseudonym), a full-time, non-tenure track English professor at Xavier who

lost her job in the immediate aftermath of the storm, explained her exile as a conflict

between rhetorical exigency and survivor's guilt:

As soon as I realized we were going to be stuck outside of New Orleans,
for more than the [three day] "hurri-cation," that's what we like to call it, I
was taking notes furiously and writing and really just feeling this need to
capture history. And, I was actually kind of jealous of the people who
were in New Orleans, in the boats, floating by, really writing about things
like how the ants had formed these little balls and the balls were floating
in the water. Or the stuff you'd see on CNN. And I really was jealous of
those people actually out there capturing it but I decided, well, there's
more than one experience to the storm. There's what you see on TV, those
people are in the thick of it, but I'm experiencing the storm. Just because
I'm not there doesn't mean I wasn't forced to be where I am. And I'm
worried about my house and I'm worried about this and I'm worried about
that... Later, when I worked as a damage assessor [after having been let
go], I was doing the same thing, so I actually got to see parts of the city

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that I never would have seen. And I got to experience it from a different point of view. And I knew that I was fortunate in that, since I had not had my home damaged, even though I'd lost my job, thank god I had to have something to feel bad about, because, I mean really we all had survivors' guilt. If you didn't lose anything, it was a terrible feeling of guilt...(personal interview)

Helen's narrative sees her move the focus away from the limitations of material circumstance to a disciplinary attitude about the role of the writer and the teacher after crisis. The writer keeps the history and the teacher (empathically) facilitates the recording of experience. Importantly, material constraints continue to shape her ideas as we see the distance she identifies among writer, teacher, and student begin to collapse.

At Tulane, writing program director T.R. Johnson faced fewer institutional obstructions, as his university drew on reputation, resource, and its largely intact campus to return to "normalcy" more quickly. This does not, however, mean that instructors at Tulane were exempt from the ongoing and pervasive influences of the storm's destruction. Where university lives may have been less affected there, home and social lives were dramatically altered. In a co-authored article called "Floating Foundations: 'Kairos,' Community, and a Composition Program in Post-Katrina New Orleans," Johnson explained the conditions in which he set about re-building his program with the university's new service mission and a commitment to undergraduate education in mind:

In this period, my house had no mail service, rare garbage pickup, and constant power outages. I was on campus most of every day, but when I wasn't, I was at my desk at home—candles ready, batteries charged— often standing up from my work only to say goodbye to friends who had stopped by to say that, yes, they had lost everything, and no, they weren't coming back. With the social fabric ripped away, the next eighteen months of my life became a milder, extended, slow-motion version of what so many of my neighbors had experienced so abruptly during the week that

began on August 29, 2005: school was all there was, the only thing that pointed toward a future; ground zero for whatever new community might come to exist. ("Floating Foundations" 31)

From an administrative perspective, Johnson's narrative is important. We see the extent to which WPA work, like classroom teaching, was permanently influenced by contextual factors. The re-building of a program was more than institutional work; it was also personal catharsis and community development. This perspective, however, also reveals the extent to which institutions had distinctly different resources and ideologies for responding to the storm. At Tulane, school represented the "future," whereas schools like Delgado and UNO faced less certain, less hopeful processes of recovery. Karen, the administrator at UNO, relates a story similar to Johnson's, but vastly different institutional conditions seem to exacerbate her feelings of chaos and displacement. UNO did not return to campus until the spring, and efforts to offer classes online in the fall (and, in very limited number, at a satellite campus on the North Shore) added to the stress of dislocation:

> ...it was maybe by the second week of September we were told we were going to have a semester. Because, I'd gone thinking I'll go find some temp-work until I can get back to town or do something...so [the department chair] calls and says we're going to do a semester and, at that point, I was signed up to teach a course online and to do the freshman stuff...I think I was with [the dean of arts and sciences] when I broke down in tears and I said I can't do this. And she said, she didn't realize and I don't think [the chair] had ever realized that there was just so much going on with it that I couldn't do the administrative work and teach a class. Because, I just stayed up all night long. I couldn't sleep. So, about two in the morning I'd start writing emails to faculty about things or setting up policies. Because what we were trying to do, we'd never taught English online, we'd never wanted to teach English online. We had no one with experience. We had a few people who used Blackboard, but the majority had not. We didn't know how [the University] was going to register

students, we didn't know what we were going to have because we didn't have email. And at that point you were working through whatever private account you could set up. (personal interview)

After the campus re-opened, still occupied by National Guard and still largely under construction, attempts to re-connect the academic and larger community provided further administrative obstacles. No longer was Karen communicating through the distance of email and the isolation of material displacement. The emotional lives of teachers and students became more influential, as did the stress that accompanies discussions of shared loss. She explained:

> It was much harder in the spring, just because everybody was in the same boat as the students. And there were people whose houses weren't flooded, but the majority of people had lost houses or at least were doing repairs or doing other things. There were times where people who had taught and had taught really well, just sort of had breakdowns. It was, like, 'that's okay, but you've got to pull it together for your students, or let me know.' And, then we'd just sort of get back on track. We had an online class where students didn't hear anything for three weeks or so. So, I said come see me, the students hadn't heard anything. And it was just like, 'oh god, we're trying to this and the house is flooded, I just can't,' and I said, I know, that's fine. Then I'd say, 'what do we need to do, what do you need to get...is it time, is it feeling overwhelmed,' and I think sometimes it was just being able to say, 'I don't have to worry, somebody's going to find out...' (personal interview)

Community, in this context, appears to be a blessing and a curse. On one hand, we see the comfort of working face to face, of relying on one another. On the other, we see how a return to the physical environment of the disaster brings the tragedy into clearer focus. As an element which brings people together, community was challenged by wide discrepancies in how the storm and its aftermath were experienced. While everyone was affected to a degree, they were not affected in the same ways. These differences reflect

regional and class privilege that are more prominent after disaster. Karen tells how the environment around UNO served as a daily reminder, a daily disruption:

> Now it's starting to look better, this is what, four years later. For four years we've been driving to school through what looks like a combat zone...I think the effects for people of the city, psychologically, are just unending. I noticed and I think everybody else did too, if I went to school a different way for some reason, if I hadn't been that way for a long time...every new area you were seeing for the first time just took a day out of you. (personal interview)

The material repercussions of the storm—whether or not one's own house was destroyed—were inescapable. There were few places to shop, to buy gas, to socialize. The Lakeview area surrounding UNO to the East, South, and West was a ghost town, with street after street of abandoned houses, many sitting several feet from their original foundations.

These daily interactions with various forms of dislocation and recovery—material, political, institutional, emotional—result in two themes that recur in the narratives by post-Katrina instructors. The first, best articulated by Piano et al, is a sense of "Katrina Fatigue." It is a phrase we will see again used in the context of "teaching Katrina," as students, experiencing similar or more extreme feelings of dislocation and recovery, resisted any prompting to view Katrina as a subject for writing assignments. In the case of instructors, it seems to refer more to the unbearable stresses of watching the circumstances of one's life (as well as the lives of one's students) changing continuously over time, with little or no control over how those changes played out.

Doreen Piano, a faculty member in the English Department at UNO, described the sources of this "fatigue" as follows:

Building damage such as the open wound of a ceiling where wires dangled freely in one of my classrooms was endemic and periodic black-outs and water main breaks disrupted the normal functioning of the campus. (For at least a month, members of my department were seen scurrying across campus to use other bathrooms since ours was defunct.) Besides that, the university declared financial exigency and departments across campus were bracing for program cuts, hiring freezes, and even faculty furloughing. Student enrollment had dropped by a third and many continued to take online courses from evacuation locations, leaving the campus devoid of any student life. (Piano et al. 95)

And a colleague, Jane (pseudonym), recalled a sense in which the urge to help students deal with their experiences of trauma brought about a stark contrast in terms of what the faculty were receiving in terms of support. She explained:

I remember one of the arguments that I made after the storm, and I made this overtly and explicitly after the Virginia Tech shooting. We got an email from the chancellor that talked about ways you could talk about this with your students. It made me really angry, and I wrote an email to the chancellor, that was like, you are essentially ignoring that five of the people that were shot that day were faculty members and you're asking us to somehow...I got really angry that there was never any recognition that the faculty, it was sort of like, look at what the faculty has done for the students and the sacrifices they've made. But there was never any kind of assistance for faculty who, themselves, were suffering trauma... (personal interview)

A second and more prominent theme which recurs in the narratives of these teachers is the extent to which returning to New Orleans, planning and conducting classes, and recovering lives outside of the classroom, functioned at a level many call the "new normal." In many ways, New Orleans is a city famous for doing things differently, but after the storm those idiosyncrasies that had made New Orleans unique were amplified. Ineffective social services became a reason to feel distrust toward local, state, and national governments. Legacies of racism and marginalization prompted intense

emotional reaction and once reliable institutions were viewed as hostile to community and productivity. Even the natural world no longer seemed trustworthy. In response to this increasing sense of distrust, instructors appeared to turn toward a focus on community activism and breaking down any distinctions between their home and work lives. One instructor suggested that some of the negativity associated with a "new normal" derived from how New Orleans-area universities handled programmatic changes and faculty terminations. She described a loss of "trust" on the part of the faculty: "everyone is more suspicious or less trusting of the administration since then... also, everybody's also quite cynical about tenure and what tenure means" (personal interview).

At UNO, where significant administrative moves were made, Karen made a similar observation:

> ... I think because they said, we're going to go to Baton Rouge, we're going to set up campus, here's what you do, here's what you do...I think that when we got back, the idea of getting input on anything or getting the faculty included on any decision was just gone. It's like they got used to saying, here's a decision, here's a decision, here's what we're going to do. And once they've done it, are they going to go back? Well, no. And everything has felt, since then, like here's the edict...that has changed my attitude a lot. I feel a lot less a part, I am a lot less connected to it now than I was when I first came back, because at first those things made sense, but when they didn't stop doing it... (personal interview)

This feeling of distrust underwrites many of the narratives I gathered and occupies a place in much of the published literature by faculty members after the storm. While budget concerns were/are a problem at any school and, generally, are received with a feeling of betrayal by individuals and groups who have little or no input about how decisions are made, it was the speed and the severity of these cuts that seemed to resonate deeply with these speakers (also the fact that they came at a moment of total

vulnerability). It reflects a distrust the people of New Orleans appear to have for many

things after Katrina, including the city and national governments, as well as the natural

world itself. In my conversation with T.R. Johnson, he explained these frustrated

anxieties in city-wide terms:

> It's changed; it's not the place it was, because there's a worry. You know, the city that care forgot, the big easy, it ain't easy anymore. And it ain't as big as it was. It's not the city that care forgot; it's the city of constant worry and anxiety, especially from mid-August until November. And when Gustave came, it re-opened a lot of wounds and made a lot of people insane. Because all of us were like, oh my god we've done nothing but work for the last three years, what if everything we've worked to build back just gets flushed out in a night? That's the great worry, you know. That's the big fear. (personal interview)

In many ways, the "new normal" constitutes a focused interaction with the idea of

"role conflict" and draws attention to how one copes with a state of being personally and

professionally "in-between" worlds. Barber et al. describe how "the process of moving

between the orderly world of work and the chaotic world of home and neighborhood

became psychologically demanding" (103). Nancy Richard, a veteran faculty member at

Delgado Community College, sheds light on this process in her article "What Then Must

We Do":

> [w]e've long since lost count of those who lost everything: their homes, the contents unrecognizable in a dark sludge, a refrigerator on its side, jammed against the front door, water lines to eight, ten, twelve feet. When I saw them for the first time, they were living with friends, relatives, in motels, out of their cars, and ultimately in FEMA trailers. But they returned, to a crippled city, to a college whose future was uncertain…What I watched in my colleagues and students throughout the following spring and summer semesters was a daily reminder of what writers have long observed about the human spirit. In the face of what seem to be insurmountable obstacles, untold loss, they come to work, to school, exhausted and discouraged, but with persistent good cheer. They stop and chat in our classrooms and hallways to share stories, some of

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them comic, some heartbreaking. But they're here. So that, after all, is
what we have learned to do. (42)

But the "new normal" did not only occupy the minds of teachers as they thought about

their own lives or the lives of colleagues and students. Re-conceiving "normal" as it is

shaped by the circumstances of one's life works as a metaphor for how teachers select

from categories of idea and experience circulating in their lives. They are ideologically

and materially situated in-between the old normal and the "new normal." The choices

these teachers make in their classrooms see them aligning themselves with expressive

and/or social orientations. They often come to view experience as both emotional and

intertextual, arriving at classroom pedagogy that asks their students to investigate the

trauma of the self—to witness, to work through—as well as the trauma of community and

what it means to be affected by the disaster in ways that diverge along lines of class, race,

and geography.

The "new normal," as a balancing of social pressure, material conditions, and

disciplinary ideology also influenced pedagogical acts and programmatic outcomes. As

teachers came to see the distance between their own experiences and those of their

students diminish, it appears to have been increasingly difficult to stress things like

academic rigor and writing assessment. Virtually everyone I spoke with discussed some

kind of "softening" of evaluation policies and expectations for student punctuality and

performance. Several teachers talked about "inflating grades" and attempts to balance the

use of mandated course outcomes or grading rubrics with increased empathy after reading

student narratives of evacuation and recovery. Southeastern Louisiana University English

Department chair Richard Louth posed this critical question in an article entitled "Katrina

in Their Own Words: Collecting, Creating, and Publishing Writing on the Storm." Louth

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asks, "How could you hold a student responsible for a typed paper when her home still had no electricity? How could you mark a student absent when he had to fix his roof or meet a FEMA trailer or track down a missing family member?" (Louth 27).

Of course, for some schools, these material concerns were ongoing for several semesters, even years after the storm. In the spring of 2009, many instructors I spoke to said they were still receiving Katrina narratives in their first-year writing courses. This is perhaps a result of changes in student populations; as the city returns to pre-Katrina population numbers and demographics, many of those students who experienced the storm most painfully are returning. Or, it could be that students cycling through places like UNO or Delgado are from secondary schools in disproportionately affected areas. Some instructors report, as time went by and the "new normal" became "normal," that students would, on occasion attempt to take advantage of the discourses of trauma still circulating in the city by submitting Katrina narratives either written in previous semesters or written with the hope of gaining an instructor's sympathies. At UNO, Jane described this dilemma in terms of a negotiation between expectations and sympathies, grading what's "on the page" instead of the student's experience. But, she admitted that some of her students seemed well aware of the "in-between" space that she occupied in those early semesters of recovery:

> The ones that made me feel manipulated were the "contractor ate my homework [stories]," because it assumed, it made me feel like they were assuming that I hadn't been impacted by the storm. And I had been impacted by the storm in different ways. I hadn't lost my home, and I guess the students may have been able to assume that because the students knew I was in New Orleans and to be in New Orleans meant that you had someplace to stay. (personal interview)

On "Teaching Katrina"

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From the material circumstances of New Orleans after the storm and the

conditions of "in-betweenness" that implicitly and explicitly emerge from these instructor

narratives we begin to see the various exigencies for teaching Katrina in the classroom.

Shifting material conditions of life and work, along with the competing attitudes, beliefs,

and emotions they invoke, resulted in teachers aligning and re-aligning themselves with

various disciplinary strategies for designing post-traumatic pedagogy.

Many of these instructors came to see Katrina as a "teachable moment," an event

so overwhelming and pervasive that it touched all lives. Sponsorship practices that derive

from this expectation typically see instructors engaging students at the level of

experience, in assignments like Celeste Del Russo's "Where Y'at sessions" (Piano et al.),

that began from narratives of evacuation and recovery and gave way either to more in-

depth narratives of trauma and personal growth or to critical engagements with the social

and political contexts of post-Katrina New Orleans. Underwriting the articulation of this

"moment," which was not a singular moment but a series of events, settings, and

circumstances that aggregate into the iconic New Orleans question "Where Y'at?", is the

sense that students will want and need to write about Katrina and, very likely, will write

about it whether prompted to or not. Further, this perspective assumes that, because

Katrina was such a charged political topic, students won't have an opportunity to

critically come to terms with their experiences anyplace else. However, by situating

student experience within and among the lived experiences of other students, teachers,

and community members, students are also encouraged to see as a part of larger historical

circumstances. Balancing the poles of post-traumatic pedagogy, such assignments can

lead to critical reflection or textual dissonance (as we shall see in chapter 3).

In some cases the desire to "teach Katrina" was cast as an ethical question, or

what Joe Letter has called a "moral imperative" (Johnson, Letter, and Livingston). Not

teaching Katrina, not addressing it as a social, historical, political, and topical presence in

the class, was to do a disservice to students. Letter, one of the many post-doctoral fellows

brought into the Tulane writing program after the storm, marked the extent to which

Katrina altered his writing and his teaching:

> Katrina was a forced engagement in every sense of the word. What better lesson than that to take away from the horrors of the levee failure? At the same time, Katrina was more than a lesson gleaned in the chaotic aftermath: it had become a moral imperative. To withdraw, to try to gain 'perspective,' was to intellectualize the event, to turn away from its immediate power, its real and wrenching impact. Rather than retreat into a protected academic space, I was determined to sustain contact with the ongoing realities of the disaster. That meant making my work space, the writing classroom, coeval with the present reality of New Orleans. (Johnson, Letter and Livingston 33)

Taking their "cue from the ruins of the nearby cityscape," Letter and his collaborators

develop the concept of a "floating foundation," their term for the extent to which space

and lived environments intersect with student and teacher academic and home lives (33).

Such a view suggests that the role of university teachers and administrators inevitably

must change in response to such a tragedy and that bridging gaps between the campus

and the community constitutes not just an opportunity, but an obligation. Letter's position

further implies that to ignore the collapsing distinctions between campus and community

is to align oneself with historical notions of the university as ivory tower, untouched by

the troubles of the people below. His assertion that the classroom can and should

somehow become "coeval" with the "present reality" in the streets and neighborhoods of

New Orleans reflects this problem.

Xavier University faculty member Kathryn Laborde takes a less intertextual, but equally social view of post-traumatic pedagogy. She explained her approach to "teaching Katrina" in her spring 2006 writing course as follows:

> "This semester," I told my students, "we will be writing about our experience as well as the experiences of others. What you have lived through is important," I continued. "But as overwhelming and unforgettable as it seems right now, you will forget the little details, the very sights and scents that will bring this experience back to you in full color. That said, we will spend the semester saving these details in black and white. And one day many years from now, you'll be glad that you did." ("Show and Tell" 53/4)

It is worth noting the use of the pronoun "we" here, as Laborde positions her own post-Katrina writing as an impetus for re-conceiving her course expectations and for helping to build community and confidence in the classroom. She goes on to explain how her students produced narratives of evacuation, exile, and return that follow the model she sets out for them. But in my view this position introduces a key question: to what extent did the urge to "teach Katrina" reflect the needs of the sponsoring entity, in this case the instructor, more than the needs of the sponsored students? Laborde and Letter together reflect the continuum of post-traumatic pedagogy that each instructor in this study aligned themselves with. Letter focuses on social contexts to the extent that important differences may be elided, while Laborde focuses on the "black and white" narratives of personal experience.

Del Russo, in the article "Making It Up As We Go Along: Students Writing and Teachers Reflecting a Post-K New Orleans," developed a sense of the "teachable moment" that further explores this tension between the aims of writing pedagogy and the pressure to tell storm stories. She emphasized that "we had all experienced Katrina,"

which suggests that writing Katrina can result in a level of camaraderie that is difficult to attain in a classroom, program, or institution not bound together by its response to significant pressures. She added:

> Returning to the classroom was no easy feat, especially considering that nearly half of my students had lost their homes and were still living in FEMA trailers, hotels, or in friends' basements. I did not want my class to be seen as just one more obstacle to cross on their way to recovery. Rather, I wanted students to realize the classroom as a space for writing in response to tragedy, and hoped this would be beneficial for them as they rebuilt their personal lives. (Piano et al. 85)

For Del Russo, the storm and the altered social fabric of the city constituted a unique opportunity to engage students in locally focused, community writing projects. It was a chance to "get students to translate into writing what they had already perceived as issues of local importance and personal relevance to themselves as storm victims and members of an affected community" (Piano et al. 85). Their experiences of Katrina, gathered through those "Where Y'at?" writing prompts, became the groundwork for the students' various forays into other topics of interest, an almost endless array of issues that could be connected to the storm.

Also in Piano et al., Sarah DeBacher, a faculty member at UNO, similarly saw the return and recovery as "an enormous opportunity" (Piano et al. 88). DeBacher outlined how her background in creative writing had driven her to use writing (in the form of a blog) to personally heal and, she reasoned, such efforts might help her students as well. Framing her pedagogy against the "publicly co-opted" image of New Orleans endlessly repeated by national news outlets, she explained that she felt as though she "had an

obligation to 'right the wrong' in my own writing, and have my students do the same in theirs":

> That first post-Katrina semester, though, I questioned whether it was responsible to allow a student to write about any old thing when clearly Katrina was the most important subject on any New Orleanian's radar. After all, Hurricane Katrina was the subject that defined us, and the one we had the power—through writing—to define. (89)

But DeBacher later came to the realization that this work arrived with potential dangers and that any attempt to "teach trauma" without coming to terms with the social and political complexities of experience and representation could result in harm to teachers and/or their students. She confesses in the article, "I didn't need to change how I taught in order to 'teach Katrina.' In fact, I quickly learned that 'assigning Katrina' would in many ways be a mistake" (Piano et al. 89). Part of the mistake would be in the kind of non-academic, popularized discourse that writing Katrina made available for students in the classroom. The writing that emerged from these Katrina-focused assignments was plagued by "soap-box conclusions" and "it became clear that they were too close to the experience to make sense of it, and in forcing them to try, I realized that I'd put some of them through no small amount of emotional stress …which I'd hear about, as many of my colleagues later did, in my student-evaluations" (Piano et al. 91). She added:

> [W]e were tired from living in a broken city. The stores and restaurants where we'd made our groceries were closed, many permanently. We were driving miles to find a working gas station; broken traffic lights and power outages were a fact of life; doctors, dentists, and hospitals were few and far between. The landscape was altered, though it appeared achingly whole, sometimes, in our dreams. And even if we had not lost everything like so many others, we knew (just as the media and those who fed on it told us) that we were bad, bad off. But we were also tired from *thinking* about all this. (91, emphasis added)

In DeBacher's class, a sense of "Katrina Fatigue" set in and interrupted the work of writing instruction (tied to events), as well as any accounting for the events themselves. She concludes that her students "wrote poorly because I imposed a topic that they were not equipped to write about (at least not yet). In assigning Katrina as a subject, I had attempted to direct them toward discoveries I had already made in my own writing—toward what I saw as its potential meaning" (Piano et al. 93). DeBacher reveals that such assignments erase rather than call attention to difference. Social, historical, and personal differences are washed out by the expectation that post-traumatic stories must align with conventions of disciplinary and popular discourse—they should be "truthful" and they should be introspective. The limitations of such conventions in helping students engage with the mediation of race, class and trauma led DeBacher to resist her own urge to "teach Katrina" in a way that seemed meaningful for her, but not for her students.

Laborde ultimately marked a similar complication in her own efforts to "teach Katrina," though she never abandoned hope that her expressive approach was valuable. Instead of focusing on the extent to which students were able to "make sense" of the storm, she emphasized writing about Katrina as an act of recording events not for the sake of individual therapy, but for documenting a historical record ("Show and Tell"). But even this cause was perilous at times. She explained how a sort of "darkness" eventually set upon the class and how some students resisted the assignments:

> There was a moment in one of my classes where one of my students, I mean she was just resisting everything, and finally one day I wanted to talk to her after class and I said "okay, I'm getting this resistance, what's up." She said "I'm just so sick of Katrina." And I said "well, I'm sorry." She said "it's not just you, everybody is teaching Katrina. Every class we go in we have to talk about Katrina, I want to move on, and no one is

letting me"... I think I did change an assignment a little bit to reflect something else, Mardi Gras, I don't know. But I felt like, I can't change this just because of this. It is what I want them to do. And I knew that they hadn't written this stuff down, most them, they were not writing in their journals, they were not doing anything like that. So, I really felt like what I was doing was important. It's kind of like, "this is good for you, and you're just going to do it anyway." But, I really, at that point I realized, oh how stupid was I to think...I didn't think every single person [was teaching this] down to the science classes figuring out how much oil was in the water... (personal interview)

The dominance of contextual circumstances, experienced in varying degrees by students, faculty, and administrators, formed an inescapable paradigm; not a rhetorical situation that might be held at a distance and manipulated, but a complete revision of the frames and lenses by which individuals and groups make sense of their world.

In fact, all of these instructors revealed some form of this tension as they negotiated among their own narratives of struggle, the expectations placed upon them by the university and the academy more generally, and the work of writers and intellectuals motivated to record and to account for histories of trauma and marginality. Laborde concluded that she didn't want her students to forget those narratives of hours spent on an interstate overpass, watching escaped prisoners force civilians to exchange clothes and parents search for missing children. She suggested to me, "...I know a lot of it they wanted to forget, but I thought 'you have to remember' because we can't go through this again" (personal interview). But the question remains, whether or not such a memorializing, post-traumatic pedagogy simply sponsors a form of recording or record-keeping (the details of community or personal experience) that does little more than assign value to student/community experience that the student or the community themselves did not select.

The memorializing impetus overlaps with the problems of overtly therapeutic writing instruction, in that both rely on a valorization of only what the teacher deems important. Where community or personal memorial writing may politicize experience and highlight a discursive negotiation in the post-traumatic situation, it urges the student writer to focus less on writing than on "culture," less on the means and methods of recording than on a record that could somehow ensure that this "never happens again." I don't wish to convey that these projects did not have benefit, or that they cannot have benefit, but that, in the context of large-scale disaster, it is important that we consider how we articulate such benefits, where, and for whom.

The differences among institutional goals, histories, and locations are also essential factors in determining how instructors attempted to "sponsor" literate practices after Katrina. We have seen instructors from UNO and Xavier, both institutions that were hit hard by the storm itself and the aftermath, narrate drawn-out material and pedagogical recovery efforts, large-scale terminations, and decimated geographic contexts. But the contextual factors motivating how instructors responded were very different at Tulane and the two-year colleges where they gave way to different engagements with the complexities of teaching or not teaching Katrina. In particular, questions of marginality and displaceability offered critical nodes for challenging student expectations about race and class in New Orleans or for acknowledging those expectations as paradigms governing (at least in part) marginal experience.

At Tulane, T.R. Johnson explained, there was some resistance on the part of students to viewing the storm as a "black disaster." This was a sentiment articulated by instructors at UNO as well. For Johnson, the "moral imperative" underwriting writing

instruction after Katrina was not necessarily to share stories only in order to reflect or to memorialize. Rather, he marked the need to "implicate" students in the events going on around them and to consider the roles that privilege, politics, and a tense racial history all played in what happened to various groups during and after the storm. This implication and activism are reflected in changes made to Tulane's undergraduate curriculum, which now stresses service (in addition to general education and research) as an essential component of undergraduate education. In a class that considered New Orleans along a historical and literary trajectory from the old slave market to Katrina, Johnson acknowledged that there was some resistance:

> I had one or two students drop the course immediately because they thought this was going to be a course that was just mired in concerns about race. And they wanted to make everybody understand that, by god, white people suffered during Katrina too and that's the most important thing you can say about Katrina. I was like, sure...white people certainly suffered during Katrina, but it was a sledgehammer on the entire black population of the city. All black lives here were altered forever by that storm; not all white lives were. There were some students who, it was such a fraught moment in the history of the city, who just basically, all but stood up and walked out the first week. They wanted their nightmares to be at the center of things and felt that the story of Katrina had become too much the story about black poverty. Not enough the story about white inconveniences, inconveniences that fell upon privileged white people. (personal interview)

This is a particularly important line of inquiry at Tulane where so many of the students are not locals. Because Tulane is a nationally recognized private research institution, students travel from all over the country to attend Tulane; hence, their connection to the city and legacies of suffering exposed by the storm come into contact with the shock and turmoil of their individual ontologies. They had trouble contextualizing what happened to

them within the other, more political accounts of the storm. In response to a question

about teaching personal narrative in a post-traumatic classroom, Johnson explained:

> I did have these students tell their stories. I frequently had students tell
> their Katrina stories, but since most Tulane students are not native New
> Orleanians, their Katrina stories are of limited interest. None of them were
> here; they all got on a bus and got out of here before the levees broke.
> They were out of here a good two, even three days, before all hell broke
> loose. So, their stories are stories about sitting in traffic and then sitting in
> a gym floor in Jackson waiting to get a bus back to their home town...
> Many of them had rocky fall semesters, but they just become stories of an
> embattled students' life that was fairly quickly rectified when they got
> back into their normal routine in January. Now, that's because it's Tulane.
> At UNO, it's a completely different story. Those are students who were at
> the superdome and convention center, or sat on their roofs for a week, or
> never left at all. Those are the heavy ones. They sat on their roof for a
> week and then climbed down to the mud caked house and camped out for
> six months. There are a lot of UNO students that are like that... (personal
> interview)

We can see Johnson attempting to carve out a space in his classroom for students to

reflect on their own privilege, their own relationships to a city that is providing so much

to them. Questions about race and class were the dominant narrative in post-Katrina New

Orleans (and nationally about post-Katrina New Orleans), but merely collecting stories

about racial injustice or narrating the details of media bias does not bring one into contact

with the influence of race on one's own life.

In other places, like Delgado and Nunez Community Colleges, this contact is

nearly impossible to avoid. The students attending these schools were (and still are)

living in the places that CNN and Fox News chronicled in obsessive, 24-hour news

coverage. They experienced the racial and economic fallout of the storm, just as they had

experienced pervasive inequity beforehand. Writing from these places doesn't need to be

artificially "mired in concerns about race" because concerns about race and class govern

how and where people live their lives. As a result of the extreme and not uncommon

displacement and hardships of students in the poorer parts of the city, we see writing

instructors from two-year colleges turn away from grand narratives of hurricanes and race

in America, toward engagement with the very mundane details of loss, recovery, and the

day-to-day realities of invisibility and disposability in a large American city. Elizabeth

and Linda, faculty members at Delgado, emphasized the circumstances of marginal

students during our conversation. They explained:

> Elizabeth: Our experience here is always different from the experience at
> UNO or Tulane or Loyola, because we have a different student population.
> We take students that they won't or can't take, that they don't know what to
> do with...
>
> Linda: We really have to take just about everybody.
>
> Elizabeth: Yes, we're open admission. And we try to prepare them if they
> want to go on to one of those other places; we try to prepare them for that.
> The poverty is another issue, because the poor kids tend to come from
> poor schools and they're underprepared and so they come to us...
>
> Linda: and no family support either.
>
> Elizabeth: But, I think what might have been a bit of a leveler, was
> Katrina, because UNO students faced the same thing. Xavier, Dillard,
> Loyola, they've all faced some of the same crises. So, in some ways, we're
> dealing with the same emotional territory as they are. But, I think the
> consistent element here is that we just have a different student population.
> And unfortunately it was the poorer areas of the city that were hit the
> hardest. (personal interview)

Classroom pedagogy designed to engage with the daily, lived realities of this "different"

population develops not in response to a sense of trauma as a "teachable moment," but as

a way of thinking and living that is generally inescapable. Elizabeth explained that no

matter what they were reading or writing, "[t]hat Katrina experience was so overwhelming and so powerful, it impacted every aspect of their lives and altered the way they thought about themselves and their place in the world" (personal interview). As a result, her decision was not to "teach Katrina," but to teach in the ever-present contexts of Katrina:

> We have students whose lives tend to be pretty messy anyway, a lot of complications, single mothers who also have jobs, maybe taking care of an elderly grandparent. And they're poor and they have transportation issues, you name it. After the storm, we had to be even more attuned to those needs. Eight family members in a FEMA trailer and, if they were lucky enough to have a computer, you couldn't' get time on there. So, there were those issues, no place to get work done. You began to listen more carefully to students' excuses. Because my party line had always been, don't give me excuses. I don't want to make a judgment about whether you're telling me the truth or not. Just get caught up. So, over the long term, if I were still teaching, I think that experience just made me more aware of the baggage they bring with them when they cross the threshold of that classroom. I was always aware of it before, but even more so now. Because some of them still haven't completely recovered. People still haven't been made whole. They're still trying to get their homes back together or they're still living with a relative because their home in the 9th ward is still blighted. So, it can't but impact your life for a very long time. (personal interview)

While Elizabeth's commentary does invoke a sense of trauma's inevitability, she situates it against the specific material contexts within which students were (and in some cases, still are) writing. Katrina functions in this narrative as a way to draw attention to the ways in which the material conditions of reading and writing shape what we see, know, learn, and write. Such a view allows for both disenfranchised and privileged students to engage with the experience of living and working in post-Katrina New Orleans. It further

manages the tension between writing about experience and situating that experience socially; that is, it occupies a flexible place on the continuum of post-traumatic pedagogy.

A post-traumatic pedagogy of the everyday emphasizes the lack of options for a student writing from a FEMA trailer in the third year of recovery. Where her experience might easily have been overlooked in the interest of disciplinary practice, it becomes less convenient to separate the material circumstances *of* her writing with goals, means, and methods *in* her writing. Gwen Robinson, a faculty member at Nunez, articulated an overlap between inevitability and everyday contexts. Notably, Robinson's essay is among the few in print by teachers in post-Katrina New Orleans that discusses the death of a student:

> I was glad to be home, but I was still besieged with fear. I dreaded hearing the stories that I knew were waiting to be told. We had been scattered all over the country and the repercussions were enormous. I had faced so many obstacles in my own journeys, but I was especially concerned about my students. I hoped some were starting better lives; I figured some were struggling to survive; I knew some were dead. (107)

The rarity of references to death is somewhat surprising in the scholarly literature after Katrina and only serves to emphasize the diverse range of experiences for teachers and students at New Orleans area universities. While stories were a prominent fixture in every program, only in some places were those stories inflected by this magnitude of loss. For Robinson, everything "ended with a Katrina story" (109) and it became incumbent upon her to figure out how to manage post-trauma academic expectation, and material destruction, in a place where the confluence of these things was problematic before the storm. She suggested that she and the storm "became collaborators" giving students who are traditionally silenced "permission to speak" (110). She did this by having them avoid

the dramatic stories of life and death that were already so much a part of their lives, instead asking them to tell of day-to-day experience and helpful ideas for recovery. Robinson too expresses a sense of the teacher as a kind of therapist/leader (ironically in collaboration with the trauma itself) and she certainly views the storm as an opportunity to immerse students in "sensory" experiences. But one cannot help but see her account, like Elizabeth's, as a move to productively engage students by balancing the rhetorical work of writing instruction with the cultural work of post-traumatic discourse and/or community/civic engagement.

Elizabeth's and Gwen Robinson's narratives highlight how important it is to account for the influence of contextual circumstances on writing teachers. Ignoring context can lead well-meaning teachers to sponsor literate practices that do not meet the needs of university writing students generally, or the students with whom they're sharing their material circumstances. In terms of the inability to separate the needs of teachers from the needs and desires of students, who may simply want the same kind of education they might have received if the storm had not intervened in their semester, it seems important that teachers attempt to account for their own position in the university and in the classroom. In my interview with Karen at UNO, her comments reflect Cintron's state of in-betweenness and the extent to which this in-betweenness confused the distance between student and teacher desires. She explained:

> When we started teaching one of the big questions was, do we have them write about Katrina? I ended up...what I said was...I think you're going to find students who are going to need to write about it, who almost have to write about it, and you're going to find students who don't want to write about it. I wouldn't suggest setting up anything where they're required to write on a topic, but it seems to me that you could have that be the topic

and offer something that's related, but not the same thing for any student who opts out of writing about things that are too close. I said, 'you don't know what's happened to students in these situations.' Some of them were still pretty closely... I think in some cases we might have had a few times when students' topics didn't let them get away from it. But one of the things that we found that students liked, students signed up, we had a pretty high enrollment...and this was really true for me, if I hadn't had that to do, although it was really hard to do it, if I hadn't had it to do it would have been much harder to get through. You know, because it took all of my time. And then when I got here, I think it was also taking a lot of time, but it was much harder to do. I didn't realize, you know coming back; it felt like it would be easier being here. And in some ways it was, because we had the Jefferson Center and I would go there and [administration] was there. Instead of just having these people on the phone or online, I had, we had that support...so, you sort of felt like you had an institution running. (personal interview)

Karen offers an administrator's good sense in explaining the risks and realities of "teaching Katrina." Some students would simply not be ready for it. But at the mid-way point in her explanation, she shifts attention from students in classrooms to her own need to focus on her work. I would suggest that she's drawing an implicit connection here between anxiety about forcing students to confront some of their more difficult experiences and her anxieties about confronting her own experiences. Returning to work, regaining the sense of community that comes with a functioning department or program was in one sense a salve. But in having daily to face the desolation of the Lakeview campus, fluctuating enrollment numbers, and the material/emotional needs of teachers and students in her program, her answer suggests that attempting to name her own experience in writing might have proved a difficult challenge.

What is at issue here is not whether or not the decision to "teach Katrina" was right or wrong, productive or unproductive, but the extent to which we can teach an event—traumatic or not—without acknowledging the ways in which the social, historical,

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and personal realities in our lives influence how we work. Katrina calls our attention to the inevitability of context in our teaching and learning strategies. Changes resulting from the storm make visible the conditions that shape experience based on race, class, geography, and social hierarchy. The urge to adopt expressivist post-traumatic pedagogy is complicated by the reality that confessional genres are largely acceptable to and for only some segments of the population. To the working poor, they are only viable so long as they articulate the narratives of victim or aggressor that satisfy dominant culture desires.

Conclusion

While I was discussing changes in university policy and practice with an administrative Dean at UNO, the topic of service learning came up, in particular the urge by some scholars (across the disciplines) to send students "out" into destroyed communities. This is a particularly problematic concept for places like UNO, or Delgado, or Nunez, which have been fundamentally changed by the storm that struck their physical campuses, as well as the everyday lives of their teachers and students. In essence, to send them "out" to the places that need help most was to send them home. The Dean posed a series of questions that stuck with me throughout the development of this project; she asked: "Why does rebuilding one's own home not count as community service or service learning? What about taking care of a sick relative or lobbying government on one's own behalf? What about showing up for school every day and participating in an intellectual and social community?"

In this chapter we have seen New Orleans area writing teachers wrestling with these kinds of questions and the ideological dilemmas that underlie them—how best to

serve students, institutions, cities and neighborhoods, and the teachers themselves. We have, I think, observed a shift from the conventional disciplinary responses to trauma—expressive writing interested in ontological unity—toward intertextuality and a view of writing that tries to see everyday challenges as part of how teachers teach and how student writers write. While many of the strategies described here rely on problematic tropes of post-traumatic pedagogy and, therefore, reflect a tendency to musealize the experiences of student writers and their communities, collectively they begin pointing us in a new direction. An ethical, materially situated post-traumatic pedagogy emerges organically from these conversations as teachers, living through disaster *with* their students, attempt to sort through the options available to them.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, a number of productive pedagogical trends have emerged in New Orleans secondary and post-secondary institutions. First, and perhaps most prominently, there has been a turn toward writing strategies that advocate civic and community focus. James McDonald explains that "one of the most notable changes in the New Orleans colleges and universities is a much stronger sense of mission among the students, faculty, and staff on these campuses and a stronger bond between the general community of New Orleans and its colleges and universities" (McDonald 14). In some cases this bond is identified with service learning (Johnson et al, Noonan, Richard). In others it is more abstractly connected with ideas about public writing and the connection that can be made, through classroom assignments, to "real" audiences and situations outside the walls of the academy (Louth, Piano et al.). In many cases, connection to the "real" world has taken the shape of "responding" to the mediated representations that tend to govern national discourse in the wake of disaster.

There have been other changes as well. One prominent change has been a turn toward the expanded use of technology, both in terms of writing with and through technology, and the expanded and ongoing presence of online courses on these campuses. In some cases, there were no online writing courses to speak of. The use of web-based tools like Blackboard is now commonplace. In a chronically underfunded city like New Orleans, this rush to "catch up" is much needed. Another change is an increased sense of what many teachers called "empathy" toward their students. Elizabeth, one of the faculty members at Delgado, described it as being "more attuned to students' personal crises" (personal interview). In being more empathetic, however, instructors have had to manage conflicts of interest as they serve both their own need to come to terms with the storm and, presumably, some of their students'. Of course, not all instructors have been entirely successful in managing this conflict and the tendency, supported by a post-traumatic and memorializing culture, to offer therapy is seductive.

At worst, I think a few of these instructors and administrators were so affected by the storm and its aftermath that they ran a real risk to themselves and to their colleagues and students in carrying on with their work. Jane admitted this risk in no uncertain terms: "I feel like I did my students some harm. In making them write about this thing that hurt them. None of them said that, although they did complain about having to deal with life and then struggling with not really wanting to write about this and that sort of thing" (personal interview). Her confession recalls the warning offered by Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner in "The Problematic of Experience," in which they insist that a pedagogy committed to students' experiences cannot dismiss students' avowed desires and needs, but cannot also view such avowals as all there is to their experience. For Lu and Horner,

the balance must be struck between political/ethical aims on the part of the instructor and the goals and interests of the students sitting in their classes. Lu and Horner suggest, "[w]e cannot deny that in some sense students do want to learn to produce what schools or society demand. But neither should we forget that those desires are not necessarily the full story—students may also want to change the demands society is placing on them, even to change who decides what is to be demanded of whom" (266). Further, student desires are "perpetually in flux and heterogeneous" (Lu and Horner 266) and in the context of large-scale disaster they are even more so. Any urge to psychologize or to turn classrooms into community centers must be tempered with this dynamism in mind.

But I don't want to give the impression that I disapprove of the work done by instructors after Katrina. In fact, I think these narratives, taken as a whole, reveal the challenging and inspiring cultural enactment of what Nedra Reynolds calls "dwelling." These teachers attempt to manage a critical intersection of the social and material conditions that shape their lived experience, and the political and disciplinary ideologies that drive their choices. They demonstrate a shift from the clearly defined poles of post-traumatic writing that we saw in chapter one toward a view of writing instruction that is contingent on time, place, and social context, rather than simply on conventions of practice. In the direst of circumstances, these teachers came back to a city "crying out for intellectual leadership" (Johnson, personal interview). In some cases they sacrificed the comfort and community of family in other places to become truly displaced in and around their own homes. What emerged, I would argue, is a critical state of "in-betweenness," that is arguably never far away for so many of us as we negotiate home and community lives, hiring and tenure processes, personal and national calamities. Reynolds suggests

that it would be absurd to believe that the spaces in which we work and socialize are "truly public and democratic" and she resists the urge (as do I) to "romanticize city streets and rural footpaths" (7). But she suggests that analyzing the rhetoric of the streets, a form of which I have tried to accomplish here, offers a valuable glimpse into the workings of writing instruction in any given time or place.

In post-Katrina New Orleans, spaces at street level, where the hierarchies of institutional power and marginalized identity are old and thick, collapsed for a moment. For the national audience these hierarchies were quickly re-established by a media more bent on ratings than on an honest discourse about race, class, and institutionalized discrimination. But on the streets of New Orleans, which flow in and out of universities, civic centers, restaurants, bars, churches, bus stops, and public schools, the discussion was ongoing and it was happening in and out of writing classrooms. It was in and from their classrooms that scholars and practitioners of writing were working in constructive and often heart-breaking conflict with representations of and by national and local media, academic institutions, communities, colleagues, and students. Their efforts and their endeavors offer valuable lessons on what Reynolds calls the "workings of geographies of exclusion: the ways in which people _feel_ excluded from certain places because of the landscape, the built environment, the inhabitants, or the force of their own preconceptions and expectations" (my emphasis, 9). How, where, and to whom they sponsored literate reactions tell us much about the extent to which composition can or should formulate response in the context of large-scale disaster.

As representatives of the University, a pervasive and powerful cultural/ideological institution, these instructors exemplify Cintron's suggestion that the workings of street-

level rhetorics don't happen beneath or apart from dominant discourse. Rather, they are completely and permanently intertwined. Experiences of subordination and domination, of hierarchy and "in-betweenness" are fused ever more prominently in the wake of disaster. As one Xavier faculty member suggested when I asked for her personal story and her professional experience of the storm, "they are all wrapped up together." What I believe we see in these narratives of displacement, recovery, and adaptation is a bridging of typically irreconcilable gaps between constructions of the academy and the public, turning the oft-derided abstractions of academic work into attempts at fostering practical, civic and social agency. Of course, because the experiences sponsored by different social, political, and geographic settings were often so vastly different, agency comes to mean many different things.

In any given time and place, our approaches to writing must balance any urge to "serve" with a careful consideration of what it means to serve and how that meaning is seen differently in terms of each individual or group experience, desire, and social/historical context. A critical and ethical post-traumatic pedagogy must focus student and teacher attention on the conditions that create and perpetuate trauma in specific times and places, rather than reify the dominant discourses of confessional writing. Ultimately, I echo Piano et al. when (drawing on work by Derrick Owens and Jonathan Mauk) they call for a view of writing that counters the "placelessness" of the college campus, but I would add that in the context of a disaster like Katrina, "placelessness" may be the only thing one can count on. "Dwelling" within displacement, interrogating one's own conditions of social, material, and institutional dislocation, as well as the dislocations of one's students, is one way to balance the institutional

expectations of college writing with the dynamic and heterogeneous needs of the student writers who move into our classrooms and out to the streets, every day, even in the direst of circumstances. Such a view of "dwelling" reflects the "official" and the "practical" experiences (Williams) we embody as writing teachers. From an awareness of "mixed experience"—where the tensions between official and practical are made evident—we might better push for counter-hegemonic approaches to expressive writing, community writing, or service learning (or a confluence of all three) that respond to large-scale disaster in ways that are materially and socially useful to teachers and their students.

CHAPTER THREE

RE-WRITING KATRINA: HOW SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND MATERIAL
CONTEXTS SHAPE STUDENT WRITING

The condition of "in-betweenness" experienced by instructors returning to New

Orleans after Katrina influences students in important ways. We saw in the community-

writing impetus articulated by instructors in Chapter Two that social, material, political,

and emotional dislocations can resonate with students' own experiences of "in-

betweenness." Displaced students returned to often more dire situations than their

instructors. Many were without homes, without basic services, and in some cases, they

came back to the city alone in order to continue their education. Of course, this was not

the experience of every student; nor was it experienced in the same ways or to the same

degree. Instructor experiences of "in-betweenness" also reach students through specific

practices employed in writing courses. In assignment prompts, grading strategies, and

classroom management, instructors in post-Katrina New Orleans actively responded to

and reconstituted experiences of displacement and dislocation for their students.

I have argued that teachers, working within and against specific hegemonic

relations in post-Katrina academic and community environments, implicitly and

explicitly articulated a condition of "in-betweenness" that can be used to conceive of

their experiences as alternately empowering and dis-empowering. In this chapter, I

develop this sense of social/political positioning and the desire to "dwell" in classrooms

and communities by examining the archival records of two sections of first-year writing at the University of New Orleans (UNO) from the fall of 2005 and the spring 2006. I look to the material record as a way of complicating the narratives offered by New Orleans area instructors. By tracing the tropes and narratives of musealized culture in course documents and by analyzing the discursive structures of student work, I hope to arrive at some sense of how implicit and explicit gestures of hegemonic or resistant "in-betweenness" were present in these classrooms. My interest is in developing a more thorough understanding of the uses and limits of writing pedagogy that pays attention to the ways in which social and historical forces mediate writing and learning in specific classrooms and communities.

I also expand on some of the problems with post-traumatic pedagogy identified in chapter one. In particular I respond to the tendency by post-traumatic scholars and practitioners, most notably those attempting to work in the context of large-scale public turmoil or disaster (Blitz and Hurlbert, Borrowman), to view student writers through a lens of essentialized and essentializing experience. After trauma, a common argument implies students lose much of their impulse to make independent academic, personal, and professional decisions. They become victims and survivors as opposed to discursive agents, and the work of the writing instructor is to help them "work through" the various memories that restrict their agency. I will not deny that in some cases this appears to be a successful way to aid students in coming to terms with their experience. But, the urge to teach trauma based on the assumption that all students need therapeutic intervention (or that they've all experienced trauma in the same way) is problematic at best. In this chapter, then, I work to theoretically bridge some of the distance between disembodied

teacher narratives about their post-traumatic work and the work as it occurred in a given material context.

My hope is to read course documents against the grain by employing a cross-disciplinary reading strategy that includes elements of critical discourse analysis and cultural rhetorics. The intersection of these two approaches, both of which focus on relationships between social practice and social power, offers a way to reflect on sympathies we might have toward teachers and students, moving us ever closer to a generative understanding about how writing works after large-scale trauma. I suggest that the narrative and textual production in these courses perpetuates a condition of "in-betweenness" and a dynamic relationship to hegemony (in ways that are both agentive and passive). They do this primarily by attempting to balance community engagement and/or student situatedness with common disciplinary expectations related to conventions of discourse, genre, and style. Student writing about experience is developed in tension with the disciplinary expectations for college writing with varying results, as some students simply reiterate the commonplace trauma narratives of dominant middle-class discourse and others challenge the relevance of trauma narratives for defining their experience.

The Writing after Katrina Archive and Resource

In the fall of 2005, Doreen Piano, a faculty member in the English department at UNO, and Celeste del Russo, one of her graduate students, began collecting materials from writing instructors and students willing to commit work to a collection called the "Writing After Katrina Archive." Piano suggests that upon returning to UNO after evacuation (six weeks into the Fall semester) she began noticing that many instructors of

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English were relying "on the unfolding tragedy and subsequent social issues that arose

after Katrina as a source of study" in their classes ("Rationale for the Project"; Appendix

A). She adds,

> In light of the situation that we faced as instructors confronting a
> drastically different situation [than the one they had left behind], we
> understood implicitly that our teaching had to reflect the many social,
> political, and emotional changes that we and our students confronted daily
> from the daily drive to campus through the ruins of once-vibrant
> neighborhoods to the massive recovery operations occurring throughout
> the city.

Piano articulates a condition of "in-betweenness" as motivation for creating a record that

will provide insights for future researchers into how the work of writing instruction

carried on during and after the devastation of Katrina. She also expresses a sense in

which materiality and sociality are dominant tropes in both the work of these writing

teachers and in the mission of the archive. In this sense, I view the archive as an

interesting record of academic/disciplinary community building but with a potential

musealizing impulse embedded within it. The archive embodies a point of conflict

between its explicit, socially oriented goals and an implicit alignment with hegemonic

order, in terms of composition as a discipline, the university as a social structure, and the

trauma narrative as a marketable commodity in dominant culture. This conflict delimits

how instructors in New Orleans after Katrina were able to carry out their expressive

and/or social pedagogical goals.

The archive itself is only a single box (now digitized) containing documents from

writing courses ranging from Fall Semester 2005 to Fall Semester 2006. The courses held

in the immediate aftermath of the storm were held mostly online. The archive includes

teacher materials—syllabi, writing prompts, grading rubrics—but is dominated by student work, including essay drafts, notes, peer review exercises, in-class exams, and "final" papers. Much of this work has been collected with the instructor's original marginal or end comments intact. Classes represented include all three levels of freshman writing at UNO—1156, their basic writing course, and 1157/1158, their two-semester first-year writing cycle. There are also submissions from courses in creative writing, creative non-fiction, and poetry.

What one notices first about this archive is its fragmentation. Contributions were solicited from all UNO English department faculty and the documents were contributed and gathered informally over the course of a few years. Hence, there is an organic quality about the archive that reflects the conditions under which it was constructed. At the time I accessed the materials, they were located unceremoniously on a shelf in Piano's office on campus. There had been no cataloguing and no clear order imposed on the papers. I needed no white gloves to handle the documents and no special permissions. But the efforts and ideas recorded within it imbue the Writing after Katrina Archive with the sort of reverence we associate with archival work. It reflects the efforts of a few faculty members and graduate students to keep a record of what was happening in their classes at a critical moment in history. It is a grassroots campaign as much as a historical document, an example of the kinds of community-focused initiatives many of these teachers were trying to get students to embrace in the classroom and in the community.

In "Preserving Our Histories of Institutional Change," Shirley Rose urges WPAs to pay more attention to their social and institutional histories by "retaining, organizing, and preserving" records of their writing programs (107). For Rose, this includes agendas

and minutes from meetings, administrative reports, correspondence, descriptions of curricula, and records of staffing practices, in addition to instructor and student work. The benefit of this kind of project is two-fold: first, it provides a usable record for researchers of writing program histories and future WPAs; second it sheds light on the functionality of composition programs, their position vis-à-vis the university, and their activities in relation to students. Rose claims that "by examining archival records we begin to recover the values and beliefs that have informed decisions about [a] program in the past and to reconstruct the processes by which current policies and practices have been developed" (108). These "values and beliefs" constitute the "cultures" in which we work and reveal a tension between "customary practices and critical events" (108). Such institutional records, in addition to any published or unpublished work that might address program history and identity, offer insight into the ways faculty and students exist in dynamic political and social relationships with their schools, their programs, and each other.

The call for archives of WPA records fits with the reasoning behind the Writing after Katrina Archive, as well as its value to my own work. Rose's articulation of the archival project opens a space for an intra- and extra-programmatic consideration of how writing programs work, particularly after "critical events." It's important to note that the archive is not the work of the WPA at UNO, but insofar as Rose sees the WPA archive as both a usable record and a reflection (or construction) of identity, the collection serves those purposes. In fact, Piano develops her reasoning for the project in similar terms:

> The goal of collecting these materials is to provide a resource for scholars, locally and nationally, in English Studies who have an interest in writing history and pedagogy, institutional history, trauma studies, and civic education. In addition to the creation and maintenance of an archive, the

materials collected will become part of a departmental database for faculty who wish to share their resources. ("Rationale for the Project")

In the context of large-scale disaster these twin goals appear even more important. Institutional affiliations, ideologies, and common practices inevitably shift when the material situations of teachers, administrators, and students are dramatically altered as they were by Hurricane Katrina. But given the rarity of this circumstance, or at least this magnitude of circumstance, the archival record presents the program with an opportunity to reflect on what has changed, how and where, in addition to providing those on the outside with an account of unimaginable experience. My own interest is in how the archive sheds light on customary practices that may be in conflict with the conditions emerging from a specific historical event, in this case Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. The fragmentary nature of UNO's archive does not offer us a vivid picture of what happened in this writing program after the storm, but it does reflect how individual teachers adapted, challenged, or re-envisioned the work of composition studies in the context of large scale trauma. We can see them positioning themselves in relation to the conventions of the discipline and the institution in the ways their work reveals conflict between expressive and social constructivist pedagogical practices.

Importantly, the Writing After Katrina Archive deviates from Rose's rubric in that it focuses much more heavily on classroom practice than on institutional record. The reality of WPA archiving is that it is inconvenient, particularly after disaster. UNO's archive reflects important limitations related to how we keep records when political relations shift dramatically (when, for example, faculty job security is uncertain) and when material conditions change (I'm thinking here of university closures, an impromptu

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move to primarily electronic communication, and the necessity of informal decision-making).[5] Such limitations make the archive even more interesting.

But this tension between presence and absence (i.e. what was kept and what was not) is an essential part of any accounting of archival records or recovery. The popularity of archival study in composition and rhetoric in recent years has brought with it a body of theoretical and operational work that provides useful ways for thinking about how to read archives and how to read ourselves reading archives. According to Barbara Biesecker, the archive is inevitably a dialogic space characterized by "double invention" and not "singular discovery" (124). The archival reader navigates the interests of the original authors, donators, and archivists (who impose their own ideas through solicitation and organization), as well as the reader's own interests in the subject and/or reverence for the materials. Linda Ferreira-Buckley explains that this dialogue is particularly important in recovering the histories of marginal groups who are often lost in official records and whose stories must be re-constructed from fragments. But the spaces between official and unofficial, between our analytic goals and our ideological sympathies, can constitute a problematic space as well ("Rescuing the Archive").

Efforts to theorize an archival method for composition and rhetoric scholarship have sought a balance between "induction and deduction" (Connors 32) or what Cheryl Glenn and Jessica Enoch call "the task of connecting the 'real' and the discourse" (24). In the collection Working in the Archives: Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition, to which Glenn and Enoch contributed the introduction, many contributors

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[5] In my interviews (see chapter 2), instructors at UNO and Xavier both discussed these uncertainties specifically; they also gave accounts of their administration making decisions without the input of faculty and, sometimes, with only the input of the few people they could organize via wireless connections or cell phone.

emphasize that archives are, first and foremost, the constructions of multiple interested parties and, as such are constantly shifting as the result of ongoing negotiation (Glenn and Enoch, Lerner, Masters, Morris and Rose). Archives are, according to Neal Lerner, shaped by social forces, "from a researcher's experiences and expectations, to contemporary events, to the choices made by those who have donated papers to an archive, leading to fragments of information that even the best archive will offer" (196). "Partial" histories, like the Writing after Katrina Archive, represent opportunities to make epistemic connections between textual fragments, but they also make very clear the dangers of feeling too certain about any conclusions we draw from silent collections of paper, ink, and dust. My hope here is to generate questions rather than to express finite conclusions.

In light of warnings about "interestedness" (Glenn and Enoch) in the archive, it is worthwhile to quickly identify the interestedness of the archive itself (attitudes expressed by its collectors) and my own shared interests in its work. The Writing After Katrina Archive emerges out of an interest, shared by Piano, Del Russo, and others in the UNO writing program, in considerations of space and place in writing pedagogy. In their 2007 article "Making it Up as We Go Along" Piano et al. explain their work in the context of scholarship by Derrick Owens and Jonathan Mauk, both of whom highlight the "placelessness" of academic writing. For the UNO instructors, Katrina facilitated an erosion of the "division between academic and home life for all campus employees, students, and faculty" and "the campus itself became another representative space of the emerging fragmented narrative of what happened after the flood" (Piano et al. 80). This perceived collapse in distance between the "outside" and the "inside" of academic life

inspired these instructors to engage students in place-focused writing assignments: "Not only were students writing and researching on issues from timely trash pick-up to wetland restoration, but also interviewing people, observing reconstruction efforts, attending neighborhood meetings and commemoration activities, and conducting surveys on campus and off" (79). In many ways all this is similar to Mauk's articulation of "academic third space" or the moving of "academia into places that matter to [students]" (Piano et al. 80). This is the case not only in terms of what students choose to write about, but also how social contexts mediate language and how we can help students to become more aware of such mediation.

I think the "distances" we find between outside the academy and inside are false ones, but I understand the impetus to mark this distinction. It is an important construction for any kind of sustainable place-based or spatially situated pedagogy; though it might be more suitable to say that the distance wasn't "eroded" so much as its artificiality has been exposed by the collapsing of the levees. In the context of large-scale public disasters we see clearly how the lives, interests and affiliations of teachers and students in-class always already intersect. After disaster, space/place become useful tropes for engaging students in critical inquiry about their writing positions, privileges, problems, and expectations. They do, however, have significant risks, including attempting to foster a sense of community not shared by students, eliding student desires by calling on them to become "citizen journalists" (Piano et al.) or fostering an ethic of musealization, for which storm stories trump all other stories.

For all its usefulness, the archive cannot tell us everything. First and foremost, it is focused exclusively on narratives about Katrina that were written for classes at UNO.

This omits a large range of work from other universities, where teachers were doing similar kinds of assignments but failed to keep this kind of textual archive. There are other archives that keep post-Katrina writing, some of which was done by students, but they do not have the same relevance for composition studies as the one at UNO.[6] Perhaps more importantly, the archive documents only those student texts that address Katrina in a direct manner—narratives or arguments about experience, recovery, community, or disaster. It houses no work written "in the context of trauma" (Goggin and Goggin), and so, does not afford us any insights into what effect the storm and its various repercussions had on writing that was not focused exclusively on storm-related circumstances. In chapter four, I will look to work done by writing students outside of the university as a way to consider other strategies that bridge gaps between writing instruction and writing contexts.

Additionally, we cannot see student work that wasn't submitted, so no generalizations can be made about the particular students in these archived classes. We cannot compare teacher strategies from before Katrina to after, and we cannot compare the assignments available in the archive with anything else that might have been done in class. We cannot, for the most part, see revisions or changes across drafts, so it does us little good to think about the quality of the student work. It is impossible to know where these students ended up in terms of their development. Finally, we cannot tell how these narratives were discussed in class, in conference, or outside of the university; i.e. we

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[6] Some of these archives include the Voices of Katrina project also out of UNO, which has produced two books of narrative histories (some from students, many collected by students, though not necessarily in writing classes), a project out of Southeastern Louisiana University called "Katrina: In their Own Words," and the expansive Hurricane Katrina Digital Memory Bank—link—which houses a variety of formal and informal documents, including work by primary, secondary, and post-secondary students. In this project I am focused on the Writing after Katrina Archive exclusively for its resonance with conversations going on in and around composition/rhetoric studies.

don't know anything about what was happening off the page, except where an instructor's narratives provide some insight.

What we can see clearly, however, is the extent to which this archive constitutes an account of and a contribution to a thriving post-disaster pedagogical community. It positions itself within larger structures of social and political power: the writing program and the English department, the university, disciplines of English studies. These ideas are most evident in the Human Subjects consent form Piano and Del Russo required contributors to complete with their submissions (Appendix A). The pronoun development throughout the opening portion of the document, moving its reader from "we" ("we are collecting writing activities") to "you ("you will be contributing") and back to "we" ("the material we collect"—now including the instructor's work) emphasizes the intersection of teachers, students, and archivists in a post-Katrina scholarly community. Further, the consent form implicates all potential readers in the same material and social circumstances: "In sharing your work, you will be contributing to a very special moment in UNO's history." It is interesting that the authors invoke the status of the institution— which was not financially or materially supporting this project—in order to solicit volunteers and to bring together individuals and groups from disparate locations in the university under the common rubric of the collective university history. Finally, the prompt also makes two connections between this closed community and a larger network of readers who might be interested in this "very special moment in UNO's history." The first is to scholars and students "locally and nationally" who might be interested in the archive as a source for primary materials. The second is to UNO communities of the future who will be able to access the archival materials via a "departmental database."

We see from this form how the Writing After Katrina Archive functions as a record of a specific time and place. But, I think we also see an important secondary purpose to build (or to re-build) community within and across writing communities (at UNO and beyond) as a response to official institutions of power that assert control in the chaos that follows disaster. We have seen how university administration made choices that marginalized faculty and students. These choices resemble commonplace accounts of city and national government making similar moves to marginalize non-dominant groups in the city of New Orleans after the storm. For all its musealizing impulse, the archive resonates as an attempt to reestablish the personal and public agency that comes with community-building. It is at once an expression of a loss of faith in institutional power— a record must be kept and be kept separate from sanctioned attempts to create narratives of and for the storm—and an assertion of social and political authority on the part of instructors on behalf of themselves and their students. It is this sense of working "on behalf" of others that we now turn.

A Critical Discourse (and Rhetorical) Analysis

If the goal of the archive is to build community, it is worthwhile to consider what kind of community its participants would desire to build. For the remainder of this chapter I consider specific documents from the archive—in particular, pairings of teacher assignments and the student essays written in response to those prompts—in order to understand how the archive reflects efforts on the part of UNO instructors to manage tensions among community-building, musealizing experience, and the goals of the writing classroom. The teachers and students who contributed work to this archive organize a response to trauma around an idea of the writing classroom as one critical

node in a diverse network of interests and affiliations that encompasses individuals and groups, official and unofficial discourse, hegemonic and counter-hegemonic practices. I draw on elements of critical discourse analysis to determine how teachers and students address these overlapping concerns.

While there are many different iterations of critical discourse analysis (see Wodak and Meyer) I am most interested in the approach articulated by Norman Fairclough, who identifies two "causal" powers that shape text and which can be considered by way of textual analysis: social structures and practices, and social agents (22). Social structures and social practices constitute abstract frameworks for and sets of limitations upon any textual production. Social structures, for Fairclough, are entities like language, which define a "potential, a set of possibilities," while social practices are the tools used in given circumstances to control "the selection of certain structural possibilities and the exclusion of others" (24). Social practices include "orders of discourse," including genres and styles (24). Social agents, or the actual designers of text, working within and against the constraints placed on them by structures and practices, are not "controlled," but they do not have limitless control. They "texture texts" and they "set up relations between elements of texts" (22). A writer in English is constrained by the expectations of English grammar and usage, but may choose to resist or reorder grammatical forms in the act of making meaning. In this sense, social practices—how the author uses discourse, genre, and style—mediate between agents and the structures that work to exert pressure on them.

In order to integrate this critical discursive framework into composition studies I view students as agents in the classrooms—their textual choices are actual choices. I'm

thinking here about arguments against non-rhetorical conceptions of error, specifically David Bartholomae in "The Study of Error" where he suggests we view basic writers as producing a "variety of writing, not writing in fewer parts or more rudimentary constituents" (254). The processes of teaching and evaluating writing necessitate a negotiation between teacher/reader and student/writer contingent on the kinds of social structures and practices outlined by Fairclough. Errors, for example, are not "evidence of arrested cognitive development, arrested language development, or unruly or unpredictable language use" (Bartholomae "Study" 254); they are evidence of the student selectively working with and through discourses, genres, and styles that "control linguistic variability for particular areas of social life" (Fairclough 24). Or, as Bartholomae might suggest, they are "evidence of intention" and the "individual's idiosyncratic way of using the language and articulating meaning" ("Study" 255).

This is not so say that student papers do not have errors. But, to usefully consider their work as part of a network of public discourse necessitates we try to see student writing as shaped by and shaping the social practices with which the students have come into contact. Viewing students as classroom and textual agents is particularly important in what I have been calling post-traumatic pedagogy where some scholars and practitioners see errors, clichés, and other problems as evidence of psychic trauma and a need for a different, more therapeutic relationship with the teacher and the classroom (Alcorn, Bracher, MacCurdy). I would identify this impulse as a failure to recognize or to productively engage with what Bruce Horner calls the "sociality of error." Horner suggests we are often quick to see social pressures acting from outside of our classroom practices (grammar as a rather arbitrary social construction and reflection of hegemonic

relationships) but we are loathe to see our own efforts in perpetuating the same or different social pressures ("The Sociality of Error").

Hegemonic pressures intersect with classroom discourse from diverse locations, but most notably from mass media. This is particularly the case in highly mediated public disasters. For Fairclough, these influences can be traced through any textual production that reflects a relationship among structure, practice, and event by considering "chains" or "networks" of text that reveal the movement of meaning "from one social practice to another, from one event to another, from one text to another" (30). This linking between texts does not rely on uniformity. Rather, it is reliant on a "systematic relationship" between them through "well-established conventions" (30). Fairclough offers the example of print and television, noting how conventions of quotation and source-attribution resemble one another as a means for establishing authority. Importantly, this relationship does not move in one direction and at any intersection of social practices, social agents from "different domains and levels of social life" (Fairclough 37) are acting and reacting to one another. It is in this sense that I think it useful to consider the ways popular narrative practices—including traumatic tropes and cliché—move from popular discourse, to classroom practice, to student production. For Fairclough, these hierarchical relations, centered on links between social practices, are "relations of choice" that draw our attention to what any given actor has elected to include, to exclude, to appropriate and/or to resist.

Further, we can trace the influence of the hegemonic through these chains of text by analyzing closely "intertextuality" and "assumptions" present in any given work. By "intertextuality," Fairclough is referring specifically to the way different voices and

perspectives are brought into a text through reference, quotation, summary, and so on. He suggests that where these voices come together, "there is always likely to be a tension between what is going on in the reporting text, including the work which the reporting of others texts is doing within that text, and what was going on in the reported text" (Fairclough 49). "Assumptions" offer related insight into social relations through implicit articulations of "common ground" upon which producer and consumer of text agree (in the case of this project, teacher prompt to student reader, student writer to teacher reader). Fairclough explains that community relies on these kinds of agreements, but "the capacity to exercise social power, domination and hegemony includes the capacity to shape to some significant degree the nature and content of this 'common ground'" (55). Searching text for assumptions about the appropriateness of discourse, genre, and style reveals this tension at work. The work housed in the archive reflects a social, historical, and textual "common ground" designed (through reading and writing) in response to Hurricane Katrina. Teachers and students draw on wide-ranging dominant and emergent practices as they manage tensions between the expectations of various social and political structures and the more immediate needs of their communities.

In using critical discourse analysis to analyze the Writing after Katrina Archive, I draw on a model set out by Hilary Janks. For Janks, when people use language they "make lexical, grammatical and sequencing choices" which function as "meaning potential" for any given text, and how these choices are made determines how potential is realized ("Language" 97). She explains "every text is just one set of perspectives on the world, a representation of it; language, together with other signs, works to construct reality" ("Language" 97). The goal of critical discourse analysis, then, is to isolate

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specific signifiers in textual and social context (within the "conditions of possibility for

that text") in order to determine what choices have been made and how those choices

reveal power dynamics at work ("Language" 100). My reading rubric, derived from Janks

(see Table 1), is designed to isolate signifiers and to determine how teacher prompting

and student writing reflect hegemonic pressures identifiable within classroom pedagogy

and/or popular discourse.

Table 1: General Rubric for Rhetorical/Linguistic Analysis

Genre	Determined by multiple and overlapping social practices	
Instructor/Prompt Expectations and Genre Expectations	Guiding questions for discussion include: What explicit and implicit expectations are articulated in the writing prompt? What social pressures from "outside" the classroom can we identify in the prompt, including popular discourses about traumatic writing and disciplinary strategies for writing education more generally? How do the expectations articulated by the prompt result in specific "moves" in the student paper? How do these "moves" align with or diverge from the instructor/prompt expectations?	
Discourse and Style	**Discourse refers here to how one exhibits (or attempts to exhibit) control over language and rhetorical situation; style refers to how one differentiates or aligns oneself**	**Description**
Intertextuality	Includes: Trope, Argument, and Narrative Quotation/Reference • Direct Speech • Indirect Speech • Free Indirect Speech • Scare Quotes Summary: areas of focus; inclusions and exclusions Turn-Taking: Who gets to speak in student papers?	

	Who is silenced? How so? Whose ideas are validated and whose are rejected? Who is the source of authority on the topic?	
Assumption	Includes: Metaphor or Euphemism: Terms for playing down (or playing up) the importance of one event or another;	
	Sequencing of Information: Establishes cause and effect; based on expectations generated in the writing prompt, as well as more common expectations about writing in popular genres— personal narrative (temporal), argument/proposal (causal/additive)	
	Mood: Particularly in conclusions, do the students make statements, ask questions, or issue commands?	
	Cliché: reflects an effort to emphasize shared meaning or shared affiliation.	

My attempt here is to incorporate the tactics of Critical Discourses Analysis into the larger reading strategy I call Cultural Rhetorics. Both approaches locate textual features in specific social and historical contexts. Where I see Critical Discourse Analysis making insightful suggestions about how texts reflect social constructions, Cultural Rhetorical analysis draws attention to how texts are used to change social constructions, to identify with or resist them. Fairclough and Janks isolate their intertextual focus on quotation or metaphor, two important textual choices that reveal how an author is situating themselves within a discursive situation. I expand my consideration to include the larger tropes, arguments, and narratives circulating around that discursive situation. How the teachers in these examples draw on commonplace ideas and practices, and then realize them through linguistic choices and structures, suggests how they viewed their

roles vis-à-vis structures of power (the University, the discipline, the writing program) and their students.

University of New Orleans Class #1: English 1157 (online) Fall Semester 2005

Because the selection of texts available in the archive is somewhat limited, I confine my discussion of this material to one textual situation within the larger scope of the class. This is to say, I make this critical inquiry fully aware that I cannot comment on what else happened in the course, how the syllabus was planned/designed, or how subsequent discussions or assignments altered the ideas or textual activities demonstrated in this assignment.

In the prompt (see table 2) we see several important social contexts that must be taken into consideration. The abbreviated fall semester at UNO began late in September and this assignment—Essay 1—has a due date of Monday, October 17. It is an early assignment for the course, likely the first of any magnitude (though its value is not stated). This is only seven weeks after the storm and the date suggests that the course was taught online (later student writing, referring to living at some distance from UNO, confirms this). So it is essential that, as we read the expectations of this prompt (as well as the student responses), we keep in mind this assignment hasn't been administered face-to-face and the conditions in which students are receiving it vary.

The essay is assigned in two parts, with two separate due dates. Functioning together, they offer students the opportunity to develop a personal narrative of experience and to reflect on the larger meaning of that experience by finding "the significance in relation to the experience of others (and human experience in general)."

Table 2: English 1157 Fall Semester Essay #1 Prompt

ENGL 1157
Essay #1 (Part 1): Draft Due Monday, Oct. 17 by 3:00 PM

The assignment for Essay #1 encompasses several steps and you will find step one below. The final product will be a well-developed, analytical essay that combines all of the elements. The aim of this assignment is not only to reflect and write about a personal experience, but to take your newfound understanding of that event and find its significance in relation to the experience of others (and human experience in general).

1. Pick an experience that changed you in a significant way—changed your circumstances, changed the way you live your life or the way you view yourself, others, or the world—and write a narrative, tell the story, of that experience. I would recommend prewriting about more than one experience and then choosing the most promising one for your narrative. Focus on the experience itself—try to avoid unnecessary "back story"—and provide as many concrete details as possible. For this assignment, it usually helps to focus on a key moment and then work your way into the rest of the story. There is no length requirement for the draft of the narrative, but aim for at least two pages. You can write more, of course. Most students find that two pages are not enough as they get started on this assignment.

Obviously, our individual experiences with Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath may be appropriate for this assignment and I encourage you to write about those experiences if you choose.

Format and Submission:

Use standard one-inch margins.
Double-space and use 12 point, Times New Roman font.
Head and title your essays.
Number your pages.

Save your essay as a Microsoft Word.doc. If you don't have Word, save your essay as an .rtf (Rich Text File). Use the Digital Dropbox function of Blackboard (located under Course Tools) to submit your paper. If you run into trouble, you may email it to me as an attachment.

SAVE A COPY FOR YOURSELF AND BACK-UP ALL OF YOUR FILES.

Essay #1 (Part 2): Final Draft Due Friday, Oct. 28 at 3:00 PM

2. Once you have written your narrative, consider the experience objectively, and analyze it. Look for deeper meaning and broader significance, and write several paragraphs that explain the significance of the event or experience. For example, the author of "Shattered Illusions" (Reading Life 4-6) does not simply tell what happened after her parents divorced, or compare her life before and after, or describe her feelings. She does all of those things—she analyzes her experience—and draws conclusions about the larger impact of her parents' divorce and some of the universal truths about coming of age that she discovers. Her essay goes beyond the mere telling of a story or the recording of a personal experience and has significance for others in a way that a diary entry never could.

Once you have completed the analysis, combine it with the narrative into a coherent and complete essay. Look to "Shattered Illusions" and the other reading assigned, especially Caroline Hwang's "The Good Daughter" (RL 178-83) as models to help guide your own essays.

The complete and final draft is due Friday, October 28 at 3:00 PM. Please observe all of the format and submission guidelines that I outlined for Part 1 above.

The first portion of the assignment expects that students will "write a narrative, tell the story" of an experience that was in some way revelatory, "that changed you in a significant way." The instructor gives operational suggestions for how to accomplish this task by urging students to pre-write on multiple subjects first, then to choose "the most

promising one for your narrative." There is a further warning against getting bogged

down in the "unnecessary 'back story'" that commonly accompanies such narratives.

There are two important implications here. First, this instructor gives this assignment (or

a similar one) often enough that he understands the temptation for students to write about

the first thing that comes to mind and to fill space with contextual detail rather than

"concrete" narrative details. Second, there is a shared understanding, either in general or

within the context of this class, as far as what constitutes a "promising" experience and,

logically, a successful paper.

The remainder of the prompt provides insights into this sense of a shared

understanding as we see the instructor offer more practical advice that should aid a

student in deciding not only what to write about, but also how to write:

> For this assignment, it usually helps to focus on a key moment and then
> work your way into the rest of the story. There is no length requirement
> for the draft of the narrative, but aim for at least two pages. You can write
> more, of course. Most students find that two pages are not enough as they
> get started on this assignment.

> Obviously, our individual experiences with Hurricane Katrina and its
> aftermath may be appropriate for this assignment and I encourage you to
> write about those experiences if you choose.

As we read, we begin to understand that the most "promising" experience here is one

that provides plenty of "concrete details," so it is recent or recalled clearly. It is a memory

motivated by some "key moment" that can be re-constructed from a point of dramatic

origin. It is one so consuming that "most students" need to write more than is expected.

The implication here is that any student who does not need to write more is an outlier and

that telling stories about experience should inspire students to work beyond the normal

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expectations of a classroom writing assignment. There is also a processural quality to the line—"most students *find* that two pages are not enough *as they get started* on this assignment." Students are described with a relational and emotional transitivity here as they are told they have stories that are worth telling and that these stories are fighting to get out. There is an element of excitement and discovery in process built into this concept of the narrative that must be or is waiting to be told. The instructor is, perhaps, trying to inspire his students to break free of commonplace thinking that equates writing with limits, including page numbers, format, etc.

The second section of the portion quoted above offers Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath as a potentially "obvious" choice for the assignment. The obviousness is hedged a bit by conditions of uncertainty established by the options presented in the clauses "may be appropriate" and "if you choose." It is clear that, while narratives of experience are multiple and must be told, one should elect to tell their Katrina narrative only if they wish. A couple of things, however, appear to put pressure on students to tell Katrina stories. The first and probably most significant pressure would be circulating narratives about Katrina that, in the middle of October, were still dominating popular news. In particular, these stories would be active and influential on those living outside of the city, where access to popular media was more widely available. Also, we see implicit pressures coming from the teacher himself. In the admonition above, we know this instructor is familiar with students' making decisions of convenience. They often will write about what the teacher deems "promising" rather than what they want to write. And the pride of place given this Katrina sentence, separated by a white space from the

assignment description and from the formatting guidelines, suggests it might carry an emphasis that students would, very likely, pick up on.

But whether or not students felt the pressure to write about the storm, the most significant factor to derive from this prompt is the pervasive tension between expectations about writing confessional narrative and expectations about writing in the academy. This is evident in the "Format and Submission" guidelines that impose structures on narratives that, just a few lines before, were bursting from the subconscious of "most students." They aren't excessive expectations, but they are a palpable counter-note to an implicit urging on the part of the instructor to have his students view their stories as extra-academic.

Part two of the assignment, where students are asked to reflect on their narratives, further clarifies this tension. The opening two lines show the instructor calling for critical reflexivity by erasing the distance between the local or textual (individual experience) and the global ("human experience"): "Once you have written your narrative, consider the experience objectively, and analyze it. Look for deeper meaning and broader significance, and write several paragraphs that explain the significance of the event or experience." Further, the local or textual articulation of experience is to be filtered through "Shattered Illusions," a course reading that the class has, presumably, prepared for discussion. This text is described as a "model" and a "guide" in that it goes beyond telling "what happened" in the author's experience to analyzing and drawing conclusions from that experience. It connects the individual narrative to "universal truths about coming of age." So, more abstract ideas like "deeper meaning" and "broader significance" are made concrete, but I would argue they are also made confusing and

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contradictory. There is an assumption here that experience can be universal and that student experience must somehow be rendered to reflect all experience.

The tension we see underwriting this conflict between expressivist-oriented post-traumatic pedagogy and more conventional academic writing is, I think, partially based on the instructor's own condition of "in-betweenness." In a post-traumatic environment, individual instructors—many of whom were themselves living in exile from the city and the university—were left to manage relationships with their university, with their social circles, with city and local government (in the event they were trying get home, to rebuild a home, or to relocate) and with students, who were in similar or even more devastated material and social situations. A position of personal, professional, political, and social displacement complicates any desire to balance the ideological representation of the university or the discipline (by maintaining the standards of academic discourse) with the urge to aid students in coming to terms with their experience and/or their own conditions of displacement. There is an evident and admirable liberatory impulse in this prompt, as the instructor attempts to help students move beyond the binding ideology of students as apprentices, limited by page requirements and minimal expectations. The instructor encourages students to see themselves as writers and storytellers and not socially situated writers. But we also see a need to reiterate limitations on textual design and submission processes, as well as limitations on how they might give value to their experience. This limitation is apparent in the need to connect the personal/political narrative of experience to some abstract, ontological sense of experience as something pre-existing and independent of discourse that we all, somehow, may tap into. It is also visible in the sense

that while their narratives are their own, they should model them on the author of "Shattered Illusions."

This is not to say that having students write narratives about experience or follow models when doing so is always a bad idea. But in the context of large-scale disaster, when relationships among individual, groups, and structures of power are exposed and in conflict, the pedagogical choice to solicit universalized narratives of experience and to confine those narratives with common (and, I would argue, necessary) expectations results in a dissonance that weakens any attempt to productively engage with difficult experience and the social/historical conditions that perpetuate it. The far end of the spectrum—where intertextuality affords students the option of situating their experience within dynamic structures of power and history—remains mostly silent in this prompt.

Such dissonance is evident in the student work written in response to this prompt. By considering the rhetorical and linguistic features of these student papers we can usefully consider how this dissonance appears (by what characteristics we can recognize it), whence it derives, and how student writing aligns with or rejects the ideological structures that cause the dissonance. There are, I suggest, two clear issues worth considering in these papers: first, the agency of student writers in electing to tell (or not to tell) the stories that are explicitly and implicitly solicited by this writing assignment. It is imperative that we understand how student writing reflects the desire of the student writer in conversation with the social and material conditions of school, city, and community. Second, the hegemonic operations of these social and material conditions as popular social structures and practices—the explicit requirement of a "human

experience"—exert influence on students in ways that overlap and conflict with influence

coming from academic structures and practices.

Class #1 Description

In terms of discourse and style, the student writing from Class #1 (Appendix B)

reflects the musealizing narratives of television and print. Intertextuality with popular

narrative is a particularly dominant characteristic of this work. Common tropes and

narratives resembling the news media recur throughout the student writing include:

Realization of storm or danger, Evacuation, Familial/Social tension, Mundane

displacement, Return/Recovery, Analysis or "Deeper Meaning." Virtually every paper I

encountered in the archive for this section of 1157 follows this progression of narrative

elements.

Use of quotation and reference in these papers is limited to direct and indirect

quotes by family members and friends. There is no direct engagement with published

material, though the juxtaposition of student story and media narrative can be read as a

form of implicit referencing. Elizabeth interacts with her mother and grandmother

regarding the anxiety and fear leading up to storm and evacuation. Judy marks a similar

concern as her father and a "local news anchor" are given direct quotes that set the stage

for evacuation. She uses direct quotation again when setting up an emotional

confrontation with her mother. Anthony uses direct quotation of a radio program director,

articulating a growing unease as the storm approaches. The absence of critical citation

has much to do with the writing prompt which encourages students not to relinquish

control over their narratives.

In many ways, widespread summary of narrative elements takes the place of

direct citation. Examples of summary are focused largely on reports by the news media.

In fact, the characteristics of the popular mediated narrative (dramatic plot, high tension,

minimal commentary, universalized characters) act as the primary source of convention

in this student writing. Before evacuation, these summaries are used to emphasize a sense

of foreboding. During evacuation, news sources occupy two roles: as contact with the

city and as reflections of what the city is becoming. I would suggest the presence of the

"news" as a catalyst for narrative action and as a source for personal revelation,

emphasizes the extent to which these students were integrating mediated accounts of the

storm into their own accounts of storm and post-storm experience. Examples include:

- Elizabeth describes her anger and shame at the image of looting and violence being broadcast on television. Reports inspire a fear of home.

- Ashley frames her narrative against the insensitivity of the news media for replaying images of people's destroyed lives, as well as their inability to adequately capture the "actual experience of losing all one has worked for and having to start over."

- Anthony similarly articulates a distrust of the media at the outset of his narrative (despite his explanation that he works in radio). He explains that to "scare" the public, in regards to a storm, is a way to keep them listening. Interestingly, he later summarizes the news descriptions of crime and social disorder as unequivocal fact.

These student writers express an ambivalence that is informed by the news media and its

strategies for reporting, but which is also informed by a desire to transform and challenge

the kinds of narratives the media tells about the students themselves.

The assumptions that underwrite this discursive ambivalence similarly point to

students engaging with a dissonance between the expectations of their classrooms and

culture, and their own interests and desires as writers. Metaphor and euphemism,

strategies used to play down (or up) the importance of an event, are used in these essays

almost exclusively as a way of describing the return to the home or city. Many engage

cinematic and historical images. Examples include:

- Elizabeth: "Everything looked battered, as if we were in a movie about the end of the world."
- Judy: "It reminded me of a ghost town from a black and white western movie."
- Ellen: "I felt like I was a Roman spectator watching gladiator fights every morning as people argued over who deserved the first shower"; she uses this image to emphasize the domestic turmoil of living in a crowded house, in exile.
- Ashley: "The city looked like a deserted ghost town."
- Anthony: "Television did not give justice to what the eye could see. Pictures may be worth a thousand words, but being there in person left you speechless."

Information is sequenced in these papers based on the expectations generated in the

writing prompt, as well as more common expectations about writing in popular genres—

i.e. personal narratives are temporally organized, while argumentative writing is

causal/additive. Further, "concrete details" have to be universally recognizable, which

explains the presence of cinematic tropes like the old West and the Roman Coliseum.

Such metaphorical alignments clean the historical event of its specificity. In this class, the

sequencing is also almost always temporal and direct. Events are linked together

chronologically with a conclusion, written as a reflection from the present, bringing the

reader to a contemporary setting. There is one notable exception. Elizabeth, in drawing

parallels to a larger "human experience" articulates a sense of having "lived two lives"

and describes a very specific memory of a riverboat dance before the storm.

While most conclusions in these papers can best be described as definitive

statements, typically in the form of cliché, two exceptions are worth noting. First,

Elizabeth ends with a question "Will the city one day become beautiful place that has

given me such wonderful memories?" (sic). And Judy, though she makes a statement, resists the generalizing impulse that appears to drive the mood of so many of the others student writers. She describes the kind of person she "is" (meaning, has become) as a result of her experiences with the storm and she explains—by paralleling her experience with the community: "Waking up that Saturday morning, I had no idea about the enormous impact that was going to be place on my life along with several others' lives. Although the experience was extremely problematic, my family and I made it though, and for that matter, so did the rest of New Orleans. All in all, I learned a couple of valuable lessons, but the hardest lesson I have yet to learn: how to put the past behind me."

Many of the instructors I interviewed for chapter 2 suggested the use of cliché was rampant in student writing. This observation holds true in virtually all of the papers from this section of 1157 as concluding comments inevitably turned to popular commonplaces that have resonance in the discourses of dominant culture:

- Judy: "As Katrina taught the community of New Orleans and me, the most precious things in life can be taken from us in an instant, including family and friends. I now treasure every moment I spend with mine."

- Ellen: "Because of this storm, I've come to realize that everything happens for a reason, even if we don't quite know what that reason is"—interesting here that she uses the definite article "this" storm and then moves to generalize about what can be learned by everyone, moving her conclusion from definite to indefinite, just as the prompt requests.

- Ashley: "there really is no sense in getting upset over what cannot be changed."

- Anthony: "It will take time, but anything good always takes time."

Class #1 Discussion

Students responded to the dissonance of the assignment prompt by generating dissonance in their own writing. We can view the confusions, problems, and rhetorical maneuvering in these papers as efforts to align with or resist discursive pressure placed on the student writer by the social practices articulated in the classroom, as well as the social practices articulated from "outside" the classroom (which, inevitably, manifest themselves within it).

The first and most obvious point to make about this dissonance is evident in the parallel structure between many of the tropes and narratives invoked by students and the linguistic and rhetorical tools they used to realize these structural moves. Each student essay begins with some form of narrative of discovery or realization. This discovery comes by way of dialogue between family members and/or news broadcasts. Quotes and summaries of conversations and media are used to set the stage for the narrative, to re-enact the experience of "hearing" about the storm or to highlight the fear and anxiety that accompanied its approach. Further, this trope opens the story *in medias res*, avoiding the "back story" admonished against in the prompt, in favor of more compelling drama. In many ways, the media supplants the sociality of the event in a way that mimics the actual history of the storm. The media became the story of the storm, reporting and shaping the narrative as it unfolded. A notable (and positive) example of this mediated sociality is work by New Orleans Times-Picayune columnist Chris Rose whose first-hand reporting of the storm, its aftermath, and his own slide into depression gave voice to the daily, lived experiences of New Orleanians in the city and in exile (see Rose 1 Dead in Attic). More common, however, were instances in which the hegemonic influence of mainstream

media favored stories of trauma, exile, helplessness, and suffering (for examples of these narratives, see Spike Lee's <u>When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts</u>). It is these universalizing narratives of experience that appear to shape the student work in Class #1.

Two strains of evacuation narrative are also of interest here. First, the descriptions of travel, geographic and social displacements, and traffic render—in "concrete detail"— the experience of leaving the city and arriving in sometimes multiple evacuation sites; second, the description of social tensions that arose for evacuees living in large groups in small spaces, moving from location to location. What is most notable is a contrast between the cold objectivity with which the students tell stories of physical displacement and the heightened emotional turmoil that accompanies narratives of social displacement and exile. Consider, for example, Ellen's narrative of departure and arrival:

> We each packed a bag and went our separate ways. Jessica left at four in the morning to head to Tampa with a friend's family, and my mother and I left at about six or seven heading West. We could not get on the interstate, not that we wanted to with all the congestion. So, we got on Airline Highway and took it all the way to Baton Rouge. We never went more over twenty-five miles per hour and frequently came to a complete standstill. We saw taxis driving by on the shoulder, presumably trying to get people to the airport on time. We might as well have made friends with the people in the cars around us because we all stayed the same way in traffic the whole way to Baton Rouge.

Ellen offers here an account of departure that is unemotional and reliant on details that do little more than prove she was there. Contrast this with the portion of her essay where she begins to take account of the social dynamics and emotional toll of this experience on her life and relationships:

> In the past month and a half I have slept on other people's couches, floors, beds, and air mattresses. I left my house thinking I would be spending a weekend in Baton Rouge, not two months. I left thinking that I'd return to

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my own bed in a few days, not be sleeping on someone's couch for almost a week because with so many people there was nowhere else. It was a switch having to get used to the habits of seventeen other people rather than just the two people I was used to living with. It was strange to wake up in the middle of the night and realize not only was I not in my own room, but I would never sleep in that room again.

Here Ellen's writing resembles the discourse of the news reporter objectively marking the details of an event while sustaining the drama implicit in being "embedded" or "on location." The example further reflects Ellen's engagement with the expectations of her assignment and her own desire to articulate a sense of personal and social dislocation that means something to her. However, both this sense of the social and its meaning are dramatically shaped by the expectations of culture and of the writing prompt. The laundry list of experiences in the first example constitutes a desire to resist the popular narratives of evacuation that depict high drama and tension amidst difficulty. Ellen draws our attention away from sensational traumatic images—cars backed up for miles, people stranded on overpasses, etc. Instead she shows us the real turmoil of living, post-Katrina, in a state of material and social dislocation. She has moved us away from the "key event" that dominates the confessional narrative, to the devastating power of everyday suffering that influences everything from how and where she sleeps to how and where she writes her paper. On the other hand, she demonstrates the extent to which media infiltrates her version of "deeper meaning" as she invokes the commonplace of mass evacuation—the individual rendered insignificant against the larger social context—and the human interest story of the family threatened by inconvenience. In both cases, she reflects dominant middle-class anxieties about individuality, safety, and privacy.

But if the emphasis in these papers on the mundane rituals of everyday life in exile might constitute a struggle for agency within and against the confines of both the popular narrative and the academic essay, the trope of return/recovery and the efforts by students to draw "deeper meaning" from their narratives are perfectly aligned with the confining expectations of genre and purpose. Because the reality of life during and after the storm was mundane and the experience of exile was long, slow, and boring, the emergence of metaphor and cliché appears to constitute a move to act on the implicit assumption of the assignment prompt that "promising" essays are dramatic. That the dominant metaphors invoked by these students are cinematic—"Everything looked battered, as if we were in a movie about the end of the world" (Elizabeth) and "It reminded me of a ghost town from a black and white western movie" (Judy)—or historical—"I felt like I was a Roman spectator…" (Ellen) and "The city looked like a deserted ghost town" (Ashley)—suggests the extent to which the process of writing personal narratives in class or out of class, functions in dialogue with a pervasive musealizing impulse in contemporary American culture. All stories may be represented through (or as) media, particularly when all stories are meant to be the same story—to reflect "universal truths" about the "human experience." Dramatic commonplaces become a tool that students use to link up with popular expectations about post-Katrina narratives.

The overwhelming use of cliché as definitive statement on the subject of Katrina and Katrina experience shows us something similar. From these papers we learn that "the most precious things in life can be taken from us in an instant" (Judy), that "everything happens for a reason" (Ellen), and that "there really no sense in getting upset over what

cannot be changed" (Ashley). The turn toward abstract generalization is clearly encouraged by the prompt, though I imagine the instructor had something quite different in mind. The result appears not to be a critical interaction with experience of self and other (except, perhaps, in the case of Elizabeth's flashback conclusion), or an interrogation of the limits of discourse for articulating experience. Rather we see these students struggling to bridge the expectation of the assignment, to find "deeper meaning," with the public impulse to obsessively record (and by recording, to devalue and de-politicize) experiences of trauma and personal disruption. Clichés constitute attempts to find shared meaning, to validate the experience of one, by universalizing the experiences of all. Andreas Huyssen might say this use of cliché indicates a "panic over oblivion" (28) that materializes most powerfully in public and private memorializing strategies—from blogging and tweeting to archiving and monument building. Huyssen suggests that "The turn toward memory is subliminally energized by the desire to anchor ourselves in a world characterized by an increasing instability of time and the fracturing of lived space (28). It is just such an instability that haunts this Katrina narrative assignment. Efforts by this instructor to inspire students to see themselves first as writers with valuable experiences to share are corrupted by hegemonic pressures exerted on student writers, from the academic and disciplinary expectations that govern classroom practices, to the popular discursive expectations that govern social practices in the "real" world. By obscuring the role of what Bartholomae would call intertextuality in writing after trauma, this instructor validates only the most expressivist-oriented aspects of post-traumatic writing pedagogy. The student papers are focused on universals and are driven by a

notion of "meaning" that omits the social contextual factors that shape meaning in any given time and place.

University of New Orleans Class #2: English 1157 Spring Semester 2006

In this second section from the archive (Appendix C and D) we can mark a similar set of pressures working from within the classroom and from culture more generally. The urge to be "writers" is less pronounced here, replaced by the pressure to be archivists, recorders, and community activists. Universalizing human interest stories are made marginal by the prioritization of recollection and recovery amidst wider social contexts. In an unpublished master's thesis that accompanied this selection of archived documents, the instructor explains how she develops a localized pedagogy that implicates her students in ongoing conversations about history and community in New Orleans. She writes:

> All essays (except the ad analysis) required that students locate a variety of resources; they used their own experiences, secondary sources (editorials, articles, essays, etc.), and more importantly, pulled from those social spaces and geographies (i.e. their neighbors, coworkers, friends, family, a resident riding next to them on the bus) that make up so much more than their academic lives (39)

In the two sets of essays that follow (both from the same course section)[7], I examine the social/spatial program outlined by this instructor as a way of considering the uses and limitations of the community impulse for writing classes after large-scale disaster. Where the previous instructor drew on an overtly expressivist orientation in his attempt to inspire students to think beyond assumptions about writing and experience, this instructor

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[7] There were no assignment prompts accompanying the papers from this section of 1157 in the archive. The prompt I analyze in relation to Essay #1 was located in the appendix of the instructor's master's thesis. There is no prompt for Essay #6, though the thesis does offer us several clues into its theoretical positioning and the desired outcomes.

asks her students to look to communities beyond the conventional limits of the freshman writing classroom. In this class, an essential view of experience—as something ineffable or "universal"—is tempered by a rhetoricized sense for how experience, textual conversation, and the spaces in which experience and textual conversation intersect.

The first assignment is a Katrina narrative very much in the same mold as Class #1 (see table 3), the primary difference being, at least for the instructor, the potential for a wider reading audience than just the classroom. By tying the assignment to the UNO sponsored Katrina Narrative Project[8] the instructor sees this assignment moving "beyond freshman composition" to an engagement with "reading and writing that…truly 'matter'" (39/40). She suggests that it is "decidedly local" in the sense that it encourages students to write about a specific experience and to contribute to a project "that was developed for the benefit of our community" (40). Here, "our community" situates student attention on not only the classroom environment, but the university and the community surrounding it. This is not a universal "our" but a specific contextualizing concept. By analyzing some of the rhetorical and linguistic features of the prompt and the student papers written in response to the prompt, I think we gain insight into the promising pedagogical aims this teacher undertakes in her post-Katrina work.

As stated, this prompt is clearly framed in conversation with the Katrina Narrative Project, a large-scale and officially sponsored archival history project at UNO.

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[8] The Katrina Narrative Project was developed out of the history department at UNO and has published two collections of Katrina stories written and/or collected by students in collaboration with individuals in and beyond the university community. The original records are housed at UNO's Earl K. Long library; see Antoine, Voices from the Storm.

Table 3: English 1157 Spring 2006--Essay #1 Prompt

English 1157, Spring 2006

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Essay 1: Katrina Narrative

Our first two assignments this semester are inspired by the Katrina Narrative Project, a writing project created by the University of New Orleans that seeks to collect the first-hand testimonies of individuals living in and around the New Orleans area who were affected by the hurricane. While your first journal assignment required that you interview a neighbor, family member, friend, or stranger and write about his or her storm experience, for essay number 1, I like you to complete you own Katrina narrative.

Whether you are a permanent resident of this area or not, whether you evacuated or stayed, you still have a story to tell, and your story is meaningful. For those of you who are interested, you may contribute final drafts of your personal narratives to the Katrina Narrative Project, which will be housed in the University library.

Length 3+ pages

Because most of us could probably write an entire book about our experiences, here are some possible areas to focus on in the narratives. Evacuation stories:

    Talk about when you left
    The decision making process
    Talk about where you went
    Staying in your home
    On the road stories

Evacuating with others:

    Friends
    Families
    Pets (taking with and leaving behind)
    Alone

Staying out of place stories

    Talk about your experience
    Shelter stories
    Staying with friends and families
    Out of state stories
    Superdome stories
    Convention center stories
    I-10 stories
    Overpass stories

Communication stories

    Trying to find others
    How did you do that?

    Where did you get your information in the weeks after the storm?
    Returning home stories
    Making the decision to return
    Not returning
    Talk about what you saw...
    Talk about what you did
    Talk about what you have lost

To explore in your narratives, only if you feel comfortable
What has been interrupted in your life?
What do you think about your life now?
What new ideas about your life have you
    thought about?
What now triggers sadness? Anger?
    Joy? Fear?

The prompt offers two overriding problems worth noting right away. First, it introduces the question of who has a story to tell and who does not, which will resonate significantly in some of the student essays. Sentence one establishes the Narrative Project as an official entity that "seeks to collect the first-hand testimonies of individuals living in and around New Orleans who were affected by the hurricane." Sentence two links student writing to the goals of the project. The instructor explains "I'd like you to complete your own Katrina narrative" and the implication is that this narrative should, to some extent, resemble the narrative "sought" by the Narrative Project; i.e. it should be a "first-hand testimony" related to an individual's life in relation to the storm. The next paragraph expands on this synchronous relation between Project and project, as students are shown that they too have a story to tell. In fact, they have one they *must* tell. Whereas the opening paragraph drew an implicit distinction between those "who were" affected by the storm and those whose stories are being collected—this second paragraph explains that "whether you are a permanent resident of this area or not, whether you evacuated or stayed, you still have a story to tell, and your story is meaningful." While this sentence appears to be an earnest effort to affirm student experiences, it removes much of the potential agency from this discursive situation by characterizing students as in need of confession and inevitably traumatized by their experience of the storm. In many ways, I think the parallels and conflicts here between the work of the Narrative Project, voluntary participation by those who have stories to tell, and the expectations placed on student writers, exemplify the critical dilemma for post-traumatic writing pedagogy, as the popular impulse to collect stories and the academic goals of writing appear more unified than they might truly be.

A second problem introduced by this prompt is the extent to which this is actually community writing, or would be seen as such by students who may have little investment in official archives of experience. This is particularly the case in that the assignment parallels the stories by students with Katrina Narrative Project contributions representing experiences that may or may not resonate with students' own experiences. For example, where a student might view their evacuation story as boring or burdensome, to ask them to tell it as a "meaningful" story may be asking them to marginalize voluntary contributions to the Narrative Project or to invest meaning where they have decided there is none. While the urge to have students contribute to ongoing conversations at the university is a worthwhile cause, dictating how, where, why and to whom they contribute seems problematic. The paralleling of the classroom prompt with the Narrative project opens an interesting space for students to participate in an official and institutionally authorized record of life as it was lived in these circumstances; however, it also brings to light the hegemonic social practices that inflect and influence how they might choose to contribute to that record.

The remaining portion of the prompt sheds light on some of these social practices as the instructor provides a list of "possible areas" where students might focus their attention in developing their narrative. Interestingly, the options parallel the media-inflected tropes and narratives of Katrina experience we saw emerge in the student papers from Class #1. This second instructor lists them as the subheadings in her prompt: "Evacuation stories," "Evacuating with others," "Staying out of place stories," "Communication stories," and "Returning home stories." Her reasoning for offering this list re-iterates a sentiment also articulated in the earlier prompt: "Because most of us

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could probably write an entire book about our experiences." The pronoun—"Us"—refers here to both teacher and students, but also to people in general. The assignment occurred early in the semester and this instructor would, very likely, have little knowledge of how much each student would want to write about their own experiences, of the storm or otherwise. So, this is an invocation of the popular idea that everyone has a story to tell. Any student to come through the class and write this story will inevitably be able (and should want) to "write an entire book" about what happened to them. To wish to do otherwise, or to resist the solicitation of a personal story, is to break from the social norms that govern popular discourse about trauma and experience.

The headings for the optional topics prioritize a view of experience as a series of events and actions ("concrete details" in the first course) leading up to some revelatory moment (the "deeper meaning" or "broader significance"). Most of the verbs are material in their transitivity in that they ask students to explore specifically what they were doing and how they were doing it ("when you left," "where you went," "taking with and leaving behind," "staying out of place," "trying to find other"). This materially focused transitivity changes in the final section of the prompt where students are invited "to explore" (which involves thinking and feeling rather than doing) their narratives in order to address more contemplative questions:

What has been interrupted in your life?

What do you think about your life now?

What new ideas about your life have you thought about?

What now triggers sadness? Anger? Joy? Fear?

The polarity of this set of options changes from past tense—recounting events in a narrative—to present tense and the insistence that something has changed, something which needs to be identified. Further, this change has occurred only at the level of the individual; it does not include family, community, or city. Key words in each question—"has been," "now," "new" and "now"—encourage the student to view their experience, or rather the testimony of their experience, as representative of something inevitably life-altering. While the prompt leaves space for both positive and negative response (many of the students offer both), there is a clear insistence that a trauma has occurred, and that the effects have been substantial ("triggering" significant emotions like "sadness," "anger," "joy," and "fear").

Much like the students in the first course, student writers in this section of 1157 follow a narrative trajectory that begins with some kind of coming into awareness of the storm ("Sunday August 28th, 2005, I will always remember that date") and ends with return/recovery and life lessons learned from the experience. It's notable that rather than emphasizing one or two of the options listed in the prompt, the students attempt to answer every question, chronicling every aspect of their own Katrina story in a few sentences. This suggests either they weren't interested in or able to tell these stories at this point in their writing careers or they recognized the extent to which these kinds of human interest narratives are only of interest in relation to dominant social groups. Additionally, it is worth noting that the papers, written in February of 2006, prioritize media accounts of the storm much more than their peers had in the previous "storm" semester suggesting a Katrina fatigue experienced over time.

Class #2 Description

In terms of intertextuality, this class (Appendix C) functions in much the same ways as Class #1. Common tropes and narratives include the realization of threat/danger, including anxiety about the storm's approach (news media, family members often "open" the narrative), and recurring references to having a "bad feeling" about this particular storm. This coming into awareness of the storm's threat is followed by several narrative characteristics derived directly from the writing prompt: "Evacuation Stories" (mundane descriptions of traffic, locations/settings; attention to material possessions); "Evacuating with Others" (examining familial/social tensions); "Staying out of place stories" (boredom, family tension, moving from location to location); "Returning Home Stories" (which draw on metaphorical descriptions to emphasize drama).

Again, there are no direct quotations or references in these papers, but the students do develop indirect quotations representing the speech of news media, as well as family and friends. Charles opens his narrative with a brief dialogue in which he names the storm—"They're calling it Katrina"—and sets up a contrast between his family's habitual and dismissive response to hurricane warnings and the eventual severity of this one. LaCresha also begins her narrative with a dialogue and a coming to awareness of the storm—her dialogue sets the stage for evacuation (social relationships and plans to stay or to leave) and works to show the reader how the writer came to understand the threat. Michael uses direct quotation to punctuate key moments in his narrative; first, as he decides to return home to put his car on jack stands to save it from any rising water, and again to reflect internal monologue—"I thought to myself, 'If I drove all those hours for nothing but I guess better safe than sorry.'"

Use of summary (and indirect quotation) is one of the more interesting rhetorical/linguistic strategies employed in these papers. As with the earlier class, these students use summaries of news reports to establish "official" explanations for what was happening. However, unlike the other class, they sometimes temper the "official" narratives of public news, with negative commentary that depicts news as either manipulative or unable to accurately represent the severity of the storm:

- Charles describes a new account of the storm's approach, explaining a sense of distrust in the accuracy of news reporting: "I always knew that the news loved drama and loved to exaggerate everything that they could, so I really didn't even pay attention to all of that."

- Ricardo points toward "experts" on two occasions: first, as the storm approaches he sees the news report but "didn't panic because it was just going to be another close one"; second, while in exile from the city he is "glued to the television" where it "seemed as though the news was talking about a city in Iraq and not a city in a civilized nation. People were left helpless and desperate to survive. Suddenly, everyone's worst dream was coming true and death was a chilling reality."

- LaCresha personalizes her interaction with news reports as they provide her with evidence of the complete destruction of her home. From media images, "We learned that most of our homes and personal properties were severely damaged. We knew at this point that we would be starting our lives all over again."

- Michael opens his narrative with a summary of a news broadcast, which serves as a framing mechanism for the story. He invokes radar images of "a category 5 hurricane heading straight for New Orleans." Like LaCresha, he represents the media as a source of useful, if discouraging information: "The next morning when I woke up is when I saw that the levees had broken and the real trouble began. I could not believe what I was seeing, water rushing through Lakeview, a community not even 5 minutes from my house, aerial views of the 9th ward submerged, and areas of Kenner flooding. I saw what appeared to be Clearview mall flooded at least 4ft and I thought that my house must be flooded because I lived right behind the mall." Later he marks the limitations of this same media, however, as he contrasts the images on the news with what he has seen upon his actual return to Metairie; his account recalls a news report: "I realized for the first time that it actually happened, a hurricane of such

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magnitude to actually flood an American city had struck New Orleans and it actually happened in my lifetime."

In these papers our attention is drawn to an interesting relationship between what happened (i.e. what the student remembers) and what they have seen in publicly mediated discourse in the months since the storm. This, I think, explains the increased presence of news in these papers and the more dynamic relationship between news and "reality." Having time to reflect and to see one's Katrina story change over repeated telling is also reflected in the common reference to a "bad feeling" (Michael) or a "feeling of uneasiness" (Ricardo) which may have been felt at the time but may also be an inflection developed after the storm. Where the media interrupted the sociality of storytelling in class #1 (by dictating acceptable strategies), students in this class demonstrate a level of distrust and a lack of faith in the news media that complicate how they invoke some of the more common tropes of mediated storytelling.

Metaphor is again used primarily in step with the trope of return or recovery. Charles describes his attempts to navigate the city as follows: "It was not easy though we had to take backstreets the whole time because W. Metairie looked like a disaster zone with huge trees blocking the middle of the road." Ricardo uses metaphor to reflect his (as well as a more public) shock at the extent of the devastation: "As we were all glued to the television, it seemed as though the news was talking about a city in Iraq and not a city in a civilized nation." The description, of course, recalls Zizek's explanation of Katrina as indicative of a contrast between what happens "there" (meaning the 3rd world or the global south) and what happens "here," in the West ("The Subject Supposed to Loot and Rape"). Michael expresses shock and draws a familiar comparison with movie devastation: "I had no idea what I was going to see once I got back in the city. The news

was showing images that looked like something out of a movie." He later uses metaphor again to establish the extent to which he has seen the city altered; he describes a "feeling of nostalgia" brought on when he looks around and sees "all the destruction and flooded homes. There was no electricity, helicopters were flying overheard, military convoys could be heard in the distance and most of the streets were blocked off. Everything was fine just a week before and now it all looks like a war zone."

Tense shifting is particularly widespread in the papers from this class. Charles shifts to present tense at a key moment in the text: "So now I don't know where my mom and dad are and if they made it out, while the rest of us don't know where to go except to just get out of Kenner and drive toward Baton Rouge." The instructor's marginal comment states: "Wow. This is pretty intense. Watch the tense, though. Stay in past tense." This shift in tense happens several more times in this paper (as well as in Michael's paper) and very likely reflects a blurring of boundaries between the spoken version of the story—perhaps told time and again in the months since the storm—and the more formal account written here, governed by the expectations of academic work.

Again, cliché dominates the reflective or exploratory portion that we find tacked onto the end of these essays. Charles invokes several common sayings associated with adversity: "with just a little bit of hard work, everything will turn alright"; "you got to look at the good of the situation"; "Why look at the empty side of the glass when the full side looks ten times better." Ricardo explains that "It was a wake up call for us not to take anything for granted or think that nothing can happen to us. I live my life grateful for the little that I have now and appreciative of what I now receive." LaCresha tells us, "I

believe that everything happens for a reason and that God has and always will be on our side" and that "I truly look to appreciate the little things in life."

Class #2 Discussion

As with the essays in the first class, these student narratives reflect both the "in-betweenness" of living and working in post-Katrina New Orleans and a dissonance that appears to haunt efforts to write explicit post-traumatic narratives in academic settings. By aligning her assignment with the Katrina Narrative Project, this instructor attempts to lend a social and political validity to the writing these students are doing. But the community to which she would have them write is a future community of readers and researchers (like myself) with whom students have little or no affiliation, particularly when so many material and social issues are more pressing. This results in an unfortunate sense of the Katrina narrative as little more than a record that fails as community archive and as academic assignment. The contrasting expectations of popular trauma narrative and academic essay blur the boundaries between what the students would do given the choice—highlighting those experiences they deem most valuable and writing in ways that serve their own narrative purposes—and the expectations of their teacher who represents the authority of the university and an interested peer, working and living in a similar circumstance.

And though these students are asked to share narratives of experience that would seem to be fairly straightforward (what happened, how did it happen, and how did it change your life). Because of the months that have passed between when the students experienced the storm and when they are writing about it for class, we can see them

drawing in various elements of public and private discourse (incorporated into their

Katrina story over time) that might be productively parsed out and analyzed in the

classroom. This would bring the students (and the teacher) into critical contact with

Fairclough's sense of universal and particular hegemony which, always already,

participates in the framing of what we write, how, and where. That the same tropes and

narratives, the same use of quotation and summary, and the same use of cliché to

universalize experience recur so often throughout this work suggests one of two likely

possibilities. First, student writers were drawing on acceptable middle-class definitions

for Katrina experience and the representation of Katrina experience that began circulating

in public discourse as soon as the storm struck. They turn to discursive and stylistic

strategies that are familiar and effective, in their estimation, in order to satisfy the

requirements of an essay that would seem to be calling for such genre conventions. A

second possibility is that the tropes and narratives of experience, the quotations and

summaries of private and public discourse, and the clichés were circulating within the

conversations going on in and around the classroom and found their way into the work by

the student writers.

In fact, I think the answer is some combination of the two. As Fairclough

suggests, the universalization of particulars that constitutes hegemonic practice relies on

shared goals and strategies that are taken as given. Confessional writing, for example, is

validated as a means for healing, a trope for self-knowledge and honesty, and a

marketable genre. Fairclough claims that this kind of widespread influence is indicative

of successful hegemonic practice: "A measure of the successful universalization of such a

particular representation is the extent to which it figures in this way as a background

assumption (and one might say as an ideology) in a wide variety of texts" (46).

Assumptions reveal ideology, and ideology affirms or rejects hegemony. Where the urge to solicit or to write confessional narratives validates a musealizing impulse to tell stories as nothing more than a bulwark against forgetting hegemonic forces are affirmed. Where the musealizing impulse is challenged and the urge to tell stories is complicated by a desire to understand the social and material contexts that shape, destroy, and re-assemble narratives of experience, hegemonic forces are resisted.

Janks emphasizes that "readers who do not sharethe codes of the text" are an important resource for critical discourse analysis as the "dominant discourses are not naturalized" for them and, as such, they "can assist those readers who do share the text's codes to read against the grain" ("Critical Discourse Analysis" 330). The student writers in these archived collections are working at an intersection of multiple "codes" of popular and academic discourse. Where they may not know all of the "codes" of academic discourse intuitively (rendered through prompt, course outcomes, university procedures, etc.), they seem to know many of the codes of public and popular culture. In several examples we can see the students working to accommodate and challenge the hegemonic social practices that govern discourse. Clichés and metaphors, for example, reflect alignment with popular storytelling strategies, while listing details and approximating formal introductions and conclusions reveals some understanding of how academic writing works. Importantly, not every student has the same relationship with these dominant discourses; for some, the middle-class narrative of post-traumatic suffering may be publicly resonant but personally inaccessible or undesirable.

Conclusion

The second set of essays from this section (Appendix D) suggests a more productive way to start thinking about how to do critical, counter-hegemonic writing pedagogy that is socially and materially contextualized within the students' own range of affiliations and interests. I want to temper what has been a largely critical reading of the archival documents with what I see as a hopeful and progressive move toward a sustainable pedagogy that engages experience and community in way that might challenge the common dissonance I see occurring in most attempts to formulate post-traumatic pedagogy. While this essay assignment, Essay 6 (the last essay in the course), is plagued by many of the social, material, and political pressures I've already identified, it attempts to move student writers away from hyper-focusing on "trauma" to a more critical engagement with the social and material conditions that give rise to and perpetuate traumatic conditions.

There was no prompt archived with this set of student papers, but the instructor's master's thesis offers insights into how we might productively read these papers. The instructor suggests that this essay, like many of the course assignments, presents students with an opportunity to engage with space and place, or what Johnathan Mauk calls a "material-discursive" setting ("Location, Location, Location"). In essence, the instructor is trying to encourage students to see barriers broken down between their school or academic lives and other discourse communities (or "geographies," in the sense of human cultural geography which has influenced composition scholars like Mauk or Nedra Reynolds) to which they belong. This instructor suggests that "by engaging these geographies in the classroom and involving students in a larger university-

wide/community minded-project, my students are better able to 'locate' themselves both academically—as a student at UNO—and as a citizen of New Orleans or another community" (45). There is a move here to have students view themselves as both student and citizen, rather than either student or citizen. It is a common sentiment among many composition scholars interested in service learning, community writing, or cultural studies pedagogy more generally (Flower, Goldblatt, Mauk, Own, Parks, Reynolds, Weisser). But there is a problem, I think, when we start to see student citizens or citizen scholarship as an obligation, an essential characteristic of "good" pedagogy or good student writing.

The instructor explains, "only when students recognize their participation in local discourse communities may they begin to think about how they are active participants in the rebuilding of New Orleans, whether they want to be or not" (45). I applaud the effort here to move students toward a more complex sense of themselves and how they are situated within their communities, indeed, how they constitute their communities through their writing. This is particularly important work in the wake of large-scale disaster when, as we have seen, the temptation to confess stories about the self and about essentials of "human experience" is overwhelming. But, I am uncomfortable with phrasing student work and experience in terms like "only when [they] recognize...may they begin." There is a power structure built into the teacher/student relationship that this position fails to account for, even when it would see students extend their own political and social influence into other, non-academic communities. The implication here is that citizen scholarship cannot, does not, and will not happen until the writing experts offer their permission and their guidance. Just as we have seen with post-traumatic pedagogies that

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represent writing teachers as the most viable conduit for emotional or psychic well-being, this perspective positions the writing instructor as a power broker who dictates when and how students can work in their communities. This constitutes another form of dissonance between the public and the academic, as students are heralded as potential champions of community, but only within very specific social, material and discursive conditions, which their instructor dictates and assesses.

Where the previous Katrina essays were temporally situated narratives of experience, Essay #6 is focused on the student's social spaces, as they are asked to describe the communities in which they live, how those communities have changed since Katrina, and what (if anything) they would like to see improved or developed in their communities. It is an opportunity for students to show pride in where they come from and to participate in re-thinking what the city could or should look like after recovery. What is troubling, however, is that many of these students, in making arguments or proposals for city development and urban renewal, draw social and political lines along considerations of race, class, and geography that challenge the ideological goals of critical, community-focused pedagogy.

I want to focus on two recurrent themes: the question of who belongs in the community and the blame placed on institutional powers that have failed to govern those communities. First, the implicit and explicit articulation of who was a part of the community before the storm (reflected in the pronoun use "I" or "us") and those who have moved into the community after or as a result of the storm (reflected in the pronoun use "them" or "they") is a move to position some people as outsiders—particularly those displaced by the storm or those from out of state who have come in to work on the

recovery effort. In these essays, "tight knit" communities are those that successfully

maintain a distinction between "lower income" conditions and "upscale" or "good

qualities" (Louis). Or, they are communities where the "new neighbors" have been given

a "little push"—in the form of fines—to encourage them to be more civically and

socially-minded.

Jessica frames this insider/outsider trope as one that only she can see: "most

people don't truly see their surroundings; their minds are on other things… However, I

see more than most when it comes to my neighborhood, thanks to my daily walks. The

area I live in is slowly declining in the wake of our most recent hurricane, Katrina." As

the ultimate insider, she establishes herself as someone knowledgeable, someone able to

make these critiques and not have them "seem harsh to most people." From this position

of expertise she sets up a then and now binary and places the blame of the "slow decline"

not on Katrina, but on new residents:

> Where there were once well kept flowerbeds and carefully maintained
> lawns, there are now piles of garbage and cars parked every which way.
> Most of the houses in the area were put up for sale shortly after the
> hurricane, and the people who bought them leave much to be desired. Two
> or three families cram into one house, mostly out of state contractors.
> They don't care for the homes, leaving debris to rot outside the house and
> letting lawns grow to unreasonable proportions. Nor do they care for the
> neighborhood, parking five or six cars in an area meant for two, taking up
> most of the street with their vehicles. Taking over to the point where it's
> almost impossible to drive down the street at all, and is impossible to pass
> other cars along the way.

The shifting of articles within several sentences from "they" (specific to an individual or

group) to "the" (as in "the homes" or "the neighborhood") emphasizes the outside

position of these new residents, as they are represented as separate from the interests of

the community. They are shown to not care about "the" community space and, as such,

are not made a part of it. Further, the description of trash and automobiles belonging to this group ("these people") suggests a sort of infestation, a multiplying that sees the yards and streets, all the open space of an urban neighborhood, crowded out by unwanted outsiders.

Louis' essay offers a similar depiction of outsiders crossing the natural and social boundaries that keep communities separate. While he describes his own community as "upscale," "well-kept," and "tucked away" he describes a shift in the "culture and population" of his neighborhood: "There are many more Spanish living in Kenner now than there were before. The only thing I notice when I am driving home are license plates from Texas. I mostly just see middle aged Spanish men walking and driving around. The reason why all of the Spanish came in was to find work." Where Jessica speaks in general terms about outsiders, Louis identifies his "they" as the Latino laborers who flooded the city in the years after Katrina (see Donato, Trujillo-Pagan, Bankston, and Singer for a discussion of this phenomenon).[9] He also draws an implicit parallel between the "Spanish" and an increase in crime and urban decay as he moves to the next paragraph and an articulation of his "dislikes" about the Kenner neighborhood where he lives: "One [dislike] is that there is way too much crime. Another dislike that I have about Kenner is that it is becoming more and more trashed with litter on the streets and the last dislike that I have is that it is just too run down. There is just no pride in cleaning up." The intolerance and xenophobia reflected in both of these papers is not uncommon, and I do not wish to suggest that I think students should not be able to articulate their own social

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[9] Interestingly, in October of 2005, then New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin made a point similar to both Jessica and Louis when he questioned: "How do I ensure that New Orleans is not overrun by Mexican Workers?" (Campo-Flores).

or political views. However, given the liberatory and socially-conscious underpinnings of service or community-focused pedagogy, these papers generate interesting questions about the limitations of this kind of writing assignment after "trauma." Should students simply articulate their current feelings about space and place or do they reflexively come to terms with the conditions that motivate those feelings?

In fact, I think the attitudes expressed by these students have much to do with the storm. The disaster made so many social and political relationships tenuous because of the breakdown of basic services, wholesale changes in material circumstance, and insufficient efforts by local, city, and national government to protect or recover its citizens. Efforts by institutions of social power to render lower income and marginalized populations of the city "disposable" appear to result in an urge by some, particularly those who may have suffered pre-storm marginalization, to assume a position of power over those who arrived after the storm. It is an ironic co-optation of power by groups whose legacies of suffering have been well-documented in recent attention to post-Katrina New Orleans (Brinkley, Brunsma et al., Dyson, McNulty, Trouble the Water, When the Levee Breaks) but whose circumstances are largely unchanged. In fact, the vastly reduced population of New Orleans—from a little less than 500,000 before the storm to less than 200,000—took on some of the identity of its more historically marginalized groups (African-Americans, the working poor). The circumstances surrounding Katrina and its aftermath saw all New Orleanians marginalized to some degree, whether economically, socially, politically, geographically, or emotionally.

This relationship to power and difference in the city forms the backdrop for the second dominant trope found in these essays, the failure of institutional power to govern

recovery and re-population. Distrust in and disappointment with the city, state, and federal government focuses primarily on things like refuse collection (which was sporadic for some time), police presence, government planning, insurance, and FEMA support. These institutional structures are needed, at least according to these students, to stem the tide of decay resulting from an influx of outsiders into their communities. Jessica explains that a "little push" is needed to get things moving in the right direction. This includes hiring more police, encouraging the neighbors to clean up by fining them, and inspiring the refuse department to work harder by cutting their pay if necessary. She concludes, "This is outrageous; this is not a way to live, and most people know that. The ones who don't see this very simple truth are the ones who are causing the problem. Well, it's time we gave them all a little wake-up call." Jessica's "wake-up call" seems to be a vastly increased institutional presence in her neighborhood to institute order in what has, at least for her, become an uncivilized place.

Louis, in making his own move to solve the problems associated with outsiders and crime in his neighborhood, adopts a more inclusive stance suggesting some personal conflict with the discourses of community isolation we saw him invoke and the desire to adapt to new material conditions in the city after the storm. He admits that "seeing all of the litter and trash that is around is depressing and turns a beautiful place into a junkyard," but he calls on a community-wide effort to clean up the space. He suggests:

> As long as people are encouraged to pick up, clean up, and throw away, the appearance of the neighborhood should stay clean and kept up. As long as everyone works together, every little effort will make a big difference. I look forward to one day living in a clean neighborhood.
> Hopefully, one day a plan will be established to rectify these problems. No community should have to face this situation again. I will work together with my neighbors on getting rid of our messy situation.

Turning to "voluntary" groups rather than governmental structures suggests a turn toward the kind of thinking typically fostered by service and community focused writing scholars. Louis' plans for urban renewal start with his own realization that he is a part of that renewal as he situates himself (via the pronoun "I") in collaboration "with" his neighbors in the community. Here, he does not distinguish good neighbors from bad ones or insiders from outsiders.

There is an important distinction to be made when discussing service or community-focused writing after trauma. While scholars such as Mauk and Reynolds invite us to think beyond the walls of the academy and to put our views on writing instruction into conversation with our own material lives and those of our students, there is an essential difference between constructing a "material-discursive" sense of place with students and having them simply write (generate discourse) about material places. Encouraging students to record the details of a time and place can be productive, but it also contributes to the larger sense of musealizing practice I have been describing throughout this project. Simply recording detail to record detail, to struggle against a "fracturing of lived space" (Huyssen 28) is to miss an opportunity to consider how and why life is lived in certain ways within certain spaces or to think about the motives and methods we employ in recording the details of our daily lived experience.

One student in this course, Linda, offers hope for the kind of spatially-focused writing assignments I think this instructor had in mind when she designed this assignment. The paper grade—A—certainly suggests this. Further, Linda's work demonstrates much of what I've been calling contextualized or situated writing in the context of trauma, rather than writing focused on trauma itself. Because this paper

reflects so clearly the kind opportunity I see emerging from this class and this assignment, I would like to quote it at some length. Linda begins with a compelling contrast between the landscape of the city and the emotional lives of its people, a contrast she carries forward throughout the essay:

> The events that had taken place on August 29, 2005 have changed the lives of everyone forever. Not only did Hurricane Katrina change the landscape of New Orleans, but it also changed the emotional aspects of residents. Ariel shots of the city seen on television demonstrated the beating it endured. Buildings were being engulfed by the flood water, while homes were being looted. Some people managed to flee their homes, while others were stranded at their location and didn't manage to escape the quick rising water. Areas like New Orleans East and the lower 9th ward suffered major physical damages due to the Katrina. My family and I are very luck and blessed that our homes did not suffer any physical damages, but unfortunately Hurricane Katrina did leave an emotional scar that will never fade. Coming back to New Orleans after Katrina felt like arriving in a new city. From waking up in the morning and driving to school, to coming home from work late at night, it feels like a different place.

While it is evident that this is not a perfect paper, Linda's work moves beyond the listing of events, grievances, news stories, and clichés about life lessons resulting from the storm (though traces of these are present). She situates Katrina as a disaster in physical space and she compounds its influence by explaining the widespread emotional toll. To show us the resulting emotional shifts in her life—a distinction she makes between the pre-storm "normal" and a post-storm loss of "familiarity and comfortableness"—she explains her life as it was lived before and after Katrina:

> Before the hurricane, my life was a daily routine. I arose from bed every morning thirty minutes prior to leaving my house. Even at early hours, my neighborhood was alive with the usual morning scenario, parents getting their kids ready for the school bus, people leaving for work, newspapers being delivered and picked up at the front porch; the usual American morning. I grew up with this sense of normalcy and this would give my day a flying start. After the hurricane a lot of people in my neighborhood

have settled in surrounding states where they had evacuated. Now the mornings are seemingly vacant as there are only a few houses that are populated ... Now since not a lot of people go to schools and offices in the morning, I have no problem in making it to school on time. Although this might seem like a positive thing, it is hard to describe the isolation I feel driving on the empty highways. My family also feels the same way as being one of the few families in our neighborhood that returned to New Orleans, the sense of seclusion is present in all our lives."

Later Linda contrasts her family's decision to return to the city with a friend's decision to move to California to college. She describes her memories of their friendship that were brought on by the sight of the "For Sale" sign outside of her friend's vacant house: "While thinking of these moments, I discovered that they can rebuild the structures and houses around my neighborhood, but it was the people living inside of these houses that molded this neighborhood for what it was before and what I long for it to remain." While Linda's narrative is both powerful and subtle in a way many of the student papers in the Writing after Katrina Archive are not, it is not the drama of the narrative that interests me. It is her use of discourse to draw into contact overlapping views of the storm—as both a physical, emotional, and political disaster. She constructs a familiar image of neighborhoods and the routine of the stereotypical "American morning" leaving us with a sense of material space fundamentally altered by the storm. A neighborhood that was vibrant is now vacant, isolated, and secluded. But the loss of place is not the great trauma of Katrina for this student author; rather, it is the irrevocable changes to the conditions of lived space—the social in addition to the material. And Linda's suggestions for recovering the city attempt to strike a balance between the recovery of material space and social space. She writes:

> The residents of New Orleans are easily giving up on ever seeing a future for them in this city because they have been so discouraged by the hurricane that no one saw coming. Local government needs to take a stand

to bring back our neighbors, families and friends. There should be less time spent about who is to blame for the unorganized events that took place prior to and after Katrina and more about the needs of the people. There must be more involvement and interaction with people who fled to surrounding areas that are seeking to return. Politicians need to find out what is keeping them from returning and tackle to solve those issues. If we bring our people home, reconstruct our neighborhoods, and build our neighborhoods on both a personal and business level, then we can make it possible to rebuild a better New Orleans.

In all of the papers from the Writing after Katrina Archive we see conflicting and overlapping tensions related to academic and public writing in a post-traumatic context. Linda's essay, which I have highlighted as a strong example of reflexive community-focused writing, is no exception. Her difficulty with grammatical and stylistic constructions suggests someone working through the expectations of academic writing, but her analysis of the mundane within a traumatic context reveals she knows something about telling stories. The essays from both classes make it clear that our desire to integrate large-scale disaster into the writing classroom, through any number of post-traumatic pedagogical strategies, comes with a price in terms of how and what students write. We need to question what we are limiting or silencing when we encourage students to tell stories about traumatic experience and to situate that experience within discursive communities to which they may or may not share affiliation. It is evident that the privileging of certain kinds of post-traumatic pedagogy, at any point on the spectrum of expressivism and social constructivism, results in specific mediations of language and experience. How students and teachers are able to represent, reflect on, and politicize their lives is shaped by the disciplinary and popular discourses circulating in and around the specific strategies employed by the teacher and the contextual factors influencing how those teachers and their students are able to "dwell" in the classroom.

Further, we should consider: How does our own articulation of the value of this kind of writing compromise the goals of the assignment or the course? What can we learn from their various resistances to confessional narrative (indeed, our own resistances to it)? What intersections of material and social space have meaning for students after disaster and how might we help them to locate these intersections, to consider them critically, and to respond (from those points of intersection) to the constant pressures placed on them by popular, academic, and community expectation?

In chapter 4, I begin developing a framework for initiating productive conversations about the problems I've posed here. Because it is clear that the dominant and resistant discursive strategies employed in post-Katrina contexts are (and must always be viewed as) unique to those contexts—i.e. they are not transferrable to other writing situations—I do not make the so-called "pedagogical turn" in this project. However, inspired by the work of New Orleans area teachers and their students, we can begin to formulate a conception of writing in the contexts of ongoing traumas—both large and small, public and private—that serves the needs of the academy, the students, and the communities where we and our students live.

CHAPTER FOUR

RE-WRITING TRAUMA: TOWARDS AN ETHICAL, SITUATED POST-TRAUMATIC PEDAGOGY

The etymologies of 'neighbor' and 'neighborhood' are explicit about proximity. Before our catastrophic brush with natural disaster, few of the volunteers in local service learning projects would have considered themselves neighbors of those they sought to help. In post-Katrina New Orleans, however, our world suddenly became smaller.
(Richard 47)

And certainly there's an opportunity for students to be more socially engaged than they would have been before the storm. Because that was unimaginable before the storm. Their problems were their problems. (Delgado Community College Writing Instructor)

Typically, when we talk about trauma in relation to composition studies, we fall into one of two binary oppositions: expressivism and social constructivism. We have seen these structures invoked throughout the course of this project. But we have also seen that in the context of large-scale disasters like Hurricane Katrina, such ideological generalities are insufficient in their complexity. As teachers and students are both largely implicated by the circumstances of the event, the urge to tell stories and engage with communities blurs together. We saw this blurring in chapter three, as socially situated writing assignments asked students to put their own stories of experience in conversation with the contexts in which the stories were occurring. We also see such blurring at work in service learning or community writing projects that situate student writers in marginal communities where social, political structures of power are most deeply felt. In such

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cases, "Trauma" becomes a frame that triggers specific ideas about writing pedagogy—

how it should be taught, to whom, by whom, where, and why. In The Activist WPA,

Linda Adler-Kassner describes such "frames" as experiential motivations for our teaching

and researching practices. She explains that as we respond and work through our

experiential frames, our desire for practices that "work" obscures the importance of

tethering such practices to clear disciplinary theory. Ultimately, Adler-Kassner calls on

us to strive for balance between "ideals" and "strategies" and to avoid the urge to see

emotional resonances between ourselves and our students or subjects as a sort of

"missing link" (26).

In the case of post-traumatic pedagogy, "trauma" triggers recurrent tropes,

arguments, and narratives that writing teachers use to develop responsive subjectivities

for themselves and their students. However, turning to strategies of post-traumatic

writing also can result in distancing the classroom from those social, material, and

political circumstances that give rise to and perpetuate the original "trauma." Getting

emotional with our students by humanizing the classroom is not inherently a bad thing,

but when the distances between strategy and ideal become too great, a musealizing

impulse (Huyssen) undermines both the social and the academic production of the

classroom. Students and teachers become collectors and not producers of community

discourse.

In this chapter I consider how some musealizing practices of post-traumatic

writing pedagogy might be formally resisted in favor of an ethical and materially situated

writing pedagogy that views experience at an intersection of discourse, community, and

civic participation. Specifically, I work through the idea of community—centering on

situated, social materiality—as an "ideal" that can drive successful post-traumatic "strategy." The most productive post-traumatic pedagogies we have seen (Goggin and Goggin, Hesford) already engage communities of influence and affiliation, as do some of the approaches that emerged from post-Katrina New Orleans.

Importantly, the notion of community that I work with here is grounded in Joseph Harris' critique of a disciplinary-wide turn toward ideas about community. Harris suggests that when many compositionists invoke the term "community" to describe either the academic discourse community or student communities outside of the university, they often rely on generalized "discursive utopias" in which the language of the scholar and the language of the non-scholar are wholly distinct and do not influence one another. Further, Harris observes our tendency to polarize talk about writing. He suggests "one seems asked to defend either the power of the discourse community or the imagination of the individual" (12), but never a confluence of the two. It is this rendering of community, formulated in response to experiential frames, which results in the forced distinction between post-traumatic scholarship about either expressive/experiential writing or social constructivist writing. Students are represented as crossing a boundary from the chaos of their communities into the safety of the classroom. Or, they are represented as moving from the ineffective and disconnected campus environment into the community where they do work that really "matters."

My goal in this final chapter is to offer a theoretical challenge to some commonplace ideas about community that drive service and community-oriented pedagogies circulating in composition studies. These strategies are attractive in the context of trauma where students and instructors are often struggling to reassemble

academic and social lives in the various discursive communities they inhabit. I'd like to begin exploring a conceptual frame for thinking about program and course design that is not post-traumatic, but that can accommodate potentially traumatic contexts. I do this by drawing on work by composition and rhetoric scholars working in service learning, public writing, and intercultural rhetorics. Additionally, I consider the larger theoretical implications of service and community writing in terms of Huyssen's musealization and critiques of multicultural discourse by Terry Eagleton and Paul Gilroy. The chapter ends with a sustained analysis of one example of what Gilroy calls a "convivial scene" of writing, where local practices are imbued with the social and political authority to respond to structures of power and to resist legacies of discriminatory discourse. My goal here is not to offer directive classroom pedagogy. Rather, I want to establish a flexible and situated framework that might help scholars and practitioners of writing education formulate ethical and critical response to the traumas experienced in their communities, including large scale disaster and pervasive social traumas associated with racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, and so on. In fact, I suggest that understanding small-scale pervasive social trauma is the only way to come to terms with the larger public traumas we face. A flexible, situated framework challenges the increasingly common tendency to prioritize flashpoints of public trauma over a sustained discussion of the social, political, and material circumstances that give rise to traumatic experience.

In previous chapters we observed a turn toward service and community writing pedagogies by instructors throughout the New Orleans area. These stories provide the motivation for my work in this chapter as I think locally situated and organically grown responses to trauma are the only sustainable means for offering response to the structures

of power in play after personal and/or public disaster. Amy Koritz and George Sanchez, in the introduction to their edited collection <u>Civic Engagement in the Wake of Katrina</u>, explain how "Katrina exposed the kind of community fissures that complicate most efforts at civic engagement and the possibilities for citizen participation that can arise when traditional politics devolve into inaction and stalemate" (2). They explore the problems that arose with the "outsourcing" of the recovery effort to religious and secular service groups from all over the country that arrived to help after the storm. While the participation of these groups was welcome, the influx of outsiders paints a portrait of civic participation as consisting "primarily of charity work" (11). Koritz and Sanchez explain that "what is missing is an ongoing dialogue that connects education with multidisciplinary strategies for addressing community needs and building on community assets" (12).

In my time in New Orleans speaking with instructors and in my reading of published and archival material, I saw this missing dialogue between the academy and the community often invoked. In my interview with T.R. Johnson, who saw his university expand the mission of their entire undergraduate program to balance research and service, he described the possibilities inherent in linking the work of the writing class to the realities of living in a city with a powerful history of creativity and discrimination:

> There's a universe on every bandstand and there's a lot of bandstands in this city that are full every night...so my job as a professor at Tulane is to sort of design bridges that gets these kids into the world beyond the campus. Now, the second half of this is that...they come in with all this baggage about what that means. Bourbon Street, Mardi Gras, Girls Gone Wild, booze, booze booze, and then the horror of crime. So I've got to somehow dismantle that edifice of prejudices and predilections, and complicate it a hundred fold, so they have a much more nuanced sense of

what they get from what is essentially tabloid media. For me, what that means is orienting them historically; first, and through a kind of historical/cultural studies, to acquaint them with aesthetic traditions. (personal interview)

A revised notion of community, which takes into account the needs and desires of every party involved, runs counter to the musealizing practices that I have been suggesting dominate post-traumatic pedagogy. Specifically, situated community writing in the context of trauma resists an urge to view the university and its classrooms as ideal or necessary places for catharsis to occur (the implication being that communities where students live are too overwrought or too troubled to be supportive). It also develops local knowledge of historical and contemporary circumstances as a benchmark for evaluating experience. This local knowledge contrasts the common reinforcement of hegemonic, media-driven narratives that tends to accompany the musealized account of trauma and recovery in composition.

For evidence that this separation of social and political contexts from the material spaces of writing is a pressing issue, we need look no further than the marked absence of race in many teacher narratives about post-Katrina writing education and virtually every student paper housed in the Writing After Katrina Archive. This is a notable and uncomfortable silence. Amidst a disaster wrought with the politics of race and class, race was simply not a part of the curriculum. Where it did appear in prompts by writing teachers, it very often didn't reappear in the work their students offered in response.

Of course, such absences are not uncommon for composition studies. Scholars have long noted that our discipline, which fights so hard for the rights of students, often fails to deal with the various discriminations that shape how those students are able to

work in the university (Gilyard, Prendergast, Royster, Smitherman, Villanueva). Catherine Prendergast points to Keith Gilyard's work when she claims that race is "undertheorized, underproblematized, and underinvestigated" and to Victor Villanueva who argues against a "colonial sensibility" in composition communities. Prendergast suggests that "we need to investigate the enduring and ingrained nature of this colonial sensibility and its effects on discourse if the absent presence of race is to be confronted and the absent absence of racism revealed" (37). Such theoretical oversights de-politicize the lived experiences of our students, teachers, and the various communities that we value. The almost total absence of race from the work by New Orleans area writing teachers and students demonstrates how this traditional sensibility remains ingrained in our work. I argue that community writing pedagogies offer a way not only to bring race to the forefront of classroom discussion, but to highlight the social and material situations that exacerbate inequity based on race, class, and other forms of discrimination. These are the very inequities that, in times of crisis, ensure that the lasting repercussions of "trauma" do not affect all social groups equally.

A Tradition of Service and Community Writing in Composition Studies

Traditionally, writing courses linked to service-learning or community writing projects have been designed with the intention of offering students real-world contexts for their work. The argument goes that writing classrooms often rely on commonplace forms and modes of communication that reinforce the idea that the university is markedly separate from the community, and that such forms and modes have little, if any, relevance outside of the university (Deans, Dorman and Dorman, Heilker). Taking

students to the street, then, ensures that they see relevance in their work; their writing comes to "mean" something to them and to others.

While I think the turn to service and community writing has largely been beneficial for the field, it does not come without risks. Musealizing ideologies find their way into even the most well-meaning desire to catalogue and to categorize the experiences of marginal groups, of which the students are rarely a part. That students very often do not choose the communities that they serve can make it difficult for them to see beyond arbitrary barriers between academic and non-academic experience and discourse. While they may recognize they're not in the academy any longer, they don't feel any more at home. Hence, the experiences of community engagement easily become reliant on a charitable othering (*us* helping *them*).

Our goal should be to respond to perceived public traumas by reinvesting student work and student experience in the social and material settings from which students arrive in our classrooms (and to which they return when they leave our classes every day). In advancing this position, I address Bruce Horner's suggestion that our view of the writing classroom—whether in the context of trauma or not—should be connected to the classroom's and the program's institutional/historical positioning, to different modes of distribution for writing, and to different modes of consumption and circulation. In essence, we must acknowledge that writing means something very different for every different stakeholder. Horner suggests that in such materially situated settings, student work can be "understood to comprise not just the material production of the text but all the activities of its provocation, composition, distribution, and reception and the involvement of these with each other: work, in short, as material social practice, where

agency meets structure" (66). Offering students opportunities to respond to structure, to assert or to dismiss the value of particular experience, should be our foremost goal.

Part of this revised strategy, then, is recognition of what Paula Mathieu has called writing instruction as "radically insufficient" (76). Mathieu warns that we should not overestimate the value of composition in the lives of students, but neither should we underestimate the ability of rhetorical education to influence their lives. I would echo Mathieu's conclusion that composition skills are valuable, but seldom "revolutionary." In the context of large-scale disaster or pervasive social trauma, I take this to be doubly true. Perhaps the best we can do as composition scholars and teachers, and as individuals committed to social justice and equality, is establish projects that empower our students to articulate the lines where use begins and ends, and where activism is both needed and desired.

Two prominent and related arguments emerge throughout the disciplinary conversations related to service and community writing pedagogy: first, the idea that this community-focused pedagogy exposes the differences between the academy and the "real" world outside it; second, the idea that service and community writing projects "denaturalize" academic work (Bacon) and make writing into something more democratic.

In work by composition scholars such as Paul Heilker and Wade Dorman and Susann Fox Dorman, a distinction is drawn between the "real" world writing of the community and the "palpably unreal rhetorical situations" of the university writing classroom (Heilker). Dorman and Dorman call for "real" writing situations in their own articulation of "real world" writing pedagogy that moves student writing out of the

university and into the "messy comprehensiveness of the real world, where problems almost never come wrapped in neat packages with clear criteria and specified rewards for solution" (122). Heilker's assertion that students "desperately need real rhetorical situations, real audiences and purposes to work with, real people to become in writing" (71) is reflected in Dorman and Dorman.

But Heilker's position relies on the assumption that the "real" world only exists outside of the academy, that those ideas, strategies, or problems that work in a university setting have no relevance elsewhere. In the "real" world articulated by Heilker and Dorman and Dorman, work is associated with profession and assessment must be tied to compensation—payment for performance. Horner explains that the false dichotomy between the academic and the "real" reinforces "dominant reifications of the work of writing" (67). Specifically he explains that as service-learning scholars devalue student writing in classrooms, they foster a vision of writing in the "outside" world as "paid employment or in terms of its effects on and/or value in that 'outside' realm" (67). But students are not being paid and any work done in the interest of social justice arrives with a whole host of social and political obstructions that are difficult to overcome, particularly in the short term. A semester or two is not enough to solve local or national problems. In many cases it isn't enough time to learn the unique strategies of the organization or to contribute in any meaningful way (see Mathieu's Tactics of Hope).

Horner also suggests that the binary construction of academic versus real reifies the notion that student writing is apprentice-work. Resisting the commonplace and "unreal" strategies of academic writing pedagogy (because it makes students apprentices to tactics and strategies that are not their own) in favor of community writing practices

does little more than resituate apprenticeship from the academic world to the professional. In the professional world, the material realities of a cycle of discursive production, payment, and consumption insist that writing which does not earn payment is not valuable work. Further, while some programs encourage students to work in professional realms where they have interests, material limitations on outreach programs and non-profit affiliations result in limited choices. Very likely, many students will continue to work on projects that hold no "real" value for them. While public writing projects are meant to increase the value of student writing—in that students see their work in the context of real world situations—they very often don't change the actual value of that work. The result is just another musealized commodity—constructed as an artifact of "culture" that does little more than reduce that culture to a collection of memorial artifacts. The community becomes something lost rather than something living; a cause for nostalgia rather than sustained engagement.

The value of service and community writing, then, is what Nora Bacon calls the "de-naturalization of academic writing" (43). For Bacon, the service learning program affords students the opportunity to mark contrasts between writing in academic settings and writing in more public settings. In this way students and teachers can challenge the long-standing hegemony of academic influence over language. Bacon describes a course in which she desires to use service writing to advance "the conventional goals of writing instruction" (40). In this way, she avoids the real/academic binary by asking students to write in and for a "real" public while at the same time appreciating "the opportunity to practice their academic skills in the service of public, socially useful work" (40). In her course, students "write for" local organizations. She concludes from student reflective

essays that they feel both "pride" and "transformation" working for these socially-minded organizations. Their disinterest in assessment and grading, according to Bacon, reflects a transition from working as "students" to working as "writers" (42). Managing this tension between student/academic and writer/real world is the most compelling element of Bacon's course.

However, I question the notion that reflective writing forms a natural bridge between the classroom and the community, that simply by thinking about experience one arrives at the differences and complications that drive that experience. Additionally, while Bacon does a notable job of challenging the real/academic binary in terms of writing practices, she maintains an ideological divide that makes community writing more valuable because it is accessible. Academic labor continues to feel obscure and imposed.

Bacon explains that her community writing assignments offer students "the chance to try on the perspective of [the community agency]" and that most groups have been happy with the organizations she "sent" them out "to write for" (45). There were some groups who felt that the assignment of political causes limited their ability to embrace the authenticity of the rhetorical situation. But my chief interest is in the reflective writing that Bacon suggests offers students a way to come to terms with the positive and/or negative aspects of their community engagement. At the heart of this vision of service writing is the same musealizing tendency that plagues post-traumatic pedagogy, as students face an urge to tell stories of "transformation" that may or may not reflect authentic interest in community activism. Bruce Herzberg, one of the originators of service-learning pedagogy in composition studies, points to this complication in his

suggestion that students doing community writing "generate a social conscience" ("Community Service" 58) but that they have difficulty transcending "their own deeply ingrained belief in individualism and meritocracy in their analysis of the reasons for the illiteracy they see" (61). As an activist, Herzberg finds it difficult to understand why his students do not become "indignant" at the social injustice they observe. As a teacher, he recognizes the ease with which students can narrate stories of indignation and ideology. This is particularly relevant with the increasing presence of green and social justice movements in public, corporate media. It is for these reasons that Herzberg challenges the notion that reflexive writing is a natural "path toward social contextualization" (59). He explains, "writing about the actual experience of doing community service, then, does not seem to me to be the primary work to be done in a composition course like mine. Instead, we study literacy and schooling and write about that" (59).

Herzberg's assertion of social context over personal reflection points us to the important assumption that underwrites community writing projects like Bacon's. In their article "Bringing Community Writing Practices into Education," Roz Ivanic and Wendy Moss articulate a common division between "community" and "school" that reflects the real/academic divide in service learning pedagogy. But they assert that such a division is merely a convenient construction. This is an idea that Bacon shares as she suggests "The distinction between the artificial classroom and the real world is overly simplistic; really, students are being asked to write for both a teacher and a community audience, and perhaps it is not surprising that the teacher—with whom they have more contact, and whose power may be more salient in their lives—sometimes comes first" (43). But her assumption that academic writing is the only writing that must be de-naturalized and de-

mystified is what strikes me as problematic. Bacon asks her students to "interrogate the classroom as a context for writing" by asking why academic writing is "preferred" and "what are the values implied with this privileging?" (43). It's worth noting that Bacon's claim that community service writing "de-naturalizes academic writing" doesn't necessarily mean that it devalues academic writing. But it does suggest that one form of writing is imposing and powerful, where the other is more accessible (more "real"). It further reflects an implicit idea that academic writing relies on the imposition of the teacher into the life of the student. Academic writing only occurs in response to a prompt, while community writing—whatever its form—falls under the rubric of what Ivanic and Moss call "self-generated" writing. Imposed writing is that which is restricted by the style and context of specific social institutions, whereas "self-generated" writing occurs in response to the writer's own needs, interests, and purposes (194). Importantly, Ivanic and Moss explain that imposed writing and self-generated writing occur in academic *and* community contexts, but I think service-learning pedagogy largely fails to recognize this fact. Indeed, according to Ivanic and Moss, composition as a whole has failed here, as many scholars see imposed (i.e. academic) and self-generated (i.e. expressivist) writing as wholly distinct.

In post-traumatic writing contexts, there is much to learn from this conversation over service and community writing pedagogy. It is clear from the organic responses of teachers on the ground in New Orleans that a turn to service-learning was not only popular it was perceived as necessary. Putting material and community life back together was inseparable from re-establishing academic life. But I would emphasize that service and community writing projects, like all writing projects, are fraught with ideological

instabilities. While material circumstances may call for change, not all change is good. I do agree with Ivanic and Moss who suggest that community discourses can have a positive influence on academic writing. In fact, I think the two are wholly inseparable, particularly in the context of trauma. Adopting what Ivanic and Moss call a "critical view" of writing pedagogy in post-traumatic writing situations allows us to move toward a view of language that matches experiences which are in a "constant state of flux" (196). Doing this can guide our classrooms to a recognition that imposed and self-generated writing occur concurrently in any situation and that both can be understood as occurring before, during, and after trauma. Further, the sense of the isolated writer coming to terms with experience through imposed/self-generated writing may be complicated by a "socially reflexive" view of the contexts in which this writing occurs. What becomes essential then is to think about composition strategies that emphasize the enduring nature of social, political, and material circumstances that give rise to trauma, rather than those strategies that musealize the personal or community experience of individuals and groups after they have been affected.

Constructing a Socially Reflexive, Situated Post-Traumatic Pedagogy

The framework I have in mind for a situated, ethical and community-driven post-traumatic pedagogy that enacts real social and personal change in ways that students choose begins at an intersection of active composition conversations. Specifically, I see the overlapping interests of place-based pedagogy and intercultural public writing providing a solid foundation from which community writing in the context of trauma can occur. This framework offers space for teachers and students to articulate experience— drawing on expressivist writing strategies—but always in such a way that those

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articulations are socially situated. As Ellen Cushman suggests, self-reflexivity should be a factor in critical classroom/community writing projects, but "social reflexivity" is the desired end ("Postmodern Ethnographies"). To attain a "critical view" of writing that encourages teacher and student "social reflexivity," I want to work through some key discussions in the fields listed above. This is a selective review that builds toward a sustained analysis of the New Orleans Neighborhood Story Project (NONSP), a community program in New Orleans' 7th Ward that serves as a model for the kind of situated, social writing that I think constitutes the most promising post-traumatic pedagogical framework. In particular, my analysis of place-based and intercultural pedagogies, in conversation with the NONSP, reflects how "convivial scenes" of writing emerge from intersections of community need and student activism by focusing on the social realities of life in the community rather than scholarly inquiry into victimized discourses of multicultural and/or human rights.

A critical post-traumatic perspective relies first and foremost on a rhetorical framework that fosters a sense of cross-community collaboration. Specifically, I have in mind revisions and reinvigorations of the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) model which has been with us for some time. More recently, efforts have been made to conceive of WAC as encompassing both cross-disciplinary and cross-community writing strategies (Goldblatt and Parks, Guerra, Kells). Thomas Deans has suggested that there is a historical and conceptual link between the work of community service writing and WAC ("Writing Across the Curriculum"). Both work to foster a notion of the writing classroom as integrated into larger systems of culture, within and beyond the university. Both emphasize qualities like collaboration, reflection, and inquiry. Goldblatt and Parks

remind us that, just as we ask our students to see overlapping sites of experience, we as teachers move in and out of academic settings, always returning to the communities "where we live" (604). But even here, we must be vigilant against the discursive hierarchy that would elevate either home or work; it's true we live in our communities, but we also live in our universities and our classrooms.

The Writing Across Communities initiative at the University of New Mexico, developed from work by Michelle Hall Kells and Juan C. Guerra, takes this cohesive view of life in relation to academic work and builds curriculum around it. Kells explains:

> We began with the recognition that to be successful, WAC program development would need to be organic (community-based), systemic (institutionally-distributed), and sustainable (flexible and responsive). We understood that the writing lives of our students will not be limited to academic and workplace environments but will also be exercised in pueblos, villages, and other communities in and beyond the university. (89)

Kells' explanation reflects the comprehensive flexibility important for a critical view of writing pedagogy working in the context of trauma. Built from the community itself by prioritizing the needs of its students and their families, this model of WAC institutes a consistent collaboration between the academic setting and various iterations of the local. The impetus for this model, as Kells describes it, is the growing sense that millennial students are facing new and daunting challenges. She notes "increasing regional and global economic disparity, declining natural resources, international political tensions, off shore labor outsourcing, rapidly shifting job markets, and transnational migration patterns" (88). To face such challenges, Kells suggests, our students require a rhetorical

education that is "context-based" and which facilitates "students' civic, academic, and professional engagement with diverse discourse communities" (88).

I am not calling for a post-traumatic writing across communities, but a view of writing across communities that might better accommodate critical inquiry into post-traumatic contexts, causes, and experiences. We have seen that it is often dangerous to assign the discourse of trauma to every millennial student. It is even more problematic to assert that all millennial students are equally implicated and affected by the machinations of transnational global politics. But it is impossible to ignore the reality that the discourses of trauma and the repercussions of global change have resonance in our students' lives. Our goal as writing scholars and practitioners must be to organize pedagogy that situates student social contexts at the forefront of our discussions. Such a view should be grounded in a clear understanding of place and how culture—and the historical inequities that shape culture—shapes discourse. From this perspective, we can formulate a view of writing in the context of trauma that is socially reflexive and politically useful for communities working in collaboration with universities.

Derrick Owens contextualizes a need for considering the "where" of composition, which he describes as an attempt to "make contact" with "teachers and students who are living in suburbs and cities, who are unhappy with the status of their neighborhoods and communities, who are frustrated with the nature of their workplaces, and who are worried about their futures and their kids' futures" (Composition and Sustainability xii). For Owens, these students are part of a "threatened generation" that very much echoes Kells' articulation of a WAC exigency. He suggests that in addition to privileging issues of race, class, and gender in our scholarship and practice, we must take into account the material

realities of geography and environmental degradation as potential threats to the well-being of our students (3). In many ways, questions of place govern how other characteristics of marginal identity are experienced and must be considered first. Owens elaborates on the uses of a place-based pedagogy focused on environmental contexts and sustainability. He explains:

> When students tell stories about the failings and the attributes of their neighborhoods, and the psychological, economic, cultural and spiritual effects these places have on them, the classroom arena has the potential to become decidedly local. Such classroom spaces let students know that the status of their communities is not something beyond the proper domain of the academy, but a vital part of the curriculum. (76)

Jonathan Mauk extends Owens' project by encouraging writing teachers to take into account not only the rhetorical and linguistic attributes of student labor, but also the "life processes that make language possible" (Mauk citing Selzer 376). Like Owens, Mauk suggests that these life processes can be made a part of critical academic inquiry. Where the campus, the classroom, and the community intersect we find rich sites of student experience that can foster inquiry into marginalizations based on race, class, gender, as well as the public and private traumas that often accompany experience of marginalization.

The sense of place-based instruction outlined by Owens and Mauk, along with work by Nedra Reynolds, Bruce McComiskey, and others, frames a discussion about what it means to teach in specific material settings and what it means for students to work within those settings. It is important, however, that we do not come to see the university as the only place where situated ideologies can be understood. In fact, academic discourse typically fails in its attempts to outline the lived experiences of marginal groups

as the narratives we receive from our students are often very different from our own. In the context of large-scale disaster, questions of place become more prevalent. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, every primary, secondary, and post-secondary school in the New Orleans area was affected to one degree or another. Even if the physical spaces of the institutions themselves were not damaged, student and teacher populations were in exile, having evacuated from the storm and/or lost homes in the flood. In such cases, displacement (and not "place") is the more characteristic trope for experience. Further, while Owens advocates for place-based assignments, one of which he calls "place portraits," these assignments must open a door for critical inquiry. After disaster, as populations shift, change, and disappear, writing about one's community can easily become tinged with intolerance and a musealizing impulse (this was characteristic of much of the student writing in chapter 3).

Simply acknowledging place, then, is not enough to establish an ethical, situated post-traumatic framework. It is also important that we conceive of a way to integrate intercultural dialogue and social reflexivity into the "material-discursive where" (Mauk). For this I turn to recent attempts by scholars to foster tactics for "public writing" in composition pedagogy. Linda K. Shamoon and Eileen Medeiros explain, "public writing starts with a heightened sensibility that something is awry within the community and that each of us as members of that community have a responsibility and a right to seek a remedy through political engagement" (179). The pedagogy outlined by Shamoon and Medeiros encourages students to engage with active political debate—a process that can be sustained in the classroom and in the community—by working in a "deliberative process" with their communities of interest and affiliation (183). The ultimate goal is to

resolve (or to work toward the resolution of) real social problems through collaboration and negotiation over shared interests.

Christian Weisser explains that the goal of public writing pedagogy is to bring writing back from the isolation of "looking" that happens in the academy, and ground student work in the actual sites where discourse is generated and used. Weisser urges us to see public writing as political action. He explains, this "allows us to pay particular attention to both our audience and our subject" by recognizing that "the groups or individuals that we hope to persuade and possibly call to action are influenced by particular rhetorical modes and devices, and their reactions are often shaped by their prior experiences with public discourse" (98). Furthermore, viewing public writing as political action more clearly renders our subjects, as we come to see them "discursively constructed through a variety of previous public discussions" (98). This opens up a space in our classrooms to discuss with our students the dynamic and ongoing intersections of "ideology and discourse" as we consider who has access to public discourse, how (historically) they gained and sustained their access, and how that access changes in the context of diverse social and material circumstances.

In language that resembles Goggin and Goggin's examination of "writing during trauma," Weisser describes his approach to writing as "public writing in context." In both instances the emphasis moves from the ontological experience—of trauma or of coming up in this or that community—to an understanding of shifting discourses of power that govern political and cultural lives in ways that we often overlook. What I like most about this parallel is that it offers a forum for bringing the questions of trauma to bear on writing pedagogy in a way that does not silence the conditions that give rise to and

sustain the trauma in the first place. Specifically, ideas about public writing can productively influence how we think about articulations of difference and discrimination in the classroom.

Linda Flower's work with "intercultural rhetorics," for example, situates critical public writing in specific material historical circumstances. For Flower, intercultural rhetoric bridges a gap between the privileged voices of academics and the silenced voices of community groups with whom we would work. Specifically, this discussion is framed as a response to problematic representations of black youth in American society. Flower explains, "We stand within a history that has alternately marginalized and ignored the knowledge of the powerless and then (when we must listen) domesticated and assimilated that experience into mainstream and middle class schemas" (39). She insists that privileged academics interested in working with such communities must be willing to "talk across difference," not by ignoring it or making victims out of the powerless, but by acknowledging the racialized history of American social structures and the "relationships of power and distrust it has left behind" (39). We must also recognize the value of "situated knowledge" for all parties involved, meaning the intercultural discourses move beyond the idiosyncrasies of place and experience—what Flower calls "swapping stories"—to "literate strategies" that help us embrace rival interpretations and build constructive negotiation (40). Turning to rival interpretations and the social reflexivity concomitant with that work potentially realizes a version of community writing that avoids the reproduction of dominant perceptions of production, consumption, and difference.

Horner suggests that this kind of approach to community or service writing might redefine "the meaning of being a student in a composition course and of writing in such a course" (68). He explains that Flower's earlier work (with Wayne Peck and Lorraine Higgins) on "community literacy"—which established a foundation for her later work on intercultural inquiry—offers a sense of service and community as continually in motion, emerging from "conflicting interests, literacy practices, and shared problems" (205). The collaborations that underwrite such community literacy projects offer writing teachers working in the context of trauma a way to manage important tensions they feel between the needs of the institution—and the requirements of given courses—and the needs of the community, of which they and their students are a part. Importantly, the notion of working in concert with community "desires" emphasizes an activist ideology that underwrites much community writing pedagogy. Such ideologies are emphasized in the wake of trauma as individuals in the academy and in the community feel a need to do "something." Problems arise when that need to respond constitutes a move toward the musealizing practices of post-traumatic pedagogy in the form of self-reflexive, but not socially reflexive writing and learning assignments.

Theorizing the Risks and Rewards of Community Writing "During" Trauma

The approach to post-traumatic pedagogy that Peter Goggin and Maureen Daly Goggin call "writing during trauma" constitutes the pedagogical arm of a theoretical process that begins with testimony and witnessing, but moves to contextual factors that shape how narratives of trauma are shared and received. In addition, they offer a category called "meta-discourse about trauma" which they use to identify a role for trauma theory in the classroom. While Goggin and Goggin don't exactly warn against the pitfalls of

teaching trauma, they acknowledge the importance of considering a range of discursive sites. Writing during trauma is "all those discourses generated during a time of trauma that are not necessarily directly related to the trauma but cannot help but be affected, and in some way respond to, and be shaped by, the trauma" (36). Under this general rubric, I would include discourses related to discrimination based on race, class, gender, sex, or geography, or what I have been calling the contextual factors that create and sustain traumatic experience.

Situating their discussion in a post-9/11 context, Goggin and Goggin present a series of questions meant to motivate disciplinary thinking about teaching before, during, and after trauma. Some of the more salient questions include:

- Why and how should a trauma of such magnitude be brought into the teaching of first-year writing in the University?
- How do our rhetorical and pedagogical theories and approaches serve us when the trauma is so great that we don't even have the language during the event to be able to grapple with it directly in the writing classroom context?
- What do we do when all our arguments, conceptions, and research concerning written communication and the teaching of writing are seemingly so instantly trivialized by the magnitude of an event so extreme that it blots out and refigures all other functions, events, and emotions? (37)

From these questions, Goggin and Goggin emphasize that in the context of large-scale disaster it becomes virtually impossible to remain untouched by the event (this is not to say, traumatized by the event). All efforts to teach in this context become teaching writing "during" trauma. Further, Goggin and Goggin emphasize that no classroom is entirely safe from this context (which is not to say from the trauma itself). Students and teachers bring experiential, political, and cultural ideas about the disaster with them into the classroom. For Goggin and Goggin, the key to an ethical post-traumatic writing pedagogy is to manage a tension between soliciting trauma narratives and silencing them.

They explain, "as teachers we need to create spaces in which students may discuss or write trauma, in whatever form they choose, if they initiate this level of trauma discourse," but "we should also…provide them with rhetorical strategies for engaging in and understanding these discourses" (40).

I read Goggin and Goggin not as insisting on post-traumatic pedagogy, but as inquiring into the limits of what we have accomplished as a discipline dedicated to student experience, as well as what we might if we worked carefully toward a "robust model" for post-traumatic pedagogy. Their effort to balance the urge to respond to trauma and the need to maintain our disciplinary goals has been influential on my work. However, Goggin and Goggin's warning about the magnitude and scope of trauma hasn't stopped some scholars from reading their approach as a broad-brush pedagogical application, rather than a theoretical inquiry into trauma theory with a pedagogical extension. For example, Melissa Nicolas, in an article featured in a post-Katrina edition of the service-learning journal Reflections, draws on Goggin and Goggin to facilitate an explanation of her experiences working at the University of Louisiana—Lafayette during and after the storm. Focusing primarily on theoretical insights Goggin and Goggin derive from trauma studies, Nicolas challenges the discursivity of the event by suggesting that the contextual factors that shape trauma—i.e. all factors that are not the experience itself—exist in a "pre-literate" space, unshaped by discourse (68). She describes a "rupture" that everyone "felt": "it was a feeling that still defies description," something "prior to language" (68). Further, she highlights the limits of academic discourse to make "sense" of this experience.

For me, Nicolas misses an opportunity here to challenge an ontological view of experience that renders history and culture as frozen and immovable elements. Her piece is a powerful record of what happened in the material setting of UL-Lafayette, but her conclusions omit the controlling status of context, the reality that student experiences before and after the storm are completely literate in that they are always already governed by discourses of power, as well as individual and group responses to such discourses. Nicolas does encourage self-reflexivity by suggesting that those who experienced the storm should explore "how we attempted to narrate this crisis," but her insistence on the lens of individual experience sabotages the potential for bridging a gap between an examination of experience and a critical view of contexts that shape that experience. What is missing is a complex view of the post-traumatic community and the social reflexivity required to come to terms with it.

At the heart of this discussion of the self and the social is what Huyssen calls the "opposition between usable pasts and disposable data" (28). Huyssen explains that the musealizing impulse constitutes an ideological "anchor" whereby we resist the instabilities of time and space that accompany expanding technologies. At the same time it allows us to assert a tangible and nostalgic history. In essence, musealization (in academic and popular culture) is a bulwark "against obsolescence and disappearance," a move to "counter our deep anxiety about the speed of change and the ever shrinking horizons of time and space" (33). There is a way of seeing Huyssen's articulation of musealization as responding not only to the traumas of history—where Huyssen's theories originate—but also future traumas, real and imagined. This musealization, I would argue, is the ideology that drives so much of what I have been describing as post-

traumatic pedagogy. The world our students inhabit is represented as irrevocably changed and that we, as teachers and learners committed to social justice, must do something about it. Ironically, musealization as a response to the pervasive psychological anxieties of 21st century life (an effort to resist disappearance) appears only to ensure that disappearance occurs, at least for those groups already at risk of being eliminated from global political discourse. Just as social theorists like Zygmunt Bauman have articulated a discrepancy in mobility between those with power and those without, the musealizing practices of post-traumatic pedagogy (in whatever form it takes) bring to light a discursive discrepancy between those with or without access to dominant discourses.

The discourses of trauma, community, and collaboration that build from a musealizing exigency rarely inquire into the historical and contextual circumstances that drive the disappearances scholars would hope to stop. Terry Eagleton, in After Theory, makes just this point. He explains that the great project of multiculturalism has failed to come to terms with our racist, classist, and sexist histories. In fact, it's only exacerbated the problem as we take comfort in our collective sense of injustice at the same time we reify the social structures where histories of it originate. The normative move of recording the histories of marginal groups does not bring the margins to mainstream, rather it only makes clear how far these group lie from true "norms" at the dominant centers of power.

Paul Gilroy's discussion of racialized and racializing language exposes the role of language in marking inclusion and exclusion. Gilroy echoes Eagleton's suggestion that the multicultural project—as it has been articulated by mainstream scholarship—has failed to trouble the waters of discrimination. He suggests that "old, modern notions of

racial difference appear to be quietly active within the calculus that assigns differential

value to lives lost according to their locations and supposed racial origins or considers

that some abject human bodies are more easily and appropriately humiliated, imprisoned,

shackled, starved and destroyed than others" (10). Implicit in Gilroy's critique are the

musealizing practices of contemporary global discourses which offer sympathy to the

lives of marginal groups, but typically do not work to change the conditions in which

those groups live. Our academic treatment of race—and I would argue any historical

condition of difference—has been made "routine" by the well-meaning discourses of

multiculturalism. For Gilroy, scholars pursuing the end of discrimination fail to "imagine

its unmaking, its deconstruction, its transcendence, or even the possibility of its eventual

descent into irrelevance" (54).

The critical term here is "unmaking" as it implies a focused process toward un-

working the legacies of racism, classism, sexism and so on. It necessitates a revised

perspective on "work" as a means to unmake. In the context of traumatic events, where

hierarchical social conditions are often laid bare, the challenge is both more daunting and

more pressing. To unmake the conditions by which African-Americans in New Orleans

suffer disproportionately is to wrestle with a host of social, political, and material

complexities. What is required here, it seems, is a critical tool for enacting situated social

and political inquiry. One such tool is Gilroy's notion of "conviviality," or "the processes

of cohabitation and interaction that have made multiculture an ordinary feature of social

life" (xv). Convivial scenes of writing would offer writing teachers opportunity to engage

students in socially reflexive discourse about communities before, during, and after

trauma by emphasizing the organic discursive and meaning-making tactics that are

natural to those communities. As we shall see in my analysis of the NONSP, community

writing projects that allow students to engage with their home communities on the terms

that are valued by those communities open a space for critical reflexivity about not only

the differences between academic and "home" discourses, but the way discourses

circulate, overlap, and change (particularly in the context of ongoing or large-scale

disaster).

Gilroy explains that conviviality takes off "from the point where

'multiculturalism' broke down." It emerges from local settings and moves our attention

away from globalized issues of identity and toward "the always unpredictable

mechanisms of identification" (xv). Specifically Gilroy asks us to consider issues of

discrimination by examining imperial and colonial histories as they resonate in

contemporary discourse, rather than nostalgically lamenting past injustices. He explains

that one goal of critical inquiry should be to make use of colonial histories by exploring

how they shape the character of "emergent multicultural relations" (3). His examples

include the everyday culture of the street where individuals and groups from a wide array

of cultural backgrounds live together in a chaotic, asynchronous, but typically peaceful

mix. This blending of backgrounds, ideologies, languages, and politics is the essence of

conviviality. Rather than theorizing how people can live together in productive conflict,

Gilroy asserts that we should actually look at how people do live this way, on a daily

basis, in every city around the world. The convivial scenes of writing that emerge in

community and service oriented pedagogies offer a response to one of Gilroy's central

questions: "what critical perspectives might nurture the ability and the desire to live with

difference on an increasingly divided but also convergent planet?" (4). In the analysis that

follows, I forward the NONSP as an example of one convivial scene for writing. And, by placing it in conversation with the pedagogies that emerged organically out of post-Katrina writing classrooms, we see how locally situated, critically driven post-traumatic writing pedagogy might offer productive response to the traumas associated with "an increasingly divided but also convergent planet."

New Orleans' Neighborhoods as "Convivial" Scenes of Writing

Before I begin my discussion of the NONSP, it's important to acknowledge that there are community writing projects like this operating all over the country (see Cushman, Goldblatt, Mathieu, Parks to name a few). I highlight this one because it is grown and sustained out of New Orleans, it precedes and outlives the "trauma" of Hurricane Katrina, and it offers us an opportunity to see social reflexivity at work in a situated, community project. It's also worth noting that the goals of the NONSP ("our stories told by us") and my goals in this analysis (examining how and where these stories are told) differ, but our commitment to enacting social change through writing is shared. For me, the next step after capturing the situated histories of one's community is to undertake a sustained, critical inquiry into the machinations of power at work in those communities.

Founded in 2004 by former John McDonough High School teachers Rachel Breunlin and Abram Himelstein, the NONSP is a book-making project "based in the neighborhoods where we live and work" (www.neighborhoodstoryproject.org). The program website explains its activities as follows: "through writing, interviewing, and photography, neighborhood writers create portraits of our places, then edit the stories

with the neighborhoods to make sure we get it right. We publish the books and have block parties to celebrate." As an organization with non-profit status, the NONSP gains support from diverse public and private locations, as well as from the sale of its books (the primary source of funding). A partnership with the University of New Orleans allows for books to be published through UNO Press.

Program descriptions throughout their web-based and printed publication reflect the extent to which the "we" and the "our" of the NONSP are ideological stances. The writers and program facilitators live in neighborhoods throughout the 6th, 7th, and 9th wards. Several student authors come from the St. Bernard and the Lafitte House Projects, both of which have been torn down in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. This commitment to present and past city spaces bears out in the NONSP's other efforts which include sponsoring community events—block parties, second lines, oral history projects—and publishing books that serve the interests of the communities themselves. These include histories of the Desire Housing Project, the House of Dance and Feathers (a museum of culture in the lower 9th Ward), and a book called Cornerstones which tells the stories of New Orleans Neighborhoods by matching important landmarks with reflections on events that happened there.

The book projects themselves begin with Breunlin and Himelstein soliciting volunteers from area schools. Most authors begin as sophomores and juniors, reflecting a commitment that sometimes extends beyond two years. In the course of writing each book, the student authors read texts that describe social and cultural inequity in urban areas (Our America: Life and Death on the South Side of Chicago and The House on Mango Street, for example) to gain an understanding for how people tell stories from and

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about distinct and marginal subject positions. The students also learn methods for gathering data. Breunlin describes the process of learning interview techniques as an effort to teach "interpersonal dynamics": "We had an all-day retreat at my house to discuss methodology and the ethics of doing fieldwork. We talked about stepping back from our everyday lives and explored the notion of cultural relativity and being open-minded to other people's stories" (Breunlin, Himelstein, and Nelson 80). This openness to community and to stories sees the organizers and the student writers shift their energies from the classroom to the "porches and front stoops" where the NONSP comes into contact with neighborhoods themselves. Breunlin explains that the interviews and stories work in an ongoing "dialectic" where "interviews [lead] to more stories and vice versa" (Breunlin, Himelstein, and Nelson 81).

The editorial statement on the back of each of the five NONSP publications suggests that the program, as "a community documentary," stands "as a testament to New Orleans' community spirit and as a map back from disaster." This mission statement reflects the socially reflexive understanding of writing during trauma that I have been exploring throughout my own project. The goal of the books is to account for the experiences of the community in cultural rhetorical constructions valued by the community. The student projects are records of historically situated and culturally contextualized lives that typically remain silent in print. The NONSP authors speak as and for the very groups much contemporary academic scholarship tries to address and their voices are situated in response to what Himelstein calls "large misrepresentations of parts of the city in film and print" (Gambit.com). These misrepresentations obscure efforts by marginal communities to represent themselves.

But collecting overlooked stories and engaging student writers are not the only important characteristic of the NONSP. The program also challenges dominant models of production and consumption for community-based writing projects. The common service and community focused model for composition studies tends to result in the re-investment of public writing—reports, grants, surveys—as "real" writing or it ensures that students remain discursively abstracted from the communities where they are working by insisting on academic capstone assignments. Ellen Cushman has referred to this as the "end of semester project model of service learning" ("Sustainable Service") by which students force their service experience into academic molds to satisfy assessment procedures. While the NONSP features a conventional editor/author/publisher relationship (which some might call an example of "real" production, circulation, and consumption), the real value of the program is that student writers are agents and active meaning-makers. The books aren't edited to be more publishable and the politically or socially contentious aspects of the texts are not removed. Editing only occurs to remove details that might incite conflict with other community members so as to avoid placing students or community participating in dangerous situations. However, the students do come to view writing as a set of choices that must be made—in terms of who is represented, how, where, and why. Ultimately, the student authors have absolute control of the cultural rhetoricity of their texts.

Community participants are included in every step of the planning, drafting, evaluation and fact-checking process. Himelstein explains:

> We got the stories ready to be read. And then we let people read the drafts, and the books became more real. Each book had a committee of readers: a family member, a fellow teenager, and someone from the city who wanted

to be a part of the Neighborhood Story Project. We would read the draft, and then talk about the book, where it was confusing, or needed more, or would endanger the writer or the neighbors. As we let people read the writing, and know the stories, people, including us, started believing that the books were already books, just waiting to be printed. And having people read the work put the fire under us. (Breunlin, Himelstein, and Nelson 82)

The community takes ownership of the books by participating in the writing and in the block-party celebrations that accompany each book's publication. The books become opportunities for each student writer's neighborhood to identify and celebrate its own unique discursive history. Breunlin describes an "informal economy" in these neighborhoods and the books become a defining element that brings people together. She explains,

There's this whole little economy around the second line—people sell beer and water and pork chop sandwiches. And it's cool to see books be a part of that...and the interviewees felt like it was their book as well, so you'll see a lot of people IN the book signing autographs. (Larson)

As an example of a "convivial" scene of writing, the NONSP reflects the unique meaning-making practices of these historically diverse, largely poor, and politically under-represented neighborhoods through the eyes of the people who actually live (d) there. The voices of scholarship are silent—save those brought to bear by the student authors themselves.

According to Eli Goldblatt, the primary aims of community writing projects working in the service of social justice should be to develop "abilities that help students become both productive individuals and engaged social beings," to "bring the margins to the center" by recognizing that the "most stressed students serve as the best guides about what a program can do" and to "cultivate relationships both inside and outside school to support literacy learning" (Because We Live Here 15). I see these three important critical

characteristics circulating productively in the description of the NONSP I have provided so far. The NONSP achieves true collaboration between communities and structures of discursive power—the community center itself, UNO, UNO Press—by building its program out of the needs and desires of the community. Goldblatt laments that "universities and colleges seldom develop plans based on suggestions that originate off campus" and hence, the means for assessing the success or failure of such plans are inevitably tied to academic practices and dominant ideology. He explains that the values of these two cultures—academy and community—as they play out in the real workings of community and service writing projects are incompatible (122). For academics interested in communities, literacy is the predominant issue and the idea upon which publications (and tenure) are secured. For community organizers, literacy is one problem or issue among many. I suggest the NONSP books reflect Goldblatt's challenge to the academy-centric model of community writing in that they demonstrate social practices that serve the neighborhood rather than the institution of higher education. Such projects afford student writers an opportunity to reflect on the social conditions of life in disparate neighborhoods, rather than on flashpoints of traumatic memory that reify stereotypical interpretations of what goes on in those neighborhoods.

In particular, the NONSP books reflect the repercussions of trauma on community and how stories told before and after disaster re-tell cultural history and potentially resist characterizations imposed by those in power. By analyzing some of these resistant characterizations, we can begin to understand the social and economic conditions of the historically marginalized communities of New Orleans as articulated by four of the NONSP's high school aged authors, Ebony Bolding, siblings Arlet and Sam Wylie, and

Kareem Kennedy. Their books, published in the immediate context of Hurricane Katrina, suggest a great deal about the lived experience of many of those same citizens whose likenesses are forever etched into our national memory: wading through chest-deep sewer water, pleading for help outside of the Superdome. These stories provide an alternative to discriminatory, hegemonic histories of power and difference, but also to the selectively sympathetic narratives of survival and victimization that dominated the media in days, weeks, and years after the disaster. Convivial scenes of writing, like those we see in the NONSP publications, emerge from a community-driven collaboration among the authors, the story project directors, and the communities themselves and offer the kind of critical moment that we (as writing teachers) and our students (as writers) should seek out in our own "material-discursive" settings.

More importantly, I think that by fostering cross-community and 'intercultural' rhetorics, these books offer us a model for situating student writers in socially reflexive writing contexts. In many ways, the NONSP books recall Flower's assertion that community literacy projects, at their best, create a "local public sphere organized around intercultural inquiry" (5). This sphere acts as a counterpublic where community members can come together to work through differences and to address legacies of historical inequity. For Flower, intercultural rhetoric "reveals the often unacknowledged rhetorical agency of the voiceless and powerless" by contesting conventional views of rhetorical agency as "either the power and will of charismatic individuals" or "social structures that confer the authority to speak and be heard to a privileged few" (6). Ordinary community members come together with the intention to systematically inquire into the roots of social injustice by remaining open to "rival interpretations" and by advancing alternative

social realities as a way of reaching "negotiated understanding" (6). In such dialogues, representatives of the university are no longer default "experts." Flower describes how she and the students working on a community project "were entering someone else's dynamic, intact world that did not feel a particular need for you or your gifts... You would be accepted and valued not by your academic, economic, or middle-class status but by your ability to participate in the common life, the common concerns, and the shared struggle as adults and teenagers saw it" (13)

Each NONSP author articulates uniquely New Orleans perspectives by drawing on rich linguistic and cultural traditions and situating those traditions in socially and historically contextualized settings. The books document community, but in ways that can never be fully understood outside the social/cultural circumstances in which the document functions. These student writers challenge expectations about what life was like in New Orleans before the storm, and counter popular assumptions about the experiences of African Americans in poor neighborhoods.

The great strength of the NONSP as a community literacy project is that it recognizes these under-privileged spaces as dynamic, local counterpublics where discourse may be used to respond to public and private traumas individuals experience in their lives. Social inequities related to race and class, which perpetuate and sustain "trauma" are met with a "radical perspective on difference" (Flower) that rejects the silencing discourses of victimhood that plague so much scholarship on social inequality. Rather, through the voices of the students, "urban problems" are re-defined as "mutual problems" (Flower 29). Further, inclusion within the community is defined by an emphasis on the productive use of difference, or what Flower calls "rival interpretations"

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where the experiences of marginality are navigated in public dialogue by fostering

respectful discursive conflict (40). Such conflicts are at the heart of intercultural rhetoric

and social reflexivity, where individuals and groups come together to celebrate

differences while opposing musealized narratives of marginality and victimhood.

NONSP author Ebony Bolding's <u>Before and After N. Dourgenois</u>, a chronicle of

life on a few blocks in the Sixth Ward, begins with her identification of "the ward" as a

defining characteristic of life in New Orleans:

> The wards in New Orleans are from voting districts. They were made at a
> time when most black people couldn't vote. Nowadays though, people my
> age represent their wards as if where you're from on the ward map says
> everything about you. They do have some people who are deuce ward;
> they don't really know where they're from. One day they're from here and
> the next they're from a certain ward just to try and be down with the
> crowd. I've never had that problem cause for as long as I can remember,
> I've been staying in the Sixth ward (Bolding 8).

Later, we hear from others living in her Sixth ward neighborhood that this distinction

really only counts on Election Day and for the young people who use it to demarcate their

space. Bolding signals her intent to "explore [her] experience" in the Sixth ward, the

ward being an idea that "some people don't associate with it at all and other people fight

for it and end up suffering the consequences" (9). So, from the very beginning we have

multiple layers of experience in play. We have Bolding herself, firmly grounded in her

sense of what it means to be a part of the Sixth ward. We have a different generation who

does not see the need for such distinctions. But we also have people who cross

boundaries, people who "don't really know where they're from." Such distinctions

between experiences, wrapped up with people's need and desire to self-identify, signal a

discourse at work that challenges popular representations of the working poor, in

particular poor African American communities. In Bolding's Sixth ward, as well as the Wylie's Ninth Ward and Kennedy's Seventh Ward, being black doesn't always mean being angry or degraded, and poverty necessarily make one a victim. I think these books offer accounts of cultural exchange, linguistic dynamism, and social continuity that complicate the representations of the poor communities of New Orleans now functioning in our collective memory.

The NONSP authors tell stories that actively resist the narratives we hear in mediated representations of post-Katrina New Orleans. They articulate a distinctly local and largely African-American perspective (though, it's important to note, these texts are quite diverse). They are stories that foreground difference and ignore the common discomfort mainstream America holds toward African American voices. In dominant discourse African American voices are a reminder of history, not of the present. They remind readers of pain felt, not inflicted, and as such can easily be dismissed. From the African American perspective, story and storytelling work differently. Henry Louis Gates Jr. suggests that the stories we tell "order our world" and help to construct a foundation upon which African Americans in an unwelcoming America construct a sense of reality and a filter for processing the events of the day (18). Geneva Smitherman echoes this sentiment in her work on African American linguistic practices. She sees AAL as a tool for ordering human experience, giving "shape, coherence, and explanation to the condition of US slave descendants" and functioning "as a mechanism for teaching and learning about life and the world" (Smitherman 64). Further, she situates the development of African American language practices within a history of resistance, as a "counter language" that was "created as a communication system unintelligible to speakers of the

dominant master class" (Smitherman 3). In terms of dominant discourse, the NONSP

projects chronicle a history of neighborhood culture that is too black, in a language that

reflects too much black experience, for popular consumption. When Bolding makes note

of the Sixth ward parade tradition—"on Sundays, the streets get taken over with people

as second lines parade through the streets. We have some of the best second lines in the

city, Yup, they surely do be rollin'. They have people from all different wards coming to

see them" (8/9)—she is not only drawing on a history that the dominant reading public

may relate to, she is articulating it in a way they may not understand or appreciate.

Most indicative of this conflict between memory project and African American

lived experience is how each book deals with the stereotypically fixed image of the

violence associated with young black males. While I do not want to suggest that the

authors dismiss the reality of violence in these communities, I do think they provide

(particularly given their age) interesting counterpoints to the culturally mediated

stereotyping of black youth that spread after Katrina and remains dominant in much

public discourse. Ebony Bolding's brother Brandon is a member of the Bayou Road

Boys, young black men from the Sixth ward who congregate on Bayou Road, so she is

sympathetic. In fact, she begins her discussion of the BRB by recognizing our assumption

that we might think of "a gang or something like that," but, she suggests, "they aren't

troublemakers" (30). We detect even more bias when she notes that "several times the

BRB have been harassed by them old stupid polices for nothing...most police officers

think every young black boy they see is up to no good, but that's a lie" (30). While the

pattern of suspicion and violence perpetrated against young black men is something I

want us to recall here, one cannot help but assume teenage boys—of any cultural

affiliation—meeting on a street side won't always have the best of intentions.

What is perhaps most notable about this example, however, is the silence of the

NONSP editors and organizers on such politically contentious material. The BRB is, by

common definition, a street gang. But Bolding's perspective is left to stand on its own

allowing her to offer a resistant interpretation to commonplace assumptions about what

such a gang might or might not be represent. In fact, the project implicitly suggests that

this is Bolding's area of expertise, not ours. It is her home, her community, and her

knowledge. Just as Flower's articulation of intercultural rhetoric foregrounds inquiry into

the hybrid constructions of community "talk, writing, reflection, persuasion, and

performance," the NONSP insists that the expertise lies with the student writer. The

usefulness of the teacher/volunteer here is simply their ability to "support a process of

inquiry, reflection, and argument" (Flower 13).

But a conflict between insider and outsider knowledge is essential to

understanding Bolding's project, as it is not the reality of the BRB's actions that is

important; it is the stereotype that she rejects, the assumption of violence. Her interview

with her brother and his best friend Mike complicates our sense of what words like

"gang" might even mean. The two speak interchangeably about their community, often

completing or echoing each other's statements:

> "Cuz sixth ward is like"
>
> "It's where we grew up at."
>
> "Yeah. We grew up around here. Most of the people we know…"

"Love this little area right here. It's all we got. If we had more, it'd be better, but this is what we gotta have right now. Sixth ward is where all the second line bands and everything started, the Indians—that's where it all came from." (33)

Exchanges like this reflect a dynamic understanding of community affinity and history, as well as a rich linguistic system—both in the original utterance and in Bolding's attention to maintaining it in print. Bolding further implicates our assumptions about young men on the streets in poor neighborhoods in her conversation with Ray, another member of the BRB. Interestingly, she asks him about his dreams: "Dreams? Everybody just hoping they get up on their feet; make some money and get up out that hood… That's the American Dream" (36). Moments later, Ray contrasts this dominant middle-class ideal with the realities of life for a young black man in the Sixth ward. On the reasons behind his jail time Ray explains "regular police stops, you know, tickets or something. Some petty stuff, you know. Same old thing everybody goin to jail for. It ain't about nothing to do with the Sixth Ward. You know, in the Ninth Ward, people doin the same thing" (36). Bolding's description of Ray functions as a "rival hypothesis," a way to re-read one marginal figure as an agent of culture and participant in community life.

In <u>Between Piety and Desire</u>, Sam Wylie similarly works to challenges our understanding of the street hustler, a character so often associated with poor black neighborhoods, particularly in post-Katrina New Orleans (consider well-documented instances of racially characterized looting). Wylie remarks on the role of money in his community and the legal or illegal extent one will go to in order to attain it. But he makes a point not to demonize those who resort to crime; instead he situates their activities against a social and economic system that offers them no alternatives: "My thing is, we all know them by what they do, but not as people. We especially stereotype hustlers as

violent and ignorant, but honestly, some of them are just like normal people trying to make a living" (32). To make this point, Wylie introduces a figure called "Avon Seller," a fifteen year-old street hustler/drug dealer, with a penchant for violence. After much boasting from the young man, Wylie concludes, "to me, seems like he's confused subconsciously on whether to be hard, or tough, and just a kid. One minute he's talking about laughing and having fun with his friends, and the next he talks about 'whopping people,' or hitting people, and selling 'avon' for money" (32). Sam's insights into Avon's character suggest a complicated understanding of street level social dynamics and the emotional conflicts that lead a young man to a life of crime.

In Kareem Kennedy's <u>Aunt Alice vs. Bob Marley</u>, Kennedy engages a similar revision of what it means to be a young African American male in New Orleans. Kennedy examines his own educational history, beginning with the first grade and ending with his entry into college, as a way to situate his experiences in the social, historical, and material contexts of his youth. Kennedy opens his book by explaining:

> People tell me, 'You're a young man with an old soul.' But my youngness, in the eyes of some people, supersedes my soul. Several times, my outer appearance as a Black man with dreadlocks has been stereotyped as gangsta, and as a result, my place in the world has been antagonized. (5)

This representation of marginal experience is situated in rich sites of personal and communal experience: "Growing up in the Seventh Ward and the St. Bernard Public Housing Development of New Orleans—it's like you're being a sponge, soaking up all the good and bad things" (8).

The most powerful aspect of Kennedy's text is its appearance. It is written as a first person narrative coupled with interviews, but this textual material is complemented throughout by images and primary textual documents including police arrest report,

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family photographs, hand-written notes and drafts, photographs of people and places taken by the author himself. Major sections of the book are separated by a photocopied marble-cover composition text, emphasizing the role that education plays in the book and in Kennedy's life. Each phase in his story, the text tells us visually, is enough to fill a composition book, to pass a written exam, to turn in as a written journal. As a pastiche of materials that reflect life as it was lived, Kennedy's text constitutes the kind of "mosaic" of culture called for by Cultural Rhetorical studies (Rosteck). We see clearly how the unique meaning making practices of the 7th ward community shape Kennedy's experience. But in his manipulation of the textualized memory of the neighborhood (much of which no longer exists) we see Kennedy also working to shape history. Within the 7th ward context, Kennedy is re-writing culture in a way that individuals and groups implicated by that culture will understand.

Of these texts, Kennedy's is the only one written after Katrina and though the storm haunts the many aspects of the narrative, it never takes center stage. The storm is one moment in the history of Kennedy's life and of the Seventh Ward; it is not the defining moment in this history. In the chapter entitled the Eleventh Grade (Kennedy was in the 10th grade when Katrina struck and, like so many New Orleans residents, moved to Houston for his 10th grade year), Kennedy explains: "When I first came back to New Orleans, it looked like a skeleton and resources were scattered. I was walking through the dark shadows of post-Katrina alone with the goal of getting my life stabilized" (56). But the narrative of the school year that follows is not a victimized narrative of struggle. Rather, Kennedy offers us an insightful and detailed account of New Orleans school environments. The number of open schools had been reduced, so many were over-

enrolled and reluctant to accept transfer credit from students returning from exile.

Kennedy's school was under constant watch by armed security and graffiti vandalism had

become a problem. He explains:

> Hood art also became a problem for the school. I think the tagging of the
> St. Bernard Parish (S.B.P) drawn with a red marker with the list of names
> under it was the catalyst. Before you could say beaucoup, the hallways
> were filled with literature like 'Lil Red Luvs 6th Ward Bee' and not very
> good drawings of skulls (57).

As the NONSP Afterword makes clear, the purpose of these books is not to re-

state the experience of trauma that many people associate with the city and its poor

populations. Rather these books, and the authors who spend two years or more writing

them, are working to chronicle lives in motion. While the editors describe delays

associated with Katrina, these delays did not alter their fundamental project of

"Documenting the Now" (98). But, they emphasize, "the Now was ever-changing" as the

authors and the editors experienced personal and communal changes during the

construction of the stories. These changes, represented in text, offer a counter-narrative to

hegemonic accounts of suffering and victimhood in that they construct dynamic lives in

motion—lives articulated and experienced in and through local, convivial scenes of

writing and culture. The afterword explains:

> ...so we started in on writing the hard parts. We went to where the
> projects were in the process of being torn down. Sneaking in through holes
> in fences, we roamed where thousands had lived, now desolate and post-
> apocalyptic. We went to the new spaces, shotgun doubles, ranch homes in
> the suburbs and we wrote to make sense of the changes (98/9).

We see in this text a clear tension between the old and the new, pre- and post-Katrina, but

the function of the Story Project is not to lament change or to lodge a formal complaint at

the conditions of the working poor in New Orleans before and after the storm. Rather, the

goal is social reflexivity, to answer the question: how do we change—and make change— in the wake of an experience like Katrina and what conditions can, should, and will shape those changes?

Conclusion

I suggest the NONSP is a valuable example of a situated, critical, community-driven writing project; one that we can learn much from. Its authors reflect Ivanic and Moss' "critical view" of writing as they embrace the chaos of writing in and for the community, while at the same time exposing the uses and limitations of academic discourse in coming to terms with community experience. As a reflection of convivial scenes of writing, these books are grown organically from the community by scholars and activists who don't impose order or narrative structure on the texts. The students themselves choose who is interviewed, what materials to include and how to include them. In collaboration with the editors, the texts are put together, edited, and published. Most importantly, the NONSP ensures that the communities from which these student writers emerge embrace the books as their own through consultation and by engaging those communities in the release and celebration of each author's achievement. The NONSP projects reflect Flower's insistence that community literacy projects, as convivial scenes of writing, assert a non-dominant authority by foregrounding agency as "the engagement with conflict" and as "acts of negotiation with conflicting forces from within and without" (214). The story project authors develop active counterpublics that bind the community together through shared language and interests, and offer a foundation from which to resist the machinations of authority that keep those communities in fragile subject positions.

The work done by New Orleans area writing teachers (explored in chapter 3)

provides the necessary complement to a project like the NONSP. Community projects

don't work everywhere and they serve differently within every community. As we saw in

the UNO instructors' urge to have students tell place-based narratives, part of the

problem is that we very often view our communities—particular in the wake of a

disaster—as closed, safe spaces. It's clear from the afterward of Kennedy's book that part

of the NONSP's mission is to dismantle this dream of insularity and explore what it

means to come from a place that has changed and was always changing.

This kind of dynamism relies on a long-term investment of time, energy, and

resources; three things commonly lacking in a university sponsored writing classroom.

Therefore, it is essential that we end this analysis with a few hopeful caveats. First,

situated, ethical post-traumatic writing cannot only come from the academic institution (it

can, however, emerge out of sustained collaborations between the community and the

academy—see Cushman, Goldblatt, Mathieu, Parks to name a few). Second, putting

students in community writing contexts is most productive when these communities are

socially and historically relevant to the student writers. Intersections of experience, local

knowledge, community investment, and research are essential. This insider knowledge

enables students to collect and make use of texts from a range of important and

overlooked locations—I'm thinking here of Kennedy's use of police reports, primary

school report cards, archival photographs. Further, students writing about their own

community highlight the students' access to the languages and expertise of the

community's citizens and supporters. They have the ability to decode local discursive

practices and cultural rhetorical strategies as they have been occurring over time in specific environments.

Finally, I believe students in all writing programs need to locate and enact convivial scenes of writing in their own lives. A post-traumatic writing pedagogy formulated around this idea accommodates traumas large and small as it affords students the opportunity to track the contexts and changes in community culture as they occur. Engaging community practice only after trauma occurs opens the door for musealizing practices, including the archivization of painful stories and the assertion of the academy as a safe house for memory, both of which elide the social, political, and material realities present before and after the trauma occurred.

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APPENDIX A

WRITING AFTER KATRINA ARCHIVE SUPPORT DOCUMENTS

Writing After Katrina: An Archival and Teaching Resource Project
Information for Students/Consent Form

What is the *Writing After Katrina* Archive?
The archive has been created to collect and preserve student writing and instructor assignments being generated in post-Katrina writing classrooms. We are collecting writing activities including journal responses, final papers, drafts, and in class essays from students in composition courses and other undergraduate writing courses. We intend to house the archives both digitally and physically in UNO Library's Special Collections.

In sharing your work, you will be contributing to a very special moment in UNO's history. This archive will be of great interest both locally and nationally for students and scholars in English Studies, especially those in rhetoric and composition, but also those who have an interest in pedagogy, history, and the social sciences and who rely on primary materials for their research.

In addition to the maintenance of an archive, the material we collect will become part of a departmental database for students and faculty who wish to share some of the collected electronic resources. We hope to eventually have this as a link on the dept. website.

How can I contribute?
You can contribute to the archive by submitting any materials done in your writing classes (both past courses and courses in-progress) that respond to issues of local importance to New Orleans and surrounding areas affected by Katrina, Rita, and Wilma.
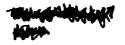
You may submit your work directly to the archive by sending electronic copies to Celeste Del Russo at her email below. Include a brief note stating that you have read this letter and approve of your work being archived. All hard copies may be left with your instructor, accompanied by this signed letter of consent. Your instructor will then submit your work to Doreen Piano, the on-campus contact for the archive.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and in no way will your grade in class be affected by your decision. You may also choose whether or not to offer your name to identify your written work. If you submit your work for the archive and then change your mind, there will be no repercussions. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel at any point you have been placed at risk, you can contact Dr. Anthony Kontos at the University of New Orleans at (504) 280-7481.

Contacts: Celeste Del Russo cdelruss@uno.edu or Doreen Piano dpiano@uno.edu

By signing below, you are giving your consent to participate in the archive project outlined above.

_____   _____   _____
Signature   Printed Name   Date

Identify my written submissions by name: _____Yes _____No

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Doreen Piano

Assistant Professor of English

University of New Orleans

dpiano@uno.edu
Application for the Robert Hacke Scholar-Teacher Award

Rationale for the Project

Title: The Writing After Katrina Project: An Archive and Teacher Resource

Purpose and Goal

Three weeks after I moved to New Orleans to start my job as an assistant professor in rhetoric and composition at University of New Orleans, Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, and the university's fall semester which had just begun the week before was quickly terminated. Six weeks after the storm, I began teaching two courses as a 10-week fall semester began at UNO, only this time I was 3000 miles away from my home institution, and Blackboard had become my new university's campus and classroom. While the graduate seminar's syllabus was changed mainly to accommodate the abbreviated semester, the sophomore level writing class, originally designed as a memoir/autobiography class, I changed to one entitled: *Writing out Hurricane Katrina: Natural Disaster and the American National Psyche.* Almost immediately after the semester began, I realized that writing about the storm, the flood, and its continuing aftermath would unearth some rich and immediate writing topics for UNO students. On my return to New Orleans I soon discovered that many instructors in the English department had relied on the unfolding tragedy and subsequent social issues that arose after Katrina as a source of study in writing classrooms.

During spring semester 2006, about a dozen of us came together to discuss our similar concerns and goals about teaching in a post-Katrina New Orleans. In light of the situation that we faced as instructors confronting a drastically different situation, we understood implicitly that our teaching had to reflect the many social, political, and emotional changes that we and our students confronted daily from the daily drive to campus through the ruins of once-vibrant neighborhoods to the massive recovery operations occurring throughout the city. The idea for the *Writing After Katrina: An Archive and Teacher Resource* originated during this time while

working with a graduate student Celeste Del Russo on her masters' thesis "(Re)building Cultural, Community, and Academic Identity: Freshmen Composition After Katrina." From discussions about teaching in a post-Katrina classroom, we realized that we should find a way to preserve instructor materials and student writings that were produced during this time. Since then we have generated interest and participation among UNO students and instructors to contribute to the archive; in addition I have contacted nationally recognized writing scholars who understand the historical importance of preserving these materials and are willing to provide expertise and advice.

The purpose of this archive and resource is to collect and preserve student writing and instructor pedagogy generated in writing classrooms at the University of New Orleans after Katrina. The collected materials reflect not only students' experiences of the unfolding tragedy but also their engagement with the subsequent social and political issues that arose after the flood. Submissions to the archive include first year writing classes, poetry and fiction, literature, sophomore writing, and honors classes.

Some examples of class materials and assignments to be included in the archive include the following:

- English 1156, 1157, 1158: First year composition courses
Sample assignments include: A visual narrative essay examining post-Katrina life; a persuasive essay on whether or not New Orleans should be saved;
- English 2151: A sophomore-level writing class
Sample assignments include: A class blog about Katrina, Katrina-related interview paper, writing about a significant place—pre/post Katrina; A Katrina anniversary commemoration observation paper;
- English A fiction/poetry class with readings taught at University of Missouri-St. Louis entitled Flirting with Disaster;
- English xxx: Second semester writing course taught at Mercy College, Toledo Ohio; Students created

English 2228 —intro to Poetry

The goal of collecting these materials is to provide a resource for scholars, locally and nationally, in English Studies who have an interest in writing history and pedagogy, institutional history, trauma studies, and civic education. In addition to the creation and maintenance of an archive, the materials collected will become part of a departmental database for faculty who wish to share their resources. Although

APPENDIX B

ENGLISH 1157, FALL SEMESTER 2005

ENGL 1157
Essay #1 (Part 1): Draft Due Monday, Oct. 17 by 3:00 PM

The assignment for Essay #1 encompasses several steps and you will find step one below. The final product will be a well-developed, analytical essay that combines all of the elements. The aim of this assignment is not only to reflect and write about a personal experience, but to take your newfound understanding of that event and find its significance in relation to the experience of others (and human experience in general).

1. Pick an experience that changed you in a significant way—changed your circumstances, changed the way you live your life or the way you view yourself, others, or the world—and write a narrative, tell the story, of that experience. I would recommend prewriting about more than one experience and then choosing the most promising one for your narrative. Focus on the experience itself—try to avoid unnecessary "back story"—and provide as many concrete details as possible. For this assignment, it usually helps to focus on a key moment and then work your way into the rest of the story. There is no length requirement for the draft of the narrative, but aim for at least two pages. You can write more, of course. Most students find that two pages are not enough as they get started on this assignment.

Obviously, our individual experiences with Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath may be appropriate for this assignment and I encourage you to write about those experiences if you choose.

Format and Submission:

Use standard one-inch margins.
Double-space and use 12 point, Times New Roman font.
Head and title your essays.
Number your pages.

Save your essay as a Microsoft Word.doc. If you don't have Word, save your essay as an .rtf (Rich Text File). Use the Digital Dropbox function of Blackboard (located under Course Tools) to submit your paper. If you run into trouble, you may email it to me as an attachment.

SAVE A COPY FOR YOURSELF AND BACK-UP ALL OF YOUR FILES.

Essay #1 (Part 2): Final Draft Due Friday, Oct. 28 at 3:00 PM

2. Once you have written your narrative, consider the experience objectively, and analyze it. Look for deeper meaning and broader significance, and write several paragraphs that explain the significance of the event or experience. For example, the author of "Shattered Illusions" (Reading Life 4-6) does not simply tell what happened after her parents divorced, or compare her life before and after, or describe her feelings. She does all of those things—she analyzes her experience—and draws conclusions about the larger impact of her parents' divorce and some of the universal truths about coming of age that she discovers. Her essay goes beyond the mere telling of a story or the recording of a personal experience and has significance for others in a way that a diary entry never could.

Once you have completed the analysis, combine it with the narrative into a coherent and complete essay. Look to "Shattered Illusions" and the other reading assigned, especially Caroline Hwang's "The Good Daughter" (RL 178-83) as models to help guide your own essays.

The complete and final draft is due Friday, October 28 at 3:00 PM. Please observe all of the format and submission guidelines that I outlined for Part 1 above.

Elizabeth ███████

███████████

ENGL 1157-004 OL

28 October 2005

Essay # 1 Final Draft

The Experience I'll Never Forget

On Saturday, August 27, I woke up late as I did every Saturday and started my day by doing homework that was due that Monday. When I finally finished the work I had to do, I started to paint the little, antique dresser that I had bought at a flea market a few weeks before. While I quietly painted I listened to my nervous grandmother who was telling me about a massive hurricane in the gulf. I didn't really take it too seriously; I just kept painting quietly. She said to me in an upset voice, "your mother is going to come home and probably want us to start packing." I was thinking the same thing, so as I finished the second coat of paint and started to decide what I should pack. When my mother arrived home from work that evening she told us, with a worried look, that she had booked a hotel in Houston, Jackson, and Carthage, Texas. As she told me this I couldn't help but laugh because every time there's a storm in the Gulf of Mexico she books at least three hotels in three different cities. Then later we would have to pick one and cancel the rest.

At six o'clock the next morning we started on the road: my mother, grandmother, sister, brother, and I. My family and I arrived at the little Best Western in Carthage, Texas at about t three o'clock that August afternoon. From the first day we arrived at the hotel all we did was watch the news on the television. It was very stressful for everyone. The morning the destructive hurricane hit the city, nobody had slept the night before; all we could do was hope

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that everything would be fine. Later that afternoon my father called us; he works as a news photographer at WDSU so he had to stay behind. He said that the situation outside was starting to get dangerous and the reporter and he were forced to take shelter at Ochsner hospital. The conditions in the hospital weren't really bad yet; the lights had only been out for a few hours. He told us that he had gone out in the parking garage during the storm to take video. He described the streets to us, saying that the water looked like a river. "It was strange" he said, "because the river rushing down the deserted streets had white caps." He said they were going to leave the city before the water could surround the hospital. We asked him if we could come home, he told us he didn't think we would be able to come home for weeks. I was relieved to hear from my father but disappointed to hear the condition of the city.

Days went by and it started to feel like we had always lived in that little hotel room. It was very hard because all I could do was think about my home. I would see the pictures and just worry if I would be coming home to anything. I would watch the news but they hardly ever had news about Metairie on the television. All I saw was the city in ruins and people taking advantage of the horrible incident. I felt so mad and ashamed by the images on television. People had already lost there homes to the water and now looters were breaking into their businesses and stealing what was left. I was frustrated because there were police officers doing the same. Seeing this made me scared to go home. I knew that I would always remember those days that I had spent away from my home because I had never gone through anything like that in my life. I really do love the city of New Orleans. It's like no other place in the United States, and it hurt me to see it torn apart. I just wondered if it would ever be the same.

Three weeks later my father said he thought it was safe for us to return home. Early the

next morning we excitedly packed our bags and started on the long trip back home to Metairie. Louisiana. We arrived in Metairie at about four o'clock that day. We couldn't believe what we were witnessing. Everything looked battered, as if we were in a movie about the end of the world. Huge trees, that once made the neighborhood, look pleasant, were torn out of the ground and some had been snapped in half like twigs. Every few seconds, huge black helicopters flew through the cloudless sky. The sounds of the helicopters blared in the distance. As we traveled farther we saw National Guardsmen everywhere. We drove cautiously down my street dodging the piles of debris that was left in the streets from Katrina's winds. It was as if we had entered a ghost town. Besides the National Guardsmen, there was no one else around. We began to get closer and closer to the house. I could feel myself getting sick, all I could think of was, this is it. Will my house have a hole in the roof? Will there be water damage? As the thoughts of what was to come flowed through my mind; I saw the side of the house. As the front of the house came into view; I became so overwhelmed that all I could do was sit in the car and stare at my home. A smile quickly appeared on my face. I was finally home and my house didn't have the huge tree from next door sprawled across the roof, as I expected might have happened. There was brown and black debris everywhere in my small front yard. I quickly jumped out of the car and darted for the front door of my little house. As I stood on my porch, a stench started to fill my nose. At first I didn't know where it could be coming from, but then I realized it was the smell of New Orleans. When my grandmother opened the front door another smell filled the air, a smell that I hope I never have to smell again. I knew where this odor was coming from; the refrigerator. I rushed through the house to make sure there wasn't any damage. After inspecting

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the house I headed for the backyard. As I stepped through the back door I realized my porch had floated against the near by garage. I stepped outside and noticed that the pool was filled with a black, mosquito infested sludge. I then started to become aware of the fact that the smell in the air wasn't only from New Orleans but also from the pool. There was plenty of work to be done, but I was just thrilled that I was home and hoped that everything would soon be alright again.

I realize now when looking back that I was naive. I thought things would be normal once I got home. I was very wrong. I quickly started to face reality. Everyone's life had been turned upside down. I just realized that on October 29, it will be two months since Katrina hit the city. It doesn't seem possible; everything looks the same as the day I came home. Every day as I ride down Wt. Esplanade I can't help but feel sorrow for the people that live in that area. I saw a home that had trash and sheet rock piled as high as the roof all the way around the house. In the back yard, where a fence once stood, was an eldly man sitting slumped over on an ice chest. In the side door of the little blue house was a young man with a mask over his nose and mouth holding a wheel barrel. He was dumping sheet rock on the top of the massive pile around the home. The effect of the Katrina event had not hit me until I saw this; I didn't realize what some families had lost.

As I write these events and think back, I feel like I've lived two lives. I'm so accustomed to things the way they were. When I think of the way things were before the hurricane it brings a smile to my face. For example I always think back on a dance I went to last year. It was my ring dance; it was on the Cajun Queen riverboat. I'll never forget the view as I stood on the top level. It was incredible; the Greater New Orleans bridge and the buildings alone the river were brightly lit; they looked as if they were on fire. I wonder how that view must look now. I wonder if

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anything will look normal to me again. Will the city one day become beautiful place that has

given me such wonderful memories?

Ellen ███████

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ENGL 1157-004 OL

5 December 2005

Essay #1: Revised Draft

Life After Katrina

We turned on the news at about ten o'clock on Saturday night to see an update of the storm's path and to decide when we wanted to leave. Almost everyone I knew was already on their way to Texas or Florida, but my mom wanted to wait until she knew exactly where this storm was going before she chose a destination. So there we were watching WWL with my friend Jessica, who was living with us at the time, and deciding when and where we were going. Traffic looked light on the interstate towards Baton Rouge at that point, but we were all too tired from earlier in the day that we did not think we could drive at night without falling asleep at the wheel. We had all spent Saturday afternoon out in the backyard having a cast party for the show we had done this past summer. Most of the day had been spent climbing up and sliding down a thirty foot water slide that was rented for the day; so we were all exhausted by the time the festivities wrapped up. The last of the party had left about an hour earlier, and the three of us turned off the news and went to bed thinking we would just leave early the next morning and presuming traffic would still be light. Boy, were we mistaken.

We each packed a bag and went our separate ways. Jessica left at four in the morning to head to Tampa with a friend's family, and my mother and I left at about six or seven heading West. We could not get on the interstate, not that we wanted to with all the congestion. So, we got on Airline Highway and took it all the way to Baton Rouge. We never went over twenty-five

miles per hour and frequently came to a complete standstill. We saw taxis driving by on the shoulder. presumably trying to get people to the airport on time. We might as well have made friends with the people in the cars around us because we all stayed the same way in traffic the whole route to Baton Rouge. I guess we were lucky: it only took us five hours to make a one hour trip. But five hours in the car with a thirty pound dog climbing in and out of my lap the whole way was not my idea of a fun trip.

We had driven to Baton Rouge because some family friends lived there and had offered us a place in their home to stay for the hurricane. With what little belongings we had, my mother and I entered the Gavin's house around noon ready to meet the other guests who would be staying with us. Two more friends from Lakeview, Horace and Kathy, were staying in the house as well as Mrs. Terrie Gavin's parents, Don and Meryl. Later that day, a friend of mine from Chalmette called to ask if we had a place she could stay because they were not letting her stay on campus at South Eastern. She wound up coming to stay with us and that brought the people total to eight. Around seven or so that night, Mrs. Terrie's brother and his family arrived at the house as well. That brought the total to thirteen people, three dogs, one cat, and a rabbit. Then, Mr. Joe Gavin's parents and brother turned up adding three more people, and not so long after that two more relatives showed up bringing the total to eighteen people.

There were eighteen people in one house for about a week before one family moved to Houston due to job relocation. Another week later, one family moved to Arizona and a week after that another family moved back to their house in Slidell leaving us with only eight people. My friend Hannah from South Eastern went back to campus and resumed class, which left us with seven people. Mr. Joe Gavin, after having spent forty-four days working in Jackson, Mississippi with Entergy, finally came home bringing the total number of people back to eight.
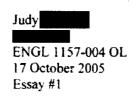
In the past month and a half I have slept on other people's couches, floors, beds, and air mattresses. I left my house thinking I would be spending a weekend in Baton Rouge, not two months. I left thinking that I'd return to my own bed in a few days, not be sleeping on someone's couch for almost a week because with so many people there was nowhere else. It was a switch having to get used to the habits of seventeen other people rather than just the two people I was used to living with. It was strange to wake up in the middle of the night and realize not only was I not in my own room, but I would never sleep in that room again. I have had to share two bathrooms with almost twenty people; and let me tell you, that is not a simple task. I felt like I was a Roman spectator watching gladiator fights every morning as people argued over who deserved the first shower. Now, that may have been quality entertainment for the first few days, but it got old fast. And on top of that, when we went to the grocery I would have to hide the things that I bought because if not, everything of mine would be gone in a matter of hours. I rarely got a chance to be by myself. The only times were when I drove to Lafayette alone, and when I went shopping for new clothes, new shoes, new everything because all I had with me when I left New Orleans were a few changes of clothes when I left New Orleans.

I've also been back to my house in Lakeview several times to find that my area endured nine feet of water for something like three weeks. Lakeview handled the storm just fine, but once the 17th Street canal levee broke, we were all put under at least eight feet of water. My house was less than ten blocks from the breach and thus it was in pretty bad shape when we got back to it a month after Katrina hit. Luckily my house is raised, and we only got around five feet inside the house, destroying only the first floor. Any pictures or memorabilia that was hanging up on the first floor were all ruined, and every piece of furniture was either splintered or covered in mold. Our piano was flipped on its back. Every table in the house bent inward in the center. Our hard

wood floors bowed and made little peaks every few feet. I have been able to save everything important from my room on the second floor, but the rest of the house is completely ruined from either water or the mold that soon followed.

I've learned many lessons from this exhausting experience. I've learned that I can live without material possessions much more proficiently than I ever thought I could; and that even though I lost almost everything, I know that I shouldn't feel sorry for myself and get down about it because there are a lot more people who did not fair as well as I did. I'm lucky to have lived in a two story house and be able to save as much as I did, and I'm fortunate to have friends that will give me a place to stay until I find someplace of my own. Katrina has changed all of our lives. I'm still living in Baton Rouge more than three months later. I'm still not back into a "normal" schedule and I drive back and forth between New Orleans and Baton Rouge more than I ever wanted to, but things will return to relative normality eventually.

After being back to my house several times, I have come to a point where the only thing left to do is accept what has happened and move on with my life. Because of this storm, I've come to realize that everything happens for a reason, even if we don't quite know what that reason is.

Judy ███
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ENGL 1157-004 OL
17 October 2005
Essay #1

Counting My Blessings: A Narrative of My Experience During and After Katrina

It was a cloudy Saturday morning on August 27th. My mother's troubled eyes were fixed on the television set as my brother and I hastily packed our suitcases. Struggling to comprehend the chaotic situation around me. I watched as my father frantically flipped through a telephone book in search of hotel numbers and locations. "I hope we can find a place to stay. I'm sure a massive amount people have already booked rooms." he said in a frustrated voice. A wave of strong disbelief had submerged our household. Just a few hours earlier, the morning news announced that a gigantic, category-five hurricane was targeting our beloved city--New Orleans. "All residents must being making arrangements to get out of the city." urged a local news anchor. My family and I wasted little time. After packing our suitcases, we immediately piled into our van and headed out of the city. After sitting in a seemingly endless line of traffic for more than three hours, we finally arrived in Baton Rouge. Tired and hungry, we opted for convenience and stayed at my uncle's house. Besides, it was more than likely that every hotel room within a 500 mile radius had been booked.

My family and I sat immobilized in my uncle's crowded living for what seemed like an eternity. The atmosphere was grim, silent, and tense; we barely spoke to each other. Anything that was said was an expression of fear and uncertainty. "I can't take it anymore!" my brother shouted. His hands trembled as he spoke, "I've never been more afraid of anything in my entire life. This could ruin everything we've hoped for." Suddenly, the news announced that Hurricane Katrina made landfall on the Gulf Coast, with New Orleans getting a huge amount of wind and rain. All eyes were on the television set as WWL reported the damage: buildings were leveled. hundreds drowned, and thousands of lives were changed in an instant, including mine. My eyes watered as

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I saw the faces of hundreds of homeless people on the news. "Momma," I wimpered. "Are we still going to have a house?" "I don't know what's happened to our house. sweetheart," she said softly. She put her hand on my shoulder and pulled me into a long hug. "It will be all right," she whispered in my ear. Her attempt to comfort me was to no avail as I quickly pulled away. I needed to be alone. Locking myself in the bathroom, I attempted to cry but couldn't. Shock overwhelmed me; I felt numb and completely void of any emotion. "Judy, it's okay to cry," I told myself while I lay down beating my firsts on the cold floor. "Why can't I cry?" I thought. Maybe the tears would come; maybe they wouldn't. Either way, crying was the least of my worries.

The next day, my family and I drudgingly heaped our suitcases and other belongings back into the van. "This such a pain in the neck," I thought. "I don't want to sit through another six hours of traffic," I grumbled as I threw my suitcase onto the backseat. Just as I predicted, we arrived in Beaumont, Texas, six hours after we left Baton Rouge. My family made a group decision and decided to take my aunt up on a generous offer. She had graciously rented us a cozy, inexpensive three-room apartment with a phone line and a cable television. Despite my angst at the idea of staying in a strange city, I had a sense of genuine gratitude considering many citizens from our area remained homeless and didn't have anyone to take them in. The days spent in the apartment seemed endless. Hours seemed to limp by as I spent my days looking out a bedroom window mournfully pondering the unfathomable uncertainties. Not only was I uncertain about when I would see my friends and other family members again, but the future of my family's livelihood was also in jeopardy. My father even considered permanently moving the family to Texas. "We might not have a choice, Judy," he said in firm yet gentle tone. "I refuse!" I yelled back at him. I didn't want to move to Texas. I missed all my friends and family. I missed my own my bed. Most of all, I missed the life that I had always known. Feeling lonely, bored, and depressed, I spent many nights in Beaumont with my head between my hands, sobbing over the life I was certain I had lost.

Near the end of our seemingly never-ending four weeks in Beaumont, another pressing situation was made public. The local Texas news station broadcasted that another humongous hurricane, this time named Rita, was predicted to make landfall on the northern Texas coast. In other words, the bull's-eye was Beaumont. My stomach knotted instantly as the familiar emotional numbness returned to my brain. "I can't go through this again. I can't go to another strange place and keep my sanity," I muttered to myself. Before I had time to further think on this assumption, my family and I were again quickly gathering our belongings in preparation to leave Beaumont. To my relief, my parent made a hesitant decision: return home. The homecoming was bittersweet. Driving through town, I sighed softly as I looked out the window. It was not even close to the place I remembered. Along with several run-down, abandoned buildings, most of the population was nowhere to be found. It reminded me of a ghost town from a black and white western movie. Despite the nagging feeling of emptiness that had overtaken the area, nothing compared to the comforting feeling of being back home.

Looking back, my experience during the hurricane evacuation significantly changed the way I look at the importance of the people closest to me. Being forced to live without my friends and other family members for an extensive period of time and missing them terribly, I've learned to value my personal relationships. They are vital for not only emotional support but also for true happiness. Before Hurricane Katrina, I often took their constant presence for granted. As Katrina taught the community of New Orleans and me, the most precious things in life can be taken from us in an instant, including family and friends. I now treasure every moment I spend with mine.

I have also learned something new about myself due to the hurricane Katrina ordeal. In the four-week long duration of the evacuation, my family and I moved (or "evacuated") a total of three times. Each move made me feel increasingly annoyed. While living in unfamiliar Beaumont, I felt miserable and disheartened. In no way shape or form am I the type of individual who does well with constant moving and change of scenery. I am need of continual stability and more than likely

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can't function without it.

Waking up that Saturday morning, I had no idea about enormous impact that was going to be placed on my life along with several others' lives. Although the experience was extremely problematic, me family and I made it through, and for that matter, so did the rest of New Orleans. All in all, I learned a couple of valuable lessons, but the hardest lesson I have yet to learn: how to put the past behind me.

Ashley ███████

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ENGL 1157-004 OL

17 October 2005

Essay #1: Final Copy

My Experience with Hurricane Katrina

Hurricane Katrina has brought both heartache and hardship to many families along the

Gulf Coast. The devastation that the city of New Orleans has undergone in the last few months

has been absolutely heart wrenching. Not to mention, the newscasters do nothing but play the

videos over and over again forcing the people who have lost everything to replay their heartache

over and over again. The pictures do not give justice to the actual experience of losing all that

one has worked for and having to start over. Luckily, with the help of the government and many

people across the country, the victims of the massive storm have been able to pick up and start

over again. Fortunately for my family and I, we did not have any major damage to our homes

and property. However, the one moment that set the basis for my whole experience was getting

in my car, taking one last look at my home, and leaving not knowing what I was going to see

when I returned.

Knowing the intensity of the storm headed towards New Orleans made our preparations

efforts very difficult. It was heartbreaking to pack all of my belongings and leave the only home

that I have ever known. I shoved everything that I had including clothes, pictures, and important

papers into my very small Mustang. When I pulled out of the driveway, I took one last look at

my beautiful, boarded up home and prayed that when I returned it would look the same. As I

drove away. I had no idea what was ahead of me. The first intention was to head to

Houston. Instead of getting stuck on the interstate, I went across the river. However, many other

people also had the same idea, and together, we were all stuck in some very heavy

traffic. Ecstatic to finally hit Baton Rouge, I got on the I-10 and headed to my final

destination. The traffic was horrendous, and I kept falling asleep, but sixteen hours later, I had

finally reached Houston. With one hotel room for six people, life was grueling. There was no

place to go because gas was so expensive, my family was worried, and I had never seen such bad

traffic in Houston. Because of hotel expenses, I left Houston and headed for Morganza, a small

farm town outside of Baton Rouge

It took about four hours for me to reach my aunt's house in Morganza, which was a

blessing compared to what I had gone through three days earlier. In my mind, I thought there

was no reason to get upset about the storm because it could not be stopped. When I arrived in

the small, country town, I thought that the experience could be fun, but I was very wrong. The

stress of living in a two bedroom one bathroom farmhouse with eleven people was

overwhelming. The major problem was that each person had their own lifestyle, and this factor

compromised our lives. I could not have any privacy to myself, I could not take hour long

showers, and most of all, there was no places to go out and have fun. So unfortunately, I was

forced to sit and dwell on what I did not know. My family and I were sure that we had gotten

four to five feet of water in our home, but to our dismay, we were wrong. Our home was high

and dry with only minor damages, but we could not return home because we had no water and

electricity. Life went on for another week and a half, but the conditions were only getting more

tense. Now, my family members were beginning to disagree about common issues and get on

each other's nerves. My mother got into a fight with my aunt, so now our family is in

shambles. By this time. I knew it was time to go home.

The day my family received the news that our home had both water and electricity. we packed our belongings and headed for home. It took about two hours to get there. but when I pulled into the driveway. my heart stopped. I had finally made it back home and it felt so good. I had missed my life. my friends. my job. and even school. However. even though I had reached home. life did not change much because nothing was open and there was no place to go. The destruction was devastating. There were trees and debris scattered everywhere. Windows were broken and the depth of the water was noticeable by looking at the buildings and seeing the water lines. The city looked like a deserted ghost town. My friends were gone. I had no job. and there was a ridiculous curfew. Within a week of my return. everyone else began their journey home. Life seemed as though it was being put back together. Families began to clean up their homes and businesses. I could finally see the fresh grass trying to grow in the yards throughout my neighborhood. Thankfully. I returned to work and can now bring in the money. I was also able to salvage this semester of school.

Hurricane Katrina taught those affected by her to cherish their family and friends because material possessions can be taken away at any time. Now. I look into my future and try to be a better person in every way because this storm has truly changed the way I think. feel. and live. There is no life of luxury now. I have to work hard and earn my keep. something I have never had to do before. Even though the effects of Hurricane Katrina were horrifying. people stuck together and hoped for the best. There really is no sense in getting upset over what cannot be changed. the city has been destroyed. but the spirit of its people still remains strong. It will take much time and effort to restore everything that was lost. The storm came for a reason. and essentially brought some positive mean to our city.

Anthony █████

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ENGL 1157-004 OL

17 October 2005

Essay #1: Final Draft

HURRICANE KATRINA

"We need to broadcast updates twice an hour on the hurricane. this is getting pretty serious." said Mike Kaplan. program director of B97. These words kept resonating in my head. I was confused on what he meant by pretty serious. Being on a station such as B97, we are encouraged to watch those celebrity gossip shows about how Jessica Simpson might have had breast implants, stuff that everyone cares about but no one really knows why. So of course. when it comes down to the Weather Channel we are just out of the loop. Finally, when we went into the commercials, I thought I would investigate and see what was really going on. When I walked out of the studio, I saw everyone running around. cell phones ringing and people talking in low voices not to alarm the person next to them. Needless to say, this was not the comfort I was looking for. By this time. it was only around eight and I had another two hours to go. Two more hours to think, plan, and scare the public; this is always a good way at keeping the listener to listen. However, the weather updates that we were forced to play was actually sending chills down my spine. "Hurricane Katrina, a powerful Category 5 Hurricane will be making landfall on the Louisiana, Mississippi Gulf Coast in the next 24-48 hours." It was at this point, where I knew it was time to do something.

When I got off work around ten. I got into my car and speeded home; at this time the interstate was dimly lit and did not have many cars on the road. which gave it a very eerie

feeling. When I got home I grabbed a few suitcases and looked for anything to throw in. First, the essentials such as clothes, music, and some food to take with me while I will be on the road, then I decided to take some important paper work, and my laptop because my whole life seems to be on it. However, I realized how hard it is to decide what to take with you and what to leave behind. It gave me a new respect for everything I had, even the simple things such as a bed, because in the back of my mind I knew that when I came back, they might not be here. It also made me realize just how much junk I collected over the years, concert tickets, autographed guitars, and pictures of places, people and things that I do not remember taking. I finished packing around one or two in the morning and knew I needed to get some sleep so I stumbled to my bed in the dark, because I was too lazy to turn the lamp on, and shut my eyes. Early the next morning after I finished squeezing everything I had packed into my tiny car, I jumped on the interstate and was heading straight for Destin, Florida. I chose Destin, because my Uncle owns a beautiful condo and was going to let me stay up there until things were "back to normal," as he put it. When I finally arrived, which seemed to be years later due to the immense traffic, I immediately ran inside and flipped on the television hoping to hear some good news. To my misfortune, it was anything but good news and they were saying it was almost certainly going to hit New Orleans in the next twenty-four hours. I was now in shock, knowing what could happen to New Orleans if a storm of this magnitude did in fact hit us.

The next morning after a restless nights' sleep, because of everything on my mind, I noticed that the storm was just making landfall. The meteorologist at the Weather Channel did say that it did make a "small jog" to the east. I did not see this "small jog." I just kept seeing this massive storm destroying the only place I called home. At this point, I kept asking those questions that I should have invested a little of my time to find out the answers before hand. "I

wonder how are my friends." "I wonder if I still have a house and a job." and "I wonder if I left anything behind that is really important?" I felt helpless; I could not get in contact with anyone because most of the phone lines were down. I could not check on the status of my house, and I had no idea where or how my friends and family were doing.

A week later, I was able to get in touch with a few family members and one or two friends who were out of state. This made me feel a little better just to know that a few people I knew were okay. However, any sense of hope that entered my mind was then destroyed by the constant flow of images being broadcasted all over the television. It was something I have never been exposed to: it was almost like an awakening. It did not look like New Orleans, people crowded in the street, fires, looters, and people just crying on the ground. At this point, I had enough of everything and just wanted to see what remained of my house, and when or even if I could come home. Those questions were not answered right away however, I did get in contact with my boss and told him I did want to return to work and I would help out with anything I could. He understood and then got me a job at WWL-AM as the assistant Webmaster until everything was back to normal and we could get our regular jobs back.

When I started working at WWL-AM they gave me a media pass so I could go into areas that were not yet letting people in. I saw this as a great opportunity to go see my house for the first time. I got into my car at around five in the morning and took off. I left at five because I thought I would not run into much traffic getting there. I arrived at around ten in the morning, and was shocked by the sights I saw. Television did not give justice to what the eye could see. Pictures may be worth a thousand words, but being there in person left you speechless. Roads that I drove on a few days before the storm were now blocked by debris. The building I use to work in was destroyed, only about ten windows actually survived from the winds vigorous force.

"I hope to God I am dreaming" is the words I murmured when I was on my street. Everything from the grass to the actual houses looked dead. No signs of life, and no signs of it even seemed like it would be returning. I pull up in front of my house, the outside looked bad but tolerable. I slowly walked to my door, and kept reminding myself that this was my idea. I opened the door to my house and looked in. Remembering that there had been no electricity and the windows were still boarded up, I thought it would be a good idea to take the boards off first, so I could see what had happened inside my house. After doing so, I walked in and what I knew happened for once actually had happened. The smell of the house was the old moldy smell, which can take your breath away if you don't occasionally go outside to get a fresh breath of air. The sights were unbelievable, being that I had hard wood floors and due to the water and the hot temperatures they buckled. I, however, did not expect them to buckle one and a half feet. It made walking in the house almost impossible, and some furniture was actually lifted off the ground. The doors to some rooms could not be opened because the hard wood floors were blocking them. My house and everything I worked hard to get was now destroyed. I could not get mad, because it had already happened. Nothing I could do now but clean up the mess and get my house back in working order. Before I left I thought it would be in my best interest to clean out the refrigerator. As soon as I opened the door of the refrigerator a wall of foul odors, indescribable to any human nose, hit me like a brick. I wanted to vomit, and almost did a few times. When that was all cleaned out, I went in my car and drove off, heading back to Florida where things smelled a little nicer.

Now, over a month later things are starting to get back to normal. My house suffered from water damage and is being repaired. I am currently living in the Covington, Louisiana area until my house is fixed. My job still remains as the assistant Webmaster of wwl.com and some

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of my friends and family have moved out of state just so something like this can not happen to them again. The only thing that is somewhat normal is the fact that last week I did my first on-air shift at B97 sense the hurricane hit New Orleans.

As hard as it is to imagine, I do feel things will get back to normal. It will take time, but anything good always takes time. My house is being repaired and we are fixing it up nicer then it was before the storm. We need to start saying what next, and stop looking back. What happened was a horrible and traumatic experience for almost everyone, and I am not saying to forget what happened. Lets stop pointing fingers, and start rebuilding and show the world how strong of a city we really are.

Anthony,
Overall, this is good work. You set up the narrative with a clear "before and after" organization and each of your paragraphs is well unified—this gives your essay a finished quality. If you choose to revise this essay, I would suggest developing the analysis a bit more to balance out the narrative. Take some more time to illustrate the changes in your life. In the conclusion, you also build a bridge to others in N.O. You might want to develop those ideas as well.

Grade: B

APPENDIX C

ENGLISH 1157, SPRING SEMESTER 2006—ASSIGNMENT #1

English 1157, Spring 2006

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Essay 1: Katrina Narrative

Our first two assignments this semester are inspired by the Katrina Narrative Project, a writing project created by the University of New Orleans that seeks to collect the first-hand testimonies of individuals living in and around the New Orleans area who were affected by the hurricane. While your first journal assignment required that you interview a neighbor, family member, friend, or stranger and write about his or her storm experience, for essay number 1, I'd like you to complete you own Katrina narrative.

Whether you are a permanent resident of this area or not, whether you evacuated or stayed, you still have a story to tell, and your story is meaningful. For those of you who are interested, you may contribute final drafts of your personal narratives to the Katrina Narrative Project, which will be housed in the University library.

Length 3+ pages

Because most of us could probably write an entire book about our experiences, here are some possible areas to focus on in the narratives. Evacuation stories:
>   Talk about when you left
>   The decision making process
>   Talk about where you went
>   Staying in your home
>   On the road stories

Evacuating with others:
>   Friends
>   Families
>   Pets (taking with and leaving behind)
>   Alone

Staying out of place stories
>   Talk about your experience
>   Shelter stories
>   Staying with friends and families
>   Out of state stories
>   Superdome stories
>   Convention center stories
>   I-10 stories
>   Overpass stories

Communication stories
>   Trying to find others
>   How did you do that?

Where did you get your information in the weeks after the storm?
Returning home stories
Making the decision to return
Not returning
Talk about what you saw...
Talk about what you did
Talk about what you have lost

To explore in your narratives, only if you feel comfortable
What has been interrupted in your life?
What do you think about your life now?
What new ideas about your life have you
    thought about?
What now triggers sadness? Anger?
    Joy? Fear?

Charles █

English 1157

█████

15 of February, 2006

Katrina Story

"Mom here comes another one!" I yelled to my mom across the living room into the kitchen.

"What's the name of this one?" my mom asked.

"They're calling it Katrina," I replied back. My mom and I where just making a joke of the whole situation. I was used to this happening every year and so was she. I just looked at it like a little vacation from work and school, plus another reason to have fun at the" hurricane parties". My mom looked at it in a different way though. She was tired of always having to know that we have to pack up again and go somewhere else just for a stupid hurricane that probably won't even hit us. As my dad and brother got home, there was nothing to discuss except for just my dad letting us know that he'll just ride this one out if it does come. Of course though, no one in my family really thought that it was going to really come!

As days kept going, the news kept showing pictures of the hurricane as it got larger, with the eye showing, with its massive winds. The news was informing people that this was a serious deal. I always knew that the news loved drama and loved to exaggerate everything that they could, so I really didn't even pay attention to all of that. I finally started to take it serious though when the mayor of New Orleans got on the

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television two days before Katrina was expected to hit and he told everybody that this is a mandatory evacuation and that this hurricane is really a serious hurricane. My mom loved to be the one in control and plan things, so I knew that she already had some type of evacuation plan that was going to be brilliant. She got us a room in the Radisson Hotel not far away from our house and got us a room in the middle of the building which I thought was very smart. I mean at least it sounded good, just for the fact that if this hurricane doesn't hit then at least we didn't drive out of state and we didn't have to wait in that long traffic line. Plus if Katrina did hit, then at least our room wouldn't get flooded or the ceiling come off because we where on the third floor of the five story hotel. All of our family agreed on it and we all left to go and stay in the hotel room the morning before Katrina was supposed to come. My friend, Clinton, and my uncle also joined us. So now we had my dad, mom, uncle, my friend, my brother Louis, our two dogs, one cat, and me all staying in a two bedroom hotel room. I remember being the last one to leave my house and going to meet everybody at the hotel room.

Right when I get there I heard the news of my brother going to go and pick up my grandma who decided not to leave with my aunt and stay home to ride the hurricane out. This is one thing you have to learn about my grandma though. The lady is crazy! She believed that if she left her house that people would come in and try to steal all her stuff, so she refused to leave. My grandma is the type to always have crazy stories. She looks like a little troll with bushy black hair, so not only does she act crazy, but she also looks crazy. She said that she would not leave her house and even tried to stab my brother with a knife when he wanted to get her out. Then my mom gets a call from my brother saying

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that he's going to stay with her at her house because he doesn't want her to stay alone for the hurricane.

That night my friend and I kept staring out the window while listening to the weather channel on the television. It was about three o'clock in the morning when the hotel lost power and we where stuck in that room just watching all the lights go off in Kenner and hearing the wind blow outside. As I finally went to sleep that night, I remember waking up to my friend Clinton telling me to get up and watch to see what the Hurricane was doing. I was amazed to see what I was looking at. Pieces of the hotel room started flying off, while Veterans Blvd. and Williams Blvd. both got flooded. I also watched my car which was my graduation present drown underneath water, while my dad's car also went halfway underneath the water. My uncle Lionel told me that he parked his car in one of the crates that they had in the back parking lot just in case the parking lot did get flooded. Which I thought was genius of him. The next day we are told that the hotel is not a good place for us to stay any longer and we where practically getting kicked out of it.

We didn't know what to do. Our cars where flooded, we couldn't get in touch with my brother, and we felt stuck in a horrible situation. Clinton had a bright idea though. If my uncle's car was in the crate then probably no water got in it, even though the streets where flooded at least four feet deep at the time. Clinton said that if we could get to that jeep and start it then we could try and ride through the disgusting canal water and to Metairie where we could get his truck parked in front of his house out. We decided

Comment: Fragment. Rewrite.

Comment: Tense. Were

Comment: This is a very strong paragraph - very focused and loaded with details. Nice work.

Comment: Awkward- rewrite. I'd love to hear more about your trip out to the car! Were you walking through water?

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to do that and the plan worked. It was not easy though we had to take backstreets the whole time because W. Metairie looked like a disaster zone with huge trees blocking the middle of the road. When we got to his house we saw that no water got into his house or garage, so his truck was good to go. But before we left we had to help his neighbor cut down a tree which fell on his car and house. After that we took off and went back to the hotel room, where someone jumped my dad's truck.

My mom got in contact with my brother and he said to come get him from my grandma's house before we decided to leave. So as we are ready to leave my uncle's jeep brakes down and we now are down to two trucks. My uncle, Clinton, the cat and I are in one truck while my mom and dad with the dogs are in the other one. All the streets where flooded all around there and the only way to go was the long way to get to my grandma's house which was completely out of the way to take to the interstate. On the ride there we lost my mom and dad as we tried to follow them to my grandma's house and we got stuck having to go on the interstate out of Kenner and into Baton Rouge. So now I don't know where my mom and dad are and if they made it out, while the rest of us don't know where to go except to just get out of Kenner and drive towards Baton Rouge.

We finally get to Baton Rouge and meet up with my friends who go to school up there and have a place up there. That night we partied up there but I knew that in the back of my mind that not everything was alright. I didn't know where my parents where and if they where ok or not. It was not until the next day that I found out that they made it to Denim Springs which was right outside of Baton Rouge. I met up with them the next day

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and they told me how they almost slept in the truck because they had nowhere to go until

my mom realized that her friend's daughter had a house up there. They got to my brother,

but he decided not to leave because my grandma was still refusing to leave her house. But

then we got a call from him and he told us that he caught a ride with a couple of strangers

while he was hitchhiking on the interstate. By that afternoon, the whole family was

finally back together again.

Even though everything seemed to start getting better, shit just got worse. My

mom started flipping out saying that we might just move to Chicago where my oldest

brother lives and just stay there to live for a while. It seemed everybody in my family was

flipping out because we didn't know what we where going to do. My dad was just pacing

back and forth not knowing what we where going to do, but he was keeping his cool. I

was just fighting with my mom telling her that there was no way I was going to go and

live that far. My uncle tells my mom that he just got in contact with a friend of his that

has a huge house in Texas where we could go. Even though we where already at a safe

place, my mom does not like to stay at other people's houses because she feels like a

nuisance and she just wanted to go somewhere else so that maybe we could find a hotel.

So we pack and decide to leave to go to Texas and stay at my uncle's friend house

until we find a hotel to stay at. Since our friend Clinton stayed in Baton Rouge with his

girlfriend and family, we only had a two-door truck to fit five people and three pets. The

ride was bumpy and uncomfortable, but every time we stopped at a gas station in Texas,

people would offer their help to us. As I told you though, my mom is weird about that

type of stuff and says that she would rather us just get a place instead of bothering other people. The whole ride to Texas I was trying to get in contact with my girlfriend who told me that her and her family where also in Texas and staying in Livingston, which was a small redneck county. We finally make it right outside of Houston, Texas in these suburbs where my uncle's friend lived. We stayed there for three days and actually had a pretty good time going to the mall and riding four-wheelers. By this time though I am really missing my girlfriend and find out that she is only an hour away from where I was. By the third day, she got her mom to come and pick me up so that I could go and stay with them. It was a good thing I did that though because the hotel where my girlfriend was staying at had open rooms and it was free for like two weeks because of FEMA. As soon as I found out this news, I called my mom and told her about it and she quickly came with the rest of my family to stay in Livingston, Texas. We stayed there for two weeks and finally decided to go back home and see if the place we called home was in ruins. Luckily though, everything was alright at our house except for our back patio, which only really got wind damage and parts of a tree on it.

In conclusion to my Katrina story, is that even though everything seems impossible to go good at the start; with just a little bit of hard work, everything will turn alright. Katrina really helped me grow up and learn a lot though. I learned always to just think that you got to look at the good of the situation, no matter what it is. I know that life is going to get a lot harder for me, just for the fact that my parents are moving to Texas and I am going to have to learn how to live on my own now; which is very scary! I just have to make the best out of the situation and work hard because like I said, "Even if it

Comment: This is scary. I like your concluding paragraph — you gave some hope—

seems impossible, just work hard and the impossible will turn out possible." Why look at the empty side of the glass when the full side looks ten times better.

Ricardo ███
English Composition
2/16/06
Narrative

A Hurricane's Effect

Hurricane seasons have given a false sense of invincibility for the past couple of years. Every year we dodged a hurricane and every year people thought it was never going to happen to us. People took life for granted and became addicted to meaningless possessions. No one could have truly prepared for this devastation that was upon us.

My life before the storm was going exactly the way I wanted it to go. I finally got out of high school and was starting college. I was working at a good job and nothing could put a damper in my life. It was the end of my first week of school when I first caught word of Hurricane Katrina. The hurricane was miles away and seemed unlikely to be a threat to New Orleans. It wasn't until Friday that the hurricane became a growing concern to experts, but to me it was nothing special. I went out to eat with my girlfriend that night at Benegans. During dinner that night, we discussed the possibility of the worst case scenario, but figured that nothing was going to happen and I expected to play golf early Saturday morning. As I loaded up to go play, I get a phone call from my older sister explaining how we were evacuating the following day. I quickly turned on the news and this storm was coming somewhere near New Orleans. At first I didn't panic because it was just going to be another close one, but then suddenly I had this feeling of uneasiness about what is going to happen.

My mom was in California and the house was completely my responsibility. I boarded up the house and took important papers and such. I boarded up my aunt's house, my cousin's house and my sister's as well. I packed all the essentials like my play station.

clothes, golf clubs and my pillow and I was ready to go to Lake Charles. Sunday morning my alarm clock woke me up 3:00am and I was on the road by 3:30am. What I thought to be a short vacation or evacuation turned to out be a nightmare. Minutes grew into hours and hours turned into days in which nothing was surely known about the conditions of our homes, except that the future of New Orleans was uncertain. I was in one hotel room with my uncle, aunt, cousin, her baby, my girlfriend and three dogs. It was a medium size room with two queen size beds and a sofa that I would grow to hate because it was uncomfortable, but yet grow to love because it was the only place that I could forget about all that was around for a couple of hours. The tension and anxiety was growing larger and lager as each day continued. Conversations were left short and simple and food no longer had a sense of delight anymore.

My cousin's husband is a cop and his safety was always a big concern for us all. My aunt and uncle's job were uncertain and U.N.O's future was looking bad for me as well. Who knew what had happened to the Lakefront campus? I thought the campus would have been completely destroyed. All this seemed bad enough for family and I until the seventeenth street canal broke and at that instant my girlfriend's home was surely lost. My girlfriend lived in Lakeview only a couple of blocks away from the break. If that didn't have everyone on edge, well the fact that people were now shooting cops and prisoners were escaping made us all a little scared for my cousin's husband. As we were all glued to the television, it seemed as though the news was talking about a city in Iraq and not a city in a civilized nation. People were left helpless and desperate to survive. Suddenly, everyone's worst dream was coming true and death was a chilling reality.

As time pressed on, it seemed that my college future was going to be put on hold,

until I heard news that L.S.U was taking in students from affected schools. I was unsure about going to L.S.U. until my mom forced me to enroll. How was I going to try and complete my first semester of college with my life completely turned upside down and with my future at a scary uncertainty?

People say that a picture is worth a thousand words, well I think that is wrong. Everyone saw pictures and video's of devastation on the news, but could only truly feel the sense of loss and pain when you see it for yourself. I was stuck in traffic for hours trying to get home and hoping for the best. As I drove, I just looked at people's faces driving by and just seeing exhaustion and despair. All I could think about was the emotions these people must have been feeling while going back home and not knowing if they were going to find their homes or something that resembled their former houses. As I pulled up to my house, my heart almost jumped out of my chest when I saw a tree down in front of my house. All I could think was that my house survived, but a tree slammed into my house and destroyed what the hurricane couldn't. As I came closer, the tree fell the other way and there was not a tree on top of my house. I walked in and smelled that refrigerator smell and smell of molded walls. I immediately duct tapped the refrigerator and carried it outside. Everything downstairs was either ruined by rain water or mold. Upstairs seemed fine until we noticed my mom's room was completely wet and destroyed. The ceiling in her room fell in and let all the rain ruin the rest of her things. My house was not as bad as most but not good by any standard either. The city allowed only four days to come and take anything you possibly could. We did this for four days and on the last day I left my house feeling empty and completely destroyed. The house I grew up in is now in ruins and a part of me was left in ruins as well. A couple of weeks later, it was time to start

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gutting my house and there is a sense of irony that come with that. We were all sad because my house was destroyed, but the next step was to destroy it even more so we could start over.

This hurricane was a bad thing for most people, but for me and my friends, this was just a wake up call. It was a wake up call for us not to take anything for granted or think that nothing can happen to us. I live my life grateful for the little that I have now and appreciative of what I now receive. Some say New Orleans will not exist in the next couple of years because of upcoming hurricanes, but I have faith that we will survive and flourish into the city we once were. All I know for sure is that everyone will listen to the warning next time around.

LaCresha ███████
English 1157-721
February 27, 2006
Essay 1

KATRINA—MEMORIES OF THE EXPECTED & UNEXPECTED

It was a Sunday, the morning of August 28, 2005. I was awakened by a phone call from my best friend Gehon. I answered, "Hello".

"Cree, are you still asleep?", she replied.

"Yes!"

"Well, you need to wake up. I'm on my way to pick you up." she stated.

"I'm not leaving. I don't want to fight all the traffic, and besides, my son has already left with his grandparents to evacuate to Memphis, Tennessee and my mom has already left for Opelousas, Louisiana. I will be okay here".

Well, that didn't set well with Gehon and she'd insisted that I leave. I really wasn't prepared to leave at the time of the call, and I was offered by another friend to leave to leave later that afternoon. I told Gehon that I would evacuate, but later in the afternoon with Corey, my other friend. She felt a bit better when I told her this, besides she wasn't the only person concerned about me staying back home, my son and mother were a bit concerned about my welfare. Later that day, Corey, his dog Gracie, myself and another friend Harry left for Memphis, Tennessee. We arrived in Memphis about eight hours later and there, Harry's wife Tonika, their son and Tonika's mother and grandmother, accompanied us.

Comment: Comma splice. Use a period.

Comment: Whenever you use dialogue, begin a new paragraph with each switch in speaker. I like this "intro!" I think it works well to open with a conversation. Good work

Comment: '

Comment: Comma Splice. Use a period.

We stayed at the Hampton Inn hotel in Memphis for one night, and then moved to another hotel because the Hampton Inn would be booked moving forward. We then moved to another hotel by the name of The Bourbon Hotel also located in Memphis. This hotel was supposed to be on the style of the French Quarters in New Orleans, but it wasn't. It was the pits!! The rooms were clean but looked as though it had not been updated for a very long time. The carpet was run down, the elevator walls were lined with linoleum tile, the wood on the bottom of the bed base looked as though it had gone through a flood or two and the electricity went out for a few hours due to a light thunderstorm. Basically, I was miserable there (and so were the rest of the ladies,) but we were grateful and very appreciative to not be under any life threatening experience as such back home. We stayed at this hotel for only one night and there, we were able to gather information regarding damages back home, from television broadcastings. We learned that most of our homes and personal properties were severely damaged. We knew at this point that we would be starting our lives all over again. The next day we decided to relocate to Houston, Texas.

It took us twelve hours to get to Houston and we were exhausted. We found a hotel room at the Comfort Inn Hotel on Westhiemer Rd. There we stayed for about several days gathering information from the media as well as trying to gain as much assistance as needed. Meanwhile, I continuously tried to contact my family members by cellular, but was unable to reach them verbally because of bad receptions. At that time the only means of communication was through text messaging. I'd added text messaging to my cellular service plan back in Memphis, and by texting, I was able to communicate to my son, mother and friends. I again texted my mother and brother once we were in

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...ouston to inform them of all the help and assistance the Red Cross, FEMA and other Houstonians were offering. At this point while they were in Louisiana, they were sort of "in the blind" to a lot of the assistance being offered. I insisted that they pack up their belongings and relocate to Houston. My son and his grandparents finally followed days later and we were all reunited. My son and I later moved in with my aunt who lives on the Northern side of Houston, and there we stayed for about two months. My mother and brother finally moved to Houston and are currently residing there at this present time.

On October 22, 2005, I finally went back home to view and gather anything I could salvage. There I saw first hand the disastrous state New Orleans and surrounding areas were in. My place was covered with mold and mildew and the only items I was able to salvage were my son's baby photos, a few important papers and my schoolbooks.

I'm a person that tries to look at the bright side of things. I look at everything I've lost at this point as a loss, and now focus on moving forward to the positives that lies ahead. My main concerns throughout this whole experience were that my family and friends were okay. I look to my God, family and friends for my strength. I was blessed that all of my family and friends got through this okay. I'm not stating that we all didn't have any struggles, but I feel somewhat relieved during tough times having someone to lean on, cry on a shoulder, or talk to during tough times. I believe that everything happens for a reason and that God has and always will be on our side. I've learned a lot from this experience, I truly look to appreciate the little things in life. Since then, I have not looked back on what was left behind. I'm currently residing and working in New Orleans and am basically moving on with my life. The memories will last forever and I will use those to motivate and strengthen me as life goes on.

Comment: "currently" and "present time" are repetitive terms.

Comment: Here is another place I'd like to see you expand—bring the reader back to this moment. I know you can give some wonderful descriptions, so do that here!

Comment: Comma splice.

Michael ■■■■■

English 1157

■■■■■■■■■

<center>"Dealing With Disaster"</center>

Sunday August 28th, 2005, I will always remember that date. That is the day that I saw images on the news of a category 5 hurricane heading straight for New Orleans. I went to work at the Country Inn Suites hotel that day at 7am and I was supposed to work until 3pm but after watching projections of Katrina's predicted path I did what I could to prepare the building for a hurricane (boarded up windows, removed chairs and tables from outside, drained the pool, etc.) and then told the manager that I was going to evacuate. It was 12pm and my girlfriend was demanding that I leave. Her mom had reserved a hotel room for my family and me in Houston and after watching the news all morning and seeing Katrina's projected point of landfall, I figured west was the safest direction to go.

Later that afternoon around 4pm I finally had my '94 Ford Bronco packed. It was my mom, 6 cats and myself; we brought three days worth of clothes, my computer, three video cameras, my bike, and snacks for the trip. That truck has a lot of room and I could not fit anything else in it.

My father had decided to go to work that afternoon at the Royal Sonesta Hotel on Bourbon St. He told us we could go down to the hotel and stay there to ride out the storm. He didn't seem to think it was going to be that bad, but I begged to differ. I'm usually not one to leave for hurricanes, but I just had a bad feeling about this one. I tried to argue the point that it looked like Katrina was headed straight for the city and I didn't think

> **Comment:** Good —strong one-liner into this paragraph.

> **Comment:** Smoother transition needed into this paragraph - a little jolting.

downtown New Orleans was the safest place to be. He refused to go. and in a way I understood because he was the building engineer and the hotel needed people to run the building even during a hurricane. To be honest. a part of me wanted to stay just to see what it was like but I figured we already had a hotel room reserved and who knew what the aftermath of the whole thing would be so I figured it'd be safest for us to go ahead and evacuate. Plus my girlfriend and my grandma would probably have a nervous break down if I told them I was going to stay. So we said our farewells and we hit the road.

I got on the I-10 at Causeway and headed west until I hit Williams Blvd where I was stopped by one of the worst traffic jams I had ever seen. I immediately remembered the horror stories I had heard about the traffic evacuating for Ivan. I prayed it was not going to be like that. After sitting in traffic for 10 minutes, I realized I forgot to put my mustang on jack stands. I told my mom I had to go back, she thought I was crazy but I said to her, "It probably won't flood but if it does, I will feel I lot more comfortable if its on jack stands at least since I couldn't get a car trailer." I managed to get back to the house, jack the car up, and get back to that horrendous traffic jam all within twenty minutes.

After about 8 hours or so we finally made it to Baton Rouge. I had some friends that invited us to stay at their place but I just didn't see how 4 people and 6 cats were all going to fit into a small 1-bedroom apartment. I figured traffic was clearing up and that I could make the rest of the drive so I turned down the offer. After another 3 hours and barely out of Lafayette, that apartment was starting to sound nice but I didn't see a point in turning around. We stopped for some food and I reenergized and got back on the road. The truck was starting to die out at stops so I was a little hesitant to let my mom drive

even though I was extremely tired. I had that problem with the truck before, and I knew if it died it was going to take awhile to get it started, so figured I might as well finish the drive because I knew how to keep it running even if we hit traffic again and had to stop.

We finally made it to Houston at around 6am Monday morning. As soon as we pulled in the parking lot of the hotel the truck died and blew a heater hose. But at least we made it. We got the key to the room and rushed to the bathroom to clean out the cat cage because one of the cats had an accident about an hour before. I don't know how we made it that long. I turned on the news to see what was going on with the hurricane but I fell asleep the second I laid down.

I woke up around 1pm and turned on the news. It looked like New Orleans had dodged the bullet yet again. I thought to myself, "I drove all those hours for nothing but I guess better safe than sorry." I figured we'd stay there for a day or two and then head home. I guess you could say I was in for a rude awaking.

Later that evening, I found the nearest AutoZone and went to get parts that I needed to repair the truck. I was kind of in a hurry to do so because I wanted to get home as soon as possible. I spent the rest of the night watching the news and frantically trying to get in touch with my other family members. We had spoken with my grandmother who had went east to Mississippi (against my better judgment) the night before but I could not get in touch with her all that day. I was worried because the storm was going right through Meridian, Mississippi, which was right next to where she was staying.

The next morning when I woke up is when I saw that the levees had broken and the real trouble began. I could not believe what I was seeing, water rushing through Lakeview, a community not even 5 minutes from my house, aerial views of the 9th ward

submerged. and areas of Kenner flooding. I saw what appeared to be Clearview mall flooded at least 4ft and I thought that my house must be flooded because I lived right behind the mall. I was shocked; I had so many things running through my head at once I didn't know what to do.

Days went by before I was able to get in touch with my other family members. My mother was hysterical. I think it was sometime over the weekend when my dad finally called, he somehow tracked down the phone number to the hotel where we were staying. I knew he was okay because the French Quarter did not flood but they were still having other problems like with all the looting. He said that everything was okay down there, the flooding had stopped just before Bourbon St. and they were locked in the hotel running off of generators with enough food to last for at least six months. That was a relief to my mother and me. I believe it was the next day we got in touch with my grandmother and she also said that she was doing well although she was without electricity. Red Cross was bringing them three meals a day so it seemed everyone was accounted for. I had talked to most of my friends and knew they had escaped harms way. After that day I figured I might as well adapt to the situation I'd been thrown into and just take it one day at a time.

That night my girlfriend's father and uncle decided they were going back to the city to asses the damage, get some things out of the houses, and bring back a second car if it was not damaged. I had heard no word of anyone being able to return to the city, but we were going to go anyway. We left at midnight. We packed into 2 cars and headed back towards New Orleans. I had no idea what I was going to see once I got back in the city. The news was showing images that looked like something out of a movie. We

finally made it to Kenner at 2pm and we managed to get through the checkpoint. I could hear military vehicles pass by in the distance, helicopters were flying by overhead, debris was scattered everywhere nearly rendering the roads impassable.

First we stopped at my girlfriend's house off of Clearview and West Metairie and everything seemed okay. We were hoping to find their cat in the house so we could bring it back to Houston. After searching for 20 minutes we finally found it hiding in the closet. We went outside to get their Toyota Corolla out of the garage and loaded it with clothes. We were the only people around: it was such an eerie feeling. We drove down Cleary Ave. to get to my house. I could not get down a section of my street because of a downed Oak tree but my house was just on the other side and I was growing impatient. I had to see my house, so I drove the car up on somebody's yard and zigzagged around the tree. I arrived in front my house and to my surprise I was greeted by my neighbors who had stayed for the storm.

It was obvious to me that the neighborhood had flooded because they already had their carpet pulled and I could see signs of a waterline on some of the houses. Everything on the outside of the house looked okay aside from some branches knocked down and a few missing shingles. My car was still standing on the stands where I left it and it didn't seem the water got to it but it definitely would have if I had not put it on the stands. As I opened the front door I was greeted with one of the worst stenches I had ever smelled. When I looked around I saw mold everywhere, on the walls on the furniture, I mean everywhere, and it was disgusting. I took one step forward and my shoe was engulfed in a puddle of sludge and muck. From what I could tell, it looked like the water rose only about 16 inches, but it was still a mess. I got what I could out of there and had to leave

Comment: Who is they?

Comment: Wordy. Punctuate and/or break into two sentences.

Comment: Introductory Clause

Comment: Like what? What did you salvage that day?

because it was getting dark. I got back in the Corolla and began the long drive back to Houston. A feeling of nostalgia came over me as I looked around and saw all the destruction and flooded homes. There was no electricity, helicopters were flying overhead, military convoys could be heard in the distance and most of the streets were blocked off. Everything was fine just a week before and now it all looks like a war zone.

Days turned into weeks but I was beginning to get used to living in Houston. I didn't like the city too much, it wasn't home, it just felt empty and didn't seem like there was much culture, but I began to make the best of it. I had fun hanging out with my girlfriend and my mom. I try not to get stressed out by anything, I felt like no matter how stressed or sad I got it wasn't going to change anything. I understood the significance of what happened and how it was going to change my life, but I've always tried to live the moment at hand, take control of the present and not worry about what tomorrow has to bring.

Suddenly we were faced with Hurricane Rita. Which looks as if its heading straight for Houston. Ironically, we decide we're going to evacuate to New Orleans for this hurricane. We got back to New Orleans the day before Rita hit land and I stayed at my girlfriend's house the night of Rita.

The next night I drove downtown to the Royal Sonesta hotel, which was to be my home for the next 3 weeks. I will never forget that drive from Metairie to downtown New Orleans via Canal St., a drive that only took 15 minutes felt like an eternity; a route that I used to drive every day was now unrecognizable. Once I crossed the parish line into Orleans off of Metairie Rd. it was like sudden darkness I could only see what the headlights of my car lit up. Just to get to a section of my hometown that I would go to

Comment: Good point!

Comment: Comma splices

Comment: Connect these feelings to your time in Houston... So, instead of worrying about things you couldn't change, you just tried to enjoy the stay in Houston—Conclude the paragraph on this note.

Comment: Fragment. Revise.

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work at everyday I had to cross through a military checkpoint. A feeling of solemnity came over me as I looked around and saw firsthand the destruction of my hometown. We had seen images on the news, and though I had been back through Metairie a few days after the storm, it wasn't until that night that I realized just how significant the damage was. I realized for the first time that it actually happened, a hurricane of such magnitude to actually flood an American city had struck New Orleans and it actually happened in my lifetime. I had only heard about it as a worse case scenario for the city, I didn't think I would actually see it happen.

I had seen my house in Metairie and I could not believe it actually got flooded from a hurricane. I heard stories of Betsy from the sixties but I did not think it would happen to me. Driving down that street that night made me realize that there were thousands of houses in the same or worse condition all around the city.

I had always watched stories on the news about areas that were struck by natural disasters but it was hard to comprehend that a disaster actually struck so close to home. These are just a few of the thoughts I had that night, as I drove down a hurricane ravaged Canal St. I will always remember those images of cars turned sideways, windows broken, that horrible sludge line burned onto the sides of all those beautiful houses and just the overall view of a place once thriving with life now so desolate.

It's been crazy ever since the storm hit. I've been trying to help my family rebuild two of our houses that flooded. I'd taken contracting jobs gutting houses in some of the hardest hit areas. At one point I was working three jobs. There is so much that needs to be done to rebuild this community. At times it got to me—going into some of the flooded houses and seeing the destruction, ruined photos and watching different families dig

through the debris, hoping to find something salvageable of the life they once knew. It made me thankful that I'm in a better situation than a lot of people. For now, I am staying at my girlfriend's house. All of my family and friends are accounted for and yeah, even though my home needs work, at least I'll be able to return to it in a few months.

APPENDIX D

ENGLISH 1157, SPRING SEMESTER 2006—ASSIGNMENT #6

Jessica █████████

█████████

English 1157 – Section 721

May 11, 2006

Home Sweet Home

How can I describe that which most overlook every day? Home is a place that most people only see for a short time, to eat or sleep. Even when home, most people don't truly see their surroundings; their minds are on other things. My home is no different; I'm not there nearly as often as I'd like to be. However, I see more than most when it comes to my neighborhood, thanks to my daily walks. The area I live in is slowly declining in the wake of our most recent hurricane, Katrina.

My street, East Louisiana State Drive, is in a very busy area of Kenner. We're right by a Wal-Mart, as well as several smaller stores and restaurants, even the post office. This causes one large problem, something that we've always had to deal with, speeding. Most people cut through our neighborhood to avoid traffic when heading to the store. The majority of those people pay no heed to the speed limit on the side streets, going fifty miles per hour in an area where the speed limit is twenty. Even worse, they ignore the stop signs and the children at play warning signs. In an area where there are many small children, that's highly disturbing. I don't know how many times I've almost gotten hit myself in these streets!

Where there were once well kept flowerbeds and carefully maintained lawns, there are now piles of garbage and cars parked every which way. Most of the houses in the area were put up for sale shortly after the hurricane, and the people who bought them

leave much to be desired. Two or three families cram into one house, mostly out of state contractors. They don't care for the homes, leaving debris to rot outside the house and letting the lawns grow to unreasonable proportions. Nor do they care for the neighborhood, parking five or six cars in an area meant for two, taking up most of the street with their vehicles. Taking over to the point where it's almost impossible to drive down the street at all, and is impossible to pass other cars along the way.

I remember days when I was a child, going door-to-door selling cookies for school. This is nearly impossible now, when most parents are afraid to even open their doors to neighbors, let alone let their children go door-to-door. They have to follow their children in their cars, or drive them to each doorway and wait for them in the car. The crime rate in my area has risen drastically since our return from the evacuation. Everywhere I look I see broken windows in houses and unsavory characters loitering around. Just recently, my friend's car was broken into, in my driveway!

One thing that especially bothers me, and brings down the quality of the neighborhood: garbage. Our garbage pickup as of late has been erratic a best, and this is not at best. We'll go two weeks without one single thing being picked up, and then when the garbage men do come, they'll only take what's in the garbage can. If something won't fit, or your garbage has overflowed and you have extra bags, too bad. Only once since my return has ALL of my trash been collected.

Still, not all of the changes have been negative. Some new families are renovating old homes, taking what was once condemnable and making it beautiful once again. One house in particular in my neighborhood was in horrible disrepair. Since the new owners moved in, the house has been re-painted and gotten new roofing, the yard cleared of three

of the five huge trees. and the jungle of a garden tamed to understandable proportions. Now when I walk by. I actually admire the house instead of crossing the street to be farther away from it.

This type of repair is not only evident in one house. Many of the homes just along my street are being fixed. Some are only getting small renovations. new paint jobs or roofing. and some are getting major makeovers. Two houses down from mine. the owners are getting new siding on their house. My neighbor is getting her entire front yard landscaped professionally. Several homes are even getting new sidewalks and driveways. Things are slowly looking up.

There is still so much to fix. even with what is already being fixed. Some of the newer neighbors are unpleasant. and most of the ones I knew are now long gone. Nothing is as it was. and so many things in my neighborhood make me angry lately. but still I wouldn't give it up for the world. There are some things you just can't do without. and one of them is a good place to live. My area may have its faults. but with a little push. things can be fixed.

Personally. I'd like to see more police patrols in the area. I've only seen one policeman in my neighborhood since I moved back in after the hurricane. If we could have an officer patrol the area at all times, a lot of the vandalism and fear we're subjected to now would be stopped. Either the culprits would be too scared to make a move with the police around. or they'd be caught and toted off to jail. Either way. the crime is lowered. Another wonderful side effect of the police being around are speed traps! Speeders would be caught and ticketed. and eventually. people would drive more slowly through the area.

The problem of the new neighbors is a harder one to solve. Nobody wants to live in a trashy neighborhood, yet that's what's happening because of these people. They should be reported to the city and fined. There are laws about the state of your yard, some even stating how high your grass can grow. If these people don't want to keep up their homes, and follow the maintenance laws, they'll have to pay the price. The fines aren't that high, but they may serve as enough of a shock to get things cleaned up a bit around here. It's surprising how much a little shove can get you, especially if you're making someone give up his or her money.

With all the renovation going on, trash is a major factor in our day-to-day life. Garbage disposal being irregular like it is does not help things move smoothly. There is no easy way to make sure it is picked up, as it should be. I'd like to see a new team assigned to our area, one that does their job and isn't lazy about it, if not a new team, then at least the addition of a few new members to our current one. If the problem is only numbers, then that will easily fix it. And if the problem isn't just with numbers, I'm sure a pay cut could serve as a reminder to do the job, and do it right.

Many of my suggestions may seem harsh to most people, but to live in squalor every day will drive even the most forgiving person up the wall. To have to fight to get even a little bit of beauty in the place that you live is insane. A person shouldn't have to keep their blinds closed during the day to keep out the sight of the house across the street. Nor should anyone have to fear for his or her children at night, even locked up in their own homes. This is outrageous; this is not a way to live, and most people know that. The ones who don't see this very simple truth are the ones who are causing the problem. Well, it's time we gave them all a little wake-up call.

Louis ███

███

English 1157-Sec. 721

May 10, 2006

What I Call Home

Before hurricane Katrina, Kenner was and still is a fairly nice place to live. I live on the far side of Kenner in a small subdivision called Woodlake, where it is nice and quiet. My house backs up onto the levee wall which borders the St. Charles parish line. Nothing could ever replace the memories of what was once called home.

My house is just like any other. It is one story, has three bedrooms, two baths, a kitchen, a den, and a living room. Since hurricane Katrina, we have had to tear out all of the walls and pull-up all of the floors. Right now, it does not feel like the home I used to know because there are no longer those little comfort zones. After everything is finished and fixed up, hopefully that sense of 'home' will come back. In my backyard, there are two big trees that offer an abundance of shade. It is relaxing just to go sit out there under the shade and enjoy the birds along with the peace and quiet.

Outside of my front door, there used to be a big beautiful maple tree with a pretty green lawn underneath it. Since then, it has been blown down and the grass killed due to all of the trash being piled up on it from the hurricane. Beyond that is Mr. Bankston's house, my neighbor across the street. The Bankstons are a little old couple who are retired and decided to move into the neighborhood quite some time ago. They spend most of their time with their grandchildren. Mr. Bruce is my other neighbor. He lives to the right of us and every weekend on the dot he is out cutting his grass and primping his lawn. The

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only time I see him leave his house is when he is leaving for work. He is a truck driver for the United Parcel Service so he spends the majority of his time driving many hours a day. Out of all the other neighbors, Mr. Bruce is my favorite. Anytime he is outside or around his house I'll usually go over and hang out for a little while. In the house to the left of us, live the Dragos. They are a much younger couple who spend their time running their children back and fourth to school in the morning and baseball practice in the evening. When they are not running their children around, they are working. Both Mr. and Mrs. Drago are hard working people. Mr. Drago is a very busy business man and Mrs. Drago usually works at one of the nearby schools. Every now and then we run into problems with them because they are a little demanding of space. Despite all of that, we all get along like neighbors should and that is all that matters.

My neighborhood has several good qualities about it that makes it a nice place to live. One of them is that it is a good upscale neighborhood and for the most part is well kept. Another good quality is that it is a tight knit community and everyone watches out for each other. I think the best quality that my neighborhood has to offer is the fact that it is tucked away from all of the hustle and bustle of the city. It really is a nice little place to live and to call home.

Compared to a few of the surrounding neighborhoods, I find that my neighborhood is much more organized in appearance. The only problem is that there is too much litter. The other neighborhoods are on a much lower income and their appearance comes across as messy and run down. The price of living is different between the neighborhoods. The only thing that separates the low income neighborhoods from the higher class neighborhoods is a flood canal which is located on the other side of my

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subdivision. The only good thing about having this kind of separation is that you keep the more run down part of town to one side.

One thing that has definitely changed has been the culture and population. There are many more Spanish living in Kenner now than there was before. The only thing I notice when I am driving home are license plates from Texas. I mostly just see middle aged Spanish men walking and driving around. The reason why all of the Spanish came in was to find work.

There are several dislikes that I have about Kenner. One of them is that there is way too much crime. Another dislike that I have about Kenner is that it is becoming more and more trashed with litter on the streets and the last dislike that I have is that it is just too run down. There is just no pride in cleaning up.

In my opinion, the one main thing that I would like to see change in my neighborhood would be the litter and trash that is scattered all over the streets. There is too much trash on the streets and in peoples yards. It is scattered throughout my neighborhood and all throughout Kenner. The litter and the trash on the streets not only poses a dangerous hazard but also an environmental hazard as well. The dangers with having trash scattered all over the streets is that it blocks the drainage holes so that when it rains the water is blocked from being drained. It poses an environmental risk to plants and fish. When the trash sits on the ground for a long period of time, it tends to smother the grass and the plants. The trash poses a dangerous risk to all of the aquatic life in the lake and in the river. When it rains, the water flows down to the drainage canals and the trash goes along with it and then it is all pumped out. When you look at a piece of trash and think why should I pick it up, it may not be bothering anyone, but if it is picked up it

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will make a difference in nature. Seeing all of the litter and trash that is around is depressing and turns a beautiful place into a junkyard.

There are several solutions to this problem. One solution would be to have a community clean up day in which different teams gather and take one section of the neighborhood while the other team takes the other side of the neighborhood. Another good solution to having all of the trash and litter cleaned up is to have a weekly trash crew to come through and pick-up all of the trash along with several street sweepers. Putting together a voluntary group of people who would like to help out and better the way of life would be another prosperous way to get people out there and help clean up some of the mess. Another way to make cleaning up fun is to throw a block party and have all of the neighbors get together and after the clean up everyone goes to the party.

In order to prevent anymore littering or trash build up, there needs to be a committee organized just for keeping the community clean. Keeping the neighborhood and the community clean all starts with the people themselves. As long as people are encouraged to pick up, clean up, and throw away, the appearance of the neighborhood should stay clean and kept up. As long as everyone works together, every little effort will make a big difference. I look forward to one day living in a clean neighborhood.

Hopefully, one day a plan will be established to rectify these problems. No community should have to face this situation again. I will work together with my neighbors on getting rid of our messy situation.

Linda ████

May 11, 2006

ENGL 1157 / Essay #6

████████

My Neighborhood

The events that had taken place on August 29, 2005 have changed the lives of everyone

forever. Not only did Hurricane Katrina change the landscape of New Orleans, but it also

changed the emotional aspects of residents. Ariel shots of the city seen on television

demonstrated the beating it endured. Buildings were being engulfed by the flood water, while

homes were being looted. Some people managed to flee their homes, while others were stranded

at their location and didn't manage to escape the quick rising water. Areas like New Orleans East

and the lower 9th ward suffered major physical damages due to the Katrina. My family and I are

very lucky and blessed that our homes did not suffer any physical damages, but unfortunately

Hurricane Katrina did leave an emotional scar that will never fade. Coming back to New Orleans

after Katrina felt like arriving in a new city. From waking up in the morning and driving to

school, to coming home from work late at night, it feels like a different place.

When Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, my parents, like many others, were

reluctant to return home. They were too afraid of coming home to nearly nothing. I insisted that

we return to New Olreans because it is where I grew up and it is all that I know. After much talk

about whether or not we would move back to our original home in New Orleans, we finally made

a decision to return and rebuild our lives where it all began. Though we were aware that

rebuilding this fragile, historical city would take a lot of work, part of our decision to come back

is the sentimental value New Orleans holds close to our hearts. I was also holding on to the familiarity and comfortableness that I was lacking in my life after Katrina had taken place.

Before the hurricane, my life was a daily routine. I arose from bed every morning thirty minutes prior to leaving the house. Even at early hours, my neighborhood was alive with the usual morning scenario, parents getting their kids ready for the school bus, people leaving for work, newspapers being delivered and picked up at the front porch; the usual American morning. I grew up with this serene sense of normalcy and this would give my day a flying start. After the hurricane a lot of people in my neighborhood have settled in surrounding states where they had evacuated. Now the mornings are seemingly vacant as there are only few houses that are populated. There are hardly any children going to school from my neighborhood so the school bus does not even arrive at my street. Watching the children laughing joyously in the morning was such a relaxing sight, and now since it is gone the mornings do not feel the same anymore. I remember heavy traffic going from my street to the interstate and it always used to bother me because I would have to get up early sometimes just to beat the rush. Now since not a lot of people go to schools and offices in the morning, I have no problem in making it to school on time. Although this might seem like a positive thing, it is hard to describe the isolation I feel driving on the empty highways. My family also feels the same way as being one of the few families in our neighborhood that returned to New Orleans, the sense of seclusion is present in all our lives.

My family was very much involved in neighborhood activities and growing up, I have made a lot of friends around our neighborhood. Some of these friends I have really gotten close to and they became a big part of my life. I remember sharing a lot of cherished moments with Jenna Gaspar, who used to live right across from my house. Jenna and I did practically

everything together. We went to the same schools and held the same extracurricular activities. One of the fondest memories I have of childhood is staying up till early hours cramming for exams or just chitchatting about current events in our lives. The biggest loss I suffered after the hurricane was when I found out that her family had moved to Los Angeles, California. Although she is living a dream by attending university of California at Berkley, every time that I talk to her I can hear it in her voice how much she misses her home town and her friends. Whenever I see the "FOR LEASE" sign outside her house, I recall all the times I spent at her house with her family for the cookouts, the birthday parties we threw with our closest friends and other countless precious memories like this. While thinking of these moments, I discovered that they can rebuild the structures and houses around my neighborhood, but it was the people living inside of these houses that molded this neighborhood for what it was before and what I long for it to remain.

There were a lot of businesses around my house that closed down after the hurricane. Our family preferred shopping at these families owned establishments rather than bigger corporate owned stores. Since the number of families living around them significantly decreased and those who came back had to be really careful with their expenditures and shop where they would get the absolute lowest prices, these small family owned stores quickly found themselves making almost nothing at all, which then led to several stores that went out of business. Many of these businesses did not have full coverage on their insurance so they were not protected against flooding and the looting that followed. My brother was working at a local grocery store and now he is out of work as a result of the hurricane. When this took place my family and I were beginning to sense that we have made the wrong decision by returning to New Orleans.

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The excitement of returning to New Orleans for me is lost right now as the people who lived around us who made this city home for us are not here anymore. When I come home from school I cannot find anything about this place that is familiar. As far as I am concerned I come back to a house that is surrounded by a lot of abandoned ones. Sometimes I get frustrated with seeing the street that was once occupied by children and families is now occupied by huge construction trucks, oversized trailer homes and piles of debris.

Although I do not experience loud traffic or annoying potholes, there are many changes that are needed to be made in my neighborhood. I feel that politicians should make an effort to construct a concrete plan to reassure those who are still living in other areas. Many residents have not yet returned to this city because of the uncertainty of what New Orleans has to offer. Initiating a well thought out plan for the future of this city will convince residents to come back to the city and reestablish the lives they left behind. I also believe that many residents feel like politicians are making it nearly impossible to return because the reconstruction standards are set too high. A number of homeowners are being forced to raise their newly built houses to a certain height; therefore some people are giving up on reconstruction. This dilemma could have been avoided if politicians would aim their focus on rebuilding a stronger levee system.

The residents of New Orleans are easily giving up on ever seeing a future for them in this city because they have been so discouraged by the hurricane that no one saw coming. Local government needs to take a stand to bring back our neighbors, families and friends. There should less time spent about who is to blame for the unorganized events that took place prior to and after Katrina and more about the needs of the people. There must be more involvement and interaction with people who fled to surrounding areas that are seeking to return. Politicians need to find out what is keeping them from returning and tackle to solve those issues. If we bring our people

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home, reconstruct our neighborhoods, and build our networks on both a personal and business level, then we can make it possible to rebuild a better New Orleans.

APPENDIX E: HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW EXEMPTION

UNIVERSITY of LOUISVILLE

Expedited - IRB Protocol - Exemption

To: Homer, Bruce
From: The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Date: Thursday, February 19, 2009
Subject: No action required

Tracking #: 09.0073
Title: Writing out the Storm: Trauma and the Work of Composition

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The above study has been received by the University of Louisville
Social/Behavioral/Educational Institutional Review Board. It has been determined by
the chair of the Institutional Review Board that this study is exempt according to 45 CFR
46.101(b), under Category 2: Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive,
diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or
observation of public behavior, unless: (2)(i) information obtained is recorded in such a
manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the
subjects; AND (2)(ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the
research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be
damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation. Surveys on
sensitive or personal topics are not exempt from IRB review..

The study is exempt only if information that could identify subjects is not recorded.

Documents Approved/Acknowledged: Informed Consent Form

DETERMINATION DATE: 02/17/2009If your research focus or activities change, please
submit a Study Amendment Request Form to the IRB for review to ensure that the study
still meets exempt status.

Since this study has been found to be exempt, no additional reporting, such as
submission of Progress Reports for continuation reviews, is needed. Best wishes for a
successful study.

Patricia K. Leitsch

Board Designee: Leitsch, Patricia
Letter Sent By: Tabb, Stephanie, 2/19/2009 9:39 AM

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Education

2011 Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition, University of Louisville.
Dissertation Director: Bruce M. Horner
Dissertation Title: "Writing out the Storm: 'Posttraumatic Pedagogy' and the Work of Composition."

2006 M.A. in English Language and Literature, University of New Mexico.

2001 B.A. in English, University of California, Los Angeles.

Positions Held

Adjunct Instructor. Otterbein University. 2010-2011.

Assistant Director of Composition. University of Louisville. 2009-2010.

Graduate Teaching Fellow. University of Louisville. 2006-2010.

Research Assistant for the Writing Across Communities Initiative. Dir. Michelle Hall Kells and Charles Paine. University of New Mexico. Spring Semester 2005.

Graduate Teaching Assistant. University of New Mexico. 2004-2006.

Publications

"Inquiry, Collaboration, and Reflection in the Student (Text) Centered Multimodal Writing Course." With Ryan Trauman and Julia Kiernan. *Teaching with Student Texts: Essays Toward an Informed Practice*. Ed. Joseph Harris, John Miles, and Charles Paine. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2011.

"On Politics, Praxis, and 'Working' English in the Real World." *JAC* 29.1 (2009) 276-81.

Conference Presentations

"Sponsoring Recovery after Katrina: Rethinking Writing Instruction in the Wake of a Large-Scale Public 'Trauma.'" Conference on College Composition. Atlanta, GA. April 9, 2011.

"Making Connections: A Collaboration between Composition and the Writing Center." International Writing Center Association. Baltimore, MD. November 5, 2010.

"On the Uses and Limits of 'Explanatory' versus 'Exploratory' Research Writing." With Matthew Dowell. Council of Writing Program Administrators. Philadelphia, PA. July 17, 2010.

"Barrios, Bulldozers, and Baseball: Exploring Rhetorics of Removal and the Chavez Ravine 'Incident'." Rhetoric Society of America. Minneapolis, MN. May 28, 2010.

"Reproducing 'Trauma' in Composition Studies: Examining the Uses and Limits of 'Posttraumatic Pedagogy'." Research Network Forum at CCCC. Louisville, KY. March 17, 2010.

"Helping Students Become Better Writers: Collaborating to Test a Central Claim of Writing Center Work." Kentucky Philological Association. Richmond, KY. March 5, 2010.

"Writing out the Storm: Trauma and the Work of Composition." Research Network Forum at CCCC. San Francisco, CA. March 11, 2009.

"En (Countering) History: Appropriated Theme Park Designs at the Creation Museum." Rhetoric Society of America. Seattle, WA. May 23, 2008.

"Essentializing is (Big) Easy: Re-Considering Cultural Practices Pre- and Post-Katrina." Conference on College Composition and Communication. New Orleans, LA. March 5, 2008.

"Situating the Historical Material Self: Walter Benjamin in the Composition Classroom." Midwest Modern Language Association. Cleveland, OH. November 9, 2007.

"Rushdie's Postmodern Fantasia, or How to start a *Fatwa* without really trying." 20th Century Literature Conference. Louisville, KY. February 23, 2007.

"'Just You Try It On': Pub Culture and Intoxicated Rhetoric in James Joyce's Ulysses." Midwest Modern Language Association. Chicago, IL. November 10, 2006.

"'One of Our Own': Rhetorical Strategy in RFK's Discourse with Cesar Chavez and The United Farm Workers Movement." Rhetoric Society of America. Memphis, TN. May 27, 2006.

"Paroled from the Palace of Distraction: Deciphering Cultural Codes in the Composition Classroom." Conference on College Composition and Communication. Chicago, IL. March 20, 2006.

"Samson Occom's Razor: The Thin Line Between Race Religion and Rhetoric." Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association. Coeur D'Alene, ID. October 21, 2005.

"Red in the Face: Indigenous Misrepresentation and the Response to Outkast's 2004 Grammy Performance." Southwest/Texas Popular Culture Association. Albuquerque, NM. February 10, 2005.

Local Presentations

"Am I the Text in this Course? Using Student Texts in the Composition Classroom." University of Louisville Pedagogy Workshop. September 12, 2007.

"Classroom Collaborations and Outcomes." Albuquerque Public High Schools/University of New Mexico Continuing Success Summit. April 12, 2006.

"Prose Stylistics in the First Year Writing Classroom." University of New Mexico Instructor Orientation. August 19, 2005.

Courses Taught

Otterbein University:

Integrative Studies 300 (Composition and Literature): Trauma Literature. Spring 2011.

Integrative Studies 270 (Composition and Literature): On Remixes and Revisions. Winter 2011.

Integrative Studies 105 (Composition and Literature): Documenting Life in Academic Writing. Fall 2010, Winter 2011.

University of Louisville:

English 312: American Literature II (1865 to the present). Summer 2009.

English 101: Introduction to College Writing. Fall 2007, Spring 2008.

English 102: Intermediate College Writing. Summer 2007, Fall 2009, Spring 2010.

University of New Mexico:

English 220: The Journey is the Destination: Rhetorics of Dissociation and Discovery. *Online Course*. Fall 2005 and Spring 2006.

Freshman Learning Community 611: "Of Mice, Mastodons, and Men". With Dr. Felisa A. Smith. Fall 2005.

English 102: Analysis and Argument. Spring 2005, Summer 2005, Spring 2006.

English 101: Expository Writing. Fall 2004.

Grants and Fellowships

English Department Bonnie Research Grant. University of Louisville 2009.

University Fellowship. University of Louisville 2006-2010.

Awards

Barbara Plattus Teaching Award. University of Louisville 2008.

Delphi Center "Faculty Favorites" Award. University of Louisville 2008.

Departmental and University Service

e-Portfolio Reading Group Participant, Otterbein University Center for Teaching and Learning. Otterbein University. Winter 2011.

Co-chair, University of Louisville Composition Program "Symposium on Student Writing." University of Louisville. April 8, 2010.

Executive Member, English Graduate Student Organization. University of Louisville. 2007-2008.

English Department Representative, Graduate Student Council. University of Louisville. 2007-2008.

Co-President, English Graduate Student Association. University of New Mexico. 2005-2006.

Conference Chair, University of New Mexico Southwest Symposium. University of New Mexico. March 3-4, 2006.

Event Chair, Marathon Reading of Almanac of the Dead with author Leslie Marmon Silko. University of New Mexico. September 22-23, 2005.

Bridge Program Coordinator, APS (Albuquerque Public Schools) High School/Freshman English Exchange Program. University of New Mexico. 2005-2006.

Planning Committee Member, Graduate Teaching Assistant Orientation. University of New Mexico. Summer 2005.

Focus Group Leader, Writing Across Communities Initiative. University of New Mexico. Spring 2005.

Roundtable Participant, Writing Across Communities Symposium. University of New Mexico. April 25, 2005.

Community Service

Columbus Literacy Council: Volunteer Tutor. Columbus, Ohio. February 2009 to August 2010.

Professional Associations

Conference on College Composition and Communication

Council of Writing Program Administrators

Modern Language Association

National Council of Teachers of English

Rhetoric Society of America