

DISRUPTING CONVENTIONS:
WHEN AND WHY WRITERS TAKE UP INNOVATION

BY

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Abstract

Genre scholars have exposed the ideological nature of genres by examining how they promote and normalize certain values, epistemologies, and power relations. Recently, scholars have extended this work to uptake—the ways in which writers take up others’ actions, texts, and genres. Doing so has revealed how uptakes become normalized and, thus, conventional, yet less attention has been given to how conventional uptakes can be disrupted through critical interventions. Given that composition pedagogies often seek to disrupt reading and writing practices to encourage critical awareness, a stronger understanding of when and why writers innovate or use convention is necessary and timely. This dissertation explores theoretically when and why writers innovate or follow conventions and also performs a qualitative study that tests “a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption.” By doing so, it theoretically contributes to uptake studies and argues for conventionalizing alternative uptakes in the classroom to encourage rhetorical agency.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	
Becoming Makers of the <i>Means</i> of Making Meaning	1-20
CHAPTER 1	
Peeling Back the Layers: Uptake as a Multi-Layered Performance.....	21-66
CHAPTER 2	
Harnessing the Power of Disruption: Moving Beyond Interpretation and into Textual Productions.....	67-111
CHAPTER 3	
Research Methods.....	112-141
CHAPTER 4	
Working Within and Against Conventional Uptakes: Research Results.....	142-213
CONCLUSION	
“She Wasn’t Teaching as Much as We Were Learning”: A Pedagogy of Uptake Awareness and Disruption.....	214-239
APPENDIXES.....	240-278
WORKS CITED.....	279-290

INTRODUCTION

Becoming Makers of the *Means* of Making Meaning

English represents that subject in the curriculum which, along with Mathematics and Science, puts forward foundational categories for thinking. It goes beyond the latter two in providing us with the means of making our representations of who we are, *the means of seeing ourselves as the makers of our means of making meaning*, and through this, giving children the possibility of seeing themselves as the makers of their futures.

-- Gunther Kress *Writing the Future: English and the Making of a Culture of Innovation*

In response to the prompt “If you had a year to research anything, what would you research and why?” for his admittance to college, Ryan responded with the following:¹

I have been told numerous times from teachers and college application people that the purpose of a college essay is to express myself and help the college see me as a thinking person. However I struggle trying to express myself through writing. I don't know why colleges require applicants to express themselves in an essay, which is what I would like to research at this time in my life.

The majority of applicants have some other better way to express who they are. For example I am good at cinematography. Someone else might express himself or herself through guitar or poetry. Specific things I would do would be interviewing college application people, interviewing applicants, and researching a broader means for applicants to express themselves to a college. Another reason for my dislike of the college essay [is] that my strong points are in math and science not English and literature. If I were asked to write a proof or do a calculus problem rather than an essay, then I would be at a much larger

¹ Ryan was a participant in my research study. I was extremely fortunate that he shared his college entrance essay with me.

advantage than I am now. Maybe I don't have the right idea about the significance of the college essay being an essay. If this were the case, then I would just discover its significance along the way in my research. Therefore I would be satisfied with either outcome and both would be beneficial to me.

While not explicitly stated within his essay, Ryan seems all too aware that his ability to “see himself as a maker of his means of making meaning” is called into question with the *requirement* that he compose an essay for entrance into college. While the college essay may allow him to be the maker of meaning, it certainly limits his capacity to act as the maker of the means of making meaning. His means are limited to writing, a task in which he believes he struggles, and his means are even more limited by the college essay, a genre that requires him to express himself in certain ways through writing.

Even though Ryan questions whether he has “the right idea about the significance of the college essay being an essay,” his own essay demonstrates an acute awareness of the tension between what higher education says it values—to help individuals become thinking individuals who can express themselves, in Ryan's words—and what higher education requires of individuals who want to enter into it—to conform their thinking and expression to certain kinds of genres, certain ways of thinking and acting, rather than providing a “broader means for applicants to express themselves.” This tension seems particularly heightened for Ryan because he does not appear to envision himself as the kind of meaning maker that he believes the college values and wants, although his essay demonstrates a much higher level of rhetorical awareness and savvy than he attributes to himself. Of course, Ryan is speaking about the larger institutional structure of higher education in his essay, but the kinds of questions that he raises and his specific research

question of “why colleges require students to express themselves in an essay” are precisely the kinds of questions that we, in composition and rhetoric, should be asking ourselves, especially if we are to speak to the larger academy and public about the significance and importance of our field and if we, as a field, aim to provide individuals with the possibility of seeing themselves as *makers* of their futures, as Kress suggests.²

Recent work within composition and rhetoric, I believe, has begun to address the tension that Ryan so insightfully points out. The movements towards rhetorical and linguistic flexibility and diversity, multicultural studies, and new media within the field and the classroom indicate a growing recognition that higher education must do more than create individuals who seek to preserve tradition and convention; it must also work to create individuals who can work with and respond to larger cultural and technological changes that tradition and convention may no longer appropriately or adequately address. Kress in *Writing the Future: English and the Making of a Culture of Innovation* speaks directly to the role that he believes the English curriculum can and should play in creating active individuals with “certain dispositions: confident in the face of difference—cultural, linguistic, ethnic, ethical—and confident in the everyday experience of change; able to see change and difference as entirely usual conditions of cultural and social life; *and* to see them as essential productive resources” (3 emphasis in original). In order to create flexible, adaptable, and active individuals, he argues that “we need to see the English curriculum *not only* in its traditional role of *preparing student for* that future [with

² Kress writes specifically about the new English curriculum in the England, and as he writes, his aim “in writing this little book is to issue an invitation to participate in a debate focused on the part which the English curriculum can, should and my play in the making of social futures” (1). While Kress speaks directly to and about the English curriculum largely, I find his arguments apply just as well to the more narrowly defined field of composition and rhetoric, a field that many argue is within the larger area of English Studies.

multiculturalism, technological and economic change and development, and transnationalism], but to see the curriculum, and the people who experience it, as *making and shaping* that future through their competent and confident action” (3 emphasis in original). In other words, while education has long purported the goal of preparing students for their futures, it has not always imagined students as active individuals who possess the ability to create and shape their futures through their own means. As Kress writes, the new curriculum “should envisage, project, and aim to produce an individual who is at ease with difference and change, whose fundamental being values innovation and is therefore able to question, to challenge, and above all to *propose alternatives, constructively*” (29 emphasis in original). Clearly Kress sees a deficiency within existing conceptualizations of the English curriculum, mainly that students are not taught to view themselves as being fully active participants within the making and creating of knowledge but rather as being passive recipients who receive and preserve existing knowledge. Most importantly, for Kress, is that students learn to value and enact innovation through the proposal of alternatives to the conventions and traditions that currently exist and proliferate.

Extending Kress’s observation from the English curriculum in general to the field of composition and rhetoric, I suggest that within composition and rhetoric, scholars and educators have tirelessly worked to encourage writers to view themselves *as makers of meaning* yet have often overlooked inviting them to see themselves *as the makers of the means of making meaning*. Here “the means” make all the difference. Many have worked to place writers (and students) at the center of the meaning-making process so that they see themselves as active participants, and certainly this is something to be

celebrated. One of the primary ways in which scholars and educators within the field have invited students to make meaning is through consciousness-raising or critical consciousness. The notion of consciousness-raising is deeply embedded goal within much composition and rhetoric scholarship and pedagogy, and it plays an especially important role within what Richard Fulkerson identifies as the dominant movement in composition within the past thirteen years: “Critical/Cultural Studies” approaches.³

While not denying the important differences between cultural studies, critical pedagogy, and feminist approaches, Fulkerson identifies these three as critical/cultural studies approaches and notes that “all three focus on having students read about systematic cultural injustices inflicted by dominant societal groups and dominant discourses on those with less power, and upon the empowering possibilities of rhetoric if students are educated to ‘read’ carefully and ‘resist’ the societal texts that help keep some groups subordinated” (4). As a result, when critical/cultural studies approaches are employed within the composition classroom, “the aim is not ‘improved writing’ but ‘liberation’ from dominant discourses” (Fulkerson 4). Students’ liberation from dominant discourses, it is argued, occurs through the interpretation and critique of texts, whether those texts are readings about cultural theory or experiences of a cultural group or individual and cultural artifacts, such as songs, advertisements, or TV shows (Fulkerson 4). By performing these interpretive moves within these texts, students discover “deep structural truths about power in American society, specifically ways in which the dominant culture dominates, in terms of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc.” and then write essays that detail the new insights that they have discovered through

³ Fulkerson identifies critical/cultural studies, contemporary expressivist composition, and rhetorical approaches as the three major approaches to the teaching of composition.

their interpretations and critiques (Fulkerson 4). By the end of this process, critical/cultural studies scholars and educators argue that students have gained a critical consciousness or awareness of the ways in which culture works and, therefore, can work to resist cultural forces.

For example, Henry A. Giroux explains that the writing assignments within his “Postcolonialism, Race, and Critical Pedagogy” class “were designed to get students to examine how representations signify and position students through the institutional and ideological authority they carry in the dominant culture. Moreover, the writing assignments were constructed so as to give students the opportunity to acknowledge their own emotional and affective investments in issues regarding race, colonialism, and the politics of representation” (11). In other words, the assignments were intended to raise students’ critical consciousness regarding issues of race, colonialism, and the politics of representation. The four writing assignments that he designed took students through the processes of analyzing the theoretical scholarship regarding one of three themes, “Orientalism, Difference, and Multiculturalism,” “Postcolonialism, Race, and Feminism,” and “Nationalism and the Politics of Speaking for Others”; offering a critical reading of an assigned critical or cultural theory text that identified major assumptions and how those assumptions were relevant to their own experiences; applying some aspect of what they learned about race and pedagogy to a particular problem in the wider university community in a position paper; and analyzing popular texts to discover how “power works through diverse regimes of representation, institutional structures, and the larger spaces of social power” (Giroux 14-16). Giroux concludes by noting that “all of these writing assignments positioned students as cultural producers and enabled them to

rewrite their own experiences and perceptions through an engagement with various texts, ideological positions, and theories” (16). Certainly the assignments do work to achieve these goals, yet I am struck by Giroux’s use of “cultural producers.” The kinds of texts that students produce, as Giroux describes them, do not seem to position students as cultural producers but rather as cultural interpreters and critics—in other words, it positions them as makers of meaning through interpretation but not as makers of the means of making meaning through production.

At the same time as encouraging writers to be the makers of meaning, then, scholars and educators and even the institution of higher education often constrain the ways in which writers can make meaning through the means (in terms of actions, mediums, genres, etc.). In other words, by controlling the means, the ways in which writers can claim and assert their rhetorical agency is constrained. For example, Giroux invites students to compose papers in which they explore their interpretations of texts and critique the texts. The means through which they make meaning appear to be limited to traditional, academic genres, and, correspondingly, to interpretation and critique. And returning again to my opening illustration, the requirement of the college essay may allow writers to “express themselves” and represent themselves through writing (i.e make meaning); yet the means, writing and the essay, through which they seek to make meaning is provided for them and even required. This first act that students perform within higher education positions them as passive individuals who will preserve tradition rather than as active individuals who can and will contribute to already existing tradition through alternative and innovative means and meanings. The college essay requirement may indeed work to prepare students for their immediate futures within higher education

in which they will be expected to write essays, but, by doing so, it also limits the immediate and more distant futures and means that students can imagine and create.

My aim thus far has not been to diminish the importance of interpretation and critique or even of traditional, academic genres within the field of composition and rhetoric, the composition classroom, or even the academy at large. Student, educators, and scholars have gained many valuable insights and produced many valuable essays and articles from such acts. This kind of work has exposed ways in which social structures and institutions work to exclude as much as (or even more so) to include, and it has worked to increase students' and writers' awareness of their roles within the meaning-making process. However, as a field that often seeks to empower students and writers, it is time to explore ways in which empowerment can move beyond interpretation and critique and into different kinds of writing and action, beyond writers "making meaning" to writers viewing themselves as "the makers of the means of making meaning."

I am not, of course, the first to put forward this kind of argument. Gunther Kress and Susan Miller, for example, illuminate the limitations of retaining a primary focus on interpretation and critique. Admitting that his prior work in critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis failed to move beyond critique, Kress is particularly interesting in moving students beyond critique and into other kinds of action because both academics and students "have a responsibility . . . to participate actively in the shaping of the world" (4). As he writes:

my own aim is to move away from a conception of the critical reader, beholder, or commentator—away that is, from a position of *insight* which provides the ability to produce analytic critique, as the central goal of humanistic education. Critique

is an essential element of informed citizenship, and of public participation; in my envisaged future society it will be seen as an essential component in producing the new goal of *education as social action: the envisaging, design, and making of alternatives*. (3 emphasis in original)

For Kress, critical insight, while a necessary and worthy action, should be only part of the overall goal of education—education should seek to endow students with the power of critical insight but should also put students' critical insights to work through the making of alternatives. The aim of education, then, as Kress notes, would “move beyond critique as an aim in itself, to the proposal of alternatives as a new and necessary aim; in which critical ability is an essential component” (4). His understanding of education as “social action” is especially revealing and intriguing since it seeks to extend the goal of education beyond the classroom and into society and it seeks to place students at the center of social action, allowing them to envision, design, and propose alternatives to make new futures rather than only learning, following, and reinforcing conventions to preserve tradition.

Kress believes this new goal of education is particularly important at this point in time since our present must begin to address and respond to multiculturalism, technological and economic change and development, and transnationalism in order to create more dynamic and responsive futures. Critique within this cultural milieu is simply not enough. Kress argues that “critique is essential in period of social stability as a means of producing change; by bringing that which is settled into crisis, it is a means for producing a cultural dynamic. In period of intense change the problem is that the cultural dynamic is too great, so that critique is not the issue; the focus of intervention has

to shift to the design of possible alternatives” (5). For Kress, it is a time of intense change, and, thus, interventions must move beyond critique and into other kinds of more innovative actions.

Susan Miller in “Technologies of Self?-Formation” presents an argument similar to Kress’s; however, her focus is less on the limitations of English curriculum more broadly and more on the limitations of cultural studies approaches within composition and rhetoric. Writing specifically in response to James Berlin’s *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures*, she provides a strong critique of his cultural studies approach in the composition classroom, noting that within it:

students readers are teachable, that is, easily led into self- and cultural reflection, and into debates about the media’s classed and sexed binaries. But as student writers, they only compose exercises in order to reflect on or display their grasp of democratic consciousness. In these model classes, their writing is not positioned to enact that consciousness because they, as *writers*, are not taught that they have the power to do so. (498 emphasis in original)

Miller’s concern with Berlin’s approach centers on the ways in which it positions students as writers—rather than being writers who enact their newly gained consciousness, they are writers who simply describe their newly gained consciousness. Doing so, Miller suggests, limits the kinds of writers that students can become and it limits the empowerment that they can achieve through their consciousness. This critique is most succinctly and eloquently stated when Miller writes:

The students Jim [Berlin] portrays as needing consciousness are not directed toward practice in manipulating genres, but to a smart awareness of generic

power; not toward guerilla stylistics, but to savvy about stylishness; not toward strength to withstand forces that prevent their critique from wide acknowledgement, but to interpretations of these forces. Yet culture as an object of study—no matter how it is studied—no more motivates active literate practices than does reading great literature. (499)

Like Kress, the students' lack of active involvement in the process of their own education concerns Miller.

Within her critique of cultural studies approaches, she also begins to suggest a solution. In addition to interpretation and awareness, students need to be taught writing (manipulation of genres and guerilla stylistics) and action (the strength to withstand cultural forces and to work against them). Building on John Guillory's thesis in *Cultural Capital* that "it is not interpretation or ideology that determines students' politics or their political power. Instead, uneven access to means of literacy/literary *production*—to making power through language, not reading it—now and always determines uneven class and social status," Miller presents her own version of his claim, arguing "for enabling students to act through language, first by placing its differential modes of making in the center of our teaching, as Jim [Berlin] suggested. By teaching texts rather than their meaning, by teaching awareness rather than rhetoric, and by teaching the power of meanings rather than the making of statements, we inadvertently reproduce a politics that is aware but passive" (498-99). For Miller and Kress, then, it is not that cultural studies or the English curriculum are failing; in fact, they are succeeding in providing students with awareness or consciousness. However, in their opinions, the English

curriculum and cultural studies need to extend that success into writing, into other kinds of action, and into a greater rhetorical agency.

Miller's calls for teaching rhetoric and the making of statements and Kress's call for alternatives and the making of students as makers of their means of making meaning certainly are compelling to the composition and rhetoric scholar and educator in me. Like many in the field, I seek to empower students, and, like many in the field, I view writing and rhetoric as two of the primary ways through which individuals can gain a sense of empowerment. While writing certainly can and should reflect what writers have gained through the actions of interpretation and critique, it seems central that writing should also work to enact what writers have gained through interpretation and critique and that writers should have rhetorical agency over that enactment. Building off of Miller's and Kress's arguments, this dissertation seeks to find productive ways in which writers can move beyond the actions of interpretation and critique and into different kinds of enactment and action: that is, how writers can gain, experience, and utilize their rhetorical agency within situations and contexts.

This is, of course, easier said than done, especially within the context of higher education that often seeks to preserve a tradition in which interpretation and critique are the primary and central means of dispersing meaning and knowledge. How, then, do we, as composition and rhetoric scholars and educators, answer these calls for moving beyond interpretation and into a broader understanding of action? I suggest and argue that rhetorical genre theory, uptake studies, and what I collectively term disruptive theories (including multicultural studies, critical theory, cultural studies, rhetorical genre theory, and feminist studies), taken together, provide a theoretical framework from which

we can imagine moving beyond interpretation and critique into other kinds of action and from which we can develop pedagogical practices that enable and encourage individuals to assert their rhetorical agency so that they can actively and deliberately create their futures.

Rhetorical genre theory has gained and retained much attention and inquiry within the field of composition and rhetoric within recent years. Conceiving of genres as rhetorical social actions in response to recurrent situations (Miller) as opposed to simply classification systems or a-rhetorical forms, scholars, such as Bazerman, Bawarshi, Coe, Devitt, Freedman, Giltrow, Miller, Russell, and Schryer, have examined the social, contextual, ideological, and pragmatic nature of genre. In other words, genres are not simply forms—they are forms, or “forms of life” (Bazerman), that help people achieve certain goals, actions, and effects in particular social contexts. People use genres to take action, to “do” things, to achieve certain effects, and to interact (effectively and easily) with others. And, as a result, genres also reflect and create ideological dimensions of culture, of the people who create and use genres. Scholars interested in genre theory, then, often look to genres, their contexts, their actions, and their users in order to learn something about the contexts in which the genres are used and the values, epistemologies, and power relations (the ideologies) of particular cultures and/or groups that use the genres.

Examining this ideological dimension of genre, many scholars have examined how individual genres, genre sets (Devitt), genre systems (Charles Bazerman), or genre repertoires (Bakhtin; Yates and Orlikowski) create and reflect assumptions and beliefs of a social group, power, or culture that affect (both positively and negatively) the ways in

which genre users can act within particular contexts. While much scholarship has been interested in what kinds of actions genres allow their users to achieve, recent scholarship has also focused on what actions genres forbid or discourage and how genres constrain users' actions and create controlled subject positions for their users. For example, Catherine Schryer in "Genre and Power" performs a Bakhtinian-influenced chronotopic analysis of insurance companies' "bad news" letters to expose the ideological time and space constraints placed upon writers and readers of this genre. She draws the conclusions that:

At its heart, [the bad news letter] attempts to freeze its readers in space and time and reduce them to passivity and non-response . . . at the same time, the contextual information gathered during the interviews revealed a network of power relations. The rhetorical form being reproduced within this correspondence operated both as a constraint and resource and demonstrated the complex and contradictory operations of power within organizations. (94)

Schryer, here, seeks to expose the ideology of a specific genre, the bad news letter, in order to discover how the genre and the organization in which it is produced constrains users' actions and creates controlled subject positions. Other examples include Gillian Fuller and Alison Lee's examination of the student essay and the ways in which it positions student writers as certain kinds of generic subjects (more specifically the student-subject, feminist-subject), and Anthony Parè's examination of social work genres and how they work to indoctrinate users, specifically marginalized Inuit workers, into an ideology that positions them within institutional power relations and that requires them to adopt new and often foreign identities.

In terms of my dissertation project, rhetorical genre theory highlights why it is so important that individuals possess the ability to be and to see themselves as the makers of the means of making meaning. Following genre theory, the means simply cannot be isolated from making meaning because the means affects the kinds of meaning, the kinds of actions that individuals can make and take within certain situations and contexts. Returning to Ryan, he realizes that the college essay positioned him as a certain kind of writer, even a certain kind of individual, who was limited in the ways in which he could express himself (i.e. make meaning). Now, of course, cinematography (Ryan's self-identified strength) would have also limited the ways in which he could express himself, but Ryan, not the institution of higher education, would have made the decision as the maker of his means, thus allowing Ryan to exercise some level of rhetorical agency and choice. By controlling the means—even if only in terms of the genres that individuals are permitted to use within certain situations and contexts—then, we risk controlling and limiting the meanings that writers and students can make and even imagine possible.

Building on rhetorical genre theory that highlights the importance of the means, uptake studies provides a way in which we can more broadly conceptualize and understand the means of making meaning. While genre is certainly one factor that contributes to the means of making meaning, other factors, such as discourse, context, and the individual(s), do so as well. Uptake, with its origins in J.L Austin's theory of speech acts and its adoption by Anne Freedman in rhetorical genre theory, focuses our attention more broadly on how meaning is made within and between texts by considering the multiple factors, including genre, that aide in the meaning making process. Put simply, uptake is what occurs—the actions that individuals perform—between texts in an

attempt to make meaning; thus, uptake can be understood as the means (in its most comprehensive sense) by which individuals make meaning between and within texts.

Returning to Ryan again, he received the writing prompt “If you had a year to research anything, what would you research and why?” (a text) and took it up (uptake) in the form of a college essay (a text). Ryan’s uptake of the writing prompt that resulted in the production of his college essay was influenced and created by several factors, some of which he notes in his essay. Ryan was influenced by teachers and college application people who told him “the purpose of the college essay is to express [him]self and help the college see [him] as a thinking person.” He was influenced by the genre of a writing prompt that delineated a clear task for him. He was influenced by his use of the college essay genre. He was influenced by his own experiences with writing and with other genres and forms of communication. He was influenced by his beliefs regarding his own strengths and weaknesses. He was influenced by the context of higher education. And he was influenced by the current situation of obtaining admittance to college. All of these factors (and most likely more) contributed to and created his uptake of the writing prompt—the means by which he made meaning of, within, and between the writing prompt, the college essay, his situation, the context of higher education, and himself.

While rhetorical genre theory highlights the importance of the means and uptake studies provides a way to conceptualize the means of making meaning, disruptive theories offer a theoretical framework from which to encourage writers to be active and innovative makers of the means of making meaning. The notion of disruption, I suggest, plays a central role within many lines of scholarship in composition and rhetoric, as I explore within Chapter 2. Feminism, cultural studies, and critical pedagogy, for

example, place disruption at the center of their reading and interpretive practices and acts in order to call into question larger (and often oppressive) social and cultural structures and institutions. These lines of scholarship encourage readers and students to be active and innovative makers of meaning by inviting them to take a critical stance. Cultural studies, for instance, invites students to read and interpret everyday and common cultural artifacts, such as advertisements, to uncover the ways in which they depict and promote dominant cultural beliefs that work to exclude or marginalize others and their beliefs. Here readers and students become active makers of meaning rather than passive recipients of meaning embedded within cultural artifacts.

While these lines of scholarship focus on making readers and students active in the reading and interpretation processes to make meaning, rhetorical genre theory, more specifically the explicit teaching of genre, and multicultural studies (two other lines of scholarship that center on disruptive acts) provide a basis from which writers can move from disruptive reading and interpretive acts into innovative textual and rhetorical acts that seek to enact disruptive readings and interpretations. Rhetorical genre theory encourages writers to disrupt their interpretations of genres, mainly through analysis and critique, so that writers gain a consciousness of genres, their forms, and their ideologies as well as an understanding of the inextricable relationship between form and context. Multicultural studies encourages writers to disrupt conventional, academic texts and ideologies by incorporating alternative texts and ideologies that are primarily informed by their own marginalized linguistic and cultural backgrounds into the context of higher education. Both of these approaches encourage writers to see themselves as the makers

of the means of making meaning and, especially, as active, critical, and innovative makers of the means of making meaning.

Chapter Overview

The first two chapters of this dissertation outline the theoretical framework for this dissertation and explore what is at stake when writers' rhetorical agency is limited because they are not seen as the makers of the means of making meaning. I position my project in relation to uptake studies and disruptive theories, especially multicultural studies and rhetorical genre theory. In Chapter 1, "Peeling Back the Layers: Uptake as a Multi-Layered Performance," I examine current theoretical conversations regarding uptake within rhetorical genre theory with an eye toward the roles that individuals play within uptake. I review Anis Bawarshi's, Melanie Kill's, and Kimberly Emmon's theorizations and uses of uptake. I then place them in dialogue with each other and with performance theory to suggest that uptake is best understood as individuals engaging in a multi-layered performance and that, within current scholarship, uptake is primarily defined by the scholars' own purposes and goals. I conclude by exploring my own contribution to uptake studies—individual uptake—that seeks to more fully and clearly understand what individuals bring to uptake and how this contributes to and affects the overall uptake process.

In Chapter 2, "Harnessing the Power of Disruption: Moving Beyond Interpretation and into Textual Productions," I explore the role that disruption plays within several lines of scholarship in order to move disruption beyond interpretation and into other kinds of action, specifically alternative and innovative textual productions. After reviewing pedagogical practices within the explicit teaching of genre and multicultural studies that seek to disrupt, I merge these two approaches and reread them

through the concept of uptake. I conclude by suggesting that teachers can encourage all students to disrupt their conventional uptakes through a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption that is situated within the interpretations *and* productions of alternative, innovative texts and that values and promotes innovation alongside convention.

Chapters 3 and 4 are a two-part report of my qualitative research study that draws from multiple methods to examine how and why writers employ innovation and convention within their writing when given the option to do either. The project takes into consideration the uptakes, texts, experiences, and self-reported motivations of ten students within a rhetorical-genre-theory-based first-year writing class. Chapter 3, “Research Methods,” outlines the design, context, data collection, and data analysis of the research study. In Chapter 4, “Working Within and Against Conventional Uptakes: Research Results,” I explore the results of my research study and data analysis, focusing on the students’ self-reported motivations for pursuing convention and innovation. I first outline the patterns that I discovered in what students reported about why they chose more innovative and more conventional uptakes in response to the unit three writing project that was designed as part of the pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption. From this, I analyze and delineate the nine most prominent factors that appear to make a difference when students are making their decisions to pursue convention and innovation.

The Conclusion, “‘She Wasn’t Teaching as Much as We Were Learning’: A Pedagogy of Uptake Awareness and Disruption” is the culmination of the theory and research that are outlined within the previous four chapters. Within it, I propose and outline pedagogical strategies and considerations as I explore how educators can work to

conventionalize alternative uptakes and how educators as well as scholars can better attend to the individual through a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption.

CHAPTER 1

Peeling Back the Layers:
Uptake as a Multi-Layered Performance

Uptake is a particularly productive and dynamic area of study for those within composition and rhetoric as it allows us to examine how people act through discourse or, in other words, how discourse leads to real consequences, effects, and actions within the social material world. Whether one is primarily interested in multicultural rhetoric, new media, service learning, critical pedagogy, or writing centers, one of the things that binds our seemingly fragmented and divergent field is the common and shared interest in how people act through discourse—that is how people use writing or speech or other textual means to achieve their ends or goals whether those ends or goals are normative or transformative. For this reason, uptake has much to offer the field and warrants attention since we have much to gain from it.

Yet uptake is a slippery concept. What uptake is and what occurs during uptake is still being worked out within research and scholarship, particularly within rhetorical genre theory. To briefly introduce uptake here before I delve into its complexity and intricacies, I turn to the commonly cited window example within speech-act theory: you enter a room, a friend says to you “it’s hot in here,” so you open the window. What is interesting about this seemingly banal interaction is not necessarily that the window is opened even though this may, in fact, be what physically allows the room to cool; what is more interesting to me and to others is that you *took up* the utterance “it’s hot in here” as a request, as your friend most likely anticipated, and consequently you opened the window to fulfill that request.

How does this utterance “it’s hot in here” become the physical act of the opening of a window? This question, or more broadly how does an utterance, a genre, or discourse become actions, consequences, and effects, is a central concern of uptake. In order for this to occur, however, someone needs to make an utterance and then someone needs to take up that utterance to produce a response. Uptake, then, allows scholars and educators to address and examine individual rhetorical actions or how people *take things up* within particular contexts. While the other person certainly may have intended “it’s hot in here” as a request, you could have taken it up in many other ways, as a complaint, a question, a demand, etc. Or another person might have taken up that utterance differently than you did. It is precisely this individual component of uptake—the ability and necessity for a person to interpret an utterance and then perform certain rhetorical actions in response to that utterance within social interactions—that makes uptake so interesting and so productive for those within the field of composition and rhetoric. It is this individual component that also makes uptake so interesting and productive for this dissertation that seeks to understand writers as “the makers of their means of making meaning” (Kress) and, from this, to encourage in writers a greater sense of rhetorical flexibility and rhetorical agency.

Anne Freadman connects uptake to rhetorical genre theory in her 2002 essay “Uptake” and details the many uptakes of the legal and cultural genres that took place within one specific legal case, “the Ryan Story,” to demonstrate how a sentence becomes an execution—more specifically, she traces how the jury’s utterance of “we find the accused guilty as charged” became the last instance of capital punishment in Australia with the hanging of Ronald Ryan. The importance and potential magnitude of uptake is

heightened within this example, especially when compared to the window example, as the consequences of uptake in this case lead to the physical death of a human being.

While not all uptakes carry such weight, all uptakes need individuals to act. With this extended example, Anne Freadman brought uptake to the attention of rhetorical genre theory scholars, but uptake has a history that does not begin with Freadman or within rhetorical genre theory. As Melanie Kill notes, uptake has a varied history with roots in the sciences where uptake was and is still used to discuss “incorporation into a system” and within J.L Austin’s *How to Do Things With Words* where he introduces uptake to speech-act theory (“Challenging” 53).¹

Understanding genre as “the interaction of, minimally, a pair of texts” rather than “the proponents of a single texts,” Freadman primarily defines uptake as “the bidirectional relation that holds between this pair; that is, between a text and what Pierce would call its ‘interpretant’” (39). Within this definition, she directs attention to uptake as a relationship between texts.² Her distinction here between interaction and relation, however, is an important one that I believe has some implications for how uptake is understood.

¹ While Kill focuses her history on Austin’s use of uptake within speech-act theory, particularly by teasing out the distinctions between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, she also links uptake with philosophers and social theorists, specifically Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau, and M. M Bakhtin, who employ concepts similar to uptake. She suggests that Bourdieu’s idea of habitus, Certeau’s notion of enunciation, and Bakhtin’s dialogical rhetoric help to examine “the relationship between the macro-level social structures encoded in discourse and the micro-level instantiations of language in use” that are in work in uptake and, by doing so, “shed light on issues vital to the expansion of uptake in which [she is] interested and provide a more comprehensive framework for understanding agency and change despite the determining power of convention” (60). By expanding Austin’s person to person micro-interactions of uptake to include Bakhtin’s dialogic model for the macro-scale interactions of genre, she finds uptake to be a productive area of inquiry since it allows scholars to examine how individuals make particular language and discourse choices (i.e. assert agency) that can either encourage change within or reinforce larger social structures.

² As Kimberly Emmons suggests, “In [Freadman’s] analysis, uptake naturalizes the connection of two (or more) generic texts in order to create a coherent sequence of activity” (“Uptake” 3).

Part of the bidirectional relation between texts (uptake) includes the act of confirming the texts' generic status. As Freadman explains:

the text is contrived to secure a certain class of uptakes and the interpretant, or the uptake text, confirms its generic status by conforming itself to this contrivance. It does so, by—say—‘taking it as’ an invitation or request. By the same token, however, the uptake text has the power not to so conform this generic status, which it may modify minimally, or even utterly, by taking its object as some other kind. (40)

In other words, a text's generic status is dependent upon uptake. If the relation or association between texts (uptake) does not define the interaction between texts in a certain way, then the generic status of a text is disrupted. To return to the window example, if I say “it's hot in here,” and no one responds verbally or physically, this text fails to secure a uptake—no one chose to “take it as” a request or invitation. Both genre and uptake, for Freadman, are primarily concerned with defining what happens between texts. Uptake is of particular importance for her because a text needs a typified uptake to become a genre and a genre needs an uptake to become an action. Uptake, then, focuses more on the primary relation between texts and the ways in which that relation defines the resulting interaction (or the processes that occur between texts) and its corresponding genre rather than on the texts themselves.

What is especially important about Freadman's understanding of uptake for this project is that it is the result of selection, definition, and representation by the speaker/writer not merely of causation. As Freadman explains, “uptake is first the taking of the object; it is not the causation of a response by an intention” (48). Instead, uptake

“selects, defines, and represents its object” from a set of possible others (48). In other words, someone must actively take up (select, define, and represent) an object, a text, in order for uptake to occur. Texts simply cannot produce themselves nor take up themselves and then produce another text in response, but people can and do. Returning again to the window example, in order for the window to be opened, I first had to make the utterance “it’s hot in here,” the window-opener then selected “it’s hot in here,” defined it as a request—“it’s hot in here, so open the window”— and consequently represented that request in the form of opening the window (thus, confirming the generic status of “it’s hot in here” as a request). My saying “it’s hot in here” did not directly cause the window to be opened; rather, it is the window-opener’s uptake of “it’s hot in here” that resulted in the window opening. The window-opener could have selected, defined, and represented “it’s hot in here” in many other ways, or as Freedman says, “the object is taken from a set of possibles” (48). “It’s hot in here” could have been taken as a complaint, an observation, a question, etc. In these instances, the uptake would have established a different kind of interaction between texts and, thus, defined a different generic status of “it’s hot in here,” and I may not have had my intended request fulfilled.

So why, in this example, did the window-opener choose to take up my statement as a request? Freedman explains that the “set of possibles” is the result of the “long, ramified, intertextual, and intergeneric memories” of uptakes (40). When encountering a text, the uptakes of that text, while theoretically limitless, are influenced by the ways in which that text has been taken up by others in the past. The window-opener took up my “it’s hot in here” as a request because similar texts in the past had been taken up as requests. Due to a shared cultural knowledge and past interactions between myself and

the window-opener, the uptake was defined and represented in a specific way, as a request and with the proceeding opening of the window. In this way, uptake's memory is reliant upon genres—a genre results from the same repeated selection, definition, and representation of a text over time. So while a text's generic status may be reliant upon uptake, uptake is also indebted to genre.

While the memories of uptakes may influence speakers/writers to act or respond in certain ways or in certain genre and, as a result, create certain kinds of roles for them, they must, ultimately, perform the “taking up” of the object. As Freadman notes, texts may be contrived to secure a certain set of uptakes, but users do not have to select those uptakes (40). In fact, users can choose not to take up the text at all. Within this caveat of uptake, the necessity of human speakers/writers becomes central as they must take part not only in the initial utterance of the text but also then in the selection, the uptake, of the object or the initial utterance. Without humans, the initial text, the relation between the texts, and the resulting interaction between those texts would not take place and would not exist. What happens during and when users take up texts rather than what happens within and between texts becomes more of a focus when considering uptake. In other words, uptake shifts the conversation in rhetorical genre theory away from genre and texts themselves to the human users and their rhetorical actions within and between texts and genres.

This individual dimension of uptake is what interests Kill, and me, the most. While Kill distinguishes herself from Freadman in two primary ways, it is the second way that I find

the most productive for building understandings of individual rhetorical action within uptake.³ As Kill explains:

I think it useful to distinguish the process of uptake from the response it produces. In Freadman's writing she seems to make a loose equation between 'uptake(s),' 'uptake texts,' and 'responses.' Although the product of uptake is the visible evidence of its work, attention only to this product threatens to hide from view the selection and memory to which Freadman calls attention. Freadman gives uptake as an event that occurred, but I find the lack of agency in that model hard to reconcile with the active respondent and her explanation of memory and selection suggest. (73)

I, too, find uptake limiting in terms of understanding individual action if primarily conceived in terms of the product produced. Kimberly Emmons provides a similar critique of Freadman, arguing that:

Freadman's work suggests that such action occurs *only* when a particular genre secures its own uptake. In Freadman's conception, it is genre itself that has agency and accomplishes social action, and individual subjects are relegated to a role in which they produce texts that are recognizable (i.e., can secure uptake) within appropriate generic systems. ("Uptake" 27)

Both Kill and Emmons raise valid concerns regarding Freadman's treatment of the individual and his or her agency within uptake.⁴ Scholars and educators do need ways in

³ In terms of her first objection, Kill writes, "first whereas Freadman is primarily interesting in boundaries drawn by ceremonial or jurisdictional regulations . . . [she] aim[s] to expand the notion of uptake to acknowledge these boundaries are not simply convention-bound as does Austin, nor primarily as dangerous or problematic as does Freadman, but as points of opportunity and possibility that are central to understanding potential for progressive social change" ("Challenging" 73).

which to conceptualize uptake as not simply a product or as simply occurring through genre but as something more that occurs because of *people acting through texts* if they want to more closely detail and understand the role that the individual and his or her actions play within uptake and communication. As one of the goals of this dissertation is to discover when and why writers pursue innovation and convention, a fuller understanding of the role that an individual plays within uptake and how that contributes to the pursuit of innovation and convention is central.

In this chapter, I look to current theoretical conversations regarding uptake within rhetorical genre theory to examine how scholars have sought to conceptualize uptake in ways that more fully explore the roles that individuals play within uptake. To do so, I first consider scholars' different theorizations of uptake separately and then place them in dialogue with each other to suggest that uptake is best understood as individuals engaging in a multi-layered performance rather than as a singular action or event and that, within scholarship, uptake is primarily defined by the scholars' own purposes and goals. I then build upon previous scholars' work with the addition of yet another layer to uptake—individual uptake. Conceptualizing uptake as a multi-layered performance in which the individual plays a central role here allows for a more thorough and comprehensive examination in later chapters regarding individual writers' uptakes.

⁴ While agreeing with Kill's and Emmon's critiques of Freadman, I maintain that Freadman does acknowledge, although implicitly, the necessity of individuals within uptake. Freadman often positions uptake as the grammatical actor within many of her sentences discussing uptake, thus grammatically removing the individual, but the individual and his or her role within uptake still proves essential in her formulations of uptake, especially since she acknowledges that genres cannot secure their uptakes. Rather Freadman begins to sketch out the role of the individual, and Kill and Emmons more fully consider it.

Uptake within Rhetorical Genre Theory

Since Freedman's publication of "Uptake," genre scholars have applied uptake to different contexts and concerns and, in doing so, have expanded the scope of uptake beyond Freedman's initial exploration. For example, Bawarshi has examined how habitual uptakes and uptake memory shape the discourse of the Israel-Palestine conflict as well as how invention and imitation intervene within the space of uptake. Tosh Tachino has used uptake, along with other rhetorical genre theory concepts, to trace how the knowledge and discourse within academic research is used within and by public policy. Chalet Seidel has analyzed how models of professionalism (and, thus, subjectivities) are taken up in the writing classroom by examining the discursive features of a journalism textbook used in American universities. Likewise, Melanie Kill has directed her attention to the classroom by exploring the ways in which composition instructors can promote and encourage rhetorical flexibility in the composition classroom by considering the ways in which uptake and identity reinforce or question each other for both students and instructors. Dylan Dryer, also looking to the writing classroom, has considered how uncomfortable writing situations may have the potential to de-routinize uptakes.

While much valuable insight has been gained from these scholars' uses of uptake, as Kimberly Emmons notes, "genre scholars have attended to uptake primarily as a necessary heuristic for understanding the ways texts and genres cohere within systems of social activity" ("Uptake" 135). In other words, genre scholars tend to focus on how uptake works within and between genres and texts and systems rather than as uptake as an act in and of itself, an act that includes genres, texts, and systems but also includes

many other considerations and components. So while uptake has proven immensely useful for scholars within diverse areas of interest within rhetorical genre theory, the larger, conceptual questions still remain: what is uptake and what happens during uptake? Anis Bawarshi, Melanie Kill, and Kimberly Emmons have most explicitly and most thoroughly sought to address these theoretical questions regarding uptake within their work, and for this reason, I focus my attention on these three scholars.⁵

While Bawarshi, Kill, and Emmons are all working with the same concept of uptake, they have different purposes and goals in mind while doing so. Bawarshi advocates for critical interventions in normalized and habitualized uptakes, especially as they operate within the acceptance of language differences. Kill explores how uptake provides people with possibilities for change, rather than just restrictions, through the use of innovative uptakes. And Emmons is interested in how people's uptakes of genres and discourses affect their identities and subject positions. Through these investigations, they present overlapping yet distinct approaches to uptake; and as a close examination of their work suggests, the ways in which they conceptualize uptake heavily depends upon their purposes and goals.

Bawarshi, one of the scholars at the forefront of uptake studies, has explored uptake through several means and, by doing so, has worked to describe and refine his understandings of uptake.⁶ Throughout his extensive body of work, he has focused on

⁵ Kimberly Emmons and Melanie Kill both worked together and with Anis Bawarshi at the University of Washington. Their understandings and uses of uptake, therefore, are most likely influenced by each other, even though they minimally provide direct reference to each others' work.

⁶ While he briefly explores uptake within his manuscript *Genre and the Invention of the Writer* (especially in relation to how a writing prompt becomes a student essay), uptake receives more detailed treatment in his response essay "Taking Up Language Differences in Composition" and within a revised version of this essay entitled "The Challenges and Possibilities of Taking Up Multiple Discursive Resources in U.S. Composition Classrooms." I focus here on his theorizations of uptake within these two pieces.

uptake's more normative functions by examining why and how dominant uptakes develop, persist, and, eventually, become conventional because, for Bawarshi, "uptake helps us understand how systematic, normalized relations between genres coordinate forms of social action" (653). This emphasis and its importance are most clearly illustrated in his oft-cited example from the composition classroom—how a standard writing assignment prompt conditions the creation of the student essay. Attention to uptake and the resulting inter- and intrageneric relations between genres, such as the ones between the writing prompt and student essay, is illuminating especially for composition and rhetoric scholars because they "maintain the textured conditions within which individuals identify, situate, and interact with one another in relations of power, and perform meaningful, consequential social actions—or, conversely, are excluded from them" (653). The writing prompt, for example, helps both teachers and students identify with certain subjectivities in which the teacher is positioned within an authority position, and, as a result, the student composes a student essay that he or she believes will comply with and fulfill the writing prompt, thus reinforcing the division of power between the two.

Given this focus on the normative functions of uptake, his conceptualizations of uptake come as no surprise; in his 2006 essay, "Taking Up Language Differences in Composition," he defines uptake as "the ideological interstices that configure, normalize, and activate relations and meanings within and between systems of genres."⁷ These

⁷ "Taking Up" appears as a response essay in the 2006 "Cross Language Relations in Compositions" special issue of *College English*. The essays within this issue, as Bruce Horner points out in his introductory essay, "participate in an emerging movement within composition studies representing, and responding to, changes in, and changing perceptions of, language(s), English(s), students and the relations of all these to one another" (569). This movement works against the tacit "English-Only" policy within composition studies and, instead, seeks to establish multilingualism, rather than monolingualism, as the norm by arguing that "students need to learn to work within and among and across a variety of Englishes

relations and meanings are typified because they are *learned recognitions of significance* that over time and in particular contexts become habitual” (“Taking” 653 emphasis in original). Uptake, as defined here, not only establishes a relation or association between genres and genre systems but also creates meanings within and between them by activating the social actions of genres. In this way, uptake is positioned as a crucial component in meaning-making process—genres may be understood as social actions via Miller, but it is the act of uptake that makes those actions and corresponding meanings visible and achievable rather than just possible. This meaning-making potential of uptake is what concerns Bawarshi. Since repeated performances of uptakes have the ability to create specific and typified meanings and relations between texts and people, those meanings and relations entail certain ideological commitments and maintain power relations that may, in some ways, be limiting or exclusionary.

Uptake, however, not only works to “configure” and “activate” specific relations and meanings but also to “normalize” them. Certainly Freedman hints at this (stating that texts are contrived to secure certain uptakes), but, for Bawarshi, this normalization function of uptake becomes central—through repeated use, the relations and meanings (or the “learned recognition of significance”) that an uptake engenders become typified and habitual. In other words, when people repeatedly take up a particular text, they learn to do so in a typified way(s) because that uptake generates relations and meanings that are recognized by others as significant and that allow them to achieve their purposes and

and languages, not simply to (re)produce and write within the conventions of a particular, standardized variety of English” (570). Bawarshi’s “Taking Up,” too, engages in this movement, bringing uptake to the table by looking at the ways in which the essays highlight the presence of dominant and normalized “English-Only” uptakes within composition studies and the composition classroom and encourage the recognition and use of “multiple languages” alternative uptakes within the classroom.

goals. For example, when receiving a writing prompt within a composition class, students will often take up the prompt in the form of student essays because they have learned through previous educational experiences that an essay is the institutionally sanctioned and appropriate way to take up a writing prompt within this context. If people do not engage in typified uptakes, the resulting relations and meanings would be altered and possibly lost on others who have come to expect the normalized uptake. Returning to the writing prompt example, if a student took up a writing prompt with a series of comics rather than an essay or employed a dialect rather than standardized English within an essay, the teachers' uptake of the student's product would, most likely, include a failing grade because the student did not "fulfill the assignment" or "follow academic conventions"—in other words, the student did not perform the "right" uptake.

The normalization and meaning-making functions of uptake prompt Bawarshi to further specify that uptakes are "ideological interstices." His use of interstices, or intervening spaces, positions uptake as a space in which many factors and influences merge, combine, and influence each other. It is not surprising that Bawarshi acknowledges the ideological aspect of uptake since genres have been recognized as ideological within rhetorical genre theory for some time now (Devitt, Pare, Schreyer, among others). But by adding ideological to specify the space of uptake, Bawarshi emphasizes how what occurs within these intervening spaces (the configuration, activation, and normalization of relations and meanings) mediate and influence people's perceptions and understandings of others and of the world. Uptakes, then, often work to maintain dominant values, epistemologies, and power relationships of a group of people. Within the academy, conventional uptakes work to maintain the essay and standardized

Englishes as the norm and, as a result, position other alternative genres and language uses as aberrations, thus creating a power and status differential between those who know and use conventional, academic uptakes and those who do not. Those who use conventional academic uptakes are rewarded (through higher grades, positive perceptions of ability, scholarships, fellowships, etc.) while those who do not are punished (often through lower grades and negative perceptions of ability).

As a result of these normalization and meaning-making functions of uptake, knowledge of uptake is, as Bawarshi explains:

knowledge of what to take up, how, and when: when and why to use a genre, how to select an appropriate genre in relation to another, how to execute uptakes strategically and when to resist expected uptakes, how some genres explicitly cite other genre in their uptake while some do so only implicitly, and so on. Such knowledge is often tacitly acquired, ideologically consequential, deeply remembered, and difficult to unlearn. (“Taking” 654)

Here the deeply entrenched nature of uptakes is revealed—since people can acquire uptake knowledge tacitly (just like people can acquire genre knowledge tacitly), they may not be aware that other non-conventional kinds of uptakes are possible or even that they exist, uptakes that would reflect different values, epistemologies, and power relationships. For example, students learn through experience within schooling that conventional uptakes in the form of the essay are not only appropriate but required for academic success. When provided with a writing prompt, many students would not even consider composing within another genre as a viable option. These conventional uptakes become “deeply remembered” and are “difficult to unlearn” because they work for

people, they help them achieve their ends and operate within certain contexts, and they work to maintain culturally established and recognized meanings and relations. In short, as Bawarshi says, they “make sense.” (“Taking” 652). Knowing a conventional uptake, then, means more than simply knowing how to respond to another text; it also means knowing how to act and not to act, what one can do and not do, and what one can be and not be.

Uptake knowledge can be so deeply-rooted that uptakes appear to be rigid dispositions that people hold rather than active processes in which people engage and can shape. As Bawarshi explains, “uptakes, as cultural dispositions that mediate dominant formations/designs, are less textually, materially visible and more deeply held as attachments” (“Taking” 654). While allowing for the textual aspect of uptake, Bawarshi also identifies a more cognitive aspect of uptakes—they are culturally-influenced and learned inclinations. These inclinations, however, become attachments because since they are culturally-reinforced, they appear to be natural, even “just the ways things are done.” Students may then find it difficult to see alternative uptakes in response to a writing prompt because the conventional uptake of an essay is presented as the only and best way to approach writing prompts within the academy.

In a revised version of “Taking Up,” Bawarshi reiterates many of the above-mentioned aspects of uptakes—such as the habitual nature of uptake and uptakes as attachments—however, refines his definition of uptake by shifting it to “the complex, often habitualized, sociocognitive pathways that mediate our interactions with others and the world” (“Challenges” 201). This revised definition retains the ideological aspect; yet, the shift from interstices to pathways, while seemingly slight, highlights the habitual and

cultural nature of uptake more so than his previous definitions. Pathways suggest pre-established routes; of course, people can create new pathways, but they often choose to follow well-traveled and well-worn pathways established by others before them so that they do not get lost and so that travel remains relatively easy, much like students will most likely take the pre-established pathway of the essay to take up a writing prompt. It is often seen as simply too risky to veer off the path.

The cultural nature of uptake is further emphasized by his addition of sociocognitive—a term employed by Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas Huckin—to define uptake.⁸ Berkenkotter and Huckin develop their grounded sociocognitive theory of genre with the general thesis that “genres are inherently dynamic rhetorical structures that can be manipulated according to the conditions of use, and that genre knowledge is therefore best conceptualized as a form of situated cognition embedded in disciplinary activities” (3). By suggesting that uptake is sociocognitive in nature, Bawarshi establishes a similar claim for uptake: uptake knowledge is a form a situated cognition. In other words, the ways in which we understand uptakes are “derived from and embedded in our participation in the communicative activities of daily and professional life” (4). Students learn to use essays as a result of their participation within the academic community that sanctions this genre. Thus, uptakes become more like “habits of remembering” (Bawarshi “Challenges” 201); students learn how to take up particular texts through their participation within the academic context, and throughout their academic careers, they remember how to—or rather how they should—take up particular texts.

⁸ The revised version entitled “The Challenges and Possibilities of Taking Up Multiple Discursive Resources in U.S. Composition Classrooms” is located in *Cross-language Relations in Composition*.

While Bawarshi examines the ways in which the normative functions of uptake operate and the consequences of uptakes becoming normalized,⁹ this is not his sole interest. He is equally interesting in the transformative potential of uptake. In addition to conceptualizing uptake as an interstice and a pathway, he also understands uptake as another kind of space: “both as a site of instantiation and regulation of power and a site of intervention” (“Taking” 656).¹⁰ As a site of instantiation, what occurs within the space of uptake is not entirely predetermined—while the space may be normalized to maintain dominant relations and meanings, people can choose to alter or change what occurs in that space to create other relations and meanings. For example, while students may be encouraged to take up a writing prompt with an essay, they do not *have to* produce an essay; they could choose to take up a writing prompt with other alternative genres, such as a story, a visual collage, a sculpture, etc. It is for this reason that Bawarshi claims uptake not only as a site of instantiation and regulation but also as a site of critical intervention—people have the power to intervene in and disrupt normalized, conventional uptakes, even though this may not be an easy or simple task.

In order for critical interventions in normalized uptakes to occur, however, people often need some form of prompting or close examination. For example, Bawarshi suggests that “the key is to delay and, as much as possible, interrupt the habitual uptakes long enough for students to critically examine their sources and motivation, as well as for students to consider what is permitted and what is excluded by these uptakes”

⁹ For example, in “Rhetorical Memory and Representation in the Case of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” he “describes some of the rhetorical patterns and normalized uptakes that have become reified around the Israel-Palestine conflict” in (2).

¹⁰ His use of site here harkens back to his definition of genre as “site of invention.” While genres may serve as site of invention as well as instantiation and regulation, it is through the uptake of a genre and text that people can intervene.

(“Challenges” 202). Returning to the writing prompt example, students would need to examine why they want to engage in a conventional academic uptake of the writing prompt that privileges the essay as well as what they gain by engaging in this uptake (for instance access to the academy) and what they may lose (such as cultural identity or personal commitments). With this knowledge, students could then choose whether they want to continue engaging in conventional, academic uptakes or employ alternative uptakes within certain situations. In another example, he proposes that “part of the work of intervening in uptakes involves recognizing contradictions in what uptakes promise and what they actually deliver” (202). Here students could consider what the essay as opposed to other genres actually allows them to achieve rather than what they believe or think it will allow them to achieve.

Bawarshi, then, primarily conceptualizes uptake as a complex space (whether that space is a site or interstice or pathway) in which various factors converge and interact with each other. The space metaphor is particularly useful for Bawarshi because spaces are generally predetermined and defined in certain ways but can be redefined by people. For example, when I enter a room and desks in rows face the front of the classroom, chalkboards line the walls, and a larger desk with a podium sits in front of the desks, I would identify this space as a classroom that encourages a certain kind of relationship between teachers and students in which teachers hold the knowledge and power. Within this defined space, factors, such as physical layout and locations of individuals, often converge and interact with each other in a more conventional, normative way that is sanctioned within the context of the academy. The same is true of the space of uptake. Just as the pre-established physical layout of the classroom can encourage normative

relationships between students and the teacher, pre-established sociocognitive pathways can encourage normative uptakes.

Yet we can change the space of the classroom by moving the desks into a circle and removing the podium and larger desk to the side of the room in order to create a different kind of relationship between teachers and students. The space may still remain a classroom, but the ways in which the factors converge and interact with each other change, thus altering what happens or what can happen within that space. What possibilities emerge within the classroom, then, are highly dependant upon what teacher and students do within that space; they can work within pre-established frameworks of the space to further enforce conventional uptakes or they can work to examine and interrogate conventional uptakes and establish new frameworks of the space that aid in the creation of purposeful alternative uptakes. For Bawarshi, this kind of critical intervention is especially important if scholars and educators wish to validate and encourage non-standardized languages within the academic context.

Bawarshi's conceptualizations of uptake are fitting given that he has primarily used uptake "to examine some of the challenges and possibilities teachers as well as students face as they engage in this work of identifying and deploying multiple languages in discourses" ("Taking" 653). In other words, he has employed uptake to understand how standardized Englishes are normalized and habitualized to exclude alternative language uses within the academy. Since student uptakes of conventional genres and standardized Englishes are often encouraged and privileged within the academy, students' uptakes of their alternative genre and language resources are often discouraged and even condemned within academic contexts. Scholars and educators who seek to

invite students, especially multilingual students, to use their alternative genre and language resources, then, are often confronted with the deeply entrenched nature of dominant academic uptakes and their ideological effects because they are institutionally sanctioned exchanges that are “more powerful than our attempt to present lasting alternative versions of them” (“Taking” 654). In other words, dominant, conventional academic uptakes are powerful because they are institutionally sanctioned, and this sanctioning often works to discredit and override alternative uptakes that students and teachers may attempt to incorporate into the composition classroom.

Still, composition scholars and educators can work to disrupt dominant, conventional “English-Only” uptakes within the field and the classroom through alternative means, mainly by people consciously and purposefully employing their varied discursive resources, in order to create more hospitable environments for language differences. For example, Bawarshi suggests that Min-Zhan Lu’s essay “Living-English Work” “helps us understand how we can historicize differences masked by dominant uptakes and make productive use of the ambivalence produced by the presence of alternative uptakes” (“Taking” 655). In other words, Lu encourages students to closely examine the ways in which dominant uptakes delete, dismiss, reduce, or trivialize alternative uptakes and, then, to critically intervene in dominant uptakes through alternative uptakes so that students can “analyz[e] what alternative uptakes offers to the making of meaning” and “strategically deploy[] alternative uptakes as writers in order to experience the ways these uptakes position them and produce affiliations that they may or may not be comfortable with” (Bawarshi “Taking” 655).

Similar to Bawarshi, Kill employs uptake to promote linguistic diversity and variation in higher education within her dissertation entitled “Challenging Communication: A Genre Theory of Innovative Uptake” in which she explores the innovative and transformative potential of uptake to enact progressive social change rather than its more normative functions that work to preserve existing social structures and ideologies.¹¹ By doing so, Kill builds upon Bawarshi’s call for critical interventions within conventional uptakes by exploring how professional writers have already used innovative uptakes to redefine what is deemed as “successful communication,” and, thus advance progressive social change. Kill looks to uptake as a concept that allows scholars to better understand and explore agency, specifically how writers make innovative choices and decisions through uptake. To define innovation, she places uptakes on a continuum with conventional uptakes that “work to ease communication but also may compel people to reproduce meanings and material effects” on one end and innovative uptakes that “work to innovate and make use of discursive convention in unexpected ways” on the other (8). For example, when students encounter a writing prompt, conventional uptakes may include academic essays, personal essays, or PowerPoint presentations while innovative uptakes may include photo essays, advertisements, or

¹¹ Kill first takes up uptake in her 2006 essay “Acknowledging the Rough Edges of Resistance: Negotiation of Identities for First-Year Composition” in which she explores the difficulties that both students and teachers encounter when the goal of first-year composition is to promote and develop rhetorical agility. She looks to uptake to help explain why students may be resistant to classrooms that promote rhetorical agility and, thus, create unstable and multiple identities for students. One of her goals in this piece is to clarify the relationship between uptake and identity so that teachers can more appropriately respond to students and their resistance as well as understand their own identities within the classroom as unstable and multiple. She argues that “identities are negotiated relationally by securing uptakes from others” and that “identity must secure uptake; without uptake, it is not secure” (7). To forward this line of argumentation, she conceptualizes uptake as a process; she writes that uptake “is nevertheless a process that always involves selection and representation that open it up to intention and design” (6). Since her dissertation more fully and more recently details this understanding of uptake, I focus here on that piece.

comic strips. Regardless of where the uptake falls on the continuum, writers must make decisions and choices to produce a text.

The decision-making process in which writers engage provides one of the means by which Kill conceptualizes uptake. As she explains, she is “interested in uptake as a process of design carried out by a designer in relation to the full complexity of individual intentions and the social purposes that inform them” (73). Understanding uptake as a process emphasizes the active nature of uptake—uptakes are not set or static but, instead, are processes in which an individual acts and creates. This also places the individual as a primary component of uptake as an uptake needs a designer in order to occur. Moreover, the individual within Kill’s formulation appears to have some amount of awareness and intent. In this way, uptake can be (and perhaps should be) purposeful and conscious, allowing the designer to fulfill his or her own intentions with regards to social purposes and to take action. Returning to writing prompt example, a student could purposefully take up the writing prompt not in the form of an essay but in the form of a photo essay to fulfill her own individual intention to include visual argumentation along with written and to provide commentary on the limitations of conventional academic discourse and genres. It is within the process of uptake that this student is able to create her own design and assert both social and individual actions. As a result, “uptake is not simply a function of the utterance that precedes it, but is a process by which the interlocutor does something with that utterance that is a reaction to the utterance but not always properly a response” (Kill 76). What the interlocutor does within and with uptake between the two utterances depends upon individual intentions and the already existing social purposes and pressures.

While primarily conceptualizing uptake as a process, Kill, like Bawarshi, also uses the space metaphor to understand uptake; however, she more fully details what happens within the space of uptake, specifically what happen when writers innovate, rather than focusing on uptake as a space itself. She writes that “the space of uptake includes all potential affordances, with the more conventional being more obvious but other possibilities also available even if unused” (75). According to Kill, then, uptake provides a space of possibility, a space where writers/speakers can choose conventional or innovative uptakes depending upon the communicative paths they wish to follow or to create. Since uptake creates this space in which people can take action, uptake, then, is a space of action; as Kill suggests, uptake is “a space of change because when people need a new communicative path it can be attempted” (75). Once again, as active processes, uptakes can create spaces of change or spaces of stability. Kill’s use of space, then, shifts attention away from the space itself to what individuals do within that space or the processes in which they engage in that space.¹²

Her more detailed use of uptake as both a space and the complex process of selection and design reflect her purpose of exploring how professional writers assert individual actions as well as goal of demonstrating uptake’s innovative and transformative potential. For example, in one of her case studies, she examines how

¹² In addition to conceptualizing uptake a space in which individual act, Kill also imagines uptake as creating a conceptual space that is particularly useful for scholars. Pulling from Freadman’s observation that uptake “selects, defines, and represents its object,” Kill writes, “in order to acknowledge the role that selection and design play in the deployment of variant and strategic responses, we need a conceptual space like uptake in which to investigate what is going on as a particular uptake is formulated” (75). In other words, if scholars and educators wish to understand how writers innovate (employ variant and strategic responses), they need to look to the processes of uptake so that they can investigate the ways in which writers create and enact processes of selection and design. Moreover, while acknowledging that “uptake can be automatic, it can be abused by the powerful” she believes that uptake “opens conceptual space for challenges to assumptions and expectations that resist change” (73). Rather than being a space itself, uptake, here, provides a conceptual space in which scholars can examine how individuals perform automatic uptakes (or processes of design) or how individuals perform innovative and transformative uptakes.

Elizabeth Keckly engages in innovative uptakes through alternative uses of a conventional uptake in order to challenge textual authority and, more importantly, social structures. As Kill explains, Elizabeth Keckly in her autobiography:

exploits the stereotypical expectations of her largely white audience toward the goal of presenting social and political commentary without provoking resistance in her readership. By framing her text as a slave narrative, she takes up the primary genre in which black writers of the postbellum era in the United States were socially authorized to write to a broad public audience, but she subverts the standard purposes of this genre by using it to provide commentary on the life of Mary Todd Lincoln in the White House. (105)

In other words, Keckly engages in the socially expected, conventional uptake—the slave narrative—but also provides innovation—subverts the standard purposes of the genre—within that conventional uptake in order to provide social and political commentary.

In order to explore individual actions, such as Keckly's, Kill sees uptake as a process, a process in which writers make certain decisions and choices and create specific designs. Seeing uptake as a process allows her to explore how individuals act. As a process of selection and design, uptake is also open to possibility—individuals can use uptake for innovative and transformative purposes. Moreover, by imagining it as a space in which individuals create, the agency of individuals is further emphasized. Within the space of uptake, writers do the difficult work of making purposeful and meaningful communications. Both understandings place the individual at the center of uptake, allowing Kill to explore how individuals engage uptake in ways that innovate and transform.

Kimberly Emmons is also interested in the individual within uptake; however, she focuses her attention not on the individual's ability to innovate within uptake, but, rather, how uptake affects individuals' identity negotiations, subjectivities, and dispositions, specifically in terms of how uptakes organize and construct women's experiences of depression as well as create them as "biomedical subjects."¹³ To trace uptake's role within these ideological processes, she outlines a method by which scholars and educators can see and trace uptakes.¹⁴ To make uptake visible, she develops "a means of marking and referring to the textual traces of the process" of uptake (139) because "processes of uptake . . . cite previous genres, discourses, and situations" (137).¹⁵ Emmons, like Kill, conceptualizes uptake as a process, a process that leaves textual traces of previous genres, discourses, and situations, but she also specifies that there are multiple processes of uptake that occur during the overall uptake process. She distinguishes between two kinds of uptake processes—generic uptake and discursive uptake. Both uptakes work together during the overall uptake process—as Emmons explains, "as [individuals] encounter the discourse of depression, [they] use both forms of uptake as performative and interpretive acts" (140). Yet to "see" this immaterial process

¹³ Melanie Kill, too, takes up issues of identity and uptake within her article, "Acknowledging the Rough Edge of Resistance." See footnote 11 above.

¹⁴ Within "Narrating the Emotional Woman: Uptake and Gender in Discourses on Depression," Emmons examines how two groups of women take up the cultural commonplace of "excessively emotional woman" when they narrate their individual and collective understanding of depression as illness. She argues that these women's narratives "through their uptakes of ideologically loaded topoi—are shaped by the available discourses, and in turn, these help construct women's affective lives" (111). In another piece "All on the List?: Uptake in Talk about Depression," Emmons uses uptake to trace how the genres of the symptom's checklist and the self-diagnostic quiz construct depression as an illness as well as how they configure the rhetorical relationship between pharmaceutical companies, prospective patients, and healthcare providers. While these two pieces begin to explore theorizations and applications of uptake, I focus here on her most recent work "Uptake and the Biomedical Subject" in which she more closely details and outlines her conceptualizations of uptake.

¹⁵ Kill also notes that "we cannot observe the behaviors of uptake, but only see the results" ("Challenging" 75).

of uptake, she need to looks to and for textual traces of generic and discursive uptake in order to make the uptakes visible. The division between generic and discursive uptake, then, allows her “to focus attention on two distinct textual phenomena that illuminate the subjectivities available and contestable within processes of uptake” (139).

For Emmons, “‘generic uptake’ describes the subject’s selection and translation of forms of discourse (and the impositions of power those forms imply) into new speech situations,” and, thus, “generic uptake involves the selection and translation of typified forms . . . and social roles . . . into new discursive situations, thereby potentially restricting future uptake and the participant’s possible subjectivities” (139-40). Since genres are ideological (Freadman, Devitt, Schryer, Bazerman, among many others) and work to create certain kinds of subjectivities for their users (Schryer, Fuller and Lee), when a user takes up a genre and translates it into another genre, the ideological weight of the original genre transfers as well.¹⁶ In the writing prompt example, a student takes up the prompt and translates it into an essay, and by doing so, she also adopts and enacts the subjectivity that the prompt asks them to assume within her essay.¹⁷ In this way, “the

¹⁶ Emmons’s example of generic uptake entails tracing how writers of pharmaceutical advertisements “transfer the symptom’s list into a series of second person imperatives” (142). The 2001 Zolof advertisement, in particular, not only takes the form of the symptom’s list (a bulleted series of symptoms) by listing a series of imperatives but also adapts the content by transferring the symptoms into second-person imperatives—for instance, the symptom of “insomnia or hypersomnia” becomes “You’re tired all the time” and the symptom of “diminished interest/pleasure in activities” becomes “Your daily activities and relationships suffer” (141, 142). In this case, as Emmons explains, “the advertisement takes up the genre and translates it into a persuasive appeal; and; finally, the reader takes up the genre and the implicit subjectivity of an empowered *consumer* whose knowledge prepared her to submit herself to medical intervention” (143). Additionally, I would add, the reader also takes up the subjectivity of a depressed subject who needs medical intervention when reading the Zolof ad—they identify with and take on the symptoms of the depressed subject.

¹⁷ As Bawarshi writes in *Genre and the Invention of the Writer*, “every prompt has inscribed within it a subject position for students to assume in order to carry out the assignment. In FYW prompts, these roles can be quite elaborate, asking student to pretend that ‘you have just been hired as a student research assistant by a congressperson in your home state’ or ‘you have been asked by *Rolling Stone* write a critique of one of the following films.’ The prompts do not stop here, however. They go on to specify to students how they should enact these roles” (132).

practice of generic uptake entails interacting with and through a form that encodes particular identities” (Emmons 145). In other words, if the student accepts and enacts the subjectivity inscribed within the writing prompt, she, necessarily, takes up the student subject position within her essay; likewise, if the student does not accept the subjectivity inscribed within the writing prompt, she does not take up the prescribed student subject position within her essay and, most likely, will receive a failing grade for doing so.

While “generic uptake focuses attention on social organizations and roles available to multiple participants, discursive uptake provides clues to the positioning of the individual subject” (139-40). Emmons clarifies further that “unlike those of generic uptake, the dispositional effects of discursive uptake are more individual than collective” (146). While an individual’s generic uptake may create the student subject position, an individual’s discursive uptake will produce a specific kind of student subject. Discursive uptake occurs when key phrases are taken up in a new situation rather than patterns of social organization or discursive form (146).¹⁸ Returning again to the writing prompt, discursive uptake occurs when a student adopts, rewords, reappropriates, or recontextualizes the language of the writing prompt. More specifically, Bawarshi’s examination of essays in *Genre and the Invention of the Writer* demonstrates how individual students perform discursive uptake of the writing prompt in their essays as he

¹⁸ Emmons demonstrates how stock phrases within the discourse of depression, such as “brain chemistry” and “chemical imbalance,” are taken up by subclinical women in their conversations. Claire, for instance, relies upon the phrase “chemical imbalance” to understand herself and her experience of depression because, as she says, “there’s not really anything going on in my mind that I should be this depressed about” (Emmons 148). As Emmons explains:

[Claire] signals her acceptance of [a chemical imbalance] in her final turn saying, ‘I have it going really well right now . . . Maybe it’s a chemical imbalance.’ In this example, Claire has taken up the phrase ‘chemical imbalance’ and actively applied it to herself . . . In this case, her discursive uptake disposes Claire to see her experiences as the result of her own faulty brain chemistry. (148)

finds that less experienced writers often cite the prompt explicitly in their essay or reword the prompt while more experienced writers reappropriate and recontextualize the language of the prompt.

Locating the textual traces of uptake is particularly important for Emmons because she primarily conceptualizes uptake as a disposition that a subject occupies through her or his generic and discursive uptakes. Since disposition is more of an immaterial experience than a textual production or process, she finds other means of making uptake as disposition visible. In much of her work, she seeks to expose how “individuals make use of [patterns of the illness’s expression] as they come to inhabit healthy and ill subjectivities, taking on dispositions and subjective orientations as they take up the available genres and discourses” (135). In other words, as individuals take up genres and discourses of depression, they position and identify themselves as depressed, biomedical subjects. Such work, Emmons argues, “promises to yield a clearer understanding of how *experiences* become *symptoms* and how *individuals* become *patients*” (151 emphasis in original); or, more broadly, such work allows scholars to expose and understand the “rhetorical preparation of the *subjects* who enact and receive utterances” (135 emphasis in the original).

With Emmons’s interest in how individuals experience depression and create themselves as depressed subjects, her conceptualization of uptake as a disposition allows her to explore this individual component of uptake. Her further distinction between generic and discursive uptake within the textual traces of process of uptake allow her to expose how uptake works as dispositions. Generic and discursive uptake both work together during the overall uptake process to position individuals as certain kinds of

subjects. As Emmons explains, “traces of uptake within a variety of texts reveal the positioning of the depressed subject as the results of complex interactions among texts, genres, scenes, and individuals” (141). In this way, Emmons not only establishes uptake as an important component within an individual’s subjectivity and identity negotiations but also seeks to develop a means by which scholars can see the textual traces of uptake so that an immaterial process becomes more visible. Moreover, by examining how uptake contributes to the creation of the biomedical subject, Emmons shifts the uptake conversation to focus more explicitly and extensively on ideological processes of uptake, specifically the role that uptake plays within the constitution of subjectivities. Suggesting that previous uptake work (such as Bawarshi’s and Kill’s) “is focused on the social and interactional consequences of individual acts” (137) as well as textual and generic chains, she argues for a “reanimation of uptake” that returns “subjective agency” to individuals whose acts of textual production affect “the shapes and trajectories of their own and others’ individual subjectivities” (152). Emmons’s conceptualization of uptake closely follows her interest in reanimating uptake. She suggests that, “if we are to account for the power, particularly the intimate, embodied power, of uptake, we must redefine uptake not as the relation between two (or more) genres, but as the disposition of subjects that results from that relation” (137). This shift from the relationship or interstices between genres to the dispositions that result from that relationship moves the focus of uptake away from only genre and texts to the individual, specifically the ways in which uptake affects the individual’s creation of his or her own subjectivity.

To briefly summarize each scholars’ primary use of uptake, Bawarshi conceptualizes uptake as a pathway (or more broadly as a space) in which various factors

converge and intervene; Kill sees uptake as a process of design and selection in which individuals can assert agency in order to transform and innovate; and Emmons understands uptake as disposition(s) that individuals occupy when engaging genres and texts and textually identifies these dispositions through uses of generic and discursive uptakes. Of course, there is some overlap within their other conceptualizations of uptake—both Bawarshi and Kill discuss uptake as a space; both Bawarshi and Emmons see uptake as a disposition of sorts; and both Kill and Emmons identify uptake as a process. Within this overlap, however, slight yet significant differences exist.

Kill's use of the space metaphor extends Bawarshi's so that she can more fully explore and detail what happens—the actions, the processes—within the space of uptake, specifically what happens when writers innovate, rather than focusing on uptake as a space itself. The difference between their uses of space, while slight, has major implications for uptake. For Bawarshi, uptake is a space in which various factors converge and intervene, yet that space is pre-formed or pre-established in conventional and normative ways when individuals enter it, which is what makes critical interventions so difficult to achieve. For Kill, though, uptake is more of a space of possibility rather than as a space of pre-established normativity. Certainly, for Kill, social expectations still affect the creation of that space, and to this extent, it is still pre-established in some ways, but individual intentions also affect the creation of that space, which allows room for possibility.

Both Bawarshi and Emmons suggest that an individual's dispositions are result of the interaction between genres and texts (uptake) and that these dispositions are created through the use of genres and texts; however, Bawarshi appears to define and use

dispositions more broadly than Emmons. Bawarshi considers uptakes as “cultural dispositions that mediate dominant formations/designs” (“Taking” 654). He further refines these cultural dispositions as attachments that people hold. His use of disposition, then, suggests that uptake is a belief or state of mind regarding certain events, people, ideas, etc. that is culturally prescribed and reinforced and that is learned through genre. Emmons looks to uptake “as the disposition(s) assumed through the use of genres.” Her use of disposition suggests that it is a specific subjectivity or identity that an individual acquires. Emmons’s use, certainly, may fall under Bawarshi’s, as she is interested in the specific dispositions of subjectivity and identity. But another more interesting difference, for me, is that Bawarshi is interested in how uptake works as an ideological process that creates dispositions that reinforce dominant cultural beliefs, while Emmons is interested in how uptake works as an ideological process of dispositions that create specific subjectivities and identities for individuals. For Bawarshi, uptakes *lead to* cultural dispositions that individuals adopt; for Emmons, uptakes *are* dispositions that individuals inhabit. The difference, once again, is slight but important. If uptakes lead to cultural dispositions rather than are already existing dispositions then individuals may be able to intervene and alter those dispositions during the uptake process rather than simply adopt them—the most important implication being that Bawarshi allows for more room within uptake for individuals to assert some kind of individual agency while Emmons allows for less room, seeing individuals more as products of genres and discourses. Emmons use of “subjective agency” to understand individuals’ actions speaks especially well to this distinction. While this phrase acknowledges that individuals can and do act, it also

suggests that they act primarily as subjects of the genres and discourses (and, by extension, ideologies) in which they engage.

The same holds true for the difference between Kill's use of process and Emmons's. Kill imagines uptake as a process of selection and design on behalf of the individual, suggesting that while individuals are beholden to the genre and text to a certain extent through selection, they also have freedom to a certain extent through design. In fact, it is through the process of selection and design that Kill suggests individuals can assert agency and act in innovative ways. Emmons, however, seems to suggest more rigid or set process of uptake since she imagines the processes to include generic and discursive uptake and examines how individuals come to inhabit the subject positions that the generic and discursive uptakes engender.

So where does all of this leave us with uptake? Returning to my initial questions—what is uptake and what happens during uptake—I am afraid that those who are searching for a simple answer will not find one here as uptake, like most fruitful concepts, is not so easily or singularly defined. At first glance, the three primary definitions of uptake may appear to have little in common even though they are intimately related—Bawarshi sees uptake as a space, Kill as a process, and Emmons as a disposition. Without wanting to diminish the importance of their differences that I outline above, there is also a common core in these definitions—they all suggest that uptake is action-oriented. This, of course, should be of little surprise since uptake comes to us from speech-act theory and scholars have long recognized genres as rhetorical social actions. For Bawarshi, the action of uptake is the ways in which various factors converge and intervene to normalize and habituate. For Kill, the action of uptake is the

way in which individuals assert agency to transform and innovate. And for Emmons, the action of uptake is the way in which it contributes to the creation of subject positions.

What action each scholars “takes up” within his or her explanation of uptake is dependant upon his or her purpose or goals or what he or she are most interested in examining within the human communication process. And, depending on what action they look to, they provide different conceptualizations of uptake. For example, since Bawarshi is interested in the normalization action of uptake, he sees uptake as a pre-established space in which various factors converge and intervene in typified ways. Kill is more interested in the transformative and innovative action of uptake, so she sees uptake as a process in which individuals can make certain rhetorical choices, decisions, and designs. Emmons is interested in the subject-forming action of uptake, so she sees uptake as a disposition that individuals occupy when engaging genres and texts. The common issue for uptake that unites all of these scholars’ investigations is the extent to which uptake allows for or does not allow for individual action or agency¹⁹.

¹⁹ I want to speak briefly to how I am defining and using agency and why I primarily conceptualize it in terms of individual action within this dissertation. Agency, at its most basic level, suggests the ability to act. Of course, human agency is a much more complex and hotly contested concept than this. Within scholarship, many question: does agency exist, or do we suffer from the “illusion of agency”; to what degree are we “free” acting agents; where does agency exist; if agency exists within the individual, how does he or she achieve it; are we several multiple and conflicting subject positions at once or is there some underlying agent; and if we occupy several subject positions, can we use the tensions that result from these multiple and conflicting subject positions to achieve agency? In fact, at the 2003 Alliance of Rhetorical Societies conference, forty scholars proposed differing position papers to the question “how ought we to understand the concept of rhetorical agency?” Despite the plethora of answers provided, the choices still seem limiting: either one believes people possess agency (although it may be limited and constrained) and are, thus, agents or subjects; or people are possessed by the agency of external forces (such as ideology, discourses, language, genre) and are, thus, always subjects. Clearly I more closely align myself with the first position, believing that, albeit constrained in various ways, human agency exists. Not to ignore the baggage that comes along with using the term agency, I often opt to use individual action instead of agency within this dissertation. Individual action explicitly acknowledges the most important part of agency for me—that is the ability to act, to exert an action. It also provides a counter-balance for genre as social action, acknowledging that individuals play an active role within the meaning-making process as well. I use individual not to suggest that individuals act as totally free and uninhibited agents within the world but, rather, to acknowledge that while individuals are socially situated and influenced in many ways, the ways in which those factors coincide within an individual at a specific moment in time is singular to that individual.

Equally important to positioning uptake as action-oriented, all definitions implicitly or explicitly suggest the importance of individuals as socially situated beings within meaning-making processes. Individuals *must* act for uptake and the resulting actions to occur. While Kill and Emmons explicitly address the role of the individual within uptake, Bawarshi, too, considers the individual, especially the ways in which he or she can critically intervene within the space of uptake. Uptake, then, is an active process that requires individuals. Individuals may be compelled to take up texts in certain ways, yet it is, ultimately, the individual who has to make or break those expectations (of course to varying extents according to different scholars). It is within the capacity of the individual to act within uptake, as Bawarshi and Kill point out, that he or she has the opportunity to intervene in uptakes, produce alternative uptakes, and disrupt social structures and institutions.²⁰ While disruption of uptakes may not come easily, as is demonstrated through Emmon's examination of the discourse of depression and Bawarshi's examination of the Israeli and Palestine conflict, it still is a worthy and worthwhile pursuit, especially within the context of the composition classroom where educators often seek to empower student writers.

To the extent that individuals must act for uptake to occur, we can also understand uptake as a performance following Emmons's identification of uptake as a "performative and interpretive act." This conceptualization of uptake, I believe, encapsulates Bawarshi's, Kill's, and Emmons's since a performance allows an individual to enter into

²⁰ It is important to note, at this juncture, that my focus on the actions of individuals does not preclude group or collective actions. Groups are, after all, made up of individuals who choose in certain ways to act together. While this dissertation and my conception of uptake focuses on its relation to individuals, a fuller exploration of the relationship between uptake and group or collective actions is an avenue for future scholarship.

a space in which various factors converge and intervene and shape that space (Bawarshi), to engage in a process of design and selection (Kill), and to inhabit certain disposition(s) (Emmons). And, as Richard Schechner argues, “any behavior, event, action, or thing can be studied ‘as’ performance, can be analyzed in terms of doing, behaving, and showing” (32). Erving Goffman also suggests the widespread use of performance in everyday life. Certainly, then, uptake can be understood as a performance that occurs within everyday life.

The performance metaphor also seems particularly well suited for uptake because, as Schechner suggests, “we all perform more than we realize . . . daily life, ceremonial life, and artistic life consist largely of routines, habits, and rituals; and the recombination of already behaved behaviors” (28). While Schechner refers to these “the habits, rituals, and routines of life” as “restored behavior,” I believe we can also understand them, as Bawarshi suggests, in terms of uptake. In fact, uptake may play an important role in restoring behavior, as Schechner describes it. He notes that “restored behavior is the key process of every kind of performing, in every day life, in healing, in ritual, in play, and in the arts. Restored behavior is ‘out there,’ separate from ‘me’” (28) and that “performance in the restored behavior sense means never for the first time, always for the second to the *n*th time: twice-behaved behavior” (29). He further explains restored behavior by commenting that:

these strips of [restored] behavior can be rearranged or reconstructed . . . they have a life of their own. The original ‘truth’ or ‘source’ of the behavior may not be known, or may be lost, ignored, or contradicted—even while the truth or source is being honored. How the strips of behavior were made, found, or

developed may be unknown or concealed; elaborated; distorted by myth or tradition. Restored behavior can be of long duration as in ritual performances or of short duration as in fleeting gestures such as waving goodbye. (28)

Similar to restored behavior, the motivations and reasons behind conventional or normalized uptakes are often lost with time, yet they endure like the uptake of a greeting by the waving of a hand. In this sense, uptakes too appear to have a life of their own—or what Bakhtin calls “sclerotic deposits” of intentions long passed in “Discourse in the Novel” (292)—a life that many simply adhere to and join rather than challenge and disrupt.

Restored behavior also connects to performative and performativity²¹ in ways that further shed light on what I term individual uptake. Schechner writes that, “restored behavior enacted not on a stage but in ‘real life’ is what poststructuralists call a ‘performative.’ It is their contention that all social identities, gender, for example are performatives” (141).²² Several poststructuralist theorists suggest that individual identity—in terms of gender, race, class, sexuality, etc.—is not fixed or biological but rather the result of socially-constructed and repeated performances. When I refer to individual uptake, it is these performances of self to which I am referring. In particular, I am interested in how performances of self (individual uptake) interact with performances of genres and discourses (generic and discursive uptake).

²¹ Schechner notes that “in performance studies, performativity points to a variety of topics, among them the construction of social reality including gender and race, the restored behavior quality of performances, and the complex relationship of performance practice to performance theory” (110). The way in which I use it here refers primarily to his first topic: the construction of social reality including race and gender.

²² The poststructuralists that Schechner names include Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Giles Deleuze. Other theorists he identifies with this movement while explaining that they are not strictly poststructuralists include Jean Baudrillard, Guy Debord, Jacques Lacan, Judith Butler, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Jurgen Habermas, and Herbert Marcuse.

Moreover, the performance metaphor for uptake seems particularly illuminating as it not only identifies uptake as action-oriented and reliant upon individuals but it also explicitly acknowledges the situational and transitory nature of uptake. Every uptake performance will vary, sometimes in slight and nearly undetectable ways, even though an individual may choose to follow the conventional and normalized script. Returning again to Schechner and performance theory, he writes that “as embodied practices each and every performance is specific and different from every other. The differences enact the convention and traditions of a genre, the personal choices made by the performers, various cultural patterns, historical circumstances, and the particularities of reception” (29). The same holds true for uptake: the ways in which individuals choose and enact conventions (perform discursive and generic uptake) along with the ways in which individuals perform themselves (individual uptake) within particular contexts and situations creates differences between uptakes.

Rather than understanding uptake as an isolated or single action or event, uptake is better understood as a multi-layered performance. And the layers of uptake that each scholar describes and explores work together, not independently. When encountering a text, individuals perform an uptake, thus creating and engaging in a complex space in which many processes occur, one of which is the individual’s process of selection and design (which includes, but is not limited to, generic and discursive uptakes), that may lead to the individual inhabiting certain dispositions and subject positions. All of this occurs within uptake; conceptualizing uptake as a multi-layered performance, then, acknowledges the complex and many-layered actions of uptake and, more importantly for my purposes, the individual’s performance in the enactment of those actions.

With so much occurring during the performance of uptake, it is, of course, difficult for scholars to examine all of these layers at once. Which layer of uptake a scholar peels back to closely examine is dependant upon his or her purposes or goals. For instance, since Kill is interested in agency, innovation, and change within uptake, she peels back the “process” layer since this allows her to examine how an individual can intervene within and control the process of uptake. Since Bawarshi is interested in the normalization function of uptake and critical interventions within normalized uptakes, he peels back the “space” layer since this allows him to examine how and why uptakes become conventionalized and how individuals can intervene within those conventionalized spaces. And since Emmons is interested in how genres and discourse contribute to the creation particular subjectivities, she peels back the “disposition” layer since this allows her to examine how individuals come to inhabit the depressed medical subject position. How one understands and applies uptake, then, is a matter of perspective—depending upon the scholar’s interests, purposes, and goals, it is performance, a space, a process, a disposition and even more as future scholarship will surely discover.

Adding Another Layer to Uptake: Individual Uptake

As demonstrated above, uptake is a complex yet rich area of study for scholars who seek to understand how and why individuals act within rhetorical situations and interact with genres and texts as well as with other individuals. What I find especially useful about uptake is that it allows scholars to acknowledge and examine the possibility for individual action without diminishing or ignoring the influence and relevance of the social world on individuals. Put simply, uptake helps us better imagine the ways in

which individuals assert an (somewhat) individual agency within a social agency. Certainly Kill begins to examine individual action in her examination of how professional writers use innovation to achieve social commentary and Dryer, too, examines ways in which uptakes can be de-routinized; yet the majority of uptake scholarship remains focused on the ways in which individuals engage in the certain subjectivities, identities, and ideologies that genres and their discourses create and sustain (consistent with much work in rhetorical genre theory). In other words, scholarly attention is still primarily focused on normalized uptakes rather than disruptive uptakes even though there is widespread acknowledgement that individuals do not have to engage in habitual or normalized uptakes, as Freadman points out. By combining Emmons's method of textually tracing the processes of uptake, Bawarshi's call for critical interventions, and Kill's work in innovation, I seek to add another layer to the performance of uptake that more fully accounts for the individual and that may contribute to a more productive understanding of uptake disruption.

To do so, I build upon Kill's work by shifting my attention from genre to the individual by proposing and exploring yet another process in which individuals engage during the performance of uptake that more fully considers what individuals bring to the processes of selection and design—individual uptake. Certainly Kill begins to address this aspect of uptake by exploring how individuals engage innovative uptakes within genres, but I seek to more clearly delineate and explore the ways in which individuals contribute to the process of uptake. I argue that individual uptake interacts with generic and discursive uptake (as Emmons defines them) during the overall uptake process to create a singular uptake—in other words, generic, discursive, and individual uptakes

interact together to constitute the overall uptake process, and each performance of the overall uptake process is singular to that individual in that particular moment in time even though it may share commonalities with others' uptakes within a similar situation. I also suggest that, like generic and discursive uptake, individual uptake is visible through textual traces.

When individuals take up genres and discourses, they are performing multiple uptakes—they are not just taking up genre. As Emmons suggests, “the problem of uptake is the problem of what is *taken on* when an individual *takes up* particular genres and discourses” (138 emphasis in original). Emmons’s distinction between “generic” and “discursive” uptake is particularly helpful in understanding what an individual takes on when she takes up a genre.²³ While the generic and discursive distinction that Emmons identifies is certainly illuminating as it attempts to outline two particular kinds of uptake that occurs during the complex act of uptake, I believe another problem of uptake is the problem of how “what is taken on when an individual takes up particular genres and discourses” (that is generic and discursive uptakes) interacts with what the individual has already taken on prior to his or her interaction with genres and discourses (that is individual uptake). Uptakes have memories and so, too, do people, as Freadman reminds us. As suggested by Sunny Hyon, Bakhtin provides another helpful base from which to examine this problem of uptake. Bakhtin writes in “The Problem of Speech Genres,”

²³ Recall that for Emmons, “‘generic uptake’ describes the subject’s selection and translation of forms of discourse (and the impositions of power those forms imply) into new speech situations,” and, thus, “generic uptake involves the selection and translation of typified forms . . . and social roles . . . into new discursive situations” (139). Discursive uptake is a second kind of uptake “where key phrases, rather than patterns of social organization or discursive form, are taken up in new situations,” but “unlike those of generic uptake, the dispositional effects of discursive uptake are more individual than collective. Where generic uptake focuses attention on social organizations and roles available to multiple participants, discursive uptake provides clues to the positioning of the individual subject” (139-40).

“any utterance—oral or written, primary or secondary, and in any sphere of communication—is individual and therefore can reflect the individuality of the speaker” (qtd. in Hyon 63).²⁴ Hyon, for example, finds in her study of retention-promotion-tenure (RPT) evaluations that “the presence of inventiveness also seems to relate to the report writers’ individual styles, institutional closeness to the evaluated faculty member, and security in genre-bending” (190).²⁵ While these factors, of course, would vary based on the genre and writers studied, Hyon’s study highlights the importance of attending to individual factors that affect the production of texts. It is to delineating this dimension of uptake—what I am calling individual uptake—that I direct my attention to here.

A number of factors need attention when considering what an individual has already taken on prior to his or her interaction with genres and discourses. One factor to consider includes an individual’s antecedent genre knowledge (Jamieson, Devitt). Uptake is, most likely, influenced by what genres are available to the individual both during the taking up of the initial text and the production of the corresponding uptake text. Returning the writing prompt yet again, when a student encounters a writing prompt, she may initially turn to her antecedent genre knowledge of the academic essay

²⁴ Bakhtin goes on to explain that “not all genres are equally conducive to reflecting individual style,” noting that artistic literature are most conducive to individual style while the least conducive are genres that require standard forms, such as business documents, military commands, verbal signals in industry (63). While not necessarily disagreeing with Bakhtin that some genres may be more conducive to reflecting the individuality of the speaker than others, his privileging of the novel and his distinction between primary and secondary genres certainly affects his understanding of how conducive genres are to including individual style. And as Sunny Hyon demonstrates, the retention-promotion-tenure evaluations demonstrate that even business-type documents include a wide variety of individual expressive intonations.

²⁵ Hyon explains that by inventiveness she means “report writers’ playful deviations from convention” (177). When compared to Kill’s use of innovation or the use of convention in unconventional ways, Hyon inventiveness seems to more explicitly attend to the “play” of writing, suggesting humor especially since she identifies inventiveness in the forms of hyperbole, humor, irony, and informal language, whereas Kill’s use of innovation does not necessarily address this “playful” aspect of language but rather all forms of deviation from conventions. For this reason, I adopt Kill’s use of innovation within this study rather than Hyon’s inventiveness.

rather than say of the diary that she writes in her spare time or the lab report that she writes in her biology lab to complete the prompt within the context of a composition class.

Extending beyond antecedent genre knowledge, another factor to consider within individual uptake are the individual's other past experiences, more broadly. If, as Kill suggests, "genres may define roles for their participants but other socially significant markers—for example, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and so on—may trouble or challenge a person's generic habituations" (51), then we must also consider the ways in which normalized or habituated generic and discursive uptakes interact with individuals and their own prior or current subjectivities and identities during their performances of uptake, especially if we want to better imagine or understand the individual's ability to act within textual and generic production. Moreover, if, as Emmons suggests, generic and discursive uptake are performative and interpretive acts, then we must understand how individual performances of "socially significant markers" may influence (either to conform or to disrupt) performative and interpretive acts. For example, a student may respond to a writing prompt with a form non-standardized English mixed with standardized English not because she does not know the convention of using only standardized English but because she exercised her choice to perform the form on non-standardized English used by her family that she considers as central to her identity.²⁶ In short, there are many layers of performance occurring and interacting within uptake—generic, discursive, and individual—that may help us better account for and see individual action within uptake.

²⁶ This suggestion is derived, in part, from Min Zhan Lu's Lu's "An Essay on the Work of Composition" in which she attempts to account for why people might make certain decisions while composing.

While Emmons's primary concern in "Uptake and the Biomedical Subject" is to outline generic and discursive uptake, I believe that she hints at this third uptake process of individual uptake as well. When discussing Claire's description of her recent visit to the campus health center and Mei's assumption that there are tests that can determine if she has a chemical imbalance, Emmons notes that both women have adopted the subjectivities of a patient with limited responsibilities and options through their generic and discursive uptakes of the discourse of depression (150-51). However, she also notes that both women are hesitant to completely assume the biomedical subjectivity since they are not yet committed to taking antidepressants (i.e. "taking the pharmaceutical route"). Based on these observations, Emmons writes that:

Acting as double agents within the discourse of depression, these women inhabit complicated subjectivities and authorities in relation to their own bodies and selves. They are both acting as their own agents, claiming the power to choose the pharmaceutical 'route' or not, depending on their own definition of health and illness, and they are also acting as agents of the biomedical discourse, relinquishing their rights to the diagnostic interpretation of their experiences.
(151)²⁷

Emmons accounts for Claire's and Mei's hesitation to choose the pharmaceutical route as a moment of both women acting as their own agents. While not disagreeing with Emmons on this point, I would add that the women are acting as their own agents in this case because of the ways in which their individual uptakes interact with the generic and discursive uptakes in which they have engaged. In other words, the women are "acting as

²⁷ Here Emmons adopts Bawarshi's use of the double agent that is "his characterization of the student writer as 'both an agent *of* his or her desires and actions and an agent *on behalf* of already existing desires and actions' (p.50)" (cited in "Uptake" 138).

agents of biomedical discourse” through their generic and discursive uptakes and “acting as their own agents” through their individual uptakes within the overall uptake process. These three uptake processes and the ways in which they interact allow Claire and Mei, and more generally individuals, to act as double agents.

Examining writers’ individual uptakes in addition to generic and discursive uptakes is particularly useful for me because, like Bawarshi, Kill, and Emmons, I, too, have my own interests, purposes, and goals behind my use of uptake. In the remainder of this dissertation, I seek to extend the work of scholars, such as Kill and Dryer, who have begun examining how individuals assert action within texts, genre, and uptake by shifting the focus more explicitly to a certain kind of individual action, critical individual action. Critical individual action, for me, does not simply acknowledge that individuals can act within and between genres but, instead, works to disrupt or de-regularize conventionalized uptakes and genres (and the ideologies, assumptions, and subject positions embedded within them). Attention to this kind of individual action, I believe, supports Bawarshi’s call for critical intervention (or critical examination and intervention in uptakes) in both his work on language diversity and the Israel-Palestine conflict. As he notes in his work on language differences, critical intervention in our uptakes:

is particularly difficult because uptakes, as learned inclinations that mediate our encounters with language differences, are less textually, materially “visible” and more deeply held as attachments. Yet uptakes are what we have to contend with as we work to create classroom environments that are hospitable to language differences and that make strategic use of students’ various discursive resources.

(7)

Bawarshi's call for critical intervention certainly is an important and worthy one not only to make the classroom more hospitable to language differences but also to make the classroom more hospitable to difference in general. We need to explore more fully how those critical interventions can and do occur if we are to support and encourage them within the composition classroom.

Kill's use of "conventional" and "innovative" uptakes might provide a useful starting point for imagining ways in which critical interventions can take place in the composition classroom.²⁸ Kill's case study of Zora Neale Hurston and Elizabeth Keckly is of particular interest to me as it highlights the ways in which these writers create innovative uptakes through alternative uses of conventional uptakes in order to challenge textual authority and, more importantly, social structures. It is this kind of critical innovative uptake—an uptake that seeks to interrupt or disrupt conventional uptakes in order to challenge or unveil embedded ideological commitments—that interests me most. I examine how composition educators and scholars can encourage students through pedagogy to create and to engage in critical innovative uptakes within the classroom context; or, in Bawarshi's terms, how we can create critical interventions in uptakes (and by extension genre) within the classroom. Since the relationship between uptake and genres is bi-directional, critical interventions work to disrupt not only uptakes but also genres since alternative uptake performance can also work to alter the genres that are taken up.

²⁸ Recall that Kill images uptakes as existing on a continuum with conventional uptakes that "work to ease communication but also may compel people to reproduce meanings and material effects" on one end and innovative uptakes that "work to innovate and make use of discursive convention in unexpected ways" on the other (8).

This work expands upon Kill's in that it examines not just what happens during innovative uptake but also how we can encourage that innovative uptake to occur. It also moves beyond unique writing situations in which innovation may be more common or easily achieved to consider everyday—or usual—writing situations in which innovation may be less easily achieved. Finally, it examines student writers (non-professional writers) within the university context as opposed to professional writers. Kill's three case studies, while revealing, address situations in which professional writers intentionally sought to disrupt or innovate in certain ways. Moreover, they are cases that are relatively unique in that they are not regularly encountered by many. Additionally, these three cases involve writers who are in some way “othered” or marginalized—Alan Sokal, a physicist writing within cultural studies; Elizabeth Keckly and Zora Neale Hurston, African-American women writing within white male literary tradition and to primarily white audiences; and Lyn Hejinian, a radical feminist language writer writing within the poetic tradition. While it is arguable that all students within composition classrooms are “othered” or marginalized in some way(s), many students within higher education do not identify as “othered”; in fact, educators have long lamented the “status quo” students who resist critical thinking and pedagogy because they are within or strive to be within white, male, middle-class positions of power (for example C.H Knoblauch and others within *Composition and Resistance*). How, then, do composition scholars and educators encourage all students to disrupt conventional uptakes and engage in innovative uptakes within everyday writing situations that they encounter within the classroom? It is to this question that I turn to in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

Harnessing the Power of Disruption:
Moving Beyond Interpretation and into Textual Productions

Disruption: The action of rending or bursting asunder; violent dissolution of continuity; forcible severance. –Oxford English Dictionary

At first glance, disruption appears potentially dangerous and debilitating and, thus, to be avoided. Disruptions can be annoying at the least and destructive at the worst since disruptions often keep people from getting where they want to go and from achieving their goals. Yet disruption, itself, is not necessarily always negative, even though it is generally identified as such. While disruptions may sometimes impede, they can also be productive and lead in new directions. As Clayton Christiansen, Michael B. Horn, and Curtis W. Johnson state, “disruption is a positive force” (11).¹ As opposed to interruptions that often go unnoticed and ignored, the forceful and abrupt nature of disruption makes it particularly productive because disruptions call attention to themselves. People notice disruptions because they make them feel uncomfortable. And people often cannot ignore disruptions as they garner some sort of response. In short, disruptions are powerful. Scholars, then, often turn disruptive moments into productive ones by analyzing why disruptive moments are occurring, why people find them to be disruptive, and how people can work with and through the disruption. As Julie Jung writes, disruptions “create spaces where theories and relationships can be rethought,

¹ In *Disrupting Class*, Christiansen, Horn, and Johnson are interested in applying their theory of disruptive innovation or “the process by which innovation transforms a market whose services or products are complicated and expensive into one where simplicity, convenience, accessibility, and affordability characterize the community” (11)—originally applied to for-profit enterprises and industries—to public schools. While I pull from their understanding of disruption, I do not use their theory of disruptive innovation because, as they have defined it, they are interested in how innovation disrupts and transforms markets (and by their extension public schools) from complexity into simplicity through the use the technology. My use of disruption in this chapter focuses on its ability to create complexity and questions rather than simplicity and convenience through innovative uptakes that do not necessarily include the use of technology.

renegotiated, revised” (“Revision” 437). In this dissertation, disruption represents the ways in which scholars and educators can work to critically intervene within normalized uptakes, and it is particularly important for this project since it seeks to increase writers’ rhetorical awareness, flexibility, and agency. Disruption, I argue, should be productively incorporated into pedagogical practices so that normalized uptakes are not simply taken at face value but rather isolated and questioned. From these kinds of critical interventions, writers can make informed and purposeful rhetorical choices that engage conventional or alternative uptakes, depending upon their purposes and goals.

Several lines of scholarship within composition and rhetoric attempt to harness the power of disruption to encourage critical interventions within particular kinds of uptakes. Feminism, for instance, has sought to capitalize on and create moments of disruption in order to critique and expand the scope of composition and rhetoric. In Joy Ritchie and Kathleen Boardman’s “Feminism in Composition: Inclusion, Metonymy, and Disruption,” they identify three tropes or narratives that feminist scholars have used within the field—the inclusion trope that seeks to include women and gain equality for women; the metonymy trope that seeks to connect feminism and composition; and the disruption trope that seeks to critique hegemonic narratives and “reread and even reconfigure past experience and practice” (598). Drawing on postmodern theories, disruption has allowed feminist scholars “to analyze and critique the basic ‘process’ narratives of composition’s first 20 years, to raise questions about difference(s), and to critique disciplinary practices and structures that have shaped composition” (Ritchie and Boardman 598). Other feminist scholars have sought to disrupt the rhetorical canon to include women (Lunsford), the (lower) status of women as composition instructors

(Miller, Schell), and the gendered space of the composition classroom (Bauer; Gibson, Marinara, and Meem), among many other areas.

In another vein, cultural studies attempts to create disruptions within readings of texts, particularly popular culture texts. Influential proponents of cultural studies, such as James Berlin, John Trimbur, John Schlib, and Lester Faigley, argue that close readings paired with cultural analysis and critique (or interpretation) allow readers to examine often unnoticed and underlying power dynamics, social relationships, ideologies, and assumptions embedded within texts. As James Berlin and Michael Vivion note, within cultural studies “both teachers and students . . . engage in critique, in a critical examination of the economic, social, and political conditions within which the signifying practices of culture take place” (xii.).

Critical pedagogy, like feminism and cultural studies, seeks to disrupt dominant cultural practices, institutions, and ideologies through analysis and critique, specifically “problem-posing” education. In problem-posing education, the teacher and students, together, examine through dialogue and reflection material (in Freire’s terms “generative themes”) from the students’ everyday lives in order to develop critical consciousness or “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire 35). Critical pedagogy, however, is also explicitly committed to education for citizenship, imagining classrooms as democratic (counter) public spheres where alternative ideologies and ideals can be imagined and enacted (Giroux). In other words, critical pedagogy seeks to disrupt dominant ideologies, especially within educational systems and institutions, that may work against students so that they can then resist and, ideally, change them.

Clearly the act of disruption plays an important and central role within many areas of composition and rhetoric, and there is great value in these acts. Feminist scholars have created a space for marginalized voices in the academy have exposed cultural, institutional, and economical biases against women, and have expanded pedagogical practices to be more inclusive and self-reflexive. Cultural studies scholars have expanded the scope of recognized and valuable texts to include those of popular culture and mass media, have expanded the content of composition courses to include that of everyday culture and texts familiar to students, and have worked to expose culture and texts as ideological constructs that need close examination and critical analyses. And critical pedagogues have provided necessary critiques of educational structures and institutions in which scholars and teachers regularly engage, have provided students with a voice with which to question and critique dominant ideologies, and have worked to change potentially oppressive elements of society. Certainly, feminist, cultural studies, and critical pedagogy scholars' acts of disruption have allowed for many gains.

Within these gains, I believe there is also further opportunity. In these lines of scholarship, disruption primarily occurs during the readings and interpretations of texts, ideologies, structures, and institutions but seldom continues into the production or writing of texts. In other words, disruption is encouraged during analysis but less often during writing. Students may be encouraged to write *about* disruptions and what insights they have gained from them, but they are rarely disrupted or disrupt *through* writing. A quick read of assignments outlined in *Left Margins: Cultural Studies and Composition Studies* highlights this tendency. For example, Todd Sformo and Barbara Tudor in “*Monday Night Football: Entertainment or Indoctrination*” describe how they attempted to get their

students to think “critically about professional sports” by “teaching students how to isolate specific details of sports presentations for in-depth analysis” (116). The culminating assignment for this unit asked students “to critically interpret the sports presentation of their choice in a (3-4 page) essay” (127). When describing an “insightful essay” on professional wrestling, they describe conventional qualities of an academic essay:

the student was able to see past the hype and came to some perceptive conclusions. When considering the riotous response of the crowd to the cultural stereotypes presented in the wrestling ring, the student concluded that, despite the comic trappings, at some level the social caricature represent the beliefs of the audience. He reported common patterns in audience response (an absolute distinction between good and evil, support for the underdog against a notorious villain, and concern for the damsel in distress), supporting his findings with specific examples. (128)

Despite some focus on interpretation, scholars have acknowledged that disrupting readings and interpretations is not enough. Ritchie and Boardman encourage others to connect disruption to lived experiences and material history (specifically in the form of coalition building and collaboration) so that disruption and theorizing resulting from disruption may remain relevant (604). Critical pedagogy, via Freire, also recognizes the importance of moving beyond interpretation through its use of praxis, “the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it” (Freire 79). In critical pedagogy, reflection (or interpretation) needs to be accompanied by action because “neither critical consciousness nor unreflective action alone will enable people to

transform the world” (George 94). While Ritchie and Boardman as well as Freire provide us with important reminders that disruption of interpretations need to be accompanied by other actions, what those other actions can and should be are not entirely clear.

Others more explicitly outline what those other actions that accompany interpretation may look like by moving disruption into textual productions, the realm I am exploring in this study. For example, some feminist scholars have suggested that the theory behind and the practice of *écriture féminine* within the composition classroom allows students to critique and disrupt phallogentric academic discourse, although Lynn Worsham argues that this use of *écriture féminine* has not proven useful because it neutralizes its radical and disruptive potential and that *écriture féminine* is better used to investigate the ideological commitments of existing writing theory and practice than to build new writing theory and practice. Other feminist and critical pedagogy scholars have suggested the use of alternative, non-academic genres, such as journal writing, story-telling, and autobiography, as ways to disrupt conventional academic discourse. While these genres disrupted academic conventions originally, these “non-academic” genres have become so commonplace that their disruptive power has been weakened since they have been accepted as valid forms of academic discourse within the composition classroom.

In an especially explicit example of moving disruption to textual production, Bruce McComisky’s “social-process rhetorical inquiry” (informed by cultural studies) focuses on both the processes and products of discourse by providing students a set of heuristic question so that they can investigate the cycle of cultural production,

consumption, and distribution in order to provide institutional critiques. In this approach, as McComisky explains, students are asked to produce both critical essays that focus on their interpretations and reading as well as practical documents that enact their critical essays. This approach weds disruptive readings and textual productions as students are asked to put their critical readings into “practice” through practical documents.

Like these and other scholars before me, I, too, seek to harness the power of disruption and I also seek to move disruption beyond interpretation and into other kinds of action, specifically textual production. To do so, I begin this chapter by exploring how the explicit teaching of genre attempts to disrupt students’ interpretation of genres, mainly through analysis and critique, and offers some suggestions for how students can disrupt through textual production as well. I then turn to multicultural pedagogy, a pedagogy that has more fully realized the potential to disrupt through textual productions. Multicultural pedagogy, with its focus on language differences as well as multicultural and multilingual students, attempts to disrupt standardized or conventional academic uptakes through students’ alternative writing practices. By merging these two pedagogical approaches and rereading them through uptake, I suggest how teachers can encourage all students to disrupt their conventional uptakes through a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption that is situated within the interpretations *and* productions of texts. The goal of such a pedagogy is to help foster in students a sense of rhetorical agency so that they can gain a critical awareness of their uptakes. With greater awareness, students may also see more possibility within their uptakes and then use that awareness to select uptakes more deliberately and responsibly.

Explicit Teaching of Genre and Genre Awareness Pedagogy

The explicit teaching of genre may seem an unlikely place to explore disruption due to the critiques leveled against it. This approach, especially as outlined by the Sydney School, has been widely and loudly criticized by many scholars concerned that it leads not to disruption or creativity but rather to rigid and thoughtless imitation of genres as well as mindless indoctrination into certain ideologies (Dixon, Green, Luke, and Sawyer and Watson). For example, Bill Green has suggested that the teaching of genre may lead to “a curiously static world, seemingly fixed, immutable; the boundaries are clear, and decisive; one more or less moves within them” (qtd. in Richardson 133). In another example, Allan Luke has expressed concern that the teaching of genre does not adequately address “issues of textual access and power” or “pedagogical variance and difference across cultures” and, as a result, “rhetoricians and linguists could wind up wiring the circuitry of post-industrial social reproduction as uncritically as educational psychologists oiled the machinery of industrial capitalism” (xi.).

In one of the more commonly cited critiques of genre teaching, Aviva Freedman in “Show and Tell? The Role of Explicit Teaching in the Learning of New Genres” (1993) provides other cautions including that it is not necessary for the acquisition of genres, may lead to the misapplication or “overlearning” of genre knowledge, and does not consider the authentic contexts in which users produce and use genres.² Instead, she

² Objections to Freedman’s stance have been waged by many genre theorists (including Fahnestock’s and Williams and Colomb’s responses to her essay), and Lorolei Lingard and Richard Haber found that mplicit, situated, authentic learning (as advocated by Freedman) in conjunction with acontextual explicit teaching still resulted in misapplication of genre knowledge. Amy Devitt also objects to some of Freedman’s claims, while supporting others, in *Writing Genres* (see for more detail). Additionally, Michael Carter, Miriam Ferzli, and Eric Wiebe in their study on first-language adults learning the laboratory report in biology labs that the group that used their online instructional material called “LabWrite” “were significantly more effective in attaining the learninggoals of the lab than students who were given traditional instructional materials” (406). LabWrite was based within the North American school of genre

argues, based on her research of second language acquisition and composition theory, that students acquire genres through the implicit teaching strategies of situated learning and facilitative guidance.³ Yet I begin with the explicit teaching of genre because, in spite of the critiques, its focus on rhetorical flexibility and critical awareness provides opportunities for critical interventions to occur.

While necessary cautions, all of these critiques stem, I believe, from a limited understanding of the explicit teaching of genre and conflation of the three schools of genre teaching—Sydney School (Australian), English for Specific Purposes (ESP or EAP), and North American School (the New Rhetoric). For example, Freedman defines the explicit teaching of genre as “explicit discussions, specifying the (formal) features of genres and/or articulating underlying rules” and possibly the “explication of the social, cultural, and (or) political features of the context that elicits the textual regularities” (224). As Amy Devitt points out, Freedman works here with a definition of explicit genre teaching advocated, but also modified, by the Sydney school (*Writing* 193). To clarify the distinctions between the three approaches, I will briefly review them here before focusing my attention on the North American School, specifically the pedagogy of genre awareness (as outlined by Devitt, Reiff, and Bawarshi in *Scenes of Writing*). I argue that such explicit genre teaching within the North American School provides a productive basis from which disruption can be further explored due to its goals of raising of critical awareness and increasing rhetorical flexibility.

theory, used the assumption that genre can be explicitly taught and effectively learned, and was “designed to address the recurring social situation of the science laboratory classroom by guiding students in the various typified responses to that situation” (400). Their findings suggest genre can be explicitly taught and learned effectively; however, they do qualify these results, noting that they may be limited to the parameters of their study.

³ Freedman more fully outlines her approach to implicit genre teaching in her essay, “Situating ‘Genre’ and Situated Genres: Understanding Student Writing from a Genre Perspective.”

The Sydney School, based in the application of Michael Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, seeks to allow economically disadvantaged and marginalized populations—particularly within primary and secondary schools (Macken-Horarik) and adult migrant education (Feez)—access to cultures of power and their genres so that they may become, ideally, empowered participants within society (Cope and Kalantzis; Richardson). To do so, Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis argue, teachers must be explicit about genre knowledge and “about the ways language works to make meaning” (1). Understanding genre as “a staged, goal oriented social process” (Martin, Christie, and Rothery 59), teachers often use a curriculum cycle (or wheel model), developed by J.R. Martin, in which students move between looking at models of a genre, jointly constructing a text, and then independently constructing a text (Richardson 129).⁴

Founded on the linguistic theories of John Swales, the ESP school centers on second language learners who often lack the cultural or disciplinary knowledge needed to understand and acquire specific genres within undergraduate and graduate education. As a result, ESP teachers' goals include explicitly teaching students the communicative needs and genres of particular academic and professional groups by stressing the situatedness of genres in particular contexts so that they can then participate effectively within those contexts (Bhatia, Hyland, Samraj). Stressing the importance of genre analysis, teachers engage in scaffolding that includes asking students, often in small groups, to explicitly analyze, compare, and manipulate representative samples of a genre in order to develop “rhetorical consciousness raising” (Hyland) or students' awareness of

⁴ While the wheel model or curriculum cycle is the original instantiation of the Sydney School approach, others since have modified it. For example, Susan Feez alters it by outlining a teaching-learning cycle that includes building the context, modeling and deconstructing the text, independent construction of the text, and linking related texts

the formal and functional features of written texts (Hyon). Moreover, ESP teaching is usually planned around genres students are likely to encounter in relevant contexts since genres are specific to a particular culture or discipline (Hyland).

The roots of North American school of genre can be traced to Carolyn Miller's definition of genre as "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations" (31). North American genre scholars, as opposed to the Sydney and ESP schools, are less concerned with teaching students—specifically students within university settings—certain genres and more interested in teaching the process of genre analysis (identifying rhetorical choices and moves) and critique (questioning the effectiveness and ideological components of those rhetorical choices and moves) so that students not only learn how to compose genres but also develop a critical awareness of genres and their actions (Bawarshi; Coe; Devitt; Lingard and Haber; Russell). The goals of this approach include teaching rhetorical flexibility and adaptability within genres (Bawarshi, Devitt, Russell) as well as "understand[ing] the intricate connections between context and form, to perceive potential ideological effects of genres, and to discern both constraints and choices that genres make possible" (Devitt *Writing* 198).

While each of these three schools⁵ offers educators useful means for approaching genre in the classroom—especially based upon one's educational goals and students—for my purposes, I am mostly interested in the North American school because it stresses rhetorical flexibility and the raising of critical awareness, elements that work to establish

⁵ A fourth school of genre—Brazilian Genre Synthesis—also exists, as noted by Anis Bawarshi and Mary Jo Reiff in *Genre*. This school of genre synthesizes various traditions of genre, the French and Swiss genre pedagogical traditions, European philosophical traditions, Critical Discourse Analysis, the Systemic Functional Linguistic tradition, English for Specific Purposes, and Rhetorical Genre Studies and "suggests that rhetorical and sociological genre traditions need not be incompatible with linguistic traditions, and that when interconnected, these traditions can provide rich insight into how genres function and can be taught at various levels" (Bawarshi and Reiff 76-77). See *Genre in a Changing World* for more information regarding the Brazilian Genre Synthesis approach to genre.

a productive use of disruption. With these interests, as opposed to the teaching of certain genres, the process of genre analysis and critique becomes central; and with the focus on the process, the potential for critical interventions within normalized uptakes—or disruptions within this dissertation—becomes more visible and possible. Additionally, it is the North American school that has paid the most attention to the role of uptake and its relationship to genre. For these reasons, I focus on the North American explicit teaching of genre, specifically as outlined by Amy Devitt in *Writing Genres*, without wanting to diminish the important work achieved within the other schools for other groups of students and other pedagogical purposes.

North American scholars have posited several pedagogical possibilities for (often first-year) composition classrooms within higher education. Some examples include Richard Coe's teaching genre as a process, Mary Jo Reiff's use of ethnography as "both a genre (a research narrative) and a mode of genre analysis," Nancy Meyer's genre as Janus figure and her corresponding heuristic, Jeanne Marie Rose's students as genre theorists, Ann Johns' destabilization and enrichment of students' theories of genre, Sarah Andrew-Vaughan and Cathy Fleischer's use of unfamiliar genres, my own use of historical and cross-cultural unfamiliar genres, Bawarshi's genre as sites of invention, and David Russell's activity theory approach.⁶ While all noteworthy suggestions, Devitt in *Writing Genres* and Devitt, Mary Jo Reiff, and Anis Bawarshi in the textbook *Scenes of Writing* provide an alternative pedagogical approach—the teaching of genre awareness. This approach has received attention within the field, provides an

⁶ Ann John's *Genre in the Classroom: Multiple Perspectives* outlines pedagogical approaches outlined in the Sydney School and English for Specific Purposes School as well as approaches that combine elements from the different schools of genre.

accompanying textbook, *Scenes of Writing*, and is one of the more comprehensive approaches to the explicit teaching of genre within the North American school.⁷ For these reasons alone, it merits further investigation. But it is specifically the commitment of genre awareness to teach students a critical consciousness of genres that I see as providing much promise when paired with disruption and uptake.

As Devitt explains, genre awareness is not teaching textual features of particular genres or even teaching students how to write particular genres (similar to the Sydney and ESP schools). Instead, genre awareness is a primarily interpretive approach to genre—an approach that uses the analysis and critique of genres so that students can develop a “critical consciousness of both rhetorical purposes and ideological effects of generic form” (Devitt *Writing* 192).⁸ In other words, through the process of analyzing generic features and the contexts in which genres function as well as critiquing what those forms allow and do not allow, how they constrain and how they create, students gain an awareness, a consciousness, of what genres do and can allow users to achieve and how genres shape and affect the ways in which their users view, understand, and interact with others and the world. Important to note, however, is that Devitt is not just advocating for a passive consciousness and acceptance of genres but rather a *critical* consciousness (or critical awareness). Paulo Freire in his influential work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* defines critical consciousness as “learning to perceive social, political,

⁷ For example, Deborah Dean’s *Genre Theory: Teaching, Writing and Being*, an introductory text to genre and genre teaching for teachers, draws heavily from this approach. Additionally, recent dissertations that address genre theory often draw from or note the genre awareness approach (Dryer, Cheng, Fogarty, McDonald, Hendin).

⁸ Since many definitions of ideology are in use, it seems important to clarify how Devitt defines it. Drawing from other’s descriptions of how genres “reflect what [a group of people] believes and how it views the world,” Devitt describes “genre as reflecting especially and commonly a group’s values, epistemology, and power relationships—its ideology” (59-60).

and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (35). While not working with this exact definition, Devitt appears to be working with some version of it as she writes that genre awareness “may enable writers . . . to learn the needed genres with greater rhetorical understanding and with more conscious acceptance of or resistance to the genres’ ideologies” (192). Critical consciousness, for Devitt, does not necessarily entail taking action against oppressive elements of reality but it does seem to entail an awareness of social, political, and economic elements of ideologies so that students can knowingly or intentionally accept or resist them.

In addition to laying the framework for genre awareness, Devitt also provides a glimpse of what teaching genre awareness may look like—as Devitt reminds us, she “is not argu[ing] for a particular pedagogical strategy as much as argu[ing] for pedagogical strategies that keep generic form and generic context united” (200). I cite her at length here to capture the complexity of her pedagogical approach:

Using examples of already acquired genres and contrasting one familiar genre with another, teachers can lead students to discover the rhetorical purposes served by particular generic forms. Knowing the situations within which the familiar genres appear, students can come to see how the forms suit the context of situation; from there, students can be taught to discern how the context of culture influences the choices of form. Eventually, the context of genres can be introduced as students see how one genre interacts and responds to others.

(Writing 198)

Once students examine genres for various rhetorical purposes, they can then understand why genres are composed in certain ways given the specific contexts in which they are working, thus exposing often hidden ideologies and realizing the potential possibilities that exist within a genre. They can also learn to see how genres are working with others genres within that context to reinforce (or at times contradict) each other and their ideological commitments. With this newfound genre understanding, students can then apply this knowledge to experiment within familiar genres and acquire new genres or even to disrupt genres.

Specific steps of genre analysis and critique (an interpretive process) that students and teachers can engage in together and independently are fleshed out more fully within *Scenes of Writing*. As outlined by Devitt, Reiff, and Bawarshi, genre analysis involves:

close reading and some observation by

- 1) Collecting samples of a genre
- 2) Finding out where, when, by whom, why, and how the genre is used
- 3) Identifying rhetorical and linguistic patterns in the genre [includes content, rhetorical appeals, structure, format, sentence type, and diction]
- 4) Determining what these patterns tell us about the people who use it and the scene in which it is used. (63)

In an effort to keep form and content united, genre analysis begins with identifying the context of the genre and then examining the rhetorical and linguistic patterns. With both of these elements revealed, students can then look at the ways in which they interact with each other, specifically what do the rhetorical and linguistic patterns

reveal to us about the “where, when, by whom, why, and how the genre is used?” Critique, unlike analysis, involves judgment or examining and then determining the strengths and weaknesses of a genre. Critique, according to Devitt, Reiff, and Bawarshi, “enables you to examine not just how genres function within their scenes, but also how they might support and/or fail to serve the needs of their users within the scenes” (150). They add that critique is useful for writers because “*if you understand a genre’s limitations when you write it, you might be able to resist its embedded assumptions*” (162 emphasis in original). Critique, then, attempts to disrupt students’ passive readings and acceptance of genres and their ideological commitments—moving students beyond genres as simply “the way things are”—so that they may resist and even revise them.

As briefly outlined here, genre awareness with its emphasis on a critical consciousness of genre has the potential to be disruptive, especially of students’ interpretations of genre. Ideally, if students can analyze genres and then uncover and critique their ideologies, then they can choose to disrupt those ideologies through some form of resistance. While consciousness is the principal objective of the genre awareness approach, Devitt identifies “alternative” texts as a form of materially actualized resistance: “as students begin to understand the rhetorical nature of form, they can move to considering alternative ways of serving those purposes. Considering alternatives helps make visible both the choices possible within a genre and the ideology of expected forms” (199). She adds that after critique, “students might even be asked to write a new text that achieves different purposes or uses different means to the same purpose” (200). In her own class, she asks students to analyze and critique a syllabus and then “asks them

to write an alternative syllabus, one with a different purpose or one that establishes a different relationship between teacher and students” (200). Alternative texts, as described by Devitt, appear to include ideologically purposeful textual variations of the “original” text, thus creating a “new,” alternative text. In this sense, students remain within the genre yet create a different textual instantiation of the genre meant to achieve different purposes, create different power relationships, achieve the same purpose using different textual means (among many other possibilities), etc.

Similar to Devitt, Brad Peters promotes student disruption in “Genre, Antigenre, and Reinventing the Forms of Conceptualization” advocates that students engage in anti-genres in which students create alternatives of the original genre. He suggests that once students gain knowledge of the conventions of a genre, they can break convention to form “antigenres,” or genres that reinvent a grammar that fulfills the social purpose of the genre it resists to reconstitute the voice of the writer (201). He argues that “antigenres may appear in student writing when the student associates an assigned genre with a particular ideology or rhetorical technique that makes her uneasy. Or it may occur when the writer feels a need to conceptualize and articulate what she knows about a topic in a new way” (201).

The use of alternative texts or “anti-genres” as resistance is echoed by Mary Jo Reiff: “student’s critical awareness of how genres work—their understanding on how rhetorical features are connected to social actions—enables them to more effectively critique and resist genre by creating alternatives” (“Moving” 161). Since “genres—as they function to define, critique, and bring about change—can provide rich pedagogical sites, sites for intervention,” Reiff asks students within her class to create their own

generic responses or a writing manual for others on how to write that genre after analysis so that “as students critique genres as sites of rhetorical action and cultural production and reproduction, they also see how genres function as motivated social actions, enabling them to enter into the production of alternatives” (“Moving” 162, 163). Reiff appears to be working with a similar understanding of alternative as Devitt since “generic response” may include new texts within the same genre. However, she adds yet another level of alternative text by introducing the idea of the writing manual, a different genre in response to their analysis of the original genre. It is unclear, though, how the writing manual would serve as a critique of the original genre since, generally, writing manuals inform others how to successfully compose within the original genre, not necessarily how to critique it. Still Reiff’s use of the writing manual seeks to disrupt students’ production of texts.

Additionally, *Scenes of Writing* offers suggestions for how students can move from critique of a genre to revising the genre in order to enact change; as Devitt, Reiff, and Bawarshi explain, “changing the genre *reflects* but can also *affect* changes in assumptions and practices . . . genres are not just sites for communicating and acting within scenes of writing; they are also potentially sites for changing the scenes themselves” (178 emphasis in original). The writing activities within the chapter and the writing projects at the end of the chapter primarily invite students to critique genres and then revise them with their critiques in mind. For example, Writing Assignment 4.3 asks students to:

Find a genre that you are familiar with and that usually is no longer than one page . . . After analyzing how this genre operates, write your own version of the genre

so that you change its conventions (as students rewrote the IEP or the teachers rewrote the grade report). Write a cover letter to your teacher explaining what conventions you changed and how you think those changes have altered the genre's situation (subject, participants, setting, purposes, and scene). (183)

Here students are invited to rewrite their own versions of the text to change the genre's conventions, certainly a move towards disrupting the genre through textual production. And the cover letter does ask students to consider the ways in which their changes have disrupted (altered) the original situation. Yet the cover letter does not ask them to discuss the ideological implications of their changes nor does the cover letter invite critique itself. Within the genre awareness approach, then, creating alternative texts that revise "original" ones is highlighted as the primary means by which writers can disrupt genres and their ideologies.

While some attention is given to disruptive textual productions, the focus of the genre awareness approach is primarily on the interpretation or analysis of the genre, its rhetorical purposes, and its ideologies and not on the production of a (different) genre in response to the critical interpretation and critique. The name "genre awareness" itself suggests the primacy of interpretation. And Devitt's definition of genre awareness as "a critical consciousness of both rhetorical purposes and ideological effects of generic forms" (192) emphasizes interpretation over production. This emphasis can be interpreted as a limitation of this approach; as Reiff notes, "one criticism leveled against a genre approach to literacy teaching is that it focuses on analysis and critique of genres, stopping short of having writers use genres to enact change" ("Moving" 162).

Certainly creating alternative texts that revise the genre is a first step in extending the disruptive interpretation process into a disruptive textual production to enact change. Yet composing alternative texts seems to be limiting the disruptive potential of the genre awareness approach by remaining focused on the generic level. I am also skeptical about the efficacy of genre critique alone to cause disruption. As I have examined in “The Genre Effect: Exploring the Unfamiliar,” students within my genre awareness-based class were successful with analysis (understanding the ways in which genres function within a context) but struggled with critique (determining the strengths and weaknesses of the genre), especially when critiquing familiar genre (genres they encounter and use on a regular basis). Many students insisted that their chosen genres worked as they were and needed no further alterations or revisions. Additionally, Devitt suggests that “once [students] are full participants in the genre, resistance becomes more difficult (some say futile) and choices become less visible (some say invisible)” (*Writing* 196). When students analyze and critique familiar genres, their ability to resist their ideological forces and imagine different rhetorical choices within genres is difficult. Based on these findings, genre critique, especially of familiar genres, appears to be difficult for many, thus calling into question the capacity of users to disrupt conventional generic uptakes with genre critique alone. Teachers may need to do more than genre critique to disrupt conventional uptakes of genres.

My goal here is to expand upon the genre awareness approach so that textual production in addition to interpretation becomes a more central focus. To do so, I believe that we might need to do more than critique genres and create alternative texts of the original in order to cause disruption. We may also need to direct more attention to

disrupting students' uptakes at multiple levels (the generic, discursive, and individual) and throughout the interpretation and production processes so that critique and subsequent actions may be more fruitful, possible, and visible. Multicultural pedagogy may be an ideal place to turn to begin addressing these concerns as it has imagined several ways in which students can disrupt the textual production process through student-generated alternative uptakes.

Language Differences and Multicultural Pedagogy

With the goal of “encourage[ing] citizens in the United States to embrace the racial, ethnic, class, gender, religious, age, and physical differences in our population,” multiculturalism “respects, incorporates, and mediates the differences and similarities in our population” (Severino, Guerra, and Butler 1). To do so, multicultural scholars often encourage us to resee language and language differences and prompt marginalized student voices to join academic conversations through alternative uptakes and textual productions. Multicultural pedagogy, in particular, attempts to validate and support multicultural and multilingual student voices within the composition classroom by advocating that students produce writing that disrupts and, thus, changes academic standards (comparable to what the feminists sought to achieve through *écriture féminine*). By doing so, multiculturalism and multicultural pedagogy work to extend disruption beyond interpretation into textual production and, ultimately, into ideological change.

One of the ways multicultural pedagogies further disruptive productions is through disrupting the very language used to produce texts. In the 2006 special issue of *College English* dedicated to “cross-language relations in composition,” the essays of Bruce Horner, John Trimbur, A. Suresh Canagarajah, Min-Zhan Lu, Gail E. Hawisher,

Cynthia Selfe, Paul Kei Matsuda, and Anis Bawarshi, taken together, argue that “students need to learn to work within and among and across a variety of Englishes and languages, not simply to (re)produce and write within the conventions of a particular, standardized variety of English” (570). In other words, students must develop a certain level of rhetorical flexibility rather than remain stagnant within rhetorical rigidity. Anis Bawarshi, in his response essay “Taking Up Language Differences In Composition” in the 2006 *College English*, links this concern of multicultural scholarship to rhetorical genre theory via uptake. Bawarshi finds promise in this collection of essays on cross-cultural language differences not only because they “call on us to become more responsible and responsive users and teachers of English and outline some ways we can make use of and be more hospitable to language differences and peripheralized discourses in composition” but also because they “reveal the possibilities of intervening in uptakes and the possibilities that such interventions offer for more responsive and responsible uses of English” (656).

To intervene in uptakes, multicultural scholars, including some of those in this special issue, have posited pedagogical approaches that seek to challenge or disrupt students’ uptakes (interpretations and resulting textual productions) to situations and texts. The impetus for these pedagogical approaches, of course, comes from many sources; however, Horner, in his introduction to the special issue, identifies the changes in (or the changes in our perceptions of) the language backgrounds of our students and the increased permeability separating “native” speakers from ESL speakers as two of the root causes (570-71). Composition teachers are faced with an increasingly diverse, both culturally and linguistically, body of students, some who do not have English as their first

language, others who are raised within the United States but do not have English as their first language, and others who are raised within the United States but are bi- or multilingual. Multicultural scholars, in particular, are interested in preparing these multilingual and multiliterate students for hybridized language choices, often by disrupting conventional academic uptakes through encouraging and capitalizing on student-generated alternative uptakes.

For example, Carangarajah proposes a writing pedagogy of shuttling between languages in which multilingual writers are encouraged to utilize their own “discursive resources” (“Essay” Lu) when composing in order to disrupt standardized uptakes of academic conventions “so that [students] can modify, resist, or reorient themselves to the rules in a way favorable to them” (602).⁹ Doing so allows students to engage in rhetorical negotiation, the ability to “engage critically in the act of changing the rules and conventions to suit their interest, values, and identities” (602). For teachers, this means that they must “stop treating any textual difference as an unconscious error” and, instead, “consider it as a strategic and creative choice by the author to obtain her or her rhetorical objectives” (591).¹⁰ The writing pedagogy of shuttling between languages, then, encourages students and teachers to view students’ discursive resources as a resource, not a hindrance, and to use those resources to create alternative rhetorical moves that not only

⁹ Carangarajah’s writing pedagogy of shuffling echoes Min Zhan Lu’s call for a multicultural approach to style in “Professing Multiculturalism” where she “ask[s] students to explore the full range of choices and options, including those excluded by the conventions of academic discourses” (492). See “Professing Multiculturalism” for more detail.

¹⁰ David Bartholomae, Min Zhan Lu, and Joseph Williams, among others, have also invited teachers to view student error as something more than “Error.”

disrupt conventional academic standards but also disrupt dominant beliefs about conventional and alternative rhetorical moves.

Juan C. Guerra proposes a similar pedagogical approach in which he attempts to help students develop “intercultural literacy, the ability to consciously and effectively move back and forth among as well as in and out of the discourse communities they belong to or will belong to” (258). More specifically, he writes, “the intercultural-literacy approach not only encourages students to accept commonalities and differences [between their discourse communities] but also gives students an opportunity to engage them and integrate them into their lives” (258). Unlike Carangarajah who asks students to experiment specifically with language choices and error, Guerra asks students to merge academic and personal writing and genres. By allowing students to merge academic and personal writing, students can disrupt conventional academic genres by creating an alternative “complex blend of the conflicting discourses they have encountered elsewhere” (258). Guerra invites students to engage in and explore the disruptions that this complex blend of genres creates, although he cautions that this disruption was difficult for many students who preferred to keep the personal and academic separate.

In yet another instantiation of a similar approach to disruptive production, Kate Manglesdorf encourages teachers to understand classrooms as borderlands and students as bordercrossers. Working with Chicano and Chicana students who live in at least two cultures at once (American and Mexican cultures), Manglesdorf finds value in the “cultural conflicts that border students experience” and suggests that “teachers can use these conflicts to create borderlands in which their students can use language(s) to create new and empowered identities” (299). For example, students in her class produced

letters or poems that incorporated non-English words for specific rhetorical purposes and epistolary stories in which they depicted recent immigrants writing to their families in their native land (303). Alternative texts, such as these, often combine dominant and marginalized discourses, and, as Manglesdorf writes, this allows those discourses to be “mutually re-formed as students and teachers work together to generate and communicate knowledge” (299). Here alternative texts are encouraged to disrupt not only dominant discourses but also marginalized discourses in order to create hybridized or “borderland” discourses and, thus, create empowered identities for students.

Understood through the lens of uptake, these three scholars seek to disrupt conventional uptakes and academic discourse through rhetorical flexibility in which students move in and out and in between different cultures, languages, discourses, etc. as well as merge or combine them. Other scholars more explicitly address the colonization power and tendency of academic discourse and seek to empower students to resist and disrupt that colonization through student-generated alternative uptakes.¹¹ Noting the tendency of Western languages to intimidate and appropriate non-Western people and languages, Esha Niyogi De and Donna Uthus Gregory offer pedagogical strategies “that resist colonizing students and that aim to let a multiplicity of student rationalities enter into dialogue with argumentative discourse” (120). They are particularly concerned that traditional, academic argumentation dismisses and denies alternative logics; to avoid this “Western intellectual hegemony,” they encourage students to bring their own “local, culture-specific logics” into the classroom, “making classrooms sites of dialogic translation between academic and other modes of reasoning” (129). For instance, they

¹¹ Multicultural scholars do not conceptualize their pedagogies through the lens of uptake. Similar to Bawarshi in “Taking Up Language Differences in Composition,” I provide a reading of their pedagogies in terms of uptake.

propose a three stage process in which students locate the connections that they find between seemingly diverse texts, articulate their own local, culture-specific logics, and then produce texts that employ their own logics as well as traditional logic. In De's and Gregory's classrooms, alternative logics are explored before traditional logics so that conventional logics do not exclude or preclude alternative logics.

Henry Evan's "culturecentric project" achieves similar ends by asking students to resist and disrupt conventional academic discourse. The culturecentric project, as Evans outlines it, is "the development of a unit of multicultural education in a particular discipline from the perspective of particular students of various cultures" (273). While any culture, including European American, can be the object of this project, Evans explores how one project, the Afrocentric multicultural writing project, allowed African American students the opportunity to explore "the classical origins of their cultures and . . . a systematic understanding of their culture's development" within an academic system that privileges European culture (274). In other words, the Afrocentric multicultural writing project invites students to explore the origins, conventions, and traditions of one's culture and language(s), and, thus, exposes students to alternative styles, logics, and modes of argumentation. By disrupting conventional styles, logics, and modes of argumentation within the composition classroom that are often Eurocentric, the multicultural writing project not only is an alternative text itself but also encourages and elevates the value of alternative styles, logics, and modes of argumentation in general, especially in relation to conventional Eurocentric ones.

Kermit E. Campbell also explores how African American students, in particular, can disrupt academic discourse by including their own vernacular forms of discourse,

such as signifyin(g), in their academic prose. Campbell suggests that signifyin(g) or “the verbal art of insult in which a speaker humorously puts down, talk about, needles—that is signifies on—the listener” (Smitherman) “affirms African American cultural identity in writing by signaling a voice that in a way resists the very prose of which it is a part” (73). For example, Campbell examines an excerpt from Gary’s short autobiography where he discusses learning about sex as an adolescent—a line from it reads “see my mother is the type of mother who would tell me things straight up she did not play that birds and bees shit.” In reference to this line, Campbell writes:

‘Shit,’ I believe, accentuated Gary’s signifyin(g) voice. Signaled also by vernacular expression like ‘straight up’ and ‘did not play that,’ this voice pits a parent who discusses sexual matters straightforwardly with her children against parents (presumably white mainstream) who relate such matters euphemistically, as suggested by ‘the birds and the bees’ . . . here again we see the writer’s construction of self (of cultural identity) resisting construction or definition by a dominant mainstream. (75)

By including alternative discourses, like signifyin(g), within academic discourse, African American students not only gain and affirm their voices, their presence, in their writing and the academy but also resist (or disrupt) the dominant, conventional discourse of the academy.

Again through the lens of uptake, other multicultural scholars have also worked to identify and explore the kinds of alternative uptakes, such as signifyin(g), in which people engage and introduce them into the classroom. Lisle and Mano, for example, use storytelling within the composition classroom in order to “highlight the languages and

cultural knowledge students bring with them to the university” (21). Stories, as Lisle and Mano explain, are a particularly effective alternative genre “because they occur among all groups, cut across cultural boundaries, yet since types of stories and storytelling patterns can vary radically, they also clearly illustrate cultural differences” (21). They begin by telling their own stories and having students tell their stories so that they can explore how all rhetorical practices, including storytelling, are culturally constructed.¹² Similarly, Michelle Grijavla identifies silence as an alternative discourse when working with Native American students. Instead of devaluing the silence of the students, she encouraged “the class to understand silence as an effective rhetorical tool that gives shape to sound and meaning—not to confuse it with inarticulate or illiterate or with inchoate place of nonbeing, a void that lends itself to shame and insecurity” (48). Students then wrote essays, stories, and poems that engaged in alternative discourses, such as collective voices of the family and tribe, in order to understand their own struggles with their cultural identity and histories.

To summarize thus far in terms of uptake, multicultural scholars have suggested many ways in which teachers and students, together and independently, can cause disruption of conventional uptakes and academic discourse through the use of alternative uptakes. Common alternative uptakes include the conscious movement (or “shuttling”) back and forth as well as in and out of various languages, literacies, and communities and the use of non-Western and/or alternative rhetorical strategies, such as signifyin’, silence, storytelling, and of non-academic genres, such as autoethnographies and fictional pieces,

¹² See also Scott Lyon’s work on rhetorical sovereignty, specifically “Rhetorical Sovereignty: What do American Indians Want from Writing,” in which he argues for the “inherent right and ability of *peoples* to determine their own communicative needs and desires in this pursuit, to decide for themselves to goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse” (449-50 emphasis in original).

within the university setting. Taken together, these student-generated alternative uptakes challenge and disrupt conventional, academic uptakes within the classroom, thus allowing multicultural and multiliterate students to create places for themselves within the academy. Alternative uptakes, here, not only disrupt conventional uptakes but also seek to further disrupt the dominant, academic ideologies that those uptakes privilege and embody. In other words, alternative uptakes are both constitutive and generative in that they constitute disruption yet they also generate disruption. Moreover, alternative uptakes constitute and generate disruption through both the interpretation and the production of texts, which is why these pedagogies that seek to use alternative uptakes provide insight into how disruption can be encouraged and used productively.

Looking to multilingual and multiliterate students, as multicultural scholars have done, allows valuable insight into how the interventions within uptakes that Bawarshi suggests can occur, particularly how students can disrupt conventional, academic uptakes through their own alternative uptakes that are materialized within the production or writing of certain kinds of texts. Interventions, especially critical interventions that seek to challenge or disrupt dominant ideologies, may be more easily realized or created by multilingual and multiliterate students because, as Carangarajah notes, “[multilingual writers] are endowed with that mysterious ‘double vision’ that enables them to understand the possibilities and constraints of competing traditions of writing, and carve out a space for themselves within conflicting discourses” (602). By having a variety of overtly different and, at times, conflicting discursive resources at their disposal, multilingual students are, perhaps, more able to understand and see possibilities and constraints than monolingual students.

As suggested above, multicultural scholars often focus on and examine how students who are overtly multilingual and multiliterate can engage alternative uptakes to produce texts that disrupt conventional ones yet encourage teachers to see all students as multi-lingual, literate, and cultural to some extent.¹³ However, many students within academic settings in which many assume a collective (white, middle-class, English-speaking) experience are not overtly diverse nor do they identify or see themselves as multilingual or multiliterate. In fact, many students strive to be “just like everyone else” in the classroom as they do not want to be seen as different. Moreover, students do not come to composition classrooms as blank slates; they have engaged in at least twelve years of education prior to entering the university, and within these settings, they have been habitualized, for the most part, into conventional uptakes and have been rewarded for doing so. They have also engaged in many activities outside of the university where, once again, conventional uptakes are often rewarded. Even overtly multilingual or multiliterate students may resist engaging in alternative uptakes because they know, just as much as seemingly monoliterate students, that conventional, academic uptakes often

¹³ Many scholars have provided important reminders that all students, even those who appear similar or who identify as monolingual, participate within various cultures, communities, and languages. As Cecelia Rodriguez Milanes, writes “everyone is multicultural” (190). For example, Julie Linquist provides an important reminder that socioeconomic class, in addition to overt differences such as race, gender, ethnicity, and language, operates within the classroom, so we must be aware that students may bring with them to the classroom class-influenced rhetorical performances that are in stark contrast to the traditional white, middle class rhetorical performances of the academy. Matsuda, too, reminds composition and rhetoric scholars and teachers that many students do not fit the “dominant image of composition students as native speakers of a privileged variety of English” (638). This “myth of linguistic homogeneity”—the tacit and widespread acceptance of all students within the composition classroom as native English-only speakers by default—Matsuda argues, keeps second-language writers from becoming a central concern in composition and rhetoric and within the classroom. Instead, teachers need to resist the belief that “the college composition classroom can be a monolingual space. To work effectively with the student-population in the twenty-first century, all composition teachers need to reimagine the composition classroom as the multilingual space that it is, where the presence of language differences is the default” (649).

lead to success and alternative uptakes do not. For these reasons, among others, critical interventions in uptakes are difficult for all students and may be especially difficult for students who do not identify as multilingual or multiliterate.

But it is equally important that these students, in addition to those who may identify as multilingual or multiliterate, experience disruption within conventionalized academic uptakes and be encouraged to explore the production of alternatives. If we truly wish to challenge and change the exclusive nature of academic discourse and dominant ideologies through alternative uptakes, as multicultural pedagogy seeks to do, then we need to invite not only the minority to disrupt but also the majority.¹⁴ Moreover, within settings where there is a lack of overt difference, it is especially important for educators to see how they can disrupt their students' conventional uptakes and how critical interventions within uptakes can take place and, even, thrive. Perhaps, then, educators should seek to endow all students with the 'double vision' that Carangarajah believes multilingual speakers often possess as well as seek to encourage them to use it. To do so, however, multicultural pedagogies may need to be altered so that students who do not identify as multilingual or multiliterate, too, can learn how to disrupt various kinds of conventional uptakes, not just academic ones, through the creation of alternative uptakes and texts.

Toward a Pedagogy of Uptake Awareness and Disruption

Both the explicit teaching of genre and multicultural pedagogies offer much to a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption. Genre awareness allows students to become familiar with the processes of analysis and critique, moving them towards an

¹⁴ Multiculturalism pedagogy does seek to apply to all students, as many scholars point out within their work. However, the focus of their work often remains on overtly multicultural and multilingual students

important consciousness of genres, their forms, and their ideologies as well as an understanding of the inextricable relationship between form and context. In fact, an awareness of genres would seem to play a vital role within uptake disruption since generic uptake is one way in which students form their responses to (take up) various situations. Multicultural pedagogy allows students to become creative participants with their writing processes and products within the classroom by better accounting for individual and cultural uptakes. Working against conventional, academic uptakes, multicultural pedagogies encourage students to cause disruption within the university setting by incorporating their own alternative uptakes that are primarily informed by their own marginalized linguistic and cultural backgrounds.¹⁵

While these approaches offer possibilities for disruption, each has its own limitations. Genre awareness, with its focus on analysis and critique, not only limits its disruptive possibilities to primarily the interpretation of genres but also often limits the disruption to the generic uptake. And while it does allow for textual disruption through creation of alternative texts that revise original ones, this kind of textual disruption seems narrow in scope. Unlike the genre awareness approach, multicultural pedagogies focus on disruption through the production of alternative uptakes, but these textual acts seem

¹⁵ While scholars, such as the ones I discuss above, point out the benefits of multicultural approaches, others have exposed some problems with such approaches. Joseph Harris, for example, is concerned with the leveling dynamic of multicultural classrooms when they are treated as “multicultural bazaars” “where [students] are not so much brought into conflict with opposing view as placed in a kind of harmless connection with a series of exotic others” (119). In other words, rather than engaging other cultures, students simply sample other cultures but without any in-depth knowledge or appreciation of cultural or historical specificity. Certainly this is a valid concern and criticism of multicultural approaches, and although my pedagogy does not ask students to sample different cultures, this could also be an issue if teachers encourage students to simply sample from “alternative uptakes.” However, I find this criticism to be less of a concern for the pedagogical approach that I outline because, if done correctly, this pedagogy emphasizes both “awareness” and “disruption” of one’s own uptakes. Students do not and should not simply sample from alternative uptakes but, rather, ground all their uptakes within contextualized rhetorical and genre analysis.

limited to those who can identify with marginalized discourses and/or cultures.

Additionally, with the focus on marginalized discourses and cultures, multicultural pedagogies often limit their disruption to conventional, academic uptakes rather than other kinds of conventional uptakes.

Genre awareness and multicultural pedagogy seem a particularly complementary pairing based upon these strengths and limitations; while genre awareness expands the scope of multicultural pedagogy to students who may not identify with marginalized discourses and cultures and to disrupting genres beyond the academic, multicultural pedagogy expands the scope of genre awareness to disrupting through textual productions and to the creation of alternative texts that do more than revise original texts. Merging these two pedagogical approaches, then, aids in the development of a pedagogical approach that values both interpretation and production. And turning to uptake further enhances and complicates this merging in, at least, three specific ways.

First, uptake allows us to view the interpretation and the textual production stages of writing as more united and continuous, making disruption a more united and continuous process as well, instead of something that occurs during the interpretation or production stage separately. As the process in which individuals engage between genres, uptake more directly and more clearly links the reading of the original text and the production of another text in response to the original. This refocusing allows us to consider more fully how the students, the writers, engage with and against genres through uptakes and produce responses through those uptakes. Second, uptake allows us to connect disruption to specific rhetorical situations, not just general language habits (a la multicultural pedagogy). For example, instead of working against “academic discourse”

in general, as multicultural pedagogies seek to do, students can focus their attention on particular texts and situations that may encourage conventional, academic uptakes and, from this, investigate what those conventional, academic uptakes allow in those specific situations and what they do not allow. Situating disruption within specific situations makes disruptive uptakes not only more visible but also more meaningful. Third, uptake allows us to move disruption beyond the level of genre (a la genre awareness) and into other acts of uptake. Asking students to consider the other elements of uptake, such as the discursive and individual, increases the opportunities and possibilities for disruption, and by increasing the opportunities for disruption, students are provided with more possibilities within their uptakes, allowing them to decide how and when and to what degree disruption works best for their specific rhetorical purposes and goals. Drawing from genre awareness and multicultural pedagogy, a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption, then, seeks to disrupt or challenge students' conventional uptakes so that students see the possibility for and have the opportunity to create alternatives.

While genre awareness and multicultural pedagogy provide a more theoretical basis from which I develop a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption, I also look to innovation and creativity theory to provide a more practical basis. I explicitly turn to innovation and creativity at this point in order to explore more concretely how to encourage disruption and the creation of alternatives within the composition classroom. I suggest that disruption can move beyond interpretation and into textual productions through innovation. Writers innovate when they take up discursive conventions in unexpected ways to create a product or response that demonstrates novelty or newness that is appropriate to the situation or context. From this, I consider how teachers can

harness the power of disruption within the classroom to critically intervene within students' conventional uptakes in order to encourage students to engage in more innovative textual productions.

The notion of innovation carries with it a history and various connotations. Within the field of composition and rhetoric, the concept of innovation has not received much attention, although I believe that it has received some attention in other guises, such as novelty, newness, and inventiveness. David S. Kaufer and Cheryl Geisler in "Novelty in Academic Writing" also note this dearth within the field, observing that "despite the attention paid to 'invention and inquiry' in writing instruction—novelty as a writing standard, much less strategy, is absent from our pedagogical traditions in composition" (287).¹⁶ Kaufer and Geisler are particularly interested in "authorial novelty" or how writers create "newness" (the "creation of both intellectual and communal products that didn't exist before an author") in knowledge, theories, and ideas within particular academic disciplines and genres; as they write, "neither classical nor contemporary rhetoric speaks *directly* to the issue of how authors in knowledge-making communities design to be new" (304). While Kaufer and Geisler focus on writers creating "newness" in knowledge within academic disciplines, Sunny Hyon focuses on writers' using "inventiveness" within the genre of retention-promotion-tenure reports (RPT). More specifically, she seeks to discover "writers' use of 'inventive' strategies, i.e. those that playfully deviate from RPT report conventions" (175). Hyon suggests, then, that

¹⁶ They further clarify that "for writing teachers, [novelty or newness] seems to play a negligible role in our teaching vocabulary and practice. As members of a discipline, we position newness at the center of our own authorial plans, yet find ourselves reluctant to bring our standard to the classroom. We direct students to write an 'original' essay, but by 'original' we typically only mean 'free of plagiarism' or 'in one's voice' rather than new" (305).

inventiveness occurs in RPT reports when conventions are broken or manipulated within certain “playful” ways.¹⁷

Both Kaufer and Geisler and Hyon provide some insight into how innovation has been or may be understood within the field of composition and rhetoric, although both are limiting to some extent. Kaufer and Geisler primarily conceptualize novelty as a writer’s creation of abstract knowledge that contributes to an existing academic subject. This distinction becomes most clear in their discussion of why teachers lack confidence in teaching newness to student writers as they note that “virtually no student claims the background knowledge to be new in an academic subject. Still, as a practical matter, one must wonder how students ever grasp what it means to be an insider when their practice remains on the outside” (306). In other words, few if any students have enough background knowledge to contribute entirely new knowledge to an academic subject, but, as they note, students must begin somewhere. Hyon primarily conceptualizes inventiveness as rhetorical and linguistic strategies, including hyperbole, humor and irony, and informal language, that involve some amount of “play” with conventions. While these are certainly viable ways to view novelty and inventiveness, surely writers can demonstrate novelty—and hence disruption—in other ways than the creation of new knowledge and can demonstrate inventiveness in other ways than playfulness with conventions. For example, a writer could demonstrate novelty with the introduction of a “new” generic form or demonstrate inventiveness by subverting conventions, both a means of disruption.

¹⁷ In her study, Hyon finds this inventiveness in the forms of hyperbole, humor and irony, and informal language and notes that “writers’ individual styles, institutional closeness to the evaluated faculty member, and security in genre-bending” appear to influence the presence and level of inventiveness (190).

Melanie Kill's use of innovation, while not explicitly defined, seems to combine these notions of novelty and inventiveness and provides room for a more comprehensive understanding of innovation that more clearly connects to desirable and productive disruption. Kill, like Hyon, employs the term innovation in contrast to convention, noting that uptakes exist along a continuum between convention and innovation. And also similar to Hyon, Kill identifies particular rhetorical moves—deception, linguistic passing, and literary experimentation—as “points of particular interest” along the uptake continuum (8). Kill's definition of innovation, however, appears to be more inclusive than Hyon's use of inventiveness as she undertakes to explore how “language users innovate and make use of discursive convention in unexpected ways” *and* “what effect do such *innovative uptakes* have on the maintenance and revision of social structures”(8). Here Kill appears to be aligning innovation with unconventional uses (or unexpected uses) of conventions within particular genres and discourses that intentionally seek to maintain or alter social structures. In this way, for Kill, innovation occurs at both a textual level (similar to Hyon) and an ideological level (similar to Kaufer and Geisler). In other words, a writer's unexpected use of conventions within a particular genre leads to ideological implications and consequences. This, of course, makes sense given that Kill approaches innovation from a rhetorical genre theory perspective in which genres are understood as enmeshed with rhetorical situations and, thus, contain ideological import. As such, any alteration or unexpected use of convention within a genre contains ideological implications, and as such, can disrupt conventional ideologies and uptakes.

Kill's use of innovation certainly fits the needs of my current project as I, too, seek to explore how conventional uptakes can be disrupted so that writers have the

opportunity to use convention in unexpected ways. Where I differ from Kill, as noted within the previous chapter, is that I seek to move beyond observing existing and purposeful innovation within professional writers' texts in socially and politically charged situations to encouraging writers to innovate within their texts in everyday and less obviously charged situations. To do so, I have built upon Kill's use of innovation by turning to creativity theory, specifically Teresa M. Amabile's social-psychology approach to creativity.¹⁸ While creativity and innovation are not necessarily synonymous terms, certain areas of creativity scholarship suggest enough similarities between them that, I believe, creativity theory can provide insight into innovation and, thus, provides ways in which disruption and the creation of alternatives can be encouraged within the classroom.

While many researchers have attempted to create objective criteria for assessing creativity, the concept, as many scholars note, is especially difficult to define and assess because it is not a scientific concept but rather "it's a culturally and historically specific idea that changes from one country to another, and from one century to another" (Sawyer 36). And, as such, "criteria for creativity require an historically bound social context" (Amabile 34). In other words, what is considered "creative" depends upon the historical and social contexts in which it occurs. What is considered creative within one historical context or culture may not necessarily be considered creative in another. Despite this important caveat, most researchers' definitions of creativity include novelty and

¹⁸ Creativity theory is an expansive and complex body of scholarship, and I, admittedly, do not possess the expertise to adequately consider creativity theory in its complexity. Moreover, reviewing and incorporating the entirety of creativity theory is beyond the scope of this project. Other scholars more well-versed and immersed within creativity theory could seek to expand on the preliminary connections that I establish here within future projects, as creativity theory, I believe, has much to offer to uptake studies as well as the field of composition and rhetoric as a whole.

appropriateness: in that a product, idea, or response is considered creative if it is new or original *and* if it is determined to be socially valuable and appropriate for its context (Amabile, Sawyer, Starko).¹⁹ Such contextualized definitions of creativity fit comfortably with efforts to encourage students' disruptions for socially valuable and appropriate ends.

Creativity theories, like theories of discourse production, fall into individualistic and contextualist approaches. Keith Sawyer divides the approaches to creativity into two camps: (1) the individualistic approaches (primarily from the field of psychology) that examine the creative potential of individuals and view creativity as an individual trait and (2) the contextualist approaches (from the fields of anthropology, sociology, and history) that examine how societies, cultures, and historical periods allow for and affect creativity and view creativity as the result of contextual factors.²⁰ While valuable research certainly continues within all of these areas, Sawyer claims that the “the modern science of creativity is the sociocultural study of creativity” in which scientists “move beyond psychology to incorporate sociology, anthropology, and history” (173). Amabile’s social-psychology approach to creativity that “aims to identify particular social and environmental conditions that can positively or negatively influence the creativity of most individuals” while still acknowledging the individual component of creativity seems to fall under Sawyer’s modern science of creativity, and it is particularly useful for my purposes. Since I seek to discover ways in which writers can be disrupted within writing

¹⁹ As Amabile explains, “Conceptually, we—and most of the field—still endorse the spirit of Morris Stein’s (1953) definition of creativity as ‘that process which results in a novel work that is accepted as tenable or useful or satisfying by a group at some point in time’” (37-38).

²⁰ Sawyer details personality psychology, cognitive psychology, the biological approach, and the computational approach as specific individualistic approaches.

situations and encouraged to produce alternatives, an approach to innovation that primarily concentrates on exploring and defining circumstances conducive to creativity (i.e creative situations) rather than on the capacity of creative persons is especially apt (5).²¹

I explore Amabile's two complementary definitions of creativity since they have pedagogical implications. She offers both a conceptual (theoretical model) and consensual (operational model) definition of creativity. Her conceptual definition of creativity follows the most common and accepted definitions, noting novelty and appropriateness, but she adds another component; she writes, "a product or response will be judged as creative to the extent that (a) it is both a novel and appropriate, useful, correct or valuable response to the task at hand, and (b) the task is heuristic rather than algorithmic" (35). For Amabile, a task is algorithmic when "the path to the solution is clear and straightforward" while a heuristic task is one that does not have a "clear and readily identifiable path to solution" (35). This second component shifts attention away from the created product and onto the task that produces it, and this makes sense, especially if thought of in terms of uptake. A task has a "clear" and "straightforward" path because the uptake has been "established" and "normalized" and, thus, the individual produces a conventional response or product. A task to which the uptake is not yet conventionalized or is not yet known invites the individual to create his or her

²¹ I do not spend much time with individualistic approaches here for several reasons. First, as Amabile and Sawyer note, most creativity research has focused on the individual. To review all of that literature here is beyond the scope of this project. Second, my focus in this project is less on examining how creative or innovative individuals are but more on creating an environment in which innovation is possible and encouraged. For this reason, the contextualist approaches, especially Amabile's social psychology of creativity, are most appropriate for my purposes; however, I fully recognize that they, alone, do not provide the whole story behind creativity, much like generic and discursive uptake alone do not provide the whole story behind uptake.

own uptake—while, of course, still drawing on previous knowledge and experience—that may be more likely to produce a novel response or product in response to the particular situation. The implication here is the importance of allowing individuals freedom within tasks in terms of the ways in which they choose to take it up. In terms of the composition classroom, this may mean providing students not just with freedom to “choose their own topic” in response to a writing assignment but to “choose their own uptake(s)” in response to a writing assignment if one of the goals of the classroom is to encourage innovation.

Amabile’s second consensual or operational definition provides a means by which creativity can be subjectively assessed.²² This definition, she argues, is most useful for empirical research because it is based on creative products rather than the creative process or person and, as such, is grounded in the examination of products (33). While this definition has factored most predominantly in the creation of my research project, it also highlights the role that uptake may play in creativity and innovation. Working from her 1982 operational definition, she suggests that:

A product or response is creative to the extent that appropriate observers independently agree it is creative. Appropriate observers are those familiar with the domain in which the product was created or the response articulated. Thus, creativity can be regarded as the quality of products or responses judged to be

²² Not surprisingly, Amabile argues that an objective assessment of the creativity of a product is not possible since what is deemed creative is contextually bound. As she explains, “just as the assessment of attitude statements as more or less favorable . . . or the identification of individuals as ‘physically attractive’ . . . is a subjective judgment, so too is the assessment of creativity. Surely here are particular characteristics of attitude statements or person or products that observers look to in rating them on scales of favorability or physical attractiveness or creativity. But, in the final analysis, the choice of those particular characteristics is a subjective one” (34).

creative by appropriate observers, and it can also be regarded as the process by which something so judged is produced. (33)

This definition foregrounds the assumption that “products or observable response must ultimately be the hallmark of creativity, and that is it not possible a priori to specify which objective features of new products will be considered ‘creative’” (Amabile 34). In terms of uptake, one must look to the produced text in order to determine its degree of creativity and, not necessarily, the actions or intentions of the individual (consistent with Kill’s and Emmons’s observations that uptake is visible through texts). More importantly, this definition suggests that one cannot specify prior to uptake what the individual *must* do—either during the process of uptake or within the final product—to generate a creative product. This suggests that the process of uptake plays a critical role in the production of creative texts—it was what happens during the process of uptake, how the kinds of uptake (generic, discursive, and individual) interact, that allows an individual to innovate and produce a creative text.

As noted above, creativity researchers and theorists often appear to employ creativity and innovation as similar terms (at times even using the terms interchangeably), even though creativity is used more often; in fact, Sawyer’s title of his book is *Explaining Creativity: The Science of Human Innovation*. Sawyer provide some explanation regarding the distinction, noting that “innovation involves both the creation of a new idea, and the implementation, dissemination, and adoption of that idea by an organization” (287). In order for a product to be innovative, then, it must be more than simply the creation of something new; it must also be widely dispersed and adopted by a collective group. Within creativity scholarship, creativity often refers more to individuals

and individual products whereas innovation often refers more to organizations and wide-scale change. This, in part, explains why the term innovation is most often used within scholarship regarding technology, business (especially marketing and organizational structures), and educational curriculum.²³ The primary difference between creativity and innovation appears to be in the dissemination of the product—a creative product is adopted for use by an individual(s) while an innovative product is adopted for use by a collective group. This suggests, though, that the difference between the terms is not about the product but rather its use. The definitions and characteristics of creativity that I explore above, then, appear to equally apply to innovation.

Even though creativity theory creates a distinction between creativity and innovation, in this project, I still opt to use innovation and innovative to describe the kinds of uptakes that disrupt conventional uptakes. I do so for three primary reasons. First, I am following the scholarship already established within the composition and rhetoric field. While Kaufer and Geisler and Hyon do not use innovation, their uses of novelty and newness closely parallel Kill's use of innovation; and, since innovation is a more comprehensive term and I explicitly seek to build upon Kill's work, I follow her terminology. Second, definitions and understandings of innovation, outside of creativity theory, more directly address what I seek to capture. In the Oxford English Dictionary, creativity is defined as "creative power or faculty; ability to create" while innovation is defined as "the action of innovating; the introduction of novelties, the alteration of what is established by the introduction of new elements or forms," as "a change made in the

²³ Sawyer uses examples from the technological field (citing the development of Windows GUI) and business (citing the marketing of fashion) (288). I also located many articles and texts regarding educational curriculum that use the word "innovation" to refer to wide-scale curricular change and development (see *Innovation in English Language Teaching* for example).

nature or fashion of anything,” and as “to change (a thing) into something new; to alter; to review; to make changes in something established.” Given my interest in disrupting “established” or conventional uptakes to “alter” or “change,” innovation appears to more closely capture what I am after. And third, the term “creativity” carries with it such cultural baggage, baggage that does not accurately represent what I seek to discover. As Sawyer explains “the science of creativity often conflicts with our creativity myths,” and those myths often limit what is considered creativity to unique individuals and to only certain kinds of artistic works (18).²⁴ While no term is neutral (and innovation certainly carries with it its own connotations), the use of “creativity” and “creative uptakes” might suggest cultural ideals and knowledge that are counterproductive to the purposes of my project where I seek to explore the everyday creative acts of individuals.

The definition and understanding of innovation, then, that I work with in this project does not include wide-scale adoption by organizations as a criteria; instead, it combines Kill’s use of innovation and Amabile’s social-psychology definition of creativity. Writers innovate when they take up discursive conventions in unexpected ways to create a product or response that demonstrates novelty or newness that is appropriate to the situation or context. This definition creates a subtle distinction between innovation and innovative uptakes. Whereas innovative uptakes are performances that seek to disrupt conventional uptakes (generic and discursive), innovations are the textual traces of those innovative uptakes that can be observed within the product or response. To discover how innovative uptakes and innovation can occur

²⁴ Sawyer seeks to debunk several creativity myths including “creativity comes from the unconscious,” “children are more creative than adults,” “creativity represents the inner spirit of the individual,” “creativity is a form of therapeutic self-discovery,” “creativity is spontaneous inspiration,” “many creative works go unrecognized in their own time and are only discovered decades later,” “everyone is creative,” “creativity is the same thing as originality,” and “fine art is more creative than craft” (18-27).

within the composition classroom, the theoretical and pedagogical considerations that I outline within this chapter must be further translated into classroom practices and then studied. In the following chapters I do just this, outlining the research study that I undertook within the composition classroom and then analyzing the results from this study.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methods

The first two chapters of this dissertation outline the theoretical concepts of uptake and disruption through which I conceptualize and understand writers' uses of convention and innovation. Uptake, as Anis Bawarshi, Melanie Kill, and Kimberly Emmons have used it, shifts scholars' and educators' primary focus from genres and texts to the individuals who create the genres and texts. By doing so, these scholars have provided another avenue by which issues of rhetorical agency and individual action within and through genres and texts can be understood, examined, and studied. Bawarshi calls for critical interventions within uptakes so that individuals can evaluate and question the value and impact of normalized and conventional uptakes, especially those that seek to diminish or exclude "difference." Kill explores how uptake creates a space of possibility in which individuals can consciously and deliberately choose their own processes of selection and design that seek to reinforce or change social structures. And Emmons examines the ways in which individuals identify and negotiate the ideological traverses of generic and discursive uptakes to understand their own identities and subject positions. To their observations I add my own addition to uptake that considers the ways in which an individual's previous experiences and socially significant markers (individual uptake) interact with the overall uptake process (including generic and discursive uptake). Taken as a whole, all of these observations and theorizations suggest that individuals engage in a multi-layered performance during uptake, including their performances of convention or innovation within their texts.

Disruption, used productively as it has been in feminist theory, multicultural studies, cultural studies, critical theory, and rhetorical genre theory, seeks to use analysis and critique to unearth and uproot conventionalized and normalized ideologies, especially those that seek to exclude or marginalize others. Rhetorical genre theory, for example, examines the ways in which individuals' analyses and critiques of genre can expose hidden or underlying ideologies that may work for or against their objectives and aims. While analysis and critique are central to disruption, so, too, is extending that analysis and critique into other kinds of action. And one of the primary ways in which other kinds of action can be achieved is through individuals designing and constructing written texts or textual productions. Multicultural scholars, such as Suresh Carangarajah, Juan C. Guerra, Kate Manglesdorf, Esha Niyogi De, Donna Uthus Gregory, Kermit E. Campbell, and Henry Evans, have sought to do just that in the context of the composition classroom—to invite students to disrupt conventional, academic uptakes through the construction of innovative texts that employ alternative uptakes. The goal of such disruptions, for multicultural scholars, is for students to challenge and change conventional academic ideologies in an attempt to create a more inclusive academic environment in which rhetorical and linguistic difference is not only accepted but embraced. Drawing from these disruptive theories and pedagogies, I suggested in Chapter 2 that disruption provides a means by which scholars and educators can encourage students to identify convention and to innovate within their writing and texts in an attempt to challenge and change social structures and institutions.

Pairing uptake and disruption, then, allows me to explore both why individuals employ convention or innovation within their texts and why and how to encourage

individuals to break with convention and innovate within their texts. And, perhaps most importantly for me, these two theoretical perspectives, together, allow me to examine how the two issues—why individuals employ convention or innovation within their texts and how to encourage individuals to break with convention and innovate within their texts—interact with and influence each other.

To pursue these issues, I conducted an empirical investigation that focused on the uptakes, texts, and experiences of students who were encouraged to innovate in a writing class. I formulated the following research questions to guide my study:

- 1) When given an assignment that invites critical innovative uptakes but also allows for other uptakes, to what extent do students innovate or use convention within their writing?
- 2) How do students demonstrate innovation or convention in their writing when an assignment enables them to do either?
- 3) What do students report about why they pursue innovation or convention when an assignment enables them to do either?

I designed a qualitative research study that employed multiple methods from various traditions (similar to Gesa Kirsch and Patricia Sullivan's call for methodological pluralism) as the most appropriate approach to answer these research questions and to capture moments of and motivations behind uptake. I employ aspects of the ethnographic tradition (as outlined by Beverly Moss in "Composition and Ethnography") by performing classroom observations in order to situate my study within the classroom context, but this study is not an ethnography.¹ Classroom observations aided in my

¹ Ethnography, as a research method, has a long and complex history (and present) with roots in anthropology, thus the understanding of ethnography I provide here is not unproblematic but one found within the field of composition and rhetoric. The object of an ethnography, as Moss writes, "is to provide what Geertz refers to as 'thick description' of the culture being studied (10-14). That thick description is based on how the members make meaning and explain and interpret social actions in their own communities; in short, how they define culture. One can gain such data only by immersing oneself in the community being studied" (157). Rather than using observation to understand how students define their

development of an assignment that invited critical innovative uptakes yet allowed for other uptakes. Since what is considered innovative is contextual,² classroom observations provided me with some of the necessary context in which I could understand convention and innovation in this particular classroom and in which I could develop an assignment for these students that encouraged innovation. Pairing my classroom observations with the collection and analysis of the texts that students produced in response to this assignment provided a means by which I could examine the extent to which students used innovation or convention within their writing. Analysis of the students' texts, in particular, allowed me to identify concrete textual examples of innovation and convention.

There are, of course, limitations to textually tracing moments of innovation and convention since what these terms mean or how they are defined are culturally and contextually influenced. The most pressing concern in such an analysis is defining what constitutes textual evidence of either for two main reasons. First, convention and innovation exist on a continuum—that is, rather than being either simply conventional or innovative, texts often incorporate elements of both. Texts as a whole, then, are neither solely conventional nor innovative but, instead, fall somewhere along the continuum between conventional and innovative. And within texts, particular generic and discursive moves also fall somewhere along the continuum. Second, both convention and

culture of the classroom, I use observation as a means to understand the larger context of the classroom in an attempt to interpret and understand students' uptakes.

² As Teresa M. Amabile suggests, “criteria for creativity require an historically bound social context” (34). She elaborates (and cites studies confirming her assertions, including Simonton and Csikszentmihalyi), “creativity assessments must, ultimately, be socially, culturally, and historically bound. It is impossible to assess the novelty of a product without some knowledge of what else exists in a domain at a particular time. It is impossible to assess appropriateness without some knowledge of utility or meaning in a particular context. And it is impossible for these assessments to be made—or indeed for creative products themselves to be made—in a cultural, social, or historical vacuum” (38).

innovation are contextually bound, and, as such, what constitutes either depends on the various contexts that are operating at once. In this study, examining texts for convention or innovation meant taking into consideration the larger academic context, the context of English classrooms and classrooms in general, the context of this particular composition classroom, the context of the genre, and the individual contexts that each student brings to the writing project. The complexity of the interplay between these varying levels of context makes identifying textual traces as conventional or innovative a complicated task. Moreover, what constitutes innovation or convention at one contextual level may not at another. For example, a text may be more innovative at the academic level if it breaks from conventional academic genres yet more conventional at the level of the particular classroom if its genre is discussed in-class as a viable option or at the individual level if the student has previously and frequently composed in the genre in the past. Taking these two complications together makes identifying textual traces of innovation and convention difficult and complex. Yet despite these very real complications, locating textual traces of innovation and convention as rigorously and consistently as possible is a necessary task as doing so provides a basis from which innovation and convention can be further understood and explored through contextual factors that are exposed through classroom observations, interviews, and other forms of self-reporting.

While the classroom observations and students' texts allow me to uncover to a certain extent how and when students employ convention and innovation within their writing, interviews with students and the instructor and classroom writings as well as survey information provide insight into the motivations behind students' uses of innovation and convention. The survey information provides background information

regarding students' past experiences, specifically language and educational backgrounds and perceptions, that may have motivated their choices to use convention or innovation. This survey information alone, however, does not provide students'—or the teacher's—perspectives on why students use innovation or convention. To gain the students' perspectives on why they chose to use convention or innovation as well as how they understood innovation and convention within the context of this unit and course, I asked students to report in interviews why they pursued innovation and convention when the assignment enabled them to do either. Additionally, I asked students to comment on specific textual traces that I had identified during my analysis of their texts. Doing so served two purposes: first to provide a check on what I considered innovative or conventional and second to provide insight into what the students identified as their motivations for choosing innovation or convention. The instructor interview also served as a check for how I defined innovation and convention and allowed me to gain a second “insider” perspective on why students choose to use convention or to innovate. Pairing the survey information with the student and instructor interviews and classroom writings, then, seeks to provide a fuller picture of the possible motivations behind students' uptakes and textual productions within the confines of self-reporting.

Study Design

As stated above, the goals of my study are to access how and why writers employ innovation and convention within their writing when given the option to do either. To achieve these goals, I studied the students and teacher within a first-year writing classroom over the course of a semester. In summer 2009, I submitted my application for Human Subject Approval and received approval from the Institutional Review Board's

Human Subjects Committee to begin my study during the fall 2009 semester. This protocol allowed me to visit, observe, and record class sessions; to administer a survey; to collect written work; and to conduct and record interviews. After receiving approval, I approached one of my colleagues “Lily,”³ a second-year Ph.D student and experienced English 101 graduate teaching assistant who was teaching a first-year writing class during the fall of 2009, to request her participation in my study, and she agreed, allowing me to study her course and access to student work.

At the start of the fall 2009 semester, my observation of the class began on the first day and continued throughout the semester until the last day. While acknowledging that no observation is wholly unobtrusive or objective (see, for example, Gesa E. Kirsch and Peter Mortensen), I was not an active participant in the classroom, so my presence presumably had minimal impact. With the exception of two days (due to illness), I observed every class meeting and took field notes so that I could provide the necessary context for my study as well as capture moments of uptake occurring within the classroom interactions. Moments of uptake, of course, occur everywhere and all the time in the classroom; however, I was particularly interested in observing students’ initial uptakes of and responses to writing tasks, whether those tasks were daily writing prompts, homework assignments, or writing projects. Observing these moments of uptake from the beginning of the course allowed me to understand what might constitute conventional uptakes within this classroom so that I could design writing tasks in unit three that sought to disrupt them. Documenting these observations also allowed me to pair this observational data with interview data as well as students’ texts to gain a greater

³ All research participants’ names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

understanding of the overall uptake process, as I could see their initial responses to writing tasks, their textual responses, and their reflections on their uptakes.

On the second day of class, Lily allowed me to introduce myself and my study to the students. I provided them with the informed consent sheets and stressed to the students that the only outside-of-class work they would be asked to perform would be a one-hour interview toward the end of the semester with the possibility of a follow-up interview; all other data that I was collecting would be part of the course and course work. Originally, fourteen of the twenty-two students enrolled within the course (64%) agreed to participate within the study; however, the study (and the course) experienced some attrition (three students), as is typical within any first year classroom.⁴ My final analyses and what I report on here take into consideration ten of the fourteen students since three students did not complete the course and one student who did complete the course did not accept my invitation for an interview. These volunteers received no compensation for participating in the study except for a candy bar at the completion of the interview (but they had no previous knowledge of this gesture).

In addition to classroom observations, I designed a survey to obtain demographic information about the students as well as information about their language backgrounds, educational backgrounds, educational experiences and perceptions, writing experiences, and educational objectives (see Appendix 1). The resulting data, while informative in and of itself, was also meant to provide some insight into students' uptakes, particularly individual uptakes, and motivations when paired with collected written work and

⁴ Only one student who agreed to participate within the study and left the course directly reported to me her reason for doing so and it was health-related. I do not know the specific reasons for why the other two students left. They simply stopped attending classes and did not report any additional information to me.

interview data. To aid in the development of this survey, I turned to Min Zhan Lu's "An Essay on the Work of Composition" in which she attempts to account for why people might make certain decisions while composing⁵ as well as the survey administered by Anis Bawarshi and Mary Jo Reiff in their study regarding students' transfer of genre knowledge and the course information sheets (two in total) that Amy Devitt and I administered during our antecedent genre study. Lily administered the survey to all students on the fourth day of class since we worked to incorporate it into a classroom activity for the first unit of the course. She collected all the surveys, but only the surveys from the student participants were retained, and all the other surveys were destroyed.

While I observed nearly all classroom meetings and collected survey data during the first unit, my study itself was intensely focused on the third unit for the course and the resulting writing projects. Lily designed the first and second units of the course. In the first unit, students imitated at least four genres and then described the differences among those genres and their experiences writing them (see Appendix 2). For the second unit, students analyzed the similarities and differences between a genre used within two different communities and then composed a paper in which they compared and contrasted the features of the texts and developed "a controlling idea that attempts to make sense of the similarities and differences based on what they tell readers about the communities that produce the texts" (see Appendix 3). The third unit focused on critiquing genres; and in conjunction with Lily and her other three units, I designed the writing project for the third unit (see Appendix 4) and its accompanying assignment sequence (Appendix 5) in

⁵ Lu explains that studying writers' discursive resources would include considering the writers' language expertise, language affiliation, language inheritance, "sense of 'order' between and across the languages, englishes, and discourses among those resources" (31), sense of self, and "view of the kinds of world and success she and others have had, could have, and should have" (33).

order to provide students with opportunities to be exposed to and engage in critical innovative uptakes. The central task of the writing project was for students to present a critique of a genre in whatever manner they choose. While I take sole responsibility for the design and content of the writing project and assignment sequence, I worked closely with Lily and another Graduate Teaching Assistant to develop and revise the writing project as well as course content and activities throughout the unit.⁶ Since it was, ultimately, Lily's course and she was primarily responsible for the students' learning, I found it central to receive her input and feedback throughout the unit. Additionally, Lily remained the primary and only visible teacher throughout the course, as I acted within the classroom context only as an observer, and I did so for the entire course, not just the third unit. Students did not know that I designed the writing prompt or the activity sequence for the third unit, and their understanding of my involvement in the class was limited to that of an observer who was interested in studying how students demonstrate innovation and convention in their writing and who was collecting and studying all of their produced materials throughout the course.⁷ As such, I believe that my presence and involvement within the class did not directly interfere with students' performances throughout the course.

⁶ The other G.T.A that Lily and I worked with for this unit was not part of my study. After learning of my study, she wanted to incorporate the third unit into her first year writing course as well. I also later learned that other G.T.As were interested in teaching a unit similar to the one that we devised. This interest, I believe, speaks to the value of this study and to the desire of writing instructors to engage students in critical innovative uptakes as well as engage in critical innovative uptakes of their own.

⁷ The informed consent sheet for the students outlined my involvement in the study as follows: "I am studying how students follow conventions and how much they vary from the usual conventions when writing their English 101 papers. If you agree to participate, I will ask you to fill out a survey, and I will make copies of your papers to study and take notes on and audio record some of your classroom interactions. Additionally, I will ask five to eight students for interviews that will be focused on one of your writing projects. These interviews will most likely occur during the second half of the semester, last for one hour, and will be audio recorded. I may ask for a follow-up interview, lasting no more than one hour. All audio recordings will be used by the researcher only and will be stored in a secure area."

This is not to say, however, that my involvement within the course, particularly my designing and building of unit three, did not affect students' performances. In fact, one of my goals throughout the construction of unit three and its activity sequence was to encourage students to pursue critical innovation. Doing so, admittedly, creates some tension within my research study as I sought both to discover how, when, and why students pursue innovation and convention *and* to encourage students to innovate. I could have sought to discover how, when, and why students pursue innovation and convention by studying how students responded to the writing task without intentionally designing activities that sought to encourage innovation (i.e. studying how students responded to the writing task after they engaged in a more routine and conventional activity sequence); however, I do not believe that my research results would have been as fruitful or revealing or that I would have generated sufficient data regarding why students pursue more innovative uptakes in addition to more conventional uptakes. I cannot be certain that this would have been the case, but given the highly habitual and routine nature of conventional uptakes (as explored within uptake studies) and the highly conventional context of the composition classroom (as explored within disruptive pedagogies), it is doubtful that students would have pursued more innovative uptakes without direct encouragement and approval to do so (and my research results certainly support this initial assumption on my part). While my research purposes of determining how, when, and why students pursue innovation and convention and encouraging students to innovate are seemingly in conflict with each other, I found it necessary to do the latter in order to study the former. Since conformity plays a central role within the classroom context, innovation within this context often requires encouragement. In this

sense, I already partially knew part of the answer to my research questions—the circumstances under which students would pursue innovation must include a teacher who invites and encourages innovation. What this study allows me to achieve is to more fully explore this circumstance as well as uncover and explore the other circumstances that surround the pursuit of innovation and convention.

I generated both the writing project and assignment sequence by taking into consideration previous theoretical scholarship on critical interventions in uptake and disruption. I specifically took into consideration the normative function of uptake—that is the ways in which uptakes become conventionalized, even automatic, within specific contexts. In order to critically intervene within conventional uptakes within the classroom, one first has to identify what uptakes are normalized within the specific classroom context. Working from this understanding, I developed writing tasks and assignments that sought to use disruption productively in order to critically intervene within conventional uptakes. I also drew from the disruption present within multicultural pedagogies, taking into consideration ways in which I could introduce students to different kinds of alternative uptakes as well as ways in which I could encourage and highlight students' individual uptakes (what they bring to the overall uptake process).

In addition to these theoretical considerations, I also sought to expand upon pedagogical suggestions offered by uptake scholars and creativity scholars. Drawing from uptake scholarship, I considered Anis Bawarshi's suggestions for critical interventions in uptakes. Bawarshi suggests several options for how instructors may be able to disrupt students conventional uptakes, including: (1) delaying and interrupting habitual uptakes so that students can critically examine their sources, motivations, and

uptakes; (2) designing assignments that invite students to mix genres and modalities from different contexts and then reflect on that experience; and (3) asking students to more closely consider the invention process or “how they come to recognize a task” (9).

Bawarshi’s second suggestion—assignments that invite students to mix genres and modalities—seems the most thoroughly explored within current scholarship.⁸ While inviting students to mix genres and modalities certainly is a useful way to disrupt conventional uptakes, especially since many academic tasks discourage such uptakes, I chose to focus on Bawarshi’s less explored first and third suggestions⁹ during the construction of the third unit. I did not want to specify how students took up the writing assignment since a primary goal of my study was to explore whether students choose conventional or innovative uptakes when given the opportunity to do either. It would have been counterproductive for me to require students to respond to the assignment by mixing genre or modalities, although this certainly was a possibility open to them within this unit.

Drawing from the social-psychology theory of creativity explored in the previous chapter, I considered ways in which to create an environment in which creativity and innovation could be encouraged and cultivated. This is possible because, as Teresa M.

⁸ Examples include Julie Jung’s multigenre texts that embody her “disruptive theory of revision,” Tom Romano’s multi-genre papers which are “composed of many genres and subgenres, each piece self-contained, making a point of its own, yet connected by theme or topic and sometimes by language, images and content” (x-xi), and Robert L. Davis and Mark F. Shadle’s multiwriting or “a practice of composing in which multiple genres, media, disciplines, and cultures are potentially open to use” (13-14).

⁹ While Bawarshi’s first and third suggestions are less explored within scholarship, Dylan Dryer’s work may be seen as addressing Bawarshi’s first suggestion of delaying or interrupting habitual uptakes as he suggests that teachers can de-routinize uptake by placing students in uncomfortable writing situations (in his case, he asks students to compose either a first-person “project proposal” or a second-person “paper assignment” for a response paper prompt and then answer it after they had routinely composed eight response papers in response to his prompts) (7). My own suggestion of inviting students to explore historical and cross-cultural unfamiliar genres (Bastian 2010) can also be seen as an attempt to delay habitual uptakes.

Amabile argues, “whatever an individual’s talents, domain expertise, and creative thinking skills, that individual’s social environment—the conditions under which he or she works—can significantly increase or decrease the level of creativity produced” (17). Of course, as Amabile notes, individuals may differ in their potential for creative performance within any given situation, but “although innate abilities (‘talents’) in a given domain do appear to be important for high levels of creativity, formal education seems essential in most outstanding creative achievements (Feldman, 1980)” (82). So even though individuals will differ in their creative potential, “there is a continuum from the low levels of creativity observed in everyday life to historically significant advances in science,” and “it is possible for anyone with normal cognitive abilities to produce work that is creative to some degree in some domain or endeavor” (82). While designing this unit, I kept in mind that while I may not be able to change an individual’s “innate” creative potential, I could work to create an assignment, activities, and an environment that would maximize all individuals’ abilities to innovate.

Many social-environmental factors can influence creativity and innovation,¹⁰ and I took several of those into consideration during the creation of this unit. As indicated in the previous chapter, I did not want to create a writing assignment (or task) that provided a clear or straightforward path since “choice in aspects of how to do a task can enhance creativity and intrinsic interest” (Amabile 71). In other words, providing students with freedom to decide what to do or how to accomplish a task affects the level of creativity and innovation demonstrated. I also drew from Amabile’s work that indicates “college environments that are most conducive to creativity include teachers who give individualized attention to students outside of class, serve as models of creative activity,

¹⁰ See Amabile’s *Creativity in Context* for the full list and detailed explanations of those factors.

and encourage students to be independent” (229). While I could not necessarily control how much outside of class individualized instruction was provided, I did develop assignments that encouraged students to work independently of the instructor, and I encouraged Lily to model innovative acts and actions throughout the unit and to demonstrate less control as a teacher than she did in previous units. Another important component that Amabile outlines is “engaging in playful activities” to increase subsequent creativity (229). The notion of play and playfulness figured predominantly into my day-to-day activity planning.

I designed the writing project and assignment sheet for unit three to both delay and interrupt habitual uptakes so that students could critically examine their sources, motivations, and uptakes (Bawarshi’s first suggestion) and to ask students to more closely consider the invention process or “how they come to recognize a task” (Bawarshi’s third suggestion). To delay habitual uptakes of writing assignments, I broke with the traditional genre of a writing prompt and, instead, presented the project in the genre of game rules. My hope was that doing so would not only cause students’ conventional writing assignment uptakes to be disrupted but would also work to create a “safe space” in which both the instructor and students were engaging in critical innovative uptakes. While one does not have to break with the traditional genre of the writing prompt to interrupt or delay habitual uptakes (instead, a teacher could invite students to more carefully and closely consider their conventional uptakes of a writing prompt through a series of self-reflective questions), I believed it to be more productive to disrupt through an alternative presentation of the writing prompt for several reasons. First, since this was the first unit that attempted to disrupt students’ conventional uptakes,

it seemed central that they encounter a writing prompt that immediately yet implicitly questioned their habitual uptakes of writing prompts. In this way, their habitual uptakes were not directly questioned; rather, the writing prompt created a writing situation in which they could explore their uptake processes without feeling as though their previous uptake knowledge was being called into question or attacked. Second, since the introduction of the alternative writing prompt was the first moment in which students experienced disruption of their habitual uptakes, this also helped to set the tone for the unit and the class. It indicated to students that this unit would not be “uptakes as usual” and would require different kinds of responses and actions on their part as well as on the teacher’s part. Third, as mentioned above, the alternative writing prompt also allowed students to see the teacher engaging in disruption and innovation from the first day of the unit. This, too, contributed to the tone of the unit and helped to establish the class as a safe space since students witnessed their teacher taking risks, thus implicitly suggesting that alternative uptakes were and are acceptable within the classroom.

The presentation of the writing project in another genre also required students to read and analyze carefully the assignment sheet in order to understand the task, and this allowed for a class activity in which students, together, considered the invention process. Also, since students were to choose the genre in which they composed their critique (rather than being provided with a genre in which to compose or possible genres in which to compose), they could not simply perform their conventional academic uptake of an essay without at least considering that choice. In addition to their critique, the assignment also asked students to compose a self-reflection piece in which they explored why they chose that particular genre to present their critique as well as why they made

particular rhetorical and linguistic choices within their text. While this self-reflection piece was primarily intended to aid in my development of the interview questions and my understanding of students' uptakes and generic and discursive choices, it also required students to carefully consider their own invention processes as well as the uptakes that they performed.

Like the writing project, the activity sequence for the unit was also designed to disrupt or delay conventional uptakes and to encourage innovative and critical innovative uptakes. To do so, I needed to take into consideration the larger context of the course and my previous observations of classroom activities and interactions since, again, what is considered innovative is contextually bound. For example, Lily regularly had invited students to respond to prompts with freewrites, so on the first day of the unit, Lily invited her students to respond to a prompt not with written freewrites but, instead, with images. Instead of responding to the writing prompt with written words or with written descriptions of images that came to mind, students responded with actual drawings and no accompanying words. This interruption of their conventional written uptake of the freewrite asked them to consider another medium—drawing—in which their thoughts could be composed. It also began the unit with students engaging in some “play” and “playfulness” within the classroom. In another example, Lily often had asked students to respond to homework assignments in written paragraphs, so, for one homework assignment during this unit, students were asked to respond using the more visual cluster method (sometimes called “clustering”) instead. Activities such as these worked to encourage students to disrupt conventional uptakes and to engage in play throughout the unit.

Additionally, students were exposed to a wide variety of possible genres in which critiques are composed. In addition to Lily's modeling innovation, I wanted to provide students with other models of innovation occurring within genres. While this certainly would appear to be paradoxical since students are being provided with models for innovation (and it may be to some extent), I believed that students would benefit from seeing examples of innovation for two primary reasons: first, students might need to see options for replacing conventional academic uptakes if they chose that route—telling students to innovate while helpful does not provide them with ideas about how to innovate; and second, a wide-range of examples would highlight and reinforce that many possibilities were open to students within the project and also that those alternative possibilities were viable options for them. The collected examples that students were asked to review and evaluate included posters, songs, blogs, websites, artwork (sculpture and paintings), poems, short stories, comics, speeches, creative nonfiction, video clips (such as youtube), newspaper articles, editorials, academic articles, and academic articles with visual aids. Lily and I also worked to increase student interaction, peer advice, and peer review in this unit since the first two units relied more upon student-instructor interaction rather than student-student interaction. For example, students were asked to write one question that they still had about the writing project near its conclusion, have two peers provide answers to their questions, and then discuss the responses. In another instance, students helped each other answer questions from the heuristic in their textbook, *Scenes of Writing*, that was meant to help students develop a critique of their genres. Students placed their genre samples, genre analysis, and worksheets that included the critique questions on their desks and then freely moved around the room to their peers'

material to provide some answers to the questions. Each question required three separate and distinct responses—students could build upon what a previous student had said, but he or she was still to add something new, not just simply agree or disagree with previous responses.

One week after the end of unit three, I began conducting interviews with ten of the student participants (only one student participant did not arrange an interview with me despite my two requests). While I developed a set of common questions regarding unit three as a whole (see Appendix 4), I tailored each set of interview questions based upon the student's reported survey information and all written materials generated in unit three (in-class writing, homework assignments, and writing project three). The interviews took place in Lily's office (without her present) and were audiorecorded. After completing the interviews with students, I interviewed Lily by adapting some of the questions that I asked students as well as by considering student responses to interview questions. This interview was intended to explore her reactions to unit three and to students' final projects.

Context

I conducted my study at Great Plains University (GPU), a public Midwestern university located in a city of approximately 82,000 located in the northeastern portion of the state. GPU serves as the main campus within a system that includes three other institutions. The campus population is over 25,000 and about 4,000 of those are first-year students. 74% of the students are residents of the state, and 13% are identified as multicultural students.

The class that I observed is part of a First-Year Writing Program (FYW) housed within the English Department. FYW coordinates the three course sequence (ENGL101, ENGL102, and 200-level English courses) that serves as a general education requirement for the university. ENGL101 is a first-year composition course that focuses on writing within and outside of the university, ENGL 102 is a critical reading and writing course that focuses on writing within the university and developing research skills, and 200-level English courses encompass a broad range of genres (for example poetry or fiction, broadly defined) and topics (for instance the use of satire, the neo-slave narrative, or Holocaust literature) but all work with students to develop various methods of reading and to write in ways appropriate to the designated genre or theme of the course. Before detailing the specific ENG 101 class that I observed, I will provide a brief overview of the ENGL 101 course as a whole.

Each year, approximately 2,700 students enroll in separate sections of ENGL 101, which are taught by roughly fifty-four graduate students and lecturers. The courses are limited to 20-24 students (dependent upon enrollment) in order to provide more individualized instruction and close attention to students' writing; however, all first-year instructors' courses are always capped at 20 students. In concert with the "Writing Program Administration's (WPA) Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition," the goals of ENGL 101 promote rhetorical flexibility and awareness by developing student's abilities to recognize writing situations, to identify and analyze the rhetorical components of those situations, and to compose texts in response to their analyses and rhetorical situations. To achieve these goals, students must compose a minimum of three formal papers, complete some kind of final project that serves as a culmination of the goals of

their course, and engage in-class writing. When instructors first enter into the FYW program, they take part in a graduate level course (the Study and Teaching of Writing) in which they are exposed to various theoretical approaches to the teaching of writing and learn about different teaching practices. New teachers also all teach from a common curriculum that is designed by the professor teaching the graduate level course. After the first year, however, each individual instructor has the opportunity to design his or her own curriculum and to teach from one of (at least) three textbooks approved by the FYW administration. While some instructors retain aspects from the common curriculum from which they taught their first year in the program, many adopt one of the other textbooks and create an entirely new curriculum or retain the textbook but alter the curriculum.

Lily employed a rhetorical-genre-theory-based pedagogy and curriculum in her English 101 course that utilized the textbook *Scenes of Writing*. Her course description provided on her syllabus read as follows:

English 101: Composition is designed to increase the range of your writing abilities and to give you more conscious knowledge and control of the writing choices you make. During this course, you will gain experience in recognizing, analyzing, and responding to different categories or types of writing, called "genres." By studying the patterns of genres, you will develop a better understanding of the purposes, audiences, subjects, and conventions of writing tasks and texts. Moreover, learning the tools and techniques other writers use to successfully communicate will help you make effective rhetorical choices when you write for this course or for other academic, public, or professional scenes of writing.

On her syllabus, she also identified three official objectives as stated by the FYW program that students should accomplish by the end of the 101 course:

- Develop your rhetorical flexibility within and beyond academic writing
- Analyze how language and rhetorical choices vary across texts and different institutional, historical, and/or public contexts
- Revise to improve your own writing

At the time of my study, four units that each culminated in a writing project comprised her English 101 course: writing project 1 invited students to imitate multiple genres from different contexts, describing the reasons for and effects of their differences; writing project 2 asked students to analyze the differences between multiple texts written within the same genre; writing project 3 (the one that I composed) invited students to critique a genre of their choosing and compose that critique in a genre of their choosing; and writing project 4 asked students to engage in a revision of their papers from unit one or two and compose a self-reflection piece that explored their revision process and what they had gained from it.¹¹ Students wrote multiple drafts of each of these writing projects, meeting with Lily for conferences during units two and three and performing peer workshops for all units.

The student demographic of the course was fairly representative of most English 101 courses at GPU. Lily's class comprised twenty-two students, fourteen of whom agreed to participate in my study and 10 of whom I report on here for reasons stated

¹¹ Lily did not allow for a revision of the unit three writing project within the fourth unit, primarily due to time constraints and restrictions. On the day in which students began the fourth unit, students had just turned in unit three's writing project. Since they had not yet received feedback on unit three's writing project and had just turned it in, Lily did not feel comfortable allowing them to revise the third writing project as part of the revision unit.

above.¹² Of the students who agreed to participate in my study, the majority was eighteen years of age (80%); one was nineteen and one non-traditional student was twenty-seven. Slightly more females than males were in the study (4 male and 6 female); and most students (70%) were from the Midwest (50% were in-state residents). All but one student was born within the United States, and of those ten students, all had resided only within the United States for their entire lives. The race/ethnicity of the individuals was mostly Caucasian (80%), although one student identified as Latino/Hispanic and Caucasian and one identified as Asian. The linguistic diversity of students was narrow with ninety percent of students reporting English as their only language spoken fluently (one reported speaking both English and Korean fluently). Eighty percent of the students came from families whose annual income exceeded \$60,000 a year with four students falling between \$100,000 and 250,000 (one student reported \$10,000 – \$19,000 and another student omitted a response). Finally, seventy percent of students reported having a parent or parents who received a bachelor's degree or higher (one student reporting a parent with an advanced degree), one student (10%) reported parent(s) having some college, one student (10%) reported parent(s) with a high school diploma, and one student omitted a response.

The instructor, Lily, is a friend and colleague of mine. I chose to observe her class not only because she was teaching with the textbook *Scenes of Writing*¹³ and

¹² I only collected demographic information from the students who agreed to participate in my study, so the demographic information I report here includes only those ten students and not the entire class.

¹³ Given that the pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption that I sought to develop built off of Devitt's genre awareness approach to teaching first year composition and Devitt, Reiff, and Bawarshi's pedagogical suggestions to teaching first year composition (as well as others), I wanted to observe a class that implemented this pedagogical approach and these suggestions as well as one that used Devitt, Reiff, and Bawarshi's textbook based on them, *Scenes of Writing*. Of course, this does not mean that a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption must be situated within a rhetorical-genre-theory-based curriculum;

implementing a rhetorical-genre-theory-based curriculum (as she had done the previous academic year in English 101) but also because of her experience and dedication as a teacher. Lily had taught for three years before entering the FYW program at GPU, and at both her previous institutions and GPU, she was recognized by both students on evaluations and colleagues in reviews as an exceptional teacher. Her teaching also won her an outstanding instructor award from the GPU English Department. Additionally, she is particularly open to developing new curriculum and taking on challenges in the classroom, important attributes for any instructor but especially important for an instructor in this particular study.

Data Collection

I collected two primary forms of data: written artifacts and audiotaped interviews. The written artifacts collected included surveys, all course documents, including writing project assignment sheets and other miscellaneous handouts, all formal writing projects (four in total) composed as requirements for the course, and all other textual productions composed during unit three (mainly in-class writings and homework assignments). Before reviewing any of the material produced by students, each student was assigned a pseudonym and any identifying information was removed from all materials. Additionally, while all materials were photocopied immediately after students submitted them for review or grading prior to any markings and comments from the instructor, the four writing projects were also photocopied again after Lily marked and graded them. While students received peer feedback (primarily through peer reviews and one group conference) on all four writing projects, Lily did not directly comment on the formal

however, I found it helpful within this study as it seeks to foster in students a sense of rhetorical awareness, as does my pedagogy.

writing projects before student turned them in for a grade (as in she did not collect and directly comment on drafts). She did, however, provide feedback on in-class activities and homework assignments throughout the unit as students were developing their projects, and she encouraged students to visit her during office hours to receive more individualized and direct attention to their formal writing projects. Since students composed all of these materials—writing project, in-class activities, and homework assignments—as part of the formal requirements of the course, I believe that they accurately reflect and demonstrate their uptakes and performances as students.

As discussed above, the surveys that asked students to provide information regarding their demographics, language backgrounds, educational backgrounds, educational experiences and perceptions, writing experiences, and educational objectives were intended to supplement the other collected materials. Even though the surveys provided additional data, they do suffer from the limitations of self-reporting. Students, most likely, were able to accurately report their demographic information as well as information about their educational backgrounds, experiences, and perceptions. They were also most likely able to provide fairly accurate information provided about their language backgrounds, although some may have not fully understood the concept of dialect. However, since students were also asked to select the kinds of writing that they composed in school, at work, and outside of work and school, the information they provided was dependant upon their memories as well as their ability to connect the genres listed with their own writing experiences. Additionally, expectations about surveys and the course itself could have influenced student responses.

My second major source of data was interviews. I conducted one, one-hour interview with nine of the student participants within a week of them turning in their final writing projects (with the exception of one student who I met with during the following week) and one, one-hour interview with Lily after I had completed all student interviews. I audiorecorded all interviews as well as took detailed notes. My goal with interviews was to obtain students' self-reports about their overall perceptions of unit three and their reasons and motivations for choosing the genres in which they composed their critiques. I wanted to hear their perspectives regarding what I was observing in the class and what I was seeing in their writing. Additionally, since students composed all materials as part of the course and for grades, I wanted to provide students with an opportunity to report to me information that they may not have included within their work since Lily was evaluating it. By obtaining this data, I was able to compare student viewpoints with my analysis of their written documents. The goals of my interview with Lily were to obtain her reactions to unit three and writing project three and, more specifically, to obtain her understanding of innovation and convention within the context of her classroom. I wanted to hear her versions of what was taking place during unit three and during writing project three as well as her understanding of innovation and convention so that I could compare and contrast it with the students' perspectives and my own. As with the surveys, interviews also suffer from the limitations inherent in self-reporting; however, pairing student interviews with Lily's interview, my own observations, and their writing serves to triangulate the data in an attempt to arrive at more accurate conclusions.

Data Analysis

My data analysis was focused on student-generated material gathered from unit three, the writing projects, in-class writings, and homework assignments, and from the interviews. I began my analysis with the critiques that students produced. I used a discourse-based analytical method (similar to Huckin's context-sensitive text analysis) in which I identified (by way of color-coding) the three kinds of uptake within the texts: generic, discursive, and individual uptake. I employed Emmons' work in "the discourse of depression" as a starting point for locating or seeing generic and discursive uptake within student texts. Emmons identifies the symptom's list and how it "organizes social actors around the diagnostic moment" as an example of generic uptake within advertisements, personal writing, and interviews (11). I looked for evidence of generic uptake by locating forms of discourse, specifically academic genres, and their corresponding social roles as student within the writing. For instance, I noted moments when students incorporated a third-person, distanced, and objective academic stance within their writing or incorporated academic rhetorical moves, such as the citation of evidence, topic sentences, and explicit thesis statement. I also looked for evidence of generic uptake by locating forms of discourse and their corresponding social roles that were common to the genres in which students chose to present their critiques. For example, within the recipes, I noted the use of detailed instructions laid out in steps that began with a verb (and an implied you) in which students positioned themselves as authorities telling readers how to create the products of their recipes. In another example, I noted textual markers in the blog in which the student writer directly identified with the

audience, such as “fellow bloggers” or “sweet tooth experts”—a common rhetorical move within this genre.

Emmons identifies the catch phrase of “chemical imbalance” and the resulting “individual dispositions toward biomedical treatment models and responses to the illness” as a moment of discursive uptake (11). I looked for evidence of discursive uptake by locating specific words, phrases, and grammatical constructions and their dispositions that are used within the writing assignment or that are common to the classroom as well as those that are common to the genre in which they composed. For example, in terms of discursive uptake of the assignment and classroom context, I noted particular phrases or questions that came directly from their textbook *Scenes of Writing* or the explicit use of phrases from the assignment, such as “critiquing a genre” and even just the words “critique” and “genre.” In terms of the discursive uptake of the genres in which they composed, I also looked for particular words and phrases common to that genre. In the recipes, for example, I looked for phrases and words common to the discourse of cooking such as “dash of,” “sprinkle of,” “that will excite your party,” “will serve,” “add,” “combine,” “mix,” etc.

Finally, I looked for evidence of individual uptake by looking for moments within the text where generic or discursive uptakes seem to be contradicted or resisted as well as for moments where students interject personal information, responses, or preferences. For instance, the genre in which students selected to respond to the assignment constituted a moment in individual uptake of the assignment. Textual traces of individual uptake also occurred in terms of the explicitness of the critique—that is whether student writers opted to explicitly state their critique or imply it. In short, I looked for textual

traces that indicated generic and discursive uptakes of the assignment, generic and discursive uptakes of the genre in which they chose to present their critiques, and individual uptakes of the assignment, the genre, and the discourse of the assignment and genre. At this point in the analysis, I did not classify or consider textual traces of uptakes in terms of innovation or convention; I was simply seeking to identify textual markers of generic, discursive, and individual uptakes.

In the students' self-reflection papers, classroom writings (composed in-class and as homework), and interviews, I also performed a rhetorical criticism analysis (Huckin) in which I looked first to identify students' self-reported reasons and motivations for performing particular uptakes of the assignment (primarily in terms of what genres they chose to present their critiques in) and then looked for patterns within the reasons and motivations that I identified. It was only after I located motivations and identified patterns within them that I began to examine their uptakes of the assignment in terms of innovation and convention. Doing so allowed me to consider their critiques for both what I was defining as innovative and conventional in relation to the context of the academy and this particular composition classroom and what the students were identifying as innovative or conventional. By combining these perspectives, I developed a more nuanced understanding of innovation and convention based on this particular class and these particular students. More specifically, I identified conventional and innovative uptakes as existing on a continuum, not being either innovative or conventional but, rather, falling somewhere in between as more innovative or more conventional (as more fully explored in the next chapter). The patterns that I uncovered through my rhetorical criticism revealed not whether a student and his or her text was conventional or

innovative but rather the reasons and motivation that students reported for why they chose to pursue the more innovative and more conventional as they defined it. In the following chapter, I explore more fully these results of my data analysis, focusing on the students' self-reported motivations for pursuing convention and innovation.

CHAPTER 4

Working Within and Against Conventional Uptakes:
Research Results

At the end of unit three, Lily and I were able to witness the products of our efforts to disrupt the students' conventional academic uptakes. While our intention was to encourage students to innovate in the form of uptakes that were non-conventional within the context of the academy and the composition classroom, we allowed students to choose the ways in which they presented their critiques. In response, students composed their critiques in a variety of genres including a PowerPoint, PowerPoint with notes and an accompanying oral speech, business letter, blog, magazine article, recipe, magazine advertisement, and magazine cover. The students also provided some insight into their motivations behind their critiques in their accompanying self-reflection pieces, in which they described why they chose the genres that they did and why they made specific rhetorical choices within their chosen genres. The interviews that I undertook with them shortly after they turned in their third writing projects served to further probe their motivations behind their critiques as well as their understandings of the third unit and writing project.

The research study and my analyses of the collected materials produced much more data than I had initially anticipated. Both the data regarding contextual factors that appear to have affected students' uptakes and textual traces of uptake proved rich and multi-faceted. While both analyses proved interesting and illuminating, I focus this chapter on the ways in which contextual factors influenced students' individual uptakes in terms of the genres in which they selected to present their critiques and the degree to

which this choice demonstrated innovation or convention. To do so, I focus most heavily on students' self-reports in their in-class and homework assignments, self-reflection papers, and interviews and less on the textual traces of uptakes within their texts.¹ Of course, the two are related and cannot be separated (as textual traces demonstrate students' uptakes), but I use the textual traces as a starting point from which I more deeply explore the contextual factors that affected students' uptakes and the production of their texts. This emphasis shifted the focus of the discussion regarding research results in this chapter away from the texts themselves and onto context and students' self-reports. In what follows, I first contextualize innovation and convention within this particular classroom for these particular students by taking into consideration the relationship between students' individual uptakes and overall generic uptakes. I then explore what students reported about why they chose innovation and convention in response to unit three. From this, I delineate some of the factors that appear to make a difference when students are making their decisions to pursue convention and innovation.

Contextualizing Innovation and Convention

After completing the study, I realized that the second research question that I posed—how do students demonstrate innovation or convention in their writing when an assignment enables them to do either?—was, perhaps, a bit simplistic as I initially conceived it. While theoretically I parse out and pose the complexity of uptake and innovation, I did not fully comprehend what this would mean practically and textually at the beginning of the study. Since the data regarding textual traces of generic, discursive, and individual uptake proved so rich in terms of innovation and convention, I focus my

¹ I plan to return to the texts in later works to more fully explore other facets of uptake.

discussion of the second question on how the students' overall generic uptakes interact with and demonstrates individual uptakes: that is, how students' individual uptakes relate to the genres in which students choose to present their critiques.² In other words, I look to contextualize convention and innovation—or how students understand and demonstrate innovation and convention in their writing—in terms of individual uptake and overall generic uptake.

As noted in previous chapters, convention and innovation exist on a continuum. Melanie Kill, for instance, understands uptake as existing on a continuum with conventional uptakes that “work to ease communication but also may compel people to reproduce meanings and material effects” on one end and innovative uptakes that “work to innovate and make use of discursive convention in unexpected ways” on the other (8). In this light, rather than being either conventional or innovative, texts, in their entirety, fall somewhere along this continuum between convention and innovation, thus allowing them to be more conventional or more innovative while still acknowledging that they can (and often do) combine elements of both. For example, a writer could choose to compose a more conventional academic genre of an essay but include more innovative elements, such as his or her own paintings or drawings to express certain points. Convention and innovation are rarely an either/or scenario but often a both/and, occurring simultaneously within the same text. Notice, also, that, as Kill points out, innovation does not operate outside of convention as it makes use of convention in unexpected ways. It is this notion of the unexpected that seems central to understanding innovation.

² Later works will more deeply probe the multiple, interacting uptakes in which students engaged in this project.

What counts as unexpected, however, varies because, also as previously noted, convention and innovation are contextually bound—what is more conventional (or expected) within one context may be more innovative within another. For example, the generic uptake of the syllabus may be more conventional when used to outline course policies and goals within a classroom but more innovative when used for satirical commentary on a political website. The continuum of what uptakes classify as more conventional and more innovative, then, also varies from one context to another. To help uncover what the continuum might look like within the composition classroom, I asked students in their interviews to identify the most and least conventional genres that they expect to compose in the English classroom. The most conventional (or most expected) genres included the academic essay, college paper, PowerPoint, research paper, and freewrite. The least conventional (or most unexpected) genres that they noted included drawing, song, ad, movies, posters, magazine, art, sculpture, painting, acting, skit, and recipe.³

I then asked students where they would place their own critiques on that continuum to better understand what the continuum might look like within this particular classroom for these particular students.⁴ Table 1 shows what genres each student chose to critique and in which genre each student chose to present that critique.

³ I also asked Lily, the instructor, to identify what she believed to be the most and least conventional genres in the English classroom. Her responses were similar to the students as noted the academic essay, freewrite, prompt, syllabus, and powerpoint as the most conventional and art and sculpture as the least conventional.

⁴ Again, I asked Lily where she would locate the students' projects on the continuum. She placed the PowerPoint, letter, recipe, blog, advertisement in the more conventional side of the spectrum, the magazine article in the center of the spectrum, and the magazine cover in the more innovative side of the spectrum.

Table 1

Genres that Students Selected to Critique and Genres that Students Selected to Present

their Critiques

Student	Genre Critiqued	Genre in which Critique was Presented
Amanda	Women's Magazines	Magazine Article
Ashley	Syllabus	Business Letter
Bradley	Fast Food Advertisements	Recipe
Derrick	Movie Reviews	Recipe
Lauren	Recipes	Blog
Lucy	CD Covers	PowerPoint
	Weight Loss	
Mallory	Advertisements	Advertisement
Michael	Vehicle Consumer Reports	Recipe
Ryan	Movie Posters	PowerPoint with Accompanying Notes and Oral Speech
Veronica	Music Magazines	Magazine Cover

While Lucy placed her PowerPoint $\frac{3}{4}$ toward the most conventional, Ryan suggested that his PowerPoint and accompanying notes and oral speech were “near the middle” of the continuum “but more toward the conventional.” Lauren also located her blog as near the middle but “more toward the most conventional” end of the spectrum. Ashley specified that her letter to the director was $\frac{1}{5}$ toward the most conventional. Amanda located her magazine article near the middle. Bradley and Derrick both placed their recipes $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way toward the least conventional, and Michael, who also composed a recipe, said that it

was “more toward the least conventional.” Mallory suggested that her magazine advertisement was $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way toward the least conventional. And finally, Veronica located her magazine cover as “in the middle between the middle [of the least conventional] and the least conventional” (which, I believe, translates approximately to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way toward least conventional).

In addition to this information from the students, I also took into consideration what I witnessed during my observations before and during unit three to help understand what constituted more conventional and more innovative uptakes. For unit one, students imitated various genres⁵ and then composed a conventional comparison essay in which they analyzed the similarities and differences between the features of the genres that they imitated. In unit two, they composed a conventional analytical essay where they analyzed the different uses and instantiations of the same genre within two different communities.⁶ Students imitated various public, private, and academic genres as part of the writing project for unit one, and both of these units’ writing projects culminated in the production of conventional academic genres, so students had not only composed in all of these genres within this class but had also received substantial feedback from Lily regarding their performances of them.⁷ Since students had already composed in all of

⁵ The genres students selected to imitate included the horoscope, classified ad, advertisement, personal email, academic email, business card, letter to the editor, grocery list, cover letter, social networking profile, journal entry, quiz, survey, personal letter, business letter, wedding announcement, twitter, eBay, music review, resume, parking ticket, opinion article, Navy recruitment poster, concert poster, and blog.

⁶ The genres that students examined for this project included college websites, military recruitment posters, book reviews, acceptance speeches, sport articles, high school mission statements, college mission statement, obituaries, and cover letters.

⁷ Lily provides substantial feedback for each writing project. In addition to approximately 250-300 word typed responses for each project, she also includes, on average, three marginal comments—comments that most often address and/or question students’ analysis or lack-there-of—per page.

these genres and received feedback from Lily, students may have seen these as acceptable and more conventional genres within this context and in which to compose in later units.

The presentation of unit three's assignment was different than the previous two. For the first two units, Lily introduced the writing project at the beginning of the class by handing out the assignment sheet, reading it aloud to the students, and asking if there were any questions. On the first day of the unit, Lily did not begin with the writing project assignment sheet but, instead, with a writing prompt in which students were to draw a critique of their roommate, using only images and no words. This task caused confusion among the students with Derrick asking "draw the critique?" and Lauren wanting clarification, "with, like, pictures, you mean?" Before several students started to draw, many looked around the classroom, peering at other students' papers, as if to make sure this was, in fact, what they were supposed to be doing. Immediately after finishing their drawings, Lily asked students to respond in writing to the following prompt: "In the past, you have responded to in-class prompts in writing. How did it feel to compose in another medium?" Students then shared their responses with each other in small groups before they turned to a whole-class discussion in which they explicitly discussed their responses to responding to a writing prompt in a different medium. Responses varied from students reporting that they did not like it because it was more difficult to get their points across in images to others reporting that it was a good change and that they liked it because they did not get "wrapped up" in words or because they felt it was easier to get their points across in images. This discussion led into another whole-class discussion regarding critique in which students worked together to explore critique and its role within society.

Following this discussion, Lily handed out the writing project assignment sheet and different students read the separate sections aloud. After the final word was read, Lily asked “questions?” After several seconds of silence, the first response was simply “why?” followed by nervous laughter from many others in the class. Derrick then piped in with “I’m so confused” while Amanda asked “why in the game format?” to which Michael responded “she’s getting us in the mood.” From this, students quickly broke out in chatter, asking each other and Lily questions and talking to each other about the writing prompt. The conversations were so fast-paced and overlapping that I could not keep track of them and neither could Lily. She seemed to struggle to keep up with the questions and conversations, and she soon turned students’ attention to the follow-up writing prompt “what do you think this writing assignment is asking you to do and why? What kind of student is it asking you to be?” This quieted the room as students began to write in response to it. This first day of the unit provided some insight into students’ initial responses to having their conventional uptakes disrupted, and the response was overwhelmingly one of confusion yet a mild excitement. The best description of this first day of the third unit came from Lily who referred to it as the “shock and awe day” after the class had ended and the students had left. The shock and awe in the room certainly was palpable, and it certainly worked to set up a classroom context in which disruption and awareness was fronted.

Additionally, during the second week of unit three, Lily and I provided students with a wide-variety of sample critiques that included both genre critiques and more general critiques (the genre critiques were presented to students first and then the more general critiques were presented the following class period). The genre critiques

included: Margaret Atwood's critique of short stories in "Happy Endings;" an academic critique essay on the healthcare bill published in *Scenes of Writing* (their classroom textbook); Sarah Haskin's short video clip of "Target Women: You're Old;" a satirical syllabus critiquing credit card bills entitled "What if Your Credit Card Company Wrote your Syllabus" from collegehumor.com; Ryan Reynold's "Status Update (Facebook Song)" from *Saturday Night Live*; Dirk13's blog "Game Covers—Art Form or After Thought"; Trina Robbins's published essay "Gender Differences in Comics" that includes visual representations; Jennifer deWinter's web-based book review (complete with hyperlinks and images) of "Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames" published on *Kairos*; a cartoon depiction of a grading rubric that critiques the entire concept of grading rubrics; and DivineCaroline's "Menu Magic: How Restaurants Encourage Us to Eat More" article from *Minyanville.com*. The examples of critiques that tackled issues or subjects rather than genres themselves included: posters for peace, social justice, and the environment; a feminist blog entitled "feminist blogs: independent alternatives to mainstream media"; Civil Rights protest signs; a video of Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" Speech; a variety of political cartoons from politicalcartoons.com; Bob Marley's "Get Up Stand Up" live version; Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind"; and Robert Arneson's "Nuclear War Head" sculpture. After being introduced to these examples, on the first day of the third week of the unit, students worked together, without input from Lily, to generate a "class list" of genres that they could use for critique—the list included: academic essay, advertisement, movie/book review, wedding announcements, freewrites, song, video, posters, magazines, newspaper

article, syllabi, letter to editor, mission statement, video game, game rules, political cartoons, blogs, email, PowerPoint, speech, rubric, recipes, and art.

Based on all of this contextual information, I parsed out which critiques were more conventional or more innovative within this classroom. Since I am primarily interested in the students' perspectives within this chapter, their understandings of what was more conventional and more innovative weighed most heavily in my analysis. According to the students' reports regarding their own critiques, the genres that fell within the more conventional side of the continuum are the PowerPoint, business letter, PowerPoint with oral speech, and blog. The genres that fell within the less conventional side of the continuum are the recipes, advertisement, and magazine cover. The magazine article, according to Amanda, splits the middle. In the discussion below, I discuss their critiques in terms of more innovative or more conventional according to these placements as well as their relationships to each other and to what occurred within the classroom. For example, the magazine article may be more innovative than the PowerPoint but less innovative than the magazine cover within the context of this course. The three recipes are an especially interesting phenomenon within this study because, besides the PowerPoint, this was the only genre in which several students composed. It was also an example that the class spent some time detailing and discussing after they had composed the class list of the possible genres in which they could compose their critiques. I primarily consider these more innovative uptakes since the three students who composed them identified them as such, while still acknowledging that within the context of this course, the recipe became a more conventional uptake since it figured prominently into

classroom discussions. Convention and innovation certainly are complicated and nuanced concepts.

Self-Reported Motivations for Pursuing Convention and Innovation

Admittedly, it is difficult, if not impossible, to uncover the entirety of the motivations behind any decision. The complexity and the interplay of the psychological, sociological, ideological, and contextual factors (among others) that affect an individual's decisions cannot and should not be reduced and, moreover, cannot be uncovered solely through methods of self-reporting.⁸ My study is no exception to these limitations. However, by examining the students' in-class writings, self-reflection pieces, and interview responses in conjunction with each other, I begin to partially uncover the motivations behind students' choices and, by doing so, identify patterns regarding why students reported pursuing convention and innovation. Students reported pursuing the more conventional for the following reasons:

- 1) their perception of their capabilities and an accompanying sense of safety;
- 2) their desire to please the teacher to receive a good grade; and
- 3) their understanding that conventional genres easily allow analytic critique and that conventional genres more easily control readers' interpretations.

And students reported pursuing the more innovative for the following reasons:

- 1) their desire to push themselves to do something that was different and uncomfortable;
- 2) their desire to show their personalities or other talents;
- 3) their desire to please the teacher to receive a good grade; and

⁸ For discussion regarding the limitations of retrospective reporting and accounts of the writing process see Barbara Tomlinson.

- 4) their realizations of the limitations of conventional academic genres for their purposes.

While my examination here explores these patterns as distinct and separate, they are, of course, not mutually exclusive, a point to which I draw some attention to throughout the analysis.

Convention

One of the major factors students indicated that pushed them to engage more conventional uptakes is their belief that they lacked “creativity” because it was not the “kind of person” who they perceived themselves to be. Lucy, who composed her critique of CD covers in a PowerPoint presentation, for example, reports in her interview that “sometimes it’s really hard for me to think outside of the box. I’m not really that creative of a person. I like to have stuff set out and written for me. Like step-by-step instructions. So this project was kinda hard.” In her interview, I asked her to elaborate on what she meant by it is hard for her to “think outside of the box,” to which she responded, “I don’t know, I’m just that type of person, I’m just that kind of personality that needs step-by-step stuff or else I’ll always have questions.” For Lucy, not “having stuff set out” causes her to experience discomfort—she experienced the project as hard because she believes she lacks the creativity necessary to “think outside of the box” as this assignment asked her to do and craves direction and step-by-step instructions. Lacking these, she returned to the PowerPoint presentation, a genre that she told me she has been composing since her first year in high school, because she knew the step-by-step instructions for composing one and felt she could do it even if she had never created a PowerPoint for the purpose of genre critique before. Lauren expressed similar sentiments in her self-

reflection paper:

I get stressed about little things and especially about school. So when we got this assignment the first thing I did was get stressed. The thing that got me the most anxious was the fact that we did not have to complete this assignment in the form of an academic essay. I personally am not the most creative person so my first thought was to just write an academic essay anyway.

She elaborated in her interview on this statement, explaining:

I thought ‘I’m not the most creative person in the world. So I am just going to have to do an academic essay. That’s it. I’m just going to have to do it. Because I’m not creative. I’ve done academic essays. I’m just going to have to do another one. And then I’ll have to do a reflection essay.’”

While Lauren ultimately composed her critique in a blog (a genre that she had composed in before and that she identifies as more toward the conventional but still innovative for her and within this classroom in some ways), her initial stress and decision to “just write an academic essay anyway” appears to have stemmed from her fear that she just is not a creative person. In light of this, the academic essay, at first, seems like the most logical choice for her because it, apparently, does not require her to be creative, and because she has written essays before and, in this class, has done quite well on them.

Both Lucy’s and Lauren’s comments suggest that not only do they see themselves as lacking creativity but they see conventional academic genres as lacking the need for creativity as well. Lucy and Lauren do not need to be creative people when using conventional academic genres because teachers have already provided explicit step-by-step instruction regarding how to compose them and because they already and often have

composed them. The ways in which they are using the term creativity, then, appear to be linked to familiarity—what is familiar and conventional does not require creativity and what is unfamiliar or unconventional does. It also suggests that these students do not see academic genres as creative, which has the potential to then limit what they can do or even see as possibilities within conventional academic genres.⁹

Not surprisingly, other students who also reported choosing more conventional uptakes (Ashley and Ryan) expressed a sense of safety and comfort with the familiarity of these uptakes. Ashley (who wrote a business letter—a genre she imitated during the first unit) expressed in an early in-class writing that she was going to use an essay to present her critique and reports composing in high school because “I feel [an essay] is one of the ways to best explain it. I am pretty good at writing essays, so I think this would be a strong way to present my critique.” While she decided on a business letter and not the essay, in her interview she told me that she wished she could be creative but she decided on the letter because she wanted to “do something [she] kn[e]w [she] can do” and she “didn’t want to stray too far.” Ryan also wrote in the same in-class writing that he “could present in the form of a PowerPoint because I know how to do this” (and he did choose a PowerPoint presentation in the end). In response to my asking Ryan if he had considered other genres, he responded “I wasn’t really thinking of anything else. I was thinking first of an oral presentation and then to have my second one be a PowerPoint and then I decided to put them both together...I really didn’t give any other options for myself. They were really the only things that I decided on.” For these students, then, it is

⁹ I believe the potentially limiting effect of not seeing conventional academic genres as creative is best expressed through Ashley’s interview comment that “everyone writes essays. Like, we all know, you know, how to write it. We know the format. It is how it is. That’s how English class goes.” Others expressed similar sentiments.

not only their perception of their ability to be creative that appears to have influenced their decisions—it is this perception coupled with the sense of safety and comfort (and, perhaps even from this, empowerment) that they gain from composing in conventional genres that they know and believe they know how to do well.

While this sense of safety and comfort stems from students' previous experiences in English classes, students also referred to previous experiences with Lily within units one and two, in particular, when citing reasons for choosing the more conventional. More specifically, they expressed a desire to please Lily and receive a good grade. Students who reported choosing the more conventional often directly applied Lily's comments and their experiences from these previous units to this unit. For example, in an in-class writing where students were asked to explain their understanding of unit three, Lucy responded with, "in the third unit we are combining units one and two. Since we learned analysis of genres and critiques already, unit three should be a review." This quote nicely demonstrates how uptake "selects, defines, and represents its object" (Freadman). For Lucy, unit three was a clear combination of the previous two units rather than an extension of them that asked students to do something different. As a result, she directly applied and re-enacted her previous experiences within the course, as is further indicated in some of her interview responses. Lucy explained to me that she chose a more conventional genre because "they're easier to do and, like, and more pleasing." Asking her to expand on why they are "easier" and "more pleasing," she elaborated:

They are easier because we've already done them, like, already have background and know how to do them. Instead of like a blog or something never done

before...they are more pleasing to Lily because we always do academic analysis essays, and I feel like she explained it enough so like we should know how to do one.

She also added later that she thought the conventional genres would be easier “for [Lily] to grade because we’ve already done them before.”

Along similar lines, Ashley reported choosing a more conventional uptake within the context of this course, the business letter that she imitated as part of the writing project in unit one. When prompted to further explain this choice, she noted, “I figured, like, if we did [the letter] in class at the beginning of the year, then, like, I did fine on that one, so I was like ‘I should probably stick to this. I guess she likes that format, style, whatever, and so I just stuck to it for class’” (interview). Later I asked if she felt that she could really choose any genre for this project; the following was our exchange:

Ashley: With the nature of the project, you know, you have to choose, like you don’t have to do [a conventional genre], but you probably wouldn’t get as good of a grade. There comes a point where you have to choose something maybe even if it isn’t the one you really want to do just for the sake of, you know, presenting it the best you can and, like, hopefully getting a good grade...you can have fun to a certain extent, but then you have to buckle down, ‘ok, so I have to do this so that way I can get my point across.’”

Me: You can’t have too much fun in an English class?

Ashley: Well, yeah, it’s still class...it is like you are learning a lot and you need to show it. So I hope that I showed everything.

Within this statement, Ashley clearly indicates her desire to show Lily what she has learned within the first two units which requires her to “buckle down” rather than “hav[e] fun” or do the “[genre] you really want to do.”¹⁰ Both Ashley and Lucy want to please Lily and both also believe this would best be achieved by sticking with what they know and have done not only in this class but also in English classes in general. This belief was most likely influenced by their uptake memory from previous English classes but also from Lily’s previous writing project tasks and her comments on their previous papers

In both of their responses, Ashley and Lucy also connect using convention to please Lily with getting “good grades,” indicating that they believe Lily both wants and values convention, and, thus, convention will garner them a good grade—a belief that is completely understandable and warranted given that both students struggled with analysis in their previous papers and Lily noted this within her marginal and end comments. Even though they had struggled with analysis in their previous papers, they still see convention as something that Lily would prefer and value since her marginal and end comments suggested that she does. Lucy thinks conventional genres will be easier for Lily to grade, and Ashley believes that “presenting it the best you can” (which is, apparently for her, in a more conventional genre) will get you a good grade. This preoccupation with and fear of grading and grades is also expressed by Lauren in one of her early in-class writings; she notes that:

I feel [the academic essay] might be the only way I am able to effectively describe my genre and the critique I have for it...I can’t really think of another way I am able to include a lot of detail without just writing an essay...Unless I can think of

¹⁰ The one Ashley really wanted to do, she told me, was the recipe.

another form to write the critique in, I will just stick with the academic essay...A letter to editor/chef worries me because I am afraid I will not be allowed to include enough information that will lead to me getting a good grade.

Like Ashley, Lauren also fears that non-conventional uptakes will affect her grade because she cannot “include enough information”—at least with the academic essay, she can include enough detail and analysis to explain her genre and critique.

Students who chose more conventional uptakes, then, wanted to please Lily in order to get a good grade, and their understanding of what would warrant a good grade was based on their previous experiences with Lily within this particular class and also with other English classes. Or, as Ryan explained, they used what “works”: “the reason things are conventional is because they work. The non-conventional works but not as easily or well. So you stick more toward conventions because they work better” (interview). Since Lily had asked them within units one and two to compose conventional academic genres as part of their projects (and these weighted most heavily into the evaluation and grading) and stressed the importance of analysis and evidence within previous marginal and end comments in addition to classroom conversations, students carried over these experiences and expectations into this unit. Concerned that more innovative uptakes would not allow them to demonstrate analysis and critique or “work” in ways that Lily would recognize, they opted for more conventional uptakes that they knew would demonstrate analysis and critique and “work” in ways that they at least knew Lily recognized and valued.

The ways in which conventional uptakes especially “worked” for these students can be found in their understanding that the more conventional academic genres easily

enable and demonstrate analytic critique (one of the goals for this unit) as well as control readers' (primarily the teacher's) interpretations. As Ashley explains in her self-reflection, "Having both complaints and compliments about the syllabus led me to choose a formal non-academic genre . . . A letter to the director in the style of 'Letter to the Editor' allows the writer to express the good and bad things on a subject, as well as propose solutions." She continues, "I did not want to stray away from the letter format as far as presentation because I needed an approach that allowed me to express my thoughts in a meaningful way. This gave me the flexibility to be descriptive, instead of just using bullet points, short sentences, or images, like an ad or recipe." Ashley's explanation for why she chose what she considered to be a more conventional genre within this particular classroom suggests that the letter allowed her to not only show her critique but to show it in a "meaningful way" that was descriptive. In other words, this genre allowed her to be explicit about her critique (moving from strengths to weaknesses to solutions).

Lucy, too, indicates the importance of being explicit about her critique in her self-reflection paper; she writes:

I chose to present my critique of this genre in a PowerPoint because I thought it would be a colorful and entertaining way to inform people of this genre. A PowerPoint allows me to share facts about this genre and address what I believe are the strengths and weaknesses. This genre was the easiest way to inform the audience without providing too much information that would overwhelm them. A power point is a fun and exciting genre that is easy to read and explain to others. A PowerPoint, for Lucy, allows her to easily show her critique to the audience, and if her strengths and weaknesses are explicit in this genre, she can better control the audiences'

interpretation of her ideas. When prompted to expand on this quote in the interview, she indicated that she wants more explicit analysis and critique because “[Lily] always writes in my papers that I need to analyze more, like, put more analysis in it. So I wanted to make sure I was doing that...I wanted to make sure it was all written down...wanted to make sure I had enough analysis.” Lucy wants to ‘cover all her bases,’ and the ways that she identified as being most effective to do so was a more conventional genres that explicitly allows her to state critique and analysis. With this explicitness, she could push Lily to read and interpret her work as she wanted her to.

Even those who chose more innovative uptakes within this project also indicated in their self-reflections that conventional uptakes would have allowed for a certain level of explicitness and control. For example, Derrick writes that “an academic analysis paper would have allowed me to easily convey my critique to the audience,” while Michael notes that “if I presented my genre critique in an academic essay I know that I would be able to fully explain everything that is needed in the critique, including successes and failures” (self-reflection papers). Comments such as these indicate that regardless of whether they chose more convention or more innovation in response to this assignment, most students perceive conventional genres to be especially conducive to the level and type of explanation needed for a critique.

Innovation

While some students who did not identify as creative opted for more conventional uptakes (as discussed above), others who also did not identify as creative expressed a desire to push themselves to do something different and uncomfortable. Bradley most fervently expresses this desire during his interview when asked why he chose to present

his critique in a recipe: “I kinda wanted to try something new and different; and I didn’t want to be like, I didn’t want to do a PowerPoint or something I would normally do for a class. I mean, I might need to do this somewhere later down the line.” When further prompted to explain why it was important for him to do something different, he explains “so that I can learn something new and different and use it whenever I need it in life.” Even though Bradley identifies the ability to do something different as an advantageous skill that he will benefit from in the long run, this choice is particularly uncomfortable for him because he felt especially comfortable during the first two units in which he had set guidelines and composed in conventional academic genres (genres that he indicated having extensive experience with through high school and his AP English classes and genres in which he felt that he performed quite well). He explains that:

When we started making the list [of possible genres in class], I never would have thought of making a recipe. But I didn’t want to do a paper because I do them all the time. I wanted to do something different...then I saw the recipe, and I think I thought I could do something like that easily...I felt I could do it, stepping outside my comfort zone but still staying in it.

He further elaborates that after seeing other students’ innovative uptake choices during peer reviews that he “felt less uncomfortable, but [he] didn’t feel completely comfortable with it.” Despite never feeling “100 % comfortable” (in his own words) stepping outside of his comfort zone (i.e. conventional uptakes), Bradley still experiences a desire to do so primarily because he recognizes the future—and most likely also the immediate—value of such an act and he feels supported in pursuing innovation by seeing other students’ doing so.

Others identified their desire to showcase their hidden talents as a reason for pursuing innovation. In fact, a desire to demonstrate other talents or their personality—things that they believe conventional genres would not easily allow them to do—was second most cited reason next to desire to please the teacher to receive a good grade. Amanda chose the magazine article because, as she explains, “it allowed me to display one of my better strengths, graphic design. I feel that this genre is more visually appealing to the viewer than a normal academic essay would be” (paper). Veronica also notes in her paper that, “when I was given the opportunity to break out from the ordinary analysis paper and present my argument in a different and creative way, I wanted to really show my talent in creating something other than a paper.” In her interview, she further explains that she wanted to show her talent for art because:

I like doing art. And I’m not an art major. And my roommate is, like, really good at photography, and she is actually doing art right now and it just makes me feel limited because I’m doing business; and I don’t want to become an art major but I really like art. I’ve always loved it. I felt like doing this would, like, break me out from that scripted, I guess, rubric that we always have to write papers, and like, and if you are not an art major then you are not doing art.

Being able to demonstrate her talent for art is particularly important for Veronica because she identifies herself to be a “very visual person” who likes photography and art, so she “will write a paper if [she] ha[s] to but, if [she] do not have to, [she] would rather express [her] ideas in a different way because [she] like[s] it and it’s just a lot easier for [her]” than writing a paper (interview).

Similarly, others expressed a strong desire to show their personality—especially when it came to humor and sarcasm—more than they felt able to do in conventional genres. Mallory, Michael, and Derrick were especially pleased that their more innovative uptakes allowed them to showcase what they identified as some of the most important aspects of their personalities. Mallory writes in her self-reflection piece that:

To critique this genre I found it only fitting to design my own advertisement. I could have written a long, boring essay filled with sentences of composed words singling out every feature I wanted to critique, but I didn't see that as being very entertaining for me or for my user. I also know that I can be very sarcastic at times and that sarcasm in print can be hard for the reader to understand without the tone of voice and body movement to reference to it. By focusing my sarcasm in a visual format, I am allowing my reader to interpret my advertisement in their own sarcastic way. I strongly believe that a picture is worth a thousand words and I wanted my reader to walk away writing their own story of how my critique brought something to their attention that was taken for granted.

In her interview, she elaborates on this by explaining that this unit was easier than the first two units for her because “[she is] really sarcastic. And [she] think[s] [she] was able to see different ways of being able to critique things” because of this. For Mallory, her personality not only contributed to her final writing project but also to her ability to critique in general.

Michael explains that one of the main reasons he chose the recipe is because he wanted to show his personality with the use of satire and exaggeration: “I’m a very open person and I’ll basically talk to anybody. So I want people to know my personality, to

know me. So I just want, I don't know, I don't know how to say it. I just want to be out there, and people to know that this is me, this is my work, this is what I did, nobody else did this" (interview). This quote suggests his investment in his more innovative uptake in general and highlights a sense of ownership that he feels regarding this project that he did not experience with previous writing projects. Derrick, too, expresses in his interview that he chose the recipe because he is a funny person and he was able to be funny in his recipe—and, modesty aside, he declares his “funnier and better than [Michael’s] and [Bradley’s]” (interview). He added that “I was thinking about all the different ways we could do it. And then Maggie brought in the recipes. And then it really clicked from there. I was thinking about the title and how I was going to format it. It was kinda nice” (interview).

The students who reported choosing innovation to highlight their personalities and demonstrate their hidden talents appear to demonstrate a stronger sense of ownership of and investment in their writing projects. Even some of those who doubted their ability to be creative or even that they had any hidden talents felt the draw of being able to show aspects of themselves to Lily that she had not previously seen. For instance, Lauren explains that “I was really trying to look for something not an academic essay” because “I thought that it'd be not only just a nice break for me but also for [Lily] to see a different side of me. I mean I can write academic essays. But I can also [write the blog] and make it sound academic” (interview). Her comment that “it would be a nice break” speaks to another draw of more innovative uptakes—in some ways, they allow students to step outside of what they recognize as conventional uptakes while still remaining within the academic context. The value of students feeling able to express hidden talents

or their personalities was most nicely summarized by Michael who said that this third unit “was interesting I guess cause I got to see not only what other people chose but kinda what their interests were. Like [Lauren], her interests, she likes cooking, so I got to learn about the subject and about the person. And I think that’s what really drew me to this unit.”

Students who chose more innovative uptakes also cited a desire to please Lily to receive a good grade; however, they primarily framed this desire in terms of believing that Lily and/or the assignment said they were to innovate. Like those students who chose more conventional uptakes, these students also wanted to please Lily, but they believed that the best way to do so was through innovation and not convention. Bradley, for example, explained to me what he believed Lily wanted in this unit in following exchange:

Me: What do you think Lily wanted in this assignment?

Bradley: She just didn’t want us to write a paper...I feel like she wanted to see something different, something other than what you have written...I felt like she emphasized to do something different...She didn’t require us [to be creative] but I felt like she wanted us to be creative. I felt like a lot of people felt that way. She wanted us to step outside what we would normally do, which was an academic essay for an English class. And I guess I felt required just because I felt like she might enjoy something other than, like, I know if I was an English teacher I would get tired of reading academic essays. And like, she wanted us to do something else that, like, would kinda, um, entice the reader, I suppose.

Me: Did you hear other people talking about this?

Bradley: No, a general sense because only one person wrote an academic essay.

But maybe people didn't feel required but enjoy doing other things, because some people are like that. But for me it's not that way.

Me: So did you feel like being creative was another guideline for this project?

Bradley: It wasn't a written guideline, but I felt like not necessarily a guideline but more like an unwritten statement. Like, 'I want you to be creative.'

(Interview)

While the assignment itself did not require students to innovate, Bradley's comments here indicate that he certainly felt pressure from Lily not just to "not write an academic essay" but to innovate in his critique as well. In other words, Bradley "heard" Lily expressing a desire and need for innovation in this project even though it was never explicitly stated in the assignment prompt or by Lily herself.

Others also identified innovation and difference as desirable and necessary characteristics for this writing project. Michael, for instance, explains the goals of this unit as "I think to be able to, I mean, obviously critique a genre but be able to present your thoughts in a different way. I think the goal was for us to not do an academic essay" (interview). Derrick writes that Lily "wanted us to think of a more creative way to present. Not to do an academic analysis paper that we were used to writing" (in-class writing). And Mallory explains that "I know that [Lily] said we could still write an academic essay, but I think she was also like that creativeness was to be able to be like how can you put your words in a different format and still be effective, and being able to do your own way" (interview). What is especially interesting here is that all four of these students cite the academic essay as the quintessential conventional academic genre and,

therefore, to be avoided for this particular assignment. By identifying one of the primary goals of this assignment as “not doing an academic essay,” they define and understand what they are to do against what they already know and what is familiar (the academic essay) rather than what they could do or what is possible. In short, they primarily construct and explain their understanding of the writing task in terms of the academic essay—“My goal is to not write an academic essay” rather than “My goal is to write a recipe” or short story or whatever the non-essay genre may be. This suggests the centrality and weight of conventional uptakes even for those students who chose to respond more innovatively.

In addition to believing that Lily wanted them to innovate from the academic essay, other students specifically cite the writing prompt for this assignment as encouraging innovation. Amanda, for instance, writes that “the prompt is asking me to grow as a student and to think outside the box. I need to find new creative ways to compare the 2 items w/in my genre and present it to my reader” (in-class writing). Mallory directly cites the writing prompt as stressing the importance of innovation:

I think [the writing prompt] was interesting and...with her being creative and showing us a way to be creative kinda added to her expectations of creativity. So it was nice just seeing it in a different way that got you kinda excited about the paper. It wasn't boring and just make you sigh and be like ‘oh great another paper.’ It definitely added to her [hav]ing fun with it so maybe I'll have fun with it later”

Like Mallory, Derrick also recognizes the writing prompt as implicitly encouraging innovation; as he explains, “with the prompt she gave us, I was like ‘what?’ at first, but then realized it was a creative way to present it” (interview).

Perhaps because students who chose more innovative uptakes expressed a desire to push themselves and demonstrate their hidden talents, many also came to realize some of the limitations of conventional uptakes, mainly that they do not allow students to achieve other purposes outside of critique that students had for this writing project. Some cite an additional purpose being the need to entertain both the audience and themselves. Michael, for example, explains in one of his in-class writings that:

If I choose a recipe it might be easier for a viewer to quickly look at and get the point across. In an essay the tone would have to be serious and it could be boring for the viewer to read but with the recipe the use of satire would make the reader find it entertaining. I have made my final decision: a recipe. It will be easier to get across the information and it will be more entertaining for the viewer.

He later elaborates on his choice of the recipe in his self-reflection paper, noting that:

I needed to sum up with something more, something with originality, showed my beliefs, and even my personality. I determined that if I was going to make this entertaining, insightful, savvy, and satirical I had to go with a recipe. In making the recipe I was able to present both the successes and failures of the genre clearly in a satirical manner. The first things that I wanted to do with the recipe was to make sure that all my information was in it, then I simply wanted to have fun making it. My goal for the audience was for them to be entertained by my critique and then truly understand what my critique was.

Michael not only wanted his audience to be entertained but he also wanted to “have fun making it” himself. The recipe allowed him to achieve both of these purposes at once.

In addition to allowing (more easily) for entertainment, more innovative uptakes, students reported, allowed for a certain degree of open interpretation due to the less explicit nature of critique in non-conventional academic genres. Michael writes in his self-reflection piece that “I feel that if I were to write my critique in [in an academic essay] it would be boring and would not give the audience the chance to come up with their own conclusions”; and during his interview, he further emphasized the importance of allowing the audience some degree of freedom to interpret his recipe even though he felt the critique within it was fairly clear. Mallory also appreciated how her more innovative uptake of the satirical weight loss magazine advertisement allowed the audience to “think more for themselves” rather than “imposing fact on them”:

With the essay I really felt like I would have been throwing words and facts at you...and almost like not letting you think at all. I feel like with the essay, I am imposing fact on your, whereas with my ad I am allowing you to think about it also. Like in my ad, I didn't have to explain why I was used a certain font. I was really expecting [the audience] to pick up from normal ads that the fine print is really, really fine print and where you don't read things. And like on mine, I made it so huge for the exact opposite effect. To really draw your attention to the fact that you never read it before because it is really fine print. And using the really big words [in terms of size], and I was also expecting you to catch on that this is really ridiculous. But I also wanted to point out that it is really big and is

the first thing you see...I wanted you to think about those things by yourself, and like, I was kinda like feeding it to you, but I wasn't telling you what to see.

Rather than finding comfort in the explicit nature of conventional genres, like the students who reported pursuing the more conventional, Michael and Mallory seem to find the explicitness limiting—for them, it does not allow the audience to participate within the construction of knowledge or, in Mallory's terms, think about things by yourself. Both acknowledge that their critiques push the audience toward certain conclusions, yet they believe that their genres ultimately allow the audience to draw their own conclusions, and they found this to be an important and worthy goal.

Other students explain that they chose their particular forms of innovation because they were more appropriate for and “worked better” with the initial genre that they chose to critique, rather than working better for critique in general, as expressed by the students who chose to write more conventionally. Amanda, for instance, composed a magazine article complete with images, “pull quotes,” varied font sizes, column formatting, and even page numbers, because she “believe[s] it is a creative way to express [her] opinions on the subject. Since the entire critique is about magazines, [she] thought this idea would stick to the central theme and give the reader a better understanding,” presumably a better understanding of her critique that women's magazines textually purport to promote body-acceptance yet visually contradict this ideal (self-reflection paper). Lauren, while choosing the more conventional genre of a blog, also acknowledges that the blog genre, in particular, helps further her critique that recipes lack creativity and individuality even though cooking often requires some degree of creativity and individuality:

I started to think that it would be interesting if I produced the same kind of ‘blog’ about certain recipes I had made in my lifetime... This way I would be able to give my opinion because I had actually made a lot of her desserts, and also add that sense of critique by talking about my experience’s cooking them. I also thought that this would be a more interesting and creative than just doing an academic essay and be more appropriate for the genre. (self-reflection paper)

In her interview, she expands upon these points, explaining that, “I thought that it was important to be creative because recipes are also really creative. They are creative in the sense of a person putting ingredients together but, like, on paper they are not creative at all. So I thought that by bringing a sense of creativity to [the assignment], it would kinda make up for where the recipes lacked.” Within these explanations of why they chose their uptakes for this assignment, Amanda and Lauren demonstrate a more nuanced understanding their specific writing situations that goes beyond the generic writing situation of this particular assignment. They not only want to present their critiques to the teacher, but they seek to do so in ways to directly speak to the genres they chose to critique—Lauren through the blog to the recipe and Amanda through the magazine article to magazines more generally.

Along similar lines, some students believed visual representations to be central to their critiques and sought more innovative uptakes that would allow them to include particular kinds of visuals that would extend beyond a PowerPoint presentation (the go-to conventional academic genre for when students want to include visuals, according to students’ reports in this study). Veronica explains in both her paper and interview that she chose to present her critique about music magazines as a music magazine cover

because the visuals help to further her point (critique) and because the audience gains a “different outlook because of presenting in a different genre” than conventional academic genres. Amanda, too, expressed a desire to include images as well as make her critique more visually appealing because they would help further her critique.

Mediating Factors Contributing to the Pursuit of Innovation and Convention

Students reported several reasons for pursuing the more innovative or the more conventional in their writing projects during unit three; and while students reported varying motivations, clear patterns regarding why they made their choices became quite clear, as discussed above. By bringing together these self-reported motivations with survey information, in-class writings, classroom observations, self-reflection papers, and interview responses, I have developed a list of several factors that appear to make a difference when students are deciding to pursue more innovative or more conventional uptakes:

- 1) students’ past experiences with academic genres and with the genres in which they chose to compose their critiques;
- 2) students’ preferences for taking risks and following rules in the writing classroom;
- 3) students’ perceptions of their own capabilities;
- 4) students’ understanding of the assignment’s goals;
- 5) students’ belief and trust that innovation is desirable within the classroom context;
- 6) students’ exposure to multiple and varied examples of innovation;
- 7) students’ identification of a more conventional “back-up uptake”;
- 8) students’ sense of empowerment; and

9) students' access to resources.

Students' decisions to pursue innovation or convention are often motivated by these contextual conditions. While this list represents the nine most prominent factors discovered within this study, once again, it certainly does not represent the entirety of what affects students' decision-making processes. Once again, while I consider these factors separately below for analytical purposes, they do not function independently of each other; instead, they interact with each other in complex and rich ways. And the ways in which these factors interact will also differ with each individual student, thus each student's use of uptake is nuanced. In other words, a student's uptakes are influenced by how these factors (among others) have interacted and played out within the different contexts of her learning. As such, these factors and their interactions are contextually bound to each student. What this list does provide are beginning insights into students' thought and rhetorical processes within writing situations in the composition classroom—insights that writing program educators and administrators can consider and utilize when developing course goals, content, and curriculum.

Students' Past Experiences with Academic Genres and with the Genres in which Composed

Many students cited having previous experience with the genres in which they composed their critiques. That previous generic experience should influence new writing choices is not surprising given Kathleen Jamieson's concept of antecedent genre knowledge or the notion that genres known to a writer influence how the writer composes in new, unknown writing situations (a concept also explored by Amy Devitt in *Writing Genres*). In Jamieson's study of the contemporary papal encyclical and early state of the

union addresses, she argues that in unprecedented situations, “a rhetor will draw on his past experience and on the genres formed by others in response to similar situations” (406). For example, she finds the fusion of Roman imperial documents and the apostolic epistles within the papal encyclicals and elements of the “King’s Speech” from the throne in Washington’s first state of the union address (an example of textual traces of generic and discursive uptakes). While students in this study were not engaging in such monumental acts, they certainly found themselves in an unprecedented situation in which they could choose the genre in which they composed for an assignment, an act that no student reported experiencing in past classrooms during their interviews. And, as such, whether they chose more conventional or more innovative uptakes, they often drew from their past experiences in English classrooms and this class as well as their antecedent genre knowledge from other contexts.

On the surveys, I asked students to mark what genres they had performed for school, for work, and outside of school and work (see Appendix 5 for compiled results and Appendix 6 for individual results). I also asked them what types of writing they most and least enjoyed and what types of writing that they think are the most creative and most conventional. Table 2 shows in brief form what students reported.

Table 2

Students' Self-Reported Genres that They Most Enjoy and Least Enjoy Writing and

Genres that They Believe to be the Most Creative and Most Conventional

Student	Genre in which Critique was Presented	Most Enjoy Writing	Least Enjoy Writing	Most Creative	Most Conventional
Amanda	Magazine Article	I enjoy freewrites that allow me to tell a story or personal experience	I do not enjoy long, formal essays where you can not write in first person (using "I" or "my")	Poetry is most creative	Formal research papers
Ashley	Business Letter	Freewriting or a Research Paper will all my sources (as long as its an interesting topic).	Interpreting a piece of literature	Poems	Lab Write-Ups, Notes on a Presentation
Bradley	Recipe	Informational Papers	Formal Papers, especially persuasive papers	Poems, Freewrites	Formal Papers for class
Derrick	Recipe	I enjoy writing on topics of my choice. I feel if I do this I will be more exciting about what I am writing about. Creative (mostly any kind)	I hate writing response essays to literature	Sports Columns	Editorials
Lauren	Blog		Formal Essays, Research Papers	Poetry, Short Stories, Song Lyrics	Formal Essays, Research Papers, Lab and Book Reports
Lucy	PowerPoint	PowerPoint Slideshow, 5-Paragraph Essay, Song Lyrics, Poetry, IM, Book Report, Freewrite	Research Report, Resume, Business Letter, Analytical Essay, Interpreting Literature	Freewrite, Spoken Oral Presentation (informal), Poetry, Lyrics, PowerPoint	Book Report, Lab Report, Research Paper, Resume, Business Letter
Mallory	Advertisement	Freewriting, where I can just let the words flow and structure and format are not important.	Essays, interpretation of art/literature	Poetry and Opinion Papers	Research Papers

Michael	Recipe	[BLANK]	Research Papers	Fiction	Non-Fiction
Ryan	PowerPoint with Accompanying Notes and Oral Speech	Free Creative Writing	Research Papers	Children's Stories	5 Paragraph Essay
Veronica	Magazine Cover	Freewrite, Short stories	Analysis Papers unless I enjoy the topic. Five Paragraph Essays.	Poetry, Freewrite, Short Stories	Analysis, Five Paragraph Essays

Those who reported choosing more conventional uptakes for this assignment indicated on their surveys that they had previously performed their chosen critique genres within the school context and also that they most enjoyed composing conventional academic genres. For example, Ashley reports that she had experience writing business letters and letters to the editor for school (the genre that she chose for her critique) and also that she most enjoys writing research papers and freewriting. Lucy, too, chose a genre, the PowerPoint, for her critique that she marks as having previous experience with within school and, as she notes in her interview, that she had been composing regularly since her first-year of high school. She also lists the PowerPoint as the first genre she most enjoys writing along with the five-paragraph essay, the book report and, as one of the most creative types of writing along with freewrites, informal, spoken oral presentations, poetry, and lyrics. Like Ashley and Lucy, Ryan chose genres that he had composed in school, a PowerPoint with accompanying notes and oral speech for his presentation, but he also notes that he had previous experience with these genres for work and outside of school and work. While Amanda reported choosing a less conventional uptake for this assignment, the magazine article, she indicated on her survey that she had

written a professional article and journalism for school previous to this assignment and also expressed her desire to obtain a minor in journalism

While some students drew from antecedent genres that they had encountered within the school context, others—both those who pursued more innovative and more conventional uptakes—pulled from genres they had composed for work or outside of school and work. Lauren, for instance, who wrote a blog for her third project, indicates that she had experience writing blogs for work and outside of school and work but not for school. When I asked her to further explain her experience with blogs, she explained that she wrote a blog for her swim team but that is was different than the blog she composed for this assignment because she was “not getting a grade for it and this needed to get critique in” (interview). In addition to her own personal experience with blogs, Lauren also drew from what was at the time a recently released movie *Julia and Julie* in which a woman, Julie, cooks her way through Julia Child’s cookbook and writes a blog about her experiences. Lauren writes in her self-reflection piece that as she was talking to her mom about this movie, “I started to think that it would be interesting if I produced the same kind of ‘blog’ about certain recipes I had made in my lifetime.” Expanding upon the influence of this movie on her decision to compose her own blog, she explains that “I thought about [the movie]. Well [Julie] cooked her way through Julia Child’s cookbook, and I wanted to make sure I did the same thing. And I actually made all the recipes I wrote about. And I’ve made more than that. And I’ve made more from Paula Dean” (interview). Lauren uses not only her own experience with blogs to develop her own critique but also the experiences of others.

The remaining students in this study, Mallory (magazine advertisement) and Veronica (magazine cover) as well as Michael, Bradley, and Derrick (recipes), did not indicate on their surveys or in their interviews that they had previously written in genres that they chose for their critiques; however, I also did not list them on the survey, so I cannot know whether they had prior experience with these genres or not. Overall, most students, whether they pursued more innovative or more conventional uptakes, did choose a genre to present their critique in which they had some prior experience.

Students' Preferences for Taking Risks and Following Rules in the Writing Classroom

One section of the survey that students completed at the beginning of the semester attempted to uncover students' general inclinations toward convention or innovation within the classroom by asking questions such as "I feel comfortable taking risks in writing within the classroom" and "I prefer to follow the rules of writing and write in ways that I already know in the classroom" (see Appendix 1). Their responses to these questions provide some insight into the writing preferences that they brought to this course and into unit three. These responses also reveal that those preferences were followed by some students and not by others—students who were inclined to innovate from the beginning did so in unit three and some who were inclined to use convention from the beginning did so; yet others who were inclined to use convention from the beginning ultimately opted for the more innovative. Some students also indicated other mixed preferences for convention and innovation.

Veronica's, Michael's, and Amanda's survey responses indicated that they were inclined to innovate at the beginning of the course, and all three did pursue more innovative responses to the assignment. In terms of writing a paper for a class, Veronica

agreed that one should respond to an assignment with a conventional, academic paper yet was neutral as to whether one should use correct, standard edited English when writing a paper for a class. This suggests some leniency in her understanding of conventional academic uptakes. This leniency is also reflected in her agreeing that she felt comfortable taking risks in the writing classroom as well as her strong disagreement (her only “strongly” marked) that she would choose a conventional response over a creative one to an assignment when given a creative option. While Michael and Amanda agreed that one should respond to an assignment with a conventional, academic paper and use correct, standard edited English in it, they both agreed that they felt comfortable taking risks in the classroom and disagreed that they would choose a conventional response over a creative one. All three also agreed that they wished they would have responded in a creative way to an assignment when another student has done so. These preferences that they brought to Lily’s classroom may have affected their decisions to pursue innovation for this assignment, but all also agreed that they prefer to follow the rules of writing and write in ways that they already know in the classroom. Lily’s and my attempts to disrupt conventional uptakes, then, may have more easily allowed these students to follow their preference for innovation.

Two indicated from the beginning a preference for using convention, and both of these students undertook two of the more conventional uptakes of the group. Lucy’s responses suggest that she had the strongest preferences for pursuing convention within the classroom than any of the other students. She strongly agreed that one should respond to an assignment with conventional paper and that the paper should use correct, standard Edited English. She agreed that she prefers to follow the rules of writing and to

write in ways that she already knows and was neutral as to whether she felt comfortable taking risks in her writing in the classroom. Given these preferences, it is not surprising that she was among those making the more conventional choices in composing her PowerPoint presentation. Ashley's responses also indicated a relatively strong preference for convention. She strongly agreed that one should use correct, standard edited English for papers although she just agreed that one should write a conventional academic paper in response to an assignment. She agreed that she preferred to follow the rules of writing and write in ways that they already knows, and she remained neutral as to whether she felt comfortable taking risks in her writing as well as whether she would choose a more creative response over a conventional one when given the option. Both agreed, though, that they wish they would have pursued a more creative option when they see other students doing so (a belief that they independently stated during their interviews). Some students, then, followed their preferences for convention in spite of Lily and I provided them with opportunities to disrupt their conventional uptakes.

Given this study's attempt to encourage innovation, the most interesting students in terms of this study are the ones who indicated an initial preference for convention within the classroom but, instead, pursued innovation within this unit and assignment. Bradley's survey responses most strongly point to his preference for convention. He reported that he strongly agreed that one should respond to an assignment with a conventional, academic paper and that the paper should always use correct, standard edited English. He also strongly agreed that he prefers to follow the rules of writing and write in ways he already knows in the classroom while remaining neutral about feeling comfortable taking risks in his writing within the classroom. Additionally, he agreed that

he would choose a more conventional response rather than a creative one when provided the option, and he was neutral as to whether he wishes he would have responded to an assignment creatively when he sees another student doing so. All of these responses, together, suggest his clear preference for using convention, yet he composed a recipe—a genre that he and the others who composed in it identified as more innovative—to display his critique. Mallory, who composed the magazine advertisement, also indicates a preference for convention although she also allows some room for pursuing innovation. She disagreed that she felt comfortable taking risks in her writing within the classroom, and she agreed that one should respond to an assignment with a conventional, academic paper, that the paper should use correct, standard edited English, and that she prefers to follow the rules of writing and write in ways she already knows in the classroom. Still she indicates more willingness than Bradley to engage in innovation as she disagreed that she would choose a more conventional response rather than a creative one when given the option and agreed that she wishes she would have responded to an assignment in a creative way when another student has done so. Like Mallory, Derrick's responses indicate an individual who balances the comfort he gains from pursuing convention with his desire to “break the rules” and to demonstrate some degree of independency. He agreed that one should respond to an assignment in a conventional, academic essay, but he was neutral as to whether that essay must use correct, standard edited English. He also agreed that he would choose a more conventional response rather than a creative one when given the option. Yet he disagreed that he prefers to follow the rules of writing and write in ways that he already knows in the classroom. His choice to compose the recipe—a genre that he identified as more innovative but became more conventional

within the context of this classroom—appears to nicely coincide with his preferences.

Lauren and Ryan also provided mixed responses that appear to suggest a stronger preference for innovation but also an understanding of the importance of convention as well. Lauren, who composed the blog, strongly agreed that she felt comfortable taking risks within the writing classroom and strongly disagreed that she would choose a more conventional response rather than a creative one. Additionally, she disagreed that she preferred to follow the rules of writing and write in ways that she already knew in the classroom, and she identified “creative” as the type of writing she most enjoyed and “formal essays and research papers” as the types of writing she least enjoyed—a preference that she contradicted in her interview in which she indicated that she enjoyed writing conventional academic genres and even found comfort and safety within them (as discussed within the next section). This preference may also be reflected in her neutral response to the statement that she wishes she would have responded creatively to an assignment. Additionally, she indicated an understanding of the importance of convention in her survey when she agreed that one should respond to an assignment with a conventional, academic paper and that the paper should always use correct, standard edited English. Ryan, too, indicated this understanding when he strongly agreed that one should respond write a paper with correct, standard edited English; however, he remained neutral as to whether one should write a conventional, academic paper in response to an assignment. Furthermore, he indicates a preference for innovation when he agrees that he feels comfortable taking risks in the writing classroom, strongly disagrees that he would choose a more conventional response rather than a creative one, and identifies “free creative writing” as the type of writing he most enjoys; he indicates a preference for

convention when he agrees that he prefers to follow the rules of writing and write in ways that he already knows in the classroom and disagrees that he wishes he would have responded in a creative way to an assignment when another student has done so. Both Lauren and Ryan, then, demonstrate some mixed preferences, valuing both innovation and convention, which may explain why they opted for what they identified as more conventional genres that they still found to be innovative.

These results, taken together, suggest that, while preferences certainly affected students' uptakes for this unit, they did not entirely dictate them in all the individual cases. Other factors that I discuss within this chapter appear to have worked either to more strongly solidify preferences for innovation or convention or to modify those preferences. Moreover, these results also highlight the importance of attending to the individual within uptake—the students within this study represent the gamut of possibilities in terms of preferences for innovation and convention and serve as a reminder that students cannot be lumped together as they are individuals with their own preferences and proclivities, even when students report having similar educational and genre backgrounds and experiences. Finally, these results also suggest that knowing students' preferences as they come into a writing classroom provides some insight into the challenges as well as successes that students may face when inviting them to disrupt conventional academic uptakes.

Students' Perception of Their Own Capabilities

Whether students pursued the more conventional or the more innovative, the ways in which they understood their own capabilities, especially in terms of creativity and writing (more specifically conventional academic writing), greatly affected their writing

choices and final products. Some who do not view themselves as creative persons at all (such as Lucy and Ashley) could not see themselves composing anything outside of what they considered to be conventional academic genres (Lucy the PowerPoint presentation) or genres that they had composed within the context of this particular class (Ashley the letter to the director). Both found safety and comfort in familiarity and indicated little desire to step outside of it. Others who also did not identify as being creative, however, did pursue innovation to a certain extent. Bradley, for example, composed his critique in the form of a recipe (a genre he identified as creative despite others in the class also choosing this genre) even though, as he writes in his self-reflection piece:

Being creative, for me, is not very easy; some people are just born to be creative people and I am definitely not one of those people. Through perseverance, however, I was able to put together a pretty good piece that accomplishes almost exactly what I meant for it to accomplish. Another reason why I chose a recipe as my genre was because I wanted to be unique and not choose a paper, poster, or PowerPoint like everyone else in the class. However, when we did the peer reviews in class, both of the people that I reviewed did recipes as well. Even though this happened, I still feel like a recipe is a good genre of choice for me because it requires me to think outside the box.

While not believing himself to be creative and to be a “good” conventional academic writer, he worked hard—persevered, in his own words—to create something that allowed him to comfortably demonstrate innovation even though this threatened the comfort he feels when performing conventional academic uptakes.

Lauren, too, does not identify as a creative person (“I personally am not the most creative person” as she states in her paper and reiterates many times in her interview), but what further complicates her decision-making process is this belief coupled with her self-reported learning disabilities. In her interview, Lauren explains to me that “I have two learning disabilities, and writing is one of the only [subjects] that I don’t get affected in, in English. So before I was diagnosed, I just spent hours writing. . . . I don’t need any handicaps in [English] class.” Lauren identifies strongly with conventional academic writing because this is one of the subjects within the context of the academy where she feels, in her own words, “safe,” “comfortable,” and “normal.” As a result, she perceives herself to be an especially competent writer within the English classroom, and, understandably so, she prefers, even enjoys, engaging in conventional academic uptakes. Engaging in innovative uptakes within the classroom, then, is especially threatening for her on two fronts—they ask her to be “creative,” a skill she believes she does not possess, and they call into question the absolute and overriding value of conventional academic uptakes, one of the only places she feels “safe” within the university. Lauren’s ultimate choice of the blog to present her critique works particularly well for her because, as she said, she was still able to be academic and write at the same time as being a just a little creative in her presentation. This makes sense given that Lauren, as she indicated in her interview, sees the blog as both conventional and innovative, even though she locates it as more toward the conventional within the classroom.

While Lucy and Ashley found their perceived lack of creativity to be a hindrance to more innovative uptakes, Bradley and Lauren worked with their perceived lack of creativity and engaged in what they identified as more innovative uptakes that felt most

comfortable for them. Students who did not view themselves as creative, then, choose different kinds of uptakes, yet, in some ways, they all still limited themselves in terms of what they believed they could successfully and comfortably achieve. Moreover, these students' perception of their creativity interacted in important ways with how they felt about conventional uptakes. The stronger the attachment to and comfort with conventional uptakes, the less creative they perceived themselves to be, and this ultimately appears to have affected their uptakes whether those uptakes were more conventional or more innovative. Even though Bradley and Lauren engage in more innovative uptakes than Lucy and Ashley, they still opted for more conventional uptakes within the context of this class (the recipe) and within the writing classroom more generally (the blog).

Conversely students who chose more innovative uptakes often perceived themselves to be creative and indicated a weaker attachment—even an aversion—to conventional academic uptakes because they did not believe they were “strong” or “good” writers. Veronica, for instance, explains that she chose to present her critique in the magazine cover because “I like to draw and be creative. After I figured out we could present it in any way we wanted, I thought the magazine cover would be the best because it gives me the chance to be satirical and get people to laugh and actually see what I am trying to convey. I thought it would be a lot easier for me personally because it is harder for me to get down what I want to show in writing” (interview). For Veronica, being able to be creative and show her creativity “was a nice break from writing an academic essay” because, as she puts it, “I am not that strong of a writer” because “I don’t like writing” (interview). Michael also questioned his writing abilities, noting in his interview that “I

spent more time on units one and two because I'm a slow writer and I'm not very good at it...but I probably spent more thought in this one because I had to search for things and ponder ideas and you know beat back and forth with what critique I was going to do.”

Michael's feelings toward writing became even clearer when I asked him why he first indicated that he was going to write an essay for this writing project—he explains he did so “because I didn't know we could do otherwise...I asked later on in class, ‘so we don't have to do it in an academic essay.’ And [Lily] was like ‘no, you're free to do whatever you want.’ So I was like, ‘screw that, that's out of the window’...cause I don't like writing. I was only going to do it if we have to.” Given the ways that both Veronica and Michael feel about their writing abilities, the opportunity to engage in innovative uptakes that did not include what they traditionally identified as writing was a welcome relief. Both of these students are not what most would traditionally identify as a weak and struggling writers (based on their previous writing projects and other writings in the course), yet they certainly and adamantly believe themselves to be, which, in turn, affected their decisions to pursue innovation.

Regardless of whether these students pursued more convention or more innovation, they often talk about writing and themselves as writers in terms of conventional academic uptakes, such as those that result in the academic essay. In other words, these students appear often to be working within narrow definitions of what strong writing is, mainly that strong writing occurs within conventional academic uptakes. If they were not writing a paper, they often did not view it as strong writing; and if they were not writing a paper well (as they defined it), they were not strong writers. Yet Veronica uses many words and phrases on her magazine cover and Michael's recipe

includes an overview statement, a set of directions, and a final concluding tip, certainly not as much writing as they would have done for an academic essay and certainly a very different kind of writing than what they would have done in an academic essay but still writing nonetheless. When I asked Veronica to remark upon the fact that she did write on her magazine cover but she does not view herself as a strong writer, we had the following exchange:

Me: I was interested [by your comments about not being a strong writer] because you do write on this cover. Why is this not writing or strong writing?

Veronica: I don't know, I think that my self-reflection piece is not strong writing but...

Me: What's the difference?

Veronica: I don't know. Writing a paper with analysis and stuff is harder for me than getting my thoughts down in a way that's effective. I don't know.

Me: Does this writing not require analysis and critique?

Veronica: It probably does, I just don't notice it. I don't know

Me: Why don't you think you notice it as much with an analysis paper?

Veronica: I guess writing the genre of the paper is for me, like, more hard for me to do because I'm thinking way too much about it, like, for something I enjoy doing it just comes naturally and I don't really take it into consideration. It's weird, I don't know.

Whether students perceive themselves to be strong writers seems to have more to do with how they see themselves performing conventional academic writing rather than how they see themselves performing other kinds of writing, less conventional writing, within the

context of the classroom. If writing comes more easily for them in non-academic genres, it seems they do not identify it as strong writing. Often writing within the context of the academy must be hard and they must struggle with it in order to be doing it well.

Students' Understanding of the Assignment's Goals

All students, to some extent, engaged in uptakes that they believed Lily wanted them to perform whether they thought those uptakes involved critique, creativity, or both. In short, they all wanted to please Lily and complete the assignment in ways that they perceived they were supposed to do. However, the chief difference between students who made more conventional or more innovative choices is that the former understood this unit as only stressing the importance of critique while the latter understood this unit as stressing the importance of critique *and* as asking the students to be creative and innovate.

I explicitly asked each student during our interview what they identified as the goals for unit three. Those who chose more conventional uptakes unanimously responded that the goal was to learn how to critique. Ryan explains that the goal was “to answer the ‘so what’ question as to why [what we identified within the genre] was a weakness;” he elaborates by stating that “[Lily] wants, she was really stressing the “so what” question. She really wanted us to understand why our genre’s weakness was a weakness” (interview). Ryan’s draws his use of the “so what” question here directly from unit two in which students explored the analysis paper, a paper that asks them to pursue the “so what” question as a way to aid them in their analysis. Ryan transfers that language to this unit and, thus, understands critique as asking a different kind of “so what” questions; he also transfers Lily’s focus on the “so what” question into this unit. Lauren, too, makes a

connection between this unit and unit two, explaining that “this is the one I was most concerned about” because “I had some problems in my second paper with analysis...I thought the goals were to not just give your opinion but do it in an intellectual way and give evidence on it to support what you were saying” (interview). She further specifies that “goals were just to academically critique something...that means not just saying ‘it doesn’t allow the users to be creative.’ I have to describe why or ‘so what.’ I had to describe why she should care” (interview). Like Ryan and Lauren, others who identified critique as the goal also positioned this unit in relation to former units. Ashley explicitly links this unit to previous units, specifically unit 1, stating that the goal on this unit was to “learn how to critique a genre” and that this meant “pushing yourself to apply what you learned more. Like in the first paper, she wrote, ‘what about this,’ ‘what about this’” (interview). Lucy also creates a link between all three unit by bringing together critique from unit three, analysis from unit two, imitation from unit one—“the goal was being able to critique a genre and analyze it and then you kinda imitate it” (interview).

Not only did these students identify critique as the primary and only goal for the unit, they also expressed discomfort with and confusion about the process of critique. When designing this unit within the context of this course, I believed innovation would fit best within the third unit in which they undertook critique. For me, critique and innovation go hand-in-hand as critiques often lead to innovations and vice versa. This, however, was not how all students experienced critique. Students’ confusion regarding critique may have resulted from Lily’s comments during previous units and their experiences in previous units (as discussed above), but they expressed a more general confusion about the act of critique as well—a relatively common experience for first-year

students as many composition educators can attest. For example, Ryan notes that he was “not very comfortable” in this unit “because at the beginning, I didn’t really understand what the project was...I wasn’t very clear on critique” (interview). Pairing critique and innovation together, then, may have interfered with some students’ abilities to pursue innovation rather than aiding or encouraging them to do so.

Pairing critique with innovation, however, did seem to work for other students, especially those who chose more innovative uptakes. They also identified a primary goal for the unit to be critique but they also found creativity and, correspondingly, exploration and freedom to be secondary goals. As Amanda says, the goals were to “to get everyone to explore different genres. This was the first time we were able to choose whatever we wanted to do instead of just writing a paper. And to focus in on the specific critique question you choose. And to best answer your genre according to that critique. Um, I think it was kinda more like a unit of exploration, giving us a little bit more freedom to decide” (interview). Others made similar statements that highlighted this sense of exploration and discovery that Amanda observes. Derrick explains that the goals were to “figure out how to critique but more than that” and that Lily also wanted them to find a “fun way to critique a genre” and to “make our own way to write something” (interview). Veronica considers this unit in relation to the other two, noting that “it was different and more creative because we weren’t critiquing things and then you are writing a paper, uh, like, these are the things you need to write, and it was more like you take it and however you want and create your own critique in whatever way best will describe it.”

Within these statements, Amanda, Derrick, and Veronica also indirectly link the goal of critique with the goal of creativity—they not only needed to discover a critique

but also needed to then discover ways to “best” present that critique, a task that required creativity but also, as Derrick notes, some sense of agency (“make our own way to write something”). Michael explicitly connects critique and creativity, explaining that the goals were “to be able to, I mean, obviously critique a genre but be able to present your thoughts in a different way,” and he further comments that “[Lily] wants a good critique, something creative, and something that ties both of those together” (interview). For students who reported opting for innovation, then, presenting a critique and being creative were not independent goals, nor were they enough alone. Although they might not have explicitly stated it as a goal, their responses indicate that they found a third goal to be bringing together critique and creativity in ways that were productive for themselves and their potential audience.

Students’ Belief and Trust that Innovation is Desirable within the Classroom Context

Nearly all students indicated that they initially experienced a general distrust of the assignment and Lily. While Lily and the assignment may have told students that they could innovate, students did not always believe that this was, in fact, the case. Derrick, for instance, explains that “I thought that at first [we could use other genres than the academic essay], but I didn’t really think that is what Lily meant” (interview). Despite thinking that he did not have to write an academic essay, Derrick is wary of this proposition, thinking that Lily did not really mean it when she said they could present their critiques as they wished. Similarly, Ashley felt as though the assignment was confusing and almost a trick. Even though the assignment sheet said she could use any genre, she said that “it was just kinda confusing. It was just because we had so much freedom. I don’t think I was thinking, I don’t think I was thinking we really do get to

pick whatever we want” (interview). Veronica also expressed some hesitation to pursue innovation because “[she] felt like [she] needed [Lily’s] permission to do something different,” something other than conventional academic uptakes (interview). She needed and wanted that permission to be explicit as it was not enough for Lily to simply say they could present their critiques as they wanted. Veronica needed Lily to explicitly approve of her choice of the magazine cover before she believed that she could innovate within this assignment.

In addition to distrusting Lily and the assignment, many also simply did not realize at first that they could write something other than the academic paper, even though Lily had told them that they could when discussing the assignment on the first day of the unit and the assignment explicitly states, “You will choose how you will present the critique of your chosen genre.” This belief that they had to compose in conventional academic genres was most clear in several of the early in-class writing assignments during the unit. In response to the prompt “what is this assignment asking you to do” that Lily asked them to respond to after reading the assignment sheet aloud and discussing it as a class, Lauren summarizes the assignment as “after we [write our critique] we will also have to do a self-reflection piece that will explain our thoughts and analyze the paper we have produced.” She immediately identifies the paper as the genre in which she is to present her critique without recognizing the possibility that they could present their critiques in another genre. What is especially interesting about her response, though, is she uses “piece” to describe the self-reflection and “paper” to describe the critique. Presumably she believes the response will be a paper of some kind since it is intended to “explain our thoughts and analyze the paper,” but she identifies that as a “piece” and the

critique as a “paper.” Her use of “paper” suggests a more conventional academic genre, while her use of “piece” suggests something less easily classified.

In response to the same prompt, Michael also initially identifies the genre in which they are to present their critique in as a paper. He writes that:

This assignment is asking the reader, a student, to write a critique paper. While writing the paper the student must obey all the rules of the ‘game’ or writing assignment or they will lose...it is possibly written in a game rule format to show the student that there is not one particular genre a subject must be written in. It is asking a student to be a good game player and to follow the rules and guidelines of the story.

Michael indicates at first that the assignment asks him, the student, to write a critique paper; however, he demonstrates a much more complex and confused understanding of the assignment as he continues to work through what the prompt is asking of him. He then moves on to indicate that the genre in which the assignment was presented, game rules, may have led him to his first conclusion that he needs to write a critique paper since the focus on “rules” suggest more rigidity and, perhaps, even convention. He believes he must be “a good game player,” and a good game player follows the rules, in his case, of the classroom. He also acknowledges, however, that the game rules may be showing the students that they can write their critiques in other genres than the academic essay. His use of “story” rather than “game” at the end of his response signals his genre confusion—is he following game rules or a story? Is he writing a critique paper or something else? Faced with the reality that there may be more than one genre in which to

present his critique, he may be working to understand what this may mean and what this may look like.

Several students reiterated this belief that they initially believed that they had to write papers for their critiques during their interviews (which occurred after they turned in the third writing project). Michael, for example, “didn’t realize you could do otherwise” and thought he had to write a paper (interview). When he realized other choices existed, he explains, “this changed right away” (interview). Derrick, too, was confused because, as he states, “I thought we were supposed to do, like the first two papers” (interview). Drawing on his previous experiences in the class, Derrick simply assumes he was to just write a paper like had done before. He further explains that “it took a couple days of realizing what we were doing” before he realized he did not have to write a paper (interview). Lauren also immediately assumed they were writing another academic essay because “[she] didn’t know how many more opportunities existed” (interview).

Students began to believe and trust that innovation was not only desirable but possible during the second and third weeks of the unit. They identified two primary experiences as central to their realization that the assignment and Lily really meant that they could choose any genre to present their critique: viewing examples of critiques (I detail the effects of viewing examples below as a separate factor) and creating a class list of possible genres in which they could present their critiques. The class list that the students generated together without input from Lily during the third week of the unit and after they had viewed the examples of critiques included: academic essay, advertisement, movie/book review, wedding announcements, freewrites, song, video, posters,

magazines, newspaper article, syllabi, letter to editor, mission statement, video game, game rules, political cartoons, blogs, email, PowerPoint, speech, rubric, recipes, and art. At the conclusion of generating these examples, Lily asked, “so how can you present your critique?” to which Bradley responded, “lots of different ways, more than what we listed here.”

The class list and the resulting discussion of what their critiques could look like—“it could be anything,” as Derrick remarked—seemed to ease many students’ distrust and concern as well as to allow them to actually believe that more possibilities existed beyond the academic essay or PowerPoint. Ashley explicitly referred to the list as a major turning point for her because “after we made the list, it made me realize, “ok, we really do [get to choose whatever we want]....it’s not what I was expecting at all. So once it became really clear we could do whatever we want, I was like ‘I am going to do whatever I want’” (interview). Lauren also points to the importance of the class list because it allowed her to see that many different kinds of possibilities existed and that she could engage in those possibilities. After their first in-class writing in which Lily asked them to draw a critique of their roommate rather than describing the roommate in words (the only way in which they responded to in-class writing response until this point), Lauren was concerned that she simply could not do what Lily wanted them to do for this assignment. She explains that “after we did the drawing critique, I was like ‘there is no way I can do anything like that’...so I kinda thought it was black and white. Like I would have to do something artsy or right. And I was like, ‘no, no, no.’ I was like ‘I can’t do art. I just can’t do it.’ And then we started making the list of everything we could do, I was like ‘wow, I can do all this stuff’” (interview). Being asked to respond to an in-class writing

prompt with drawing instead of writing caused Lauren to believe that she either had to do something “artsy” or “right—and “right” for her meant conventional uptakes of the essay or PowerPoint because she felt she could not be “right” with art. It was not until she saw that she could engage in an uptake that she considered less extreme than art and that she could viably engage in those uptakes that her trust and belief in Lily and the assignment began to change.

Lily’s classroom persona and personality also played a role in students believing that innovation was desirable, although fewer students noted Lily herself as having a direct effect on this than the class list and the examples of innovation. Lily’s role was particularly important for Mallory, the only non-traditional student in the class, who served in the Navy for several years before entering the university. As she explains, “I’m in the process of getting out of a military phase...I kinda just want to do what I am told and do it. But now that I got have gotten to know Lily and how she really wants us to push out outside of the bounds, I feel more comfortable with her because I think she appreciates risks” (interview). She added that she also perceived Lily to be open to her ideas and flexible with students’ interests. Mallory’s perception of Lily—in addition to other factors—encouraged her to pursue a more innovative uptake rather than a more conventional one because she feels comfortable enough with Lily to take risks. Veronica also expresses that her perception of Lily encouraged her to pursue innovation: “with her style, I guess maybe I see her as that young teacher who wants to see creativity and not the one who wants you to just do point blankness...she’s just so young, bubbly, and a good personality” (interview).

Students' Exposure to Multiple and Varied Examples of Innovation

As indicated above, even after students realized that they really could innovate within this unit and assignment, it still took time before they understood what this could and would look like. The student-generated class list as well as the examples of critiques that Lily and I provided for them had a significant impact in terms of whether they could actually see themselves pursuing innovation. In other words, knowing and believing that they could innovate was one thing; knowing what this would look like for themselves and even others was another issue.

As detailed earlier, Lily and I provided students with several examples of critiques that included posters, songs, blogs, websites, artwork (sculpture and paintings), poems, short stories, comics, speeches, creative nonfiction, video clips (such as youtube), newspaper articles, editorials, academic articles, and academic articles with visual aids. Overall, viewing these diverse examples did appear to provide students with a broader understanding of the ways in which they could compose their critiques, at least to some extent. Veronica explains that “I didn’t know what kinds of genres we were allowed to do it in, and I thought the options would be an essay and PowerPoint. So I choose the PowerPoint at first because I thought it would be visual” (interview). When asked why this changed, she notes the importance of seeing examples and comments that “I didn’t know that we could present in any form until [Lily] elaborated. Me and [Mallory] were talking and she said she talked to [Lily] about doing hers as an ad, and I was like, ‘that is really cool, I wonder if we could do that?’ And then once [Lily] told us we could, I didn’t want to write a paper. I thought the [magazine] cover would be more effective than a PowerPoint.” While seeing the examples certainly helped Veronica decide to

pursue a more innovative uptake, hearing from another student that she talked to Lily about her idea of using an ad to make her critique made those examples more of a reality and less of an illusion.

Similarly, Amanda explains that she began to feel more comfortable in this unit when “I got to see so many examples and saw so many examples of things I never would have considered to be part of an English class before. So it just widened my, it just caused me to notice things around me...it’s broadened my understanding of what to expect, what’s to come, what’s really considered English, what’s considered a genre, things like that” (interview). Amanda’s response here indicates that her preconceived notions and expectations of “what’s really considered English” at first interfered with her ability to pursue something more innovative. Seeing many examples helped to broaden her understanding of what was possible for this project but also what is possible within the context of an English class. She expands on this by stating that “after I talked to [Lily] and after we got all those different examples and after I saw what other people were doing, I got more comfortable. And all the pre-writing exercises...all the different examples were very different and I never would have thought of those as critique before” (interview). While the examples certainly helped Amanda see how she might innovate, her comments also suggest that the examples alone are not enough—it was the provided examples and peer’s critiques and pre-writing exercises and talking to Lily that allowed her to see innovation and then to pursue something more innovative herself. It was the combination of seeing examples from others and peers, dialoguing with Lily about her project, and engaging in disruptive and innovative pre-writing exercises that mattered for her.

Ashley, who ultimately pursued what she reported to be a more conventional uptake in the form of a letter to the director, also noted the importance of seeing examples; she explains that she did not know “how far we could really push it” so she thought “a PowerPoint, I could do that. And an essay, I was thinking I want to be able to explain myself and I don’t know how else to do it...But after we did the list and stuff, I thought ‘oh I don’t want to write an essay and I don’t want to do a PowerPoint because a PowerPoint wouldn’t get my point across and the essay, you know, there are a lot of more fun and exciting ways to present my information’” (interview). Seeing innovative examples and developing a class list allowed students to see “how far they could really push it” (as Ashley says) but also, and perhaps more importantly, how far Lily would actually let them push it. Veronica, Amanda, and Ashley indicate that it was not just a matter of seeing examples that helped them see how they could engage in innovation but that is was also a matter of believing that they really could innovate and that Lily really wanted them to do so. The examples served to confirm and illustrate Lily’s desire for them to innovate from the academic essay. This suggests the importance of building an environment in which innovation is both illustrated and genuinely encouraged.

Students’ Identification of a More Conventional “Back-Up Uptake”

Even after seeing multiple examples, trusting that they could innovate, and believing they themselves possessed the capacity to innovate, several who reported pursuing more innovative uptakes still expressed wanting a sense of safety and comfort. They often gained this sense of safety and comfort from having a designated “back-up uptake” that they could use if they found that their attempts at innovation were not successful or as successful as they wanted them to be. For instance, Mallory remarks that

throughout the unit, the essay was her “back up plan” in case she “really couldn’t pull off the ad” (interview).

While Mallory was one of the only students to explicitly comment that she had a “back up plan” in her interview, students’ responses to in-class writings, specifically the ones in which they reported and ranked the genres that they were considering using to present their critiques during the third week of the unit, suggest that other students also had more conventional back up uptakes in mind. Most indicated two possible genres that they were considering (a few noted three), and all ten students listed either the essay or PowerPoint (and sometimes both) as genre possibilities that they were considering pursuing at this point in the unit. Whether they listed a more innovative option as their first choice (such as Mallory citing the advertisement or Michael citing the recipe) or a more conventional one, all ten students listed a more conventional academic genre as their second choice.

Their reliance on conventional uptakes, most notably the essay and PowerPoint, despite considering other more innovative uptakes, is best explained by Veronica, who said that while this assignment and unit “broke [her] out of a scripted rubric,” she knew that “you can always just write a paper” (interview). Additionally, Michael notes how he feel like he “is writing the same kind of paper every week,” and Lucy explains that conventional uptakes are just simply easier to perform (interviews). These beliefs might have allowed those who wanted to pursue more innovative uptakes to feel safe knowing they could return to something that they knew how to do if their attempts at innovation failed. Fear of college and fear of college educators may have factored into their choice of more conventional back up uptakes as well. Bradley mentions that “especially being a

freshman in college, you're given a certain way to do things, and you want to do them just to get it right" (interview). Along similar lines, Lauren notes that in order to get good grades in college, you need to "follow the rules, and not be a smartass to your teachers, like I was in high school. I would never do that to my professors now because I am scared of them. Not really, but you know." Conventional uptakes are seen as safe both because they are often "right" since an instructor tells you to perform them and because they will, most likely, get you a good grade.

Students' Sense of Empowerment

Those who described their choices as more innovative often indicated a sense of empowerment that they experienced throughout the unit or that they felt more strongly at the end of the unit. This sense of empowerment, perhaps not surprisingly, appears to have resulted from having more freedom to discover and choose their uptakes. As Amanda explains, "by giving us more responsibility, [this unit] is kinda forcing us to grow a little bit. To go out and find not only the critique you wanted to do. You had to go out and figure out what best suited your topic and then go out on top of that and pick the best genre to present it in. So you got a lot more chance to express yourself" (interview). For Amanda, having these open-ended opportunities allowed her to find ways to express herself, and while this initially caused her some level of discomfort, she ultimately found herself more comfortable and more empowered to make her own choices. When asking about her comfort level within this unit, she remarks:

Actually I think I felt most comfortable with this one out of the two previous ones. After I got going with it, I got a clear critique, and I had a clear topic of what I was going to do. This one I felt most prepared and spent the most time

editing and revising...I think it is because I got to choose, that privilege of the critique topic and the genre, I think helped me better personalize it and do something I was most comfortable with.

Her use of “privilege” here is quite revealing. This privilege of letting her make her own choices, to choose her own uptakes, provided her with opportunities that she was previously not allowed to explore within this course or other courses. And this appears to have led her to feeling more prepared and even more invested in this project and unit than previous ones. Michael expresses a similar sentiment when he states that this unit “was open more to what I wanted to do, it was kinda my direction, it wasn’t the direction of the teacher” (interview). While Lily and I certainly provided direction and tasks for students to achieve throughout this unit, Michael did not experience this writing project as confining or limiting as others. Like Amanda, he felt he was “open” to follow his own interests and develop his own direction rather than simply following Lily’s direction.

This privilege (as Amanda calls it) of being able to choose their own uptakes was a new experience for several students within this class. Without having to engage in conventional uptakes, students who wanted to pursue innovation found themselves within unfamiliar territory and, as a result, indicated that this writing project required more “thinking” than others. Mallory explains that:

When [Lily] opened it up to being able to express your idea in any way, like, I really had to think about could I really do [my critique] in[to] a song. Like I spent a day, and I had to think ‘how can I really make this into a song? Or how could I really make it into something else?’ So [the project] was really pushing you to think about different ways. And then within those ways, I was really critiquing

my own ideas. Like ‘how this would work and how this wouldn’t work’ . . . so that’s how I thought it allowed me to really think outside . . . (interview)

Mallory’s explanation of how she “really had to think” about presenting her critique is not surprising. Without relying upon conventional uptakes, she wanted to discover new uptakes, more innovative uptakes within the context of the writing classroom, that would work for her critique, a task that “pushed” her to think in certain ways in which she did not have to for the first two projects. She needed to exercise a different kind of thinking. Derrick describes this different way of thinking best when he illuminates what he gained from the third unit and the writing project: “more creative thinking skills. Like, as soon as I thought of [the recipe to present my critique], my mind was filled with ideas. I had to write everything down because I didn’t want to forget it” (interview). This unit invited students to not just engage their critical thinking skills, which are standard in conventional academic uptakes; it also asked students to engage their creative thinking skills, allowing them to explore possibilities rather than simply following routine. From this, students, such as Amanda, Michael, Mallory, and Derrick, may have derived a sense of empowerment not only because they were able to choose their own uptakes but also because they needed to think creatively and actively about what their uptakes could and would be.

While students indicated feeling empowered during this unit, several also commented on what they gained in this unit and how that would carry into future situations. Derrick, a future marketing major, explained to me that this unit was most beneficial for him because “we had to think outside the box. More creative ways of doing stuff. My area is marketing, so I need to think about creative slogans. So this

[unit] helped a lot” (interview). Derrick feels that he was able to “think outside the box”—a skill that he finds directly relatable to his future career—and he indicates that he gained a sense of empowerment, noting that he felt more comfortable at the end of this unit “because I succeeded in doing it” and “I feel like I have the tools, what it takes, to do it again” (interview). Derrick’s use of “it” here refers directly to the unit itself but what he gained from the unit was not simply successfully completing his writing project. He now feels that he can successfully employ his creative thinking skills and innovate to some extent because he has gained the tools necessary to do so. Bradley also found this unit to be particularly beneficial because, as he explains, “I was able to do something that I wasn’t comfortable with. Now I know that I can do this and that I am capable in case given the option. Not only in English class but, I don’t even know what other class I would use it for, but certainly I can use it again” (interview). While not having as clear of an idea as to when he will be given the option to engage in more innovative uptakes in the future as Derrick does, he, too, feels better about his capability to engage challenge and innovation, and he no longer sees himself as only capable of performing conventional uptakes.

While I cannot say definitively that it was this sense of empowerment that these students reported that led them to pursue more innovative uptakes, it certainly allowed them to explore possibilities that they might not have in the past. Believing themselves to be capable, they left the unit feeling more confident about their abilities to innovate or “think outside of the box” and saw the benefits of being able to do so not only for this unit but for their future courses and careers.

Student's Access to Resources

The last factor I want to briefly address is the extent to which students' access to resources may limit their attempts at innovation. Only one student, Derrick, comments on this particular factor, but it is significant enough to warrant separate consideration. Derrick wanted to make a video clip, similar to the Sarah Haskin example, but as he explains "making a movie review into an actual movie (video clip) would have been a good way to portray my critique. I just didn't have to supplies to adequately produce a video" (self-reflections paper). It is important to keep in mind, then, that even when students may desire to innovate in certain ways and believe that they can do so, their access to resources and their material realities may work to limit them.

The Power of Working Within and Against Conventional Uptakes

One of the most substantial insights gained from the results discussed above is the profound power of conventional uptakes, particularly conventional academic uptakes within the context of the writing classroom. This power, while evident throughout the unit and all the interviews, became most clear to me during my interview with Lucy. After seeing multiple examples, working with peers on their projects for several classroom periods, and seeing presentations at the end of unit in which everyone presented their final projects, Lucy still recalls that everyone wrote a paper except for her, who composed a PowerPoint. When I asked her how her project fit into the unit, we had the following exchange in which she explains why she chose to do a PowerPoint and why she thought it was at least "a little creative" even though it was $\frac{3}{4}$ toward the more conventional:

Lucy: [Lily] was like ‘do you really want to step outside of your box and do something you never wanted to do before or do something you’ve done for other classes?’ Cause, like, didn’t everyone just do an essay?

Me: For this paper?

Lucy: Yeah.

This exchange was particularly revealing on two levels. First, despite Lucy seeing other people’s projects, most of which were not essays, and directly responding to their projects during classroom peer reviews and during the end-of-the-unit presentations, only a week after the completion of unit three, she recalls that everyone else “just did an essay.”¹¹ Her belief certainly serves to support Freadman’s observation that uptakes have memories—the memories of conventional academic uptakes are so much so that Lucy remembers everyone just writing an essay even though that simply did not occur within this unit and she witnessed it not occurring on several occasions. As a result of this memory, she recalls her PowerPoint as being more creative than other students’ projects even though, again, she acknowledges it was more conventional. Also of note here is that she pairs this observation with a summary of Lily’s presentation of the unit—Lily asking “do you really want to step outside your box”—in the form of a question and not a statement. Lucy understood this unit as an invitation to innovate, not as a request or even suggestion as did other students who “heard” and believed that Lily wanted them to innovate. Her “taking up” of Lily and the assignment as such appears to have affected how she remembers what other students produced and, in turn, how she views what she

¹¹ Not one of the ten students in the research study composed an academic essay; however, from the final presentations that I witnessed as part of my classroom observation, I was able to ascertain that at least one student did compose an academic essay, but the majority of the students within the class did not present their critiques in an academic essay.

produced. In other words, there are at the very least three levels of uptake interaction here—Lucy’s uptake of Lily’s assignment as an invitation, which, in turn, encourages her to pursue a more conventional uptake of the assignment with the end result being a PowerPoint presentation, which in turn, allows her to recall other students producing academic essays and to see her PowerPoint as more creative than others’ projects. Uptake certainly is a messy, complex process.

The second level of import concerns my own language use and conventional uptake within our exchange. When I was unsure about what Lucy was referring to when she said “didn’t everyone just do an essay,” I clarified by asking if she meant “for this paper?” I did not say assignment, unit, project, or, even, game as the assignment prompt that I designed referred to it. Despite being immersed in theory and my research study that sought to disrupt convention, performing interviews with students that sought, in part, to discover the ways in which disruption works, and designing a unit that sought to encourage students to not write “just a paper,” I still refer to and define this project in terms of a conventional uptake—a paper. The power and memory of conventional uptakes are quite great indeed.

Despite this power of conventional uptakes, many students found the motivation and desire and rhetorical agency to innovate to varying extents within unit three. While the innovations that many of them performed might not have been as large a scale as I had initially hoped for or imagined, many students worked within and against this power of conventional uptakes to quite a large degree within a span of a four week unit within a sixteen week course. Working against years of convention cannot be done as easily or

quickly as my idealism may have wanted, but it certainly can be done, and these students stand as a testament to that fact, as do their self-assessments for the fourth unit.

When the third projects were turned in, students turned their attention to the fourth unit. This unit asked students to revise either the first or second writing project (both of which required students to compose in conventional academic genres). In addition to this revision, students were to compose a self-assessment. In the past, Lily informed me, she had always asked students compose their self-assessment as an essay; however, she felt that requiring them to return to a conventional uptake without any choice would be counterproductive to the classroom atmosphere and rhetorical agency that we sought to foster in unit three. On her own accord, she revised unit four to include the option that students could compose their self-assessments in genres of their choosing. The instructions for this component of the project read: “the second part of Writing Project 4 asks you to assess your work in this course and, particularly, the revisions you made to your original essay for Writing Project 1 or 2. You may conduct this self-assessment in a genre of your choosing.” Lily also provided some further specifications noting that they should:

- Include some discussion of what genres you knew before this class, how you used those genres in writing the papers for our class, and what new genres or elements of genres you had to learn in our class.
- Explain what major changes you made in your revision of Writing Project 1 or 2 and why you made those changes (ideally, you should connect that discussion to your assessment of your strengths as a writer and what you still want to improve in your writing).

While these specifications may have limited students' uptakes in certain ways (as do all assignments), six out of the ten students in this study chose to pursue more innovative uptakes in their final self-assessments, and the ways in which they demonstrated innovation was more wide-ranging than within the third unit. Veronica wrote a fictional short story entitled "The Odyssey of English 101" and included accompanying visuals; Mallory composed a photo essay that only included images and song; Bradley created an interview in which he responded to questions from an interviewer; Lauren detailed a play-by-play analysis similar to those done by sportscasters; Ryan produced a brochure entitled "Writing Self-Assessment" complete with titled subsections and images; and Lucy designed and completed a "Self-Assessment Survey." Veronica and Mallory's choice to pursue more innovative uptakes was not a surprise given that they did so in the third unit and expressed comfort and pleasure in doing so in their interviews. Bradley's and Lauren's projects were more surprising since both expressed such discomfort within the third unit and their perceived proficiency in conventional academic uptakes during their interviews. Ryan and Lucy were, however, by far the most surprising. Both composed PowerPoints (Ryan added an oral speech to his) for their third writing projects and expressed a clear desire to pursue convention within their interviews.

While some students who reported pursuing more innovative choices in the third unit did so in the fourth unit, others who also reported doing so did not for the fourth unit. Derrick composed a business letter to Lily; Michael opted for a traditional academic essay; and Amanda wrote a personal essay. Ashley also composed a personal essay and is the only student who chose a more conventional uptake within the third unit and kept

with this preference in the fourth project. Why Derrick, Michael, and Amanda did not continue to pursue more innovative uptakes within this project I cannot say for certain. It may have been due to their perception of their capabilities and an accompanying sense of safety or their desire to please Lily to receive a good grade or their understanding that conventional genres easily allow analytic critique. It may also have been a matter of time restrictions as it was the end of the semester; they might have engaged in uptakes that are easy and quick for them. On this point, I can only speculate. What is most surprising about both Derrick and Michael, though, is that they both expressed a clear dislike, even disdain, for conventional uptakes as well as a definite desire to pursue innovation when given the choice, yet on the fourth assignment, given the choice, they chose the more conventional.

Whether students within this class will choose more innovative uptakes or not when given the chance to do so in the future I cannot say,¹² but as many of their self-assessment portions of their final projects suggest, at least in the context of this class some students did transfer those creative thinking skills (as Derrick calls them) that they experienced within unit three into other writing situations. Their self-assessments also highlight the importance of attending to the individual within the uptake process. When permitted and allowed to compose in other kinds of genres than conventional ones, individual students engaged in various uptakes—more innovative ones and more conventional ones. It is the individual, as a socially situated yet acting being, who selects, defines, and designs (in Freadman's terms) his or her uptakes. Moreover, their self-assessments indicate a contextual and shifting nature of uptakes for individuals: that

¹² Such data would require longitudinal case studies, which were outside the scope of this research project. Future areas of research could pursue more longitudinal studies of individual students to better ascertain transfer value and possibilities.

is, uptakes are situated actions, not static behaviors. While some students continued to pursue more innovative uptakes, others returned to more conventional ones. Finally, while the self-assessments suggest the power of conventional and conventionalized uptakes, they also suggest that educators can work to capitalize on this power by conventionalizing alternative uptakes within the context of the classroom so that students see them as viable and valued. I turn my attention to such pedagogical and theoretical implications and considerations in the conclusion.

CONCLUSION

“She Wasn’t Teaching as Much as We Were Learning”:
A Pedagogy of Uptake Awareness and Disruption

At the end of our interview, I asked Michael if there was anything that he would like to add. After some thought, he replied:

Like with the first and second unit, [Lily] did a lot more teaching. And in the third unit, I felt like she had us learning more. She wasn’t teaching as much as we were learning, if that makes any sense. Like in the first and second unit, maybe she’d teach and we’d only be getting 70%. But now she taught less, but we got more out of what she did teach.

What I find most interesting about his comments here is the way in which his understanding of his own position as a student has shifted between the first two units and unit three. While still positioning Lily as central to the teaching process in all three units, Michael sees himself playing a more active role in his education and learning during unit three. In other words, in the first two units, he sees himself more as a passive subject who is taught by Lily, but, in the third unit, he begins to see himself more as an active subject who is learning. While Lily did teach differently during the third unit than she did during the first two units (as one of the goals of the unit was to encourage more peer collaboration and reliance), arguably she taught roughly the same amount, not “less,” in the third unit as she did in the first two units. The differences that Michael identifies between units one and two and unit three, then, appear to be influenced more by his perception of his own ability to act as an active participant within his own learning than by Lily’s teaching.

Michael's comments provide me with hope that a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption can work to create in students a sense that they are "the makers of the means of making meaning" and that they can play a role in making and shaping their futures through competent and confident action (Kress). While the research results chapter focused on the disruptive aspect of this pedagogy and the students' final produced texts in response to unit three, uptake awareness plays an equally important role within this pedagogy. Throughout the unit, students were asked to explicitly discuss and analyze writing tasks as well as how and why they were responding to them in an attempt to get students to critically think about their uptakes. For example, as noted in the previous chapter, immediately after students responded to the writing prompt with images instead of writing, Lily asked students to respond to the following prompt: "In the past, you have responded to in-class prompts in writing. How did it feel to compose in another medium?" In another example, in the third week of class, Lily asked students to respond to the following prompt: "Reflect back on the past two weeks of class since we started the third unit. Have things felt similar to or different from the first two units? Why or Why not?" Students did not need such moments of uptake awareness to perform more innovative uptakes since disruption alone could have enabled and encouraged this. However, these moments of uptake awareness paired with disruption increase the possibility for *critical* interventions in uptakes, rather than simply interventions. Within this pedagogy, disruption can only be as effective as the awareness that accompanies it and the need that drives it. In order to truly encourage students to be "the makers of their means of making meaning" and gain a sense of rhetorical agency through doing so, writers need to experience both an awareness of their uptakes and a disruption of their

uptakes so that they can then make purposeful and informed decisions throughout their uptake processes.

In what follows, I outline some of the issues that must be taken into consideration within a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption that seeks to attend to the individual and provide her with the sense that she is the maker of the means of making meaning while still acknowledging that all individuals operate within the highly conventionalized context of higher education within the classroom. Certainly any generalizations and overarching pedagogical strategies that I outline here and elsewhere in this dissertation diminish the focus on the individual to some extent, but this is a challenge that all educators encounter when faced with the task of teaching a classroom of individuals. And I believe it is a challenge that we must and can work within and against. As such, I consider how educators can work to conventionalize alternative uptakes within the classroom and how educators as well as scholars can attend to the individuals within the classroom in a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption.

Conventionalizing Alternative Uptakes in the Classroom

One of the most pressing concerns within a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption is the profound power of convention and conventionalized uptakes within the academic context. Students do not come into the composition classroom as blank slates; rather, they bring with them from previous educational experiences strong notions of what are and are not acceptable or “right” uptakes within this context. As a result, students often perceive and understand writing and themselves as writers in terms of conventional academic uptakes within the composition classroom. Moreover, they are entering a context in which convention is highly valued, and students are acutely aware

of this. Students and educators, then, are always and already operating within convention, and they cannot fully escape the academic contexts in which they are working. While convention in and of itself is not necessarily bad or something to be avoided—convention serves an important role in creating and maintaining meaningful communicative practices)—there are some dangers and limitations to conventional academic uptakes. Primarily, conventional academic uptakes allow students to perform certain kinds of automatic actions, as expressed by Ashley’s interview comment that “everyone writes essays. Like, we all know, you know, how to write it. We know the format. It is how it is. That’s how English class goes.” This automatic nature of conventional uptakes can interfere with the innovative potential of conventional academic uptakes because it limits what students can do or even see as possibilities within these uptakes. More importantly for this study, the automatic nature of conventional uptakes also can interfere with the possibilities that students see beyond conventional uptakes. In other words, it can work to limit students’ abilities to imagine and engage alternative uptakes. Moreover, it also prevents students from knowing why they do what they do when performing conventional uptakes, and, in this way, it denies students a certain degree of rhetorical agency, even in the performance of convention.

All of this taken together suggests that educators (and perhaps even the academy at large) must work to bring innovation within more conventional academic practices. Educators must work to conventionalize alternative uptakes within the academic context so that students see convention and innovation as viable and valued and, thus, will be more likely to engage both. A commitment to innovation as well as to convention is especially important within the context of the writing classroom because it works to

increase students' rhetorical flexibility and agency. I am not advocating innovation for just the sake of innovating; rather, I am advocating a commitment to innovation alongside convention so that students gain the rhetorical skills, insight, and knowledge to make informed and purposeful decisions and choices throughout their uptake processes. By incorporating innovation into the classroom, students can come to see the many possibilities that are available to them within writing situations, and by incorporating uptake awareness, students can come to see the strengths and weaknesses of both innovation and convention. With this knowledge, they can then make rhetorical choices that help them achieve their purposes and goals within various writing situations.

A commitment to innovation, to some extent, is already present within the field of composition and rhetoric. For instance, composition educators already have worked to introduce alternative uptakes into the classroom. For example, freewriting, the autobiography, and the autoethnography were introduced into the composition classroom as innovative, alternative genres meant to expand students' notions of academic writing. As noted in Chapter 2, multicultural scholars have also worked to bring alternative uptakes into the composition classroom by drawing on students' non-academic discursive resources. These examples, among others, demonstrate that educators can bring innovation into the academic context and do so successfully. However, these examples also demonstrate that innovation, after introduced to a certain context and with time, may become too conventionalized to retain its initial innovative potential. As such, educators can and must work to conventionalize alternative uptakes within the academic context, but they must also work to continually shift what constitutes alternative uptakes if they are to retain their innovative potential and not become too conventional. The question

then becomes, how can educators work to conventionalize alternative uptakes within the classroom without fully diminishing their innovative potential? In response to this question, I propose several pedagogical considerations and strategies.

Attending to the Specific Classroom Context

A central tenet to a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption is the need to contextualize disruption, innovation, and convention within each individual classroom. As demonstrated in previous chapters, each of these concepts depends greatly on the contexts in which they operate and the individuals within those contexts. For instance, Lily and I were able to cause a disruption on the first day of unit three by asking students to respond to an in-class writing prompt with drawing and images rather than writing and words because, prior to that day, they had responded to in-class writing prompts with freewrites every class period, sometimes even twice a class period. Teachers, then, need to consider prior class activities and tasks as they develop ways in which they can work to disrupt students' conventional uptakes—what causes a disruption in one class may not in another, what causes a disruption on the first day it is introduced may not cause a disruption in later days, and what causes disruption for some individuals may not cause a disruption for others. Teachers must remain acutely aware of the power of convention within academic contexts because it can work to quickly and efficiently diminish the innovative potential of alternative uptakes. A key to a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption is keeping the curriculum, activities, and tasks fresh and innovative within the contexts in which they operate.

To take another example, unit three also acted as a disruption because students engaged in conventional academic uptakes—the comparison and contrast paper and the

academic analysis paper—within the first two units. This is not to say that only one unit within a pedagogy of this kind can invite and encourage students to engage in innovation, as was the case in this study. In fact, innovative and alternative uptakes during the pre-writing stages of a writing project that ends with a more conventional academic uptake may still allow students to explore ideas in ways that they may not have with more conventional pre-writing activities, such as freewrites or outlines. While it seems central to develop at least one unit that invites students to engage in more innovative uptakes in terms of the final product, this does not have to be, and perhaps should not be, the case for all units. In this class, for example, students engaged in more conventional academic uptakes within the first two units, establishing a balance for the disruption of the third unit. The final revision unit worked to combine elements of the first three units by asking them to revise the more conventional academic uptake and inviting them to compose a self-assessment in a genre of their choosing.

While a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption works to encourage innovation and alternative uptakes, it does not seek to eliminate or ignore convention or conventional academic uptakes within the composition classroom. Both convention and innovation are necessary and desirable within any context, including the classroom, so ignoring conventional academic uptakes entirely or, even, dismissing them would be irresponsible. Instead, this pedagogy works to create a balance between convention and innovation and conventional uptakes and alternatives uptakes, allowing students to see the value of both and to engage in both. Doing so, I believe, works to develop a sense of rhetorical agency within students by providing them with the knowledge and skills to

engage in whatever uptakes they find most appropriate and valuable within their current writing situations.

Innovation and convention, as previous scholarship suggests and as I have explored, are also highly contextual. As such, teachers will find it useful to explore what the continuum between innovation and convention looks like within their particular classrooms by considering the classroom context as well as students' understanding and perspectives, as I have done within this study. I acknowledge that teachers may not have the time and resources to perform as extensive an investigation of the continuum as I was able to do within this classroom with these particular students. A simple class activity in which students are asked to identify the most and least conventional academic genres (as I did in the interviews for this study) or even a whole-class activity in which the students, together, develop what they believe the continuum looks like would provide teachers some insight. Also, I imagine adding a component to the self-reflection piece in which students are asked to directly comment on the degree to which they found their final product to be innovative or conventional would prove useful. It is important to remember, though, that a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption does not and cannot require students to be innovative nor grade students on the degree to which they are innovative or conventional—this would diminish one of the central goals of the pedagogy which is to cultivate in students a sense of rhetorical agency.

While reviewing my other pedagogical suggestions below, it is important to keep in mind that disruption, innovation, and convention must be contextualized and, as a result, my suggestions will need to be altered appropriately within each classroom and for the individuals within that classroom. Certainly some aspects of my suggestions can be

directly applied to individual classrooms, but they are based on the results of this particular study in this particular classroom, so not all of the specific examples or suggestions that I cite will work for each individual classroom and all individuals. This pedagogy is fluid and dynamic in nature, and therein is where the fun begins.

Creating a Supportive and Illustrative Environment

Since the English classroom context and environment is so conventionalized for students and their performances in the classroom have real consequences for students in terms of grades, teachers need to take many and multiple steps to convince students to trust that innovation is desirable and that they can, in fact, engage in both innovation and convention within the classroom, as this study demonstrates. Simply allowing students to perform any uptake that they wish in a final project or product does not ensure that students will actually believe that they can do so or that the teacher would actually value more innovative uptakes.¹ Again, the conventionalized context of the classroom weighs heavy on students, and they are well-versed in “acceptable” or “right” uptakes within this context. Consequently, building a classroom environment in which innovation is both genuinely encouraged and illustrated is of central importance if this pedagogy is to be successfully implemented and its goals met. Several factors can help to build a supportive environment in which innovation is valued alongside convention.

One way in which students can come to see that innovation, too, is “acceptable” and “right” is by exposing them to multiple and varied examples of more innovative and more conventional uptakes, as the students in my study indicated. Recall that students

¹ I am reminded here of a colleague of mine who once commented that she allowed her students to compose their final projects in any genre that they wanted but that she was disappointed that students opted for more conventional responses rather than creative ones. The power of conventional uptakes is quite great indeed.

began to believe and trust that innovation was not only desirable but possible during the second and third weeks of the unit in which they viewed examples of more innovative and more conventional critiques and created a class list of possible genres in which they could present their critiques. The examples that teachers provide should be wide-ranging so that students are exposed to the multiple possibilities. The examples should also include more conventional academic (with and without innovative elements) in addition to alternative uptakes. Doing so demonstrates the multiple possible uptakes that students can engage, thus providing students with options to replace the more conventional academic uptakes if they choose to do so as well as reinforcing that alternative uptakes alongside conventional ones are valued within the classroom.

In addition to teachers providing examples from outside the classroom context, students within this study also indicated that seeing and hearing examples from their peers during in-class activities and peer reviews encouraged them to engage more innovative uptakes. This suggests that peers within the classroom also play a central role in developing a supportive and illustrative environment. Seeing other students taking risks and engaging in more innovative uptakes provides students with the confidence that they can do so as well as reinforces, again, that alternative uptakes are viable options. While teachers cannot ensure that students will engage in more innovative uptakes, they can work to more directly encourage those students who seem inclined to engage in more innovative uptakes. They can also then use these students' projects as classroom examples so that other students who may be less inclined see that other students are pursuing alternative uptakes. One of the dangers here is that students may co-opt other students' alternative uptakes, as was the case with the recipes within my study, and while

this may be problematic to some extent, especially if students feel as though others are intruding on their territory, students who may not have otherwise pursued an alternative uptake find safety and comfort when others are doing the same. Another danger is that students may not have a clear, compelling reason to innovate and, thus, simply innovate for the sake of innovating. I believe the benefits of students engaging in more similar alternative uptakes outweigh the possible dangers, since students would be exercising their innovative potential rather than simply opting for conventional academic uptakes because they find them to be safe. Even if students begin with the intention to innovate simply to innovate, the uptake awareness component of this pedagogy works to decrease the possibility that students can continue to pursue innovation without considering reasons for doing so.

In addition to these, other factors contribute to building a supportive and illustrative environment—more specifically, developing open-ended writing tasks, adapting the role of the teacher, encouraging and re-imagining peer collaboration, increasing the amount of self-reflection, and taking into account access to resources. I more fully detail them below as they warrant separate attention.

Developing Open-Ended Writing Tasks

While students should be invited to innovate within a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption, they cannot be required to do so within all writing tasks. In fact, students need to be given opportunities in which they can create their own designs and requirements—whether they are more conventional or more innovative and whether they do so individually or collaboratively or both—for how tasks are carried out. While the value of allowing students freedom to create their own designs to achieve writing

tasks seems relatively self-evident, it is not a common phenomena within the writing classroom as students are generally given writing tasks that provide clear instructions for how they are to carry them out and how they are to achieve them (i.e. writing tasks that designate their uptakes), usually culminating in the production of a conventional academic genre. One way in which students can play a role in designing their own uptakes is through the construction and implementation of open-ended writing tasks in which no clear or straightforward paths toward their conclusions are provided or designated. For example, within unit three's writing project, students were given that task to present a critique of a chosen genre—within this task, students were given several opportunities to create their own paths, including the genre that they critiqued, the critique that they wanted to present, and the manner in which they presented it. The self-assessment that Lily devised is another example of an open-ended writing task in which students were to perform a self-assessment but the manner in which they presented their self-assessment was a path they had to design themselves.

Open-ended writing tasks within a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption achieve several purposes. First, as suggested by Amabile's social psychology of creativity² as well as this study, individuals are more likely to pursue innovation when provided choice and options within tasks, which helps to encourage the disruption of conventional academic uptakes within this pedagogy. Second, open-ended writing tasks encourage rhetorical agency in that students must choose their own uptakes as they are not provided for them. If students opt for more conventional uptakes, they are still making the decision to do so while relying on past uptake experiences and knowledge.

² Amabile suggests that "choice in aspects of how to do a task can enhance creativity and intrinsic interest" (71).

Third, as students within this study indicated, the freedom and exploration that students experience when allowed to design their own uptakes in response to writing tasks increases their motivation and investment within their own work and the class as a whole. Allowing students the freedom to explore also suggests a degree of trust that the teacher places within the students—a trust that they can design their own uptakes and that they will do so successfully—and, again as students suggested, this led to an increased sense of empowerment. And fourth, open-ended tasks allow students to designate more conventional “back-up uptakes” while pursuing more innovative uptakes, which may increase the likelihood of students’ pursuing innovation. This may allow students to have a sense of safety since they know that they can return to more conventional uptakes. Moreover, allowing students the opportunity to pursue innovative uptakes while retaining a more conventional back-up uptake works to conventionalize alternative uptakes as viable options on par with more conventional ones within the writing classroom. It works to strike a balance between the two, allowing both to co-exist together.

Adapting the Role of the Teacher

The role of the teacher within a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption is active and participatory but, perhaps, in slightly different ways than other pedagogical methods. In addition to students engaging innovative, alternative uptakes, teachers also need to do so. They, too, need to take risks and experience disruption themselves. Asking students to take risks and engage in alternative uptakes while the teacher only sticks to business as usual and conventional academic uptakes sends a mixed message to students: “I want you to be innovative because it is important but not important enough for me to do so as well.” The chance of students engaging in more innovative uptakes is

not likely if a teacher continues to engage and demonstrate more conventional academic uptakes and, thus, implicitly suggests their superiority or “rightness” over alternative uptakes. In this way, teachers need to be just as active participants as students within the classroom and model the behaviors that they would like to see in students. For instance, presenting the writing prompt in the alternative genre of game rules rather than the conventional genre of a writing prompt allowed students to see Lily taking risks and innovating, while, at the same time, reinforcing for students the sense that there were rules for the writing project.

In addition to taking risks and demonstrating more innovative uptakes themselves, teachers need to encourage students in other ways as well, such as providing examples from outside the classroom of more innovative uptakes (as discussed above). Teachers can also encourage innovation by consistently and continuously assuring students that they really can choose whatever uptakes they wish to fulfill writing tasks, as Lily directly did throughout the unit. While it may feel repetitive, students often need this constant reassurance from the teacher, and it serves to help establish alternative uptakes as viable options within the classroom. Another key way in which innovation can be encouraged is through having one-on-one conversations with students outside of the classroom context. Lily indicated in her interview that more students communicated with her outside of class, via email, and during office hours within this unit than during previous units and that this seemed to increase the likelihood that they pursued more innovative uptakes as well as reassured them they could, in fact, pursue them. Adding individual conferences to a unit focused on uptake awareness and disruption, then, may prove useful

in addition to encouraging students to communicate more freely and often with the teacher outside of class.

While the role of the teacher within the pedagogy is a more active and participatory one, at the same time, it also requires teachers to “let go” and roll with the punches, so to speak. By allowing students to complete writing tasks in manners of their choosing, teachers cannot and should not provide students with clear and specific uptakes, and, thus, they cannot anticipate nor ensure what uptakes students will perform. And by implementing disruptive writing assignments and tasks, teachers also will not always be able to anticipate students’ responses and uptakes. Thus teachers need to be able to demonstrate a certain amount of flexibility—with a fair dose of good humor—within this pedagogy. This is not to say, however, that teachers play a hands-off role. Rather than explicitly directing students toward a specific uptake, they work with students and develop structured classroom activities that help them develop their own uptakes (see Appendix 3 for specific classroom activities).

“Letting go” of control to some extent in the classroom may be difficult, especially for some teachers, and teachers should be prepared to feel some discomfort at first (but, remember, students do as well). Lily, for example, indicated that her comfort level at the beginning of the unit was fairly low because, as she said, “I like to be in control. I was very worried about whether they would understand why we were doing [what we were doing in the classroom]. And so that was very nerve-racking for me. I felt like I had to give up control” (interview). While teachers may, at first, experience some discomfort when faced with disruption and alternative uptakes, I do believe that they will adjust to it relatively quickly, just as students do. Lily did suggest that she felt

more comfortable as the unit progressed because she “could see the results of working with [the students]” (interview). Her language here suggests that within a pedagogy of uptake and awareness and disruption not only might students, such as Michael, experience a shift in their understanding of their role within the classroom but so, too, might teachers, as Lily imagines herself “working with students” rather than “teaching students.”

Teachers also should keep in mind the benefits of experiencing disruption and alternative uptakes alongside of students. When both the teacher and students experience disruption together, this shared experience, perhaps ironically, helps to create a “safe space” within the classroom where everyone may feel more free and able to engage in innovative and alternative uptakes. Other benefits are best expressed by Lily when she stated that “I think [the students] felt more responsible. I think by unit three, I need to let go. And this forced me to let go. Ultimately I’m really happy for it, but that was uncomfortable for me” (interview). “Letting go” may be a difficult task for teachers, and this pedagogy, to some extent, does force them to do so, but by “letting go,” students gain more responsibility for their own uptakes and education.

Encouraging and Re-Imagining Collaboration

When teachers “let go” and students cannot rely on the teachers or their own conventional academic uptake knowledge to provide the uptakes of tasks for them, peer collaboration takes on a central role. In fact, peer collaboration should be a daily classroom occurrence, as it is essential that teachers within a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption develop activities in which students rely on each other as much as and even more than the teacher. With peer collaboration taking center stage, students

provide support for each other as they all encounter new and alternative uptakes together. They also help guide each other while they work to design their own uptakes by providing feedback, advice, and even comfort as they engage in disruptive and more innovative acts. Teachers can develop other activities in which students simply ask each other questions about the project or daily classroom activities and provide answers for each other or activities in which students engage in analyzing and creating alternative uptakes together. Students also need to receive feedback regarding their uptakes from peers throughout their processes of design, not simply on the final products of their uptakes. This means that even before they begin the actual process of composing, students should receive feedback regarding their uptakes in order to raise their awareness. This feedback can be more informal, such as when students in small groups and then in a whole-class discussion shared and explored their reactions to responding to the writing prompt in the different medium of drawing rather than writing. Or the feedback can be more formal, such as when students responded to each others' critiques with possible genres that they could use to present them. In this activity, students wrote the critique that they wished to present at the top of a blank sheet of paper. They then handed the sheets to another classmate who read the critique and then wrote a paragraph in which he or she identified two genres that the student might use to present that critique and explained why he or she chose those two genres. The sheets were then handed to another classmate who responded in the same manner. The sheets were then returned to the owners who read the two paragraphs that their classmates wrote and discussed the responses with them. In response to the written paragraphs and following discussions, students composed a new paragraph of their own in which they identified the two genres

that they were considering to present their critiques and explained why those were their choices at this point in time.

The kind of peer collaboration that occurs within this pedagogy is a different kind of collaboration than generally occurs within a writing classroom. When performing collaborative activities that engage conventional academic uptakes, students develop feedback based on their knowledge of and past performance of conventional academic uptakes. In this way, students can engage in a kind of practiced feedback—for example, during a peer review of academic essays, students often provide some type of reader-response feedback and comment on rhetorical features common to conventional academic genres, such as thesis statements, evidence, and analysis. While this feedback can be helpful and, at times, insightful, the practiced nature of peer review uptakes might also work to decrease students' awareness and critical abilities, as is often the case when uptakes become conventional. In the absence of conventional uptake knowledge and experience, students have to develop a new ways of thinking and talking about other students' uptakes and projects as well as their own.³ This may work to increase students' attention to the uptakes and tasks at hand as well as encourage them to think more carefully and thoughtfully about the feedback that they are providing.

Accordingly, students come to more heavily rely on their peers for feedback throughout the uptake process, as Michael commented in his interview, "I relied heavily on my peers just because I didn't know what I was doing." This is quite the contrast to the frequently heard complaint from students that peer feedback or peer review workshops are not that

³ The role of collaboration in innovative uptakes is a potentially fruitful area to explore in future research as it has the possibility of contributing to and altering composition and rhetoric's received notions of peer collaboration.

helpful. Without “knowing what they are doing,” as Michael puts it, peer feedback becomes essential since students help each other through the uptake process and work together to design their own uptakes.

Increasing the Amount of Self-Reflection

While initially I incorporated several self-reflective activities into the unit and curriculum primarily to generate data for my study, at the completion of the study and unit, I realized the profound value of self-reflection within a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption for both students and teachers.⁴ Like with collaboration, self-reflection should also occur throughout the uptake process. From the moment students receive a writing task to the moment they turn in a final product, they should be continuously and critically examining their sources, motivations, and uptakes (as Bawarshi suggests). Within this study, this meant asking students to reflect on their uptakes immediately after they occurred, like on the first day of the unit when students reflected on how it felt to respond to an in-class writing prompt with drawing instead of writing as usual. Students should also be more closely considering their invention processes or “how they come to recognize a task” (again, as Bawarshi suggests), like when Lily asked students to reflect on what kind of student the writing prompt was asking them to be. Teachers can incorporate similar self-reflective activities throughout the uptake process. More extensive self-reflection tasks, such as the self-reflective paper component of the final writing project in which students explained their motivations and uptakes, are also beneficial.

⁴ The importance of reflection within the writing classroom has been highlighted and explored by many other scholars. See, for example, Kathleen Blake Yancey’s *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*.

The primary function that self-reflective tasks and moments such as these serve for students is to increase their awareness of their uptakes, an essential component of a pedagogy of uptake *awareness* and disruption. Developing an awareness of their uptakes allows students to consider why they are responding to tasks in the ways that they do—in short, it can allow students to see their motivations and certain ideological commitments and beliefs. While students can choose to continue following these, being aware that they exist at least allows for the possibility that students may come to realize the limitations as well as benefits of them and, thus, seek alternatives when needed or desired. Moreover, by gaining an awareness of their uptakes and the decisions that they make while they compose, students may gain a better sense of their rhetorical agency and make more informed decisions. In this way, this pedagogy seeks to foster students' critical awareness; however, rather than grounding that awareness only within the interpretations of culture, ideology, and texts, it seeks to expand that awareness to the actions that students undertake during uptake processes and the composition of texts. As such, this kind of critical work is unique to the field of composition and rhetoric and composition classes, making the field and composition classes an integral part of the academy and higher education.

For teachers, students' self-reflections allow a better understanding of the individual and his or her uptakes. Since disruption, innovation, and convention are contextual, teachers can gain a better understanding of the ways in which each student is negotiating these concepts within the context of the classroom. Additionally, students' self-reflections also aid teachers in the development of classroom activities. Lily and I often adjusted activities or created new ones based on what students were reporting in

their self-reflective writings since they gave us a better understanding of areas in which students were confused or struggling as well as areas in which students were understanding and excelling. While teachers should be engaging in self-reflective moments regardless of the pedagogy or unit, teachers may also find it helpful to more explicitly engage in similar self-reflective moments as the students did within this pedagogy. I often asked Lily to respond to the same writing prompts as students did or I created other prompts that asked her to more closely consider her own uptakes and motivations. Since this pedagogy disrupts not just students' uptakes but also teachers', teachers should find it valuable to consider how they are responding to such disruptions in their uptakes.

Taking into Account Access to Resources

Alternative uptakes may require different technological requirements and resources than conventional academic uptakes, which generally only require access to pen or pencil and paper or word processing or PowerPoint programs on a computer. If teachers wish to encourage students to pursue alternative uptakes, teachers need to consider what resources students may need to undertake alternative uptakes. For example, in this study, Derrick reported that he would have been more likely to pursue the alternative uptake of the video clip if he had access to recording equipment.

Admittedly, access to resources can be one of the more challenging and difficult aspects of a pedagogy of uptakes awareness and disruption, as the kind and amount of resources available to teachers and students greatly depends on the institutional context. However, simply being aware of the limitations and challenges that students may face in terms of access to technology and resources is an important first step. There are several

things that teacher can do to help tackle this challenge, and in hindsight, I would have worked with Lily to incorporate these elements into the classroom. Teachers could talk openly with students about the technology and resource needs that individuals require when undertaking alternative uptakes, and from this, teachers can address students' concerns and questions regarding their own access to resources and technology.

Maintaining an open and helpful dialogue within the classroom regarding access to resources not only allows the teacher and students to work together to tackle these issues in practice but also allows for more theoretical conversations regarding technology's role within and effects on the writing process as well as the (often unequal) distribution of resources. Additionally, teachers could work with other programs and departments that support technology on their campuses so that they know what resources are available to students and can provide students with information regarding them. Teachers themselves do not have to be experts in technology to allow students to pursue alternative uptakes. They could work with others on campus who possess the appropriate knowledge, and they might even be able to schedule one classroom session in a technologically equipped classroom (if they are not generally in one) where instructional technology professionals could demonstrate for students what resources are available to them. Doing so would be a learning experience for both the teacher and students. Of course, not all alternative uptakes require special technology or resources and students would not be required to use them in their alternative uptakes, but they may be more likely to pursue alternative uptakes that do require different kinds of resources if they know what is available to them.

Attending to the Individual within the Classroom

In addition to working to conventionalize alternative uptakes so that they are valued as much as conventional uptakes, another central task of a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption is attending to the individual as much as is possible within any pedagogical approach. As this study demonstrates, individuals bring just as much to the uptake process as do genres and discourses, and what individuals bring to the uptake process affects their decisions and designs as much as do genres and discourses. The ways in which individual, generic, and discursive uptakes interact create a singular overall uptake process and product specific to that individual in that moment in time. As such, an important element of being sensitive to context within this pedagogy is being aware of the individuals within the classroom in addition to the conventional expectations within the academic context. Teachers must work to pay attention to the individuals within their classrooms while teaching the collective whole, adapting their notions of innovation, convention, and disruption as well as classroom materials and tasks accordingly. Certainly it is difficult for already time-crunched and stretched-thin teachers to fully attend to each individual within a classroom, but there are at least two considerations for teachers to keep in mind to help aid this process.

First, while there will be some overlap between students, what constitutes disruption, convention, and innovation varies—sometimes slightly, other times greatly—for each individual student. For example, within this study, Bradley (who presented his critique in a recipe) indicated experiencing a high level of disruption during the third unit primarily because he feels most comfortable and competent performing conventional academic uptakes. As a result, he experienced the recipe (a genre in which several other

students within the class composed) as an especially innovative and disruptive generic uptake for himself while acknowledging that the recipe was not the most innovative choice within the context of this class. Conversely, Veronica (who presented her critique in a magazine cover) indicated experiencing low levels of disruption during the third unit because she feels most comfortable and competent performing more innovative and alternative uptakes and less comfortable and competent performing conventional academic uptakes. Her choice of the magazine cover, while certainly one of the more innovative ones in terms of this class, was less disruptive for her. If I only had considered their final products (Bradley's recipe and Veronica's magazine cover), I might have concluded that Veronica was more innovative and, thus, more successful in terms of experiencing the disruptive potential of the unit. However, when considering their final products in conjunction with acknowledging that individuals will vary in terms of how much convention and innovation they engage as well as how they perceive those concepts, I realized that Bradley and Veronica both benefited from the disruption and awareness built into unit three—they simply did so in different, yet equally productive, ways. While Bradley was able to innovate to a certain degree and to break out of his comfort zone of conventional academic uptakes through his performance of the recipe (again, a genre that was less innovative in terms of the classroom context), Veronica was able to more fully explore her innovative potential and tendency through her performance of the magazine cover (again, one of the most innovative in terms of the classroom context). Teachers, then, need to expand their understanding of what constitutes success within a pedagogy of uptake awareness and disruption by paying attention to individual students, their experiences, their perceptions, and their performances.

Second, the nature of uptakes is contextual and shifting for individuals. As the final self-assessments within this classroom demonstrate, even if students engage more innovative or more conventional uptakes within one writing task that allows freedom to choose their own uptakes, this does not ensure that students will continue to do so in future writing tasks that allow freedom of their uptakes. For example, Lucy and Ryan both reported composing more conventional academic uptakes in their third writing projects yet pursued more innovative uptakes—Lucy the survey and Ryan the brochure—in their self-assessments in the next unit. Derrick, Michael, and Amanda, who all reported composing more innovative uptakes in their third writing projects, pursued more conventional academic uptakes—Derrick a business letter, Michael an academic essay, and Amanda a personal essay—in their self-assessments. This suggests that an individual's uptakes will vary based on the specific writing situation and the ways in which the individual, generic, and discursive uptakes interact in that particular writing situation. As such, each overall uptake process should be treated and considered as a singular event even though individuals will certainly draw from past experiences and previously acquired knowledge when performing an uptake. Ultimately, an individual's uptake processes are not set in stone, and therein lies the possibility for the critical intervention within uptakes that Bawarshi calls for and the transformative potential of uptakes that Kill seeks to uncover.

Teachers and students are not the only ones, however, who would benefit from paying more attention to the individual. Scholars and theorists of uptake studies and of composition and rhetoric would also benefit from such explorations. While it is certainly useful to consider how individuals are affected by the culture, ideology, genres, and

discourses that surround them—in short, how individuals are socially situated and influenced—this does not provide a full picture of uptake or the individual. The ways in which all of those forces coincide and interact within an individual and his or her uptakes produce a singular uptake specific to that individual during that particular moment in time. Seeking a more complete balance between the individual as socially situated and the individual as a unique combination of his or her social situatedness would provide teachers, scholars, and theorists alike a more comprehensive understanding and perspective of the many ways in which humans work as the “makers of their means of making meaning” to create and shape their worlds and futures.

Appendix 1: Student Survey Distributed at the Beginning of the Course

Survey

Please answer the following questions. Some are multiple choice; others are short answer. The questions ask for background and contact information as well as past language, educational, and writing experiences. If you choose not to respond to a question, please leave it blank. Remember all collected information will remain confidential and will be stored in a secured location.

Background

- 1) Name: _____
- 2) Email Address: _____
- 3) Age: _____
- 4) Gender: _____
- 5) What race do you consider yourself? *Please place an X next to your answer or specify where indicated.*

<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaska Native	<input type="checkbox"/> Latino or Hispanic
<input type="checkbox"/> Asian	<input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islander
<input type="checkbox"/> Black or African-American	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian	<input type="checkbox"/> Please specify: _____
- 6) In what country were you born? _____
- 7) How long did you reside in this country? _____ (in years)
- 8) How many countries have you resided in? Please list name and length of residence in years:

- 9) Parent/guardian educational background: *Please place an X next to your answer.*

<input type="checkbox"/> Some high school	<input type="checkbox"/> High school diploma
<input type="checkbox"/> Vocational certificate	<input type="checkbox"/> Some college
<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree	<input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree or PhD

10) Parent/guardian household income: *Please place an X next to your answer.*

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> under \$10,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$60,000-\$79,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000-\$19,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$80,000-\$99,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000-\$39,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000-\$149,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$40,000-\$59,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$150,000-\$249,000 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250,000+ |

Language Background

I am interested in not only standard languages, such as English, French, Italian, Spanish, etc. but also dialects. A dialect is a regional or social variety of a language that differs from a standard language in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Examples include African American English, Southern English, Chicano English, and Pidgen.

1) Number of languages spoken fluently: _____

Please list them: _____

2) First language/dialect acquired: _____

3) Language(s)/dialect(s) used regularly with family: _____

4) Language(s)/dialect(s) used regularly with friends, in workplace, etc.: _____

Educational Background

1) This is your: *please place an X next to your answer.*

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 st year at KU | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 th year at KU |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 nd year at KU | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 rd year at KU | Please specify: _____ |

2) City, state, county of last school attended: _____

3) Type of school attended for primary education: *Please place an X next to your answer.*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public elementary/middle school | <input type="checkbox"/> Home schooled |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private elementary/middle school | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charter school | Please specify: _____ |

- 4) Type of school attended for secondary education: *Please place an X next to your answer.*
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public high school | <input type="checkbox"/> Community college |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private high school | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charter school | Please specify: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home schooled | |
- 5) What English classes did you take in high school? _____

- 6) What material was covered in your English classes within high school? _____

Educational Experience and Perceptions

Please indicate with an X the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

- 1) My past teachers encouraged me to follow the rules of writing.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- 2) My past teachers encouraged me to experiment with writing.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- 3) When writing a paper for a class, one should use correct, standard edited English.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- 4) When responding to an assignment, one should write a conventional, academic paper.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- 5) It is important to please the teacher in a class even if you disagree with her or him.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- 6) It is important to me to receive a high grade in my English classes.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- 7) I consider myself to be a skilled English language user.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- 8) I believe that writing can be used to effect social, cultural, political, or economic changes.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- 9) I feel comfortable taking risks in writing within the classroom.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- 10) I prefer to follow the rules of writing and write in ways that I already know in the classroom.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

- 11) When offered a creative alternative to an assignment, I would choose a more conventional response rather than the creative one.
 ___ Strongly Disagree ___ Disagree ___ Neutral ___ Agree ___ Strongly Agree
- 12) When another student responds to an assignment in a creative way, I wish I would have done so as well.
 ___ Strongly Disagree ___ Disagree ___ Neutral ___ Agree ___ Strongly Agree
- 13) When teachers offer creative alternatives to an assignment, they grade them differently (and often harder) than conventional responses.
 ___ Strongly Disagree ___ Disagree ___ Neutral ___ Agree ___ Strongly Agree

Additional comments regarding questions 1-13: _____

Writing Experience

Please place an X in the column in which you have performed the following types of writing.

	For School	For Work	Outside School and Work
<u>Papers/Essays</u>			
Summary			
Description			
Personal narrative			
Opinion/position paper			
Book report			
Interpretation of a piece of literature			
Lab write-up/report			
Analytical essay			
5-paragraph essay			
Research paper/report (with information/sources provided)			
Research paper/report (with information/sources you found)			
<u>Informal writing</u>			
Notes on presentation (e.g. meeting, lecture)			
Notes on reading			
Freewriting			
<u>Presentations</u>			
Oral report or speech			
Powerpoint slide show			
Informal oral presentation			

<u>Professional writing</u>			
Business letter			
Resume			
Professional article			
Journalism			
<u>Public Writing</u>			
Letter to the editor			
Web page text			
Web page design			
Blog or online journal entry			
Social networking profiles (ie, MySpace)			
<u>Correspondence</u>			
Email			
Personal letter			
Listserv discussion			
Online discussion board			
Blog or online journal response			
Instant Messaging			
<u>Creative writing</u>			
Poetry			
Spoken word			
Short stories			
Long fiction			
Creative nonfiction			
Song lyrics			

Other: Please specific other kinds of writing and reading you do that are not listed above.

1) What types of writing do you most enjoy writing? _____

2) What types of writing do you least enjoy writing? _____

3) What types of writing do you think are the most creative? _____

4) What types of writing do you think are the most conventional (the least room for creativity)?

Educational Objectives

1) Intended college major or primary area of interest: _____

2) Intended college minor or secondary area of interest: _____

3) Plans after college: *Please place an X next to your answer.*

Enter workforce directly

Pursue advanced degree(s) before entering workforce

Work at home as parent, caregiver, or homemaker

Entry into the military

Other: Please specify _____

Thank you for your time!

Appendix 2: Writing Project Assignment Sheet for Unit One

Writing Project #1 Genre Differences

Overall Task

Imitate multiple genres; then describe the differences among those genres and your experiences writing them.

This first writing project has two parts, the first giving you the material for the second.

1. In class and outside, you will imitate multiple genres. You will select at least four of those genre imitations to include in this project: one from a genre that you think you imitated especially well, one from a genre that you had trouble imitating, and two other genre imitations of your choice.
2. After working in class and out to notice and describe how your genres differ in their scenes, situations, and features, you will write an essay in which you compare and contrast those genres and explore how their scenes, situations, and features affected your experience imitating them. What made imitating one genre more strange, familiar, intriguing, fun, anxiety-producing, routine, boring, lively, etc., than imitating another genre? If you wish, you may also discuss how your past experiences writing or reading those genres influenced your imitating them. Be sure to include in your essay specific details about the genres' different scenes, situations, and features.

Goals and Challenges

My primary goal for this assignment is for you to demonstrate that you can see, understand, and articulate differences among multiple genres:

- You can shift your language from one written genre to another.
- You can describe how genres differ in their features (content, appeals, structure, format, sentences, and diction).
- You can connect genres to their scenes and situations.
- You can organize a comparative essay, use details to support larger points, and edit for formal English (abilities that I expect you gained before this course--if you do not feel adequately prepared, please see me and/or visit the Writing Center for individualized help).

This assignment builds on what you already know:

- how to shift language for different genres, situations, and scenes;
- how to look at texts for details (as you have done while studying literature);
- how to describe and compare things in an essay (notice that you might organize your essay by discussing one genre at a time or by discussing scene, situation, and then one type of feature at a time).

This assignment also carries some particular challenges for most of you:

- to use our new academic concepts of scene, situation, and genre;
- to use as evidence specific details of textual form as well as content.

Situation of the Essay

Subject: The essay will concentrate on your new awareness of genres and their differences, especially their scenes, situations, and features. It also includes the subject of your experience imitating those genres. How will you bring those two subject areas together in this essay?

Purpose: Your primary purpose is to demonstrate the abilities described under Goals above, as is true for any writing assignment. For this particular assignment, your purpose is also to begin practicing genre analysis and explore your reactions to different genres. How can you best demonstrate your fluency in genre analysis and connect genre features to their scenes and situations?

Participants and Setting: This essay will remain in our classroom, written for me and your fellow students. You can assume, then, that we understand our common readings from the textbook and have all been working to analyze genres, but we have not all analyzed the same scenes, situations, or genres. Although many of your readers are fellow students, the setting places all of us in the role of university members, people who expect a certain level of formality and logic. How will you interest these readers while sticking to your subject and purpose?

Criteria

We will develop a list of criteria for this project (and all future projects) in class. Of course, meeting the goals listed above will be a major part of succeeding in this project.

Schedule

We will be working toward this writing project in every class for the next weeks. Below are some specific dates when you need to bring work to class. See your syllabus for other important dates.

Now-September 15	Begin visiting the Writing Center for help throughout this project
September 8	Bring to class drafts of all genres you have imitated so far
September 10	Bring to class the genres you have chosen and your analyses of those genres/descriptions of their scenes, situations, features
September 15	Writing Project #1 due--collect in a folder your essay along with samples and imitations of the four genres discussed in your essay

Appendix 3: Writing Project Assignment Sheet for Unit Two

Writing Project #2: Differences within Genres

Overall Task

Building on the work we have done in class analyzing the variations in texts of the same genre, analyze two different communities' uses of the same genre. You may choose both the community and the genre you analyze, though you will submit a proposal to me so that I can approve your selections. The communities and genres you choose could both be contemporary, or you could choose communities that show historical difference. You might examine websites of politicians or interest groups from opposing political parties, editorials from people with different ideologies, manuals or annual reports from two different companies, or mission statements of two different of academic institutions. After you've chosen your community and genre, select one text from each community (again, the texts must be in the same genre) and analyze each text for its scene, situation, and features.

Write an academic analysis paper in which you analyze the similarities and differences in the two texts. In addition to comparing and contrasting the features of the texts, you should develop a controlling idea that attempts to make sense of the similarities and differences based on what they tell readers about the communities that produce the texts.

You might want to consider the following questions as you work to develop a controlling idea: How do the rhetorical features of the texts work? Why did the author/creator of the text make the choices he or she did? Are there similar features that reflect similar purposes and audiences or similar uses of the texts? What do the different rhetorical features tell readers about the different goals, values, and beliefs of the communities?

Criteria

We will develop a list of criteria for this project in class.

Schedule

As with the last project, we will be working toward this writing project in every class for the next weeks. Below are specific dates when you need to bring work to class. See your syllabus for other important dates.

Now-October 13	Visit the Writing Center for help throughout this project
September 28	Paper proposal that tells me the communities, genre, and texts you are (MONDAY)using and also gives me your working controlling idea due by e-mail
October 6	Paper draft due to peers for review
October 7-9	Group conferences
October 13	Writing Project #2 due

Appendix 4: Writing Project Assignment Sheet for Unit Three

Critiquing a Genre Rules / Instructions *Critiquing a Genre* Game Rules

Average Price: Priceless	Ages: 17+
Playing Time: 4 weeks	Players: 1+

Object of “Critiquing a Genre”:

Your goal is to move through the steps of the game by developing a critique of a chosen genre, writing something that shows others why your genre needs to change, and reflecting upon what you wrote to show your critique. The player who demonstrates the most rhetorical savvy wins the game.

Contents of “Critiquing a Genre”:

Your “Critiquing a Genre” game should consist of 1) a chosen genre to critique, 2) a worthy and insightful critique of your chosen genre that you present in a manner of your choosing, 3) a self-reflection piece in which you explain—with detailed evidence and analysis—*how* and *why* you chose to present the critique as you did.

Game Preparation:

You will choose a genre (one that is of interest or is familiar) and critique that genre using box 4.1 in *Scenes of Writing*. You must then decide what critique of the genre you will use throughout the remainder of the game.

Game Play:

The official “critiquing a genre” game rules state that each player must participate in and complete the “game preparation” before beginning the game and each individual step of the game before moving onto the next. If a player fails to do so, he or she will be declared rhetorically unfit and is out of the game. Each time a player completes a step, he or she receives a kindly nod and daily writing points from the teacher. The rules also state that all players must begin the game on October 20th and end the game by November 12th.

Rules for Presenting Your Critique

You will choose how you will present the critique of your chosen genre. Examples of how others have chosen to present critiques will be provided throughout the time of play. The goal here is alert others to one or more weaknesses in your chosen genre.

You must decide on the specific critique of your chosen genre by October 29th. If a critique is not determined by this date, no daily writing points will be collected and you lose a turn. You must have a draft of your critique that you have presented in a manner of your choosing by November 5th. Once again, if a draft is not provided on this date, no daily writing points will be collected and you lose a turn. Sorry, those are the rules!

The final version that presents the critique (along with the self-reflection piece) will be due on November 12th. No extra turns will be provided after this date. The criteria for evaluating the final version will vary according to the genre chosen, although winners will be declared based upon quality and clarity of the critique as well as the quality of the final product.

Self-Reflection Rules

You will also compose a self- reflection piece that examines and analyzes the critique you make and the manner in which you present it. You must have a draft of the self-reflection piece by November 10th. If a draft is not provided on this date, no daily writing points will be collected and you lose a turn. The final version of the self-reflection piece (along with the presentation of the critique) will be due on November 12th. No extra turns will be provided after this date. If you fail to complete and turn in all parts of the game, you will sent directly to jail.

The goal here is to explain *how* and *why* you chose to present your critique, using detailed evidence and analysis. You must be sure to address 1) what genre you chose to present the critique in and why you chose that genre and 2) what choices you made regarding the rhetorical features (content, structure, format, diction, sentence structure, rhetorical appeals) in your created product and why you made those specific choices. Winners will be declared based upon the quality and clarity of the explanation of your choices and use of relevant textual evidence.

Ready, Set, Go!

Appendix 5: Activity Sequence for Unit Three

SCHEDULE FOR UNIT #3: CRITIQUING GENRES

Please remember that assignments listed under "homework" are due at the beginning of the next class meeting.

Tuesday, October 20

- Introduction: Critiquing Genres
- Handout Writing Project 3 Assignment Sheet

Homework

- Read 148-62 in *Scenes*
- Cluster Representation (p.225 *Penguin*) of Box 4.1 (p. 161) for Wedding Announcements (packet provided)

Thursday, October 22

- Understanding and Exploring Critique

Homework

- Bring in at least 5 samples of your genre
- Analysis of chosen genre (Box 2.1). Keep in mind others will be reading this. Write clearly!

Tuesday, October 27

- Developing a Critique of Your Genre

Homework

- Review 154-158 and view/read/listen to samples posted on blackboard under Critique 1
- Select the specific critique of the genre that you will present. You will share this with the class.

Thursday, October 29

- Exploring Ways to Present Genre Critique

Homework

- Read 536-534,557-565, and view/read/listen to samples posted on blackboard under Critique 2

Tuesday, November 3

- Exploring More Ways to Present Critique

Homework

- Draft of critique that you have presented in a manner of your choosing

Thursday, November 5

- In-class workshop on critique draft
- Prewriting for self-reflection piece

Homework

- Draft of self-reflection piece

Tuesday, November 10

- In-class workshop on self-reflection piece

Homework

- Writing Project 3 Due

Detailed Lesson Plans

Tuesday 10/20

Goals: Introduce writing project 3 and critique

Materials: Writing Project 3, Updated Syllabus, Wedding Announcement packets

Activities:

- Select one student before class to handout and explain updated syllabus (10 minutes)
- Present a critique of your roommate or that last person you lived with. Draw it—no words. (5-10 minutes)
- Write for five minutes on back of image: In the past, you have responded to in-class prompts in writing. How did it feel to compose in another medium?
- Share images in groups. Without explanation, ask groupmates guess what the critique is. Then share responses to drawing instead of writing response. Be prepared to share with class your responses to this change in activity. Collect both drawings and writing at end of class. (10 minutes)
- Circle up. Group Discussion of critique (10 minutes)
Ask groups to share some of their responses to composing with images instead of words to the prompt (5 minutes)

TRANSITION INTO GROUP DISCUSSION OF CRITIQUE: Could we consider drawing in response to the prompt instead of writing to be some form of critique? If so, why or if not, why? Questions to consider: what is critique; what genres is critique most commonly presented in; where and when do we most commonly see or hear critique; what role does critique play in our society; what and who do we commonly critique; what is the value of critique/why do we do it?

- Handout writing assignment sheet. Have different students read the sections aloud.
- Write for five minutes about this writing assignment: What do you think this writing assignment is asking you to do and why? What kind of student is it asking you to be?
- Collect drawings and both writings. Handout Wedding Announcement packets.

Homework: Read 148-162 in *Scenes* and answer questions in Box 4.1 (161) for wedding announcements using cluster analysis (Check out Penguin handbook) rather than listing answers to the questions.

Thursday 10/22

Goals: To understand the elements of critique, practice critique, and select a genre to critique.

Materials: Wedding Announcement Packets

Activities:

- Circle up. Free writing exercise: Ask each student to create a prompt based upon their reading assignment. What question do you have or what idea would you like to explore further?
 - Write question on top of page and then Freewrite for 5-7 minutes.
 - Have some students share their questions and responses as a way to explore the differences between critique and analysis, the definition of critique, what we gain from critique, and how critique fits into the course and with other writing assignments in this course (in other words, why are we now learning about critique?). (10 minutes?)
 - Collect questions and freewrites.

- Work with Box 4.1 (p. 161) to practice critique of genre, using the wedding announcement homework. (30 minutes?)
 - Form students into groups of three.
 - Assign each group one or two questions, based upon the number of groups.
 - Have students share their answers for the questions that they are assigned and ask them to create a “top three answers” group list for each of their questions.
 - Have each group write their question and “top three” answers on the board.
 - Each group presents their answers to the class, explaining why and how they came up with this critique, citing textual evidence for support. Each group will ask other students to share, extend, revise their answers based upon what they found.
 - Identify the “best” critiques as a class.

- Selecting a genre to work with for WP#3. (10-15 minutes)
 - Create a list of scenes in which you participate. School, fraternity/sorority, clubs, sports, doctor, Restaurants, newspaper, etc.
 - Review the scenes and select two that you are most interested or involved in.
 - Then list genres you have encountered in those two scenes.
 - Review your list of genres and select the one you are most interested in.

Homework: Collect at least 5 samples of your chosen genre and then perform an analysis of the genre. To do this, answer the questions in Box 2.1 pages 93-94. Next class—please bring in genre samples (at least 5) and analysis.

Tuesday 10/27

Goal: To begin performing their own critique of their chosen genres.

Materials: In-class critique handout

Activities:

- Check for their genre samples and genre analysis.
- Each gets a handout. Place handout, samples, and analysis of your desk. Go around the room. Answer the question that is next on the list (each one gets four answers—your answer cannot be the same as a previous one).

Homework: Finish your critique and bring it in next class period. Decide on which weakness you want to address. Also read sample critiques on blackboard and sample critique essay in *Scenes* on health care bill (pp. 154-58). Choose TWO of these sample critiques and write a paragraph for each, explaining what exactly you think is being critiqued and why the critique is presented in the way it is.

Thursday 10/29

Activities:

- Sharing critique of their genre that they will be using in the next move of the game. Have students provide feedback for each other. Person to the right of presenter selects two other people to provide a strong critique of the critique. If people volunteer, they can select them. If not, they need to select two people to respond.

- Break into groups based on one of the paragraphs—stand to get into groups.
 - Share responses.
 - Provide one strength and one weakness of this critique, explaining why.
 - Create list of three other genres you could present this critique in
 - Detail how it would look/change in one of those genres.

Write this down to hand in. And be prepared to present to the class.

Homework: Read/view/listen to other examples under critique 2 on blackboard as well as the sample critiques in *Scenes* on pp. 536-43 and 557-65.

Tuesday 11/03

Goal: To develop their own critiques and look at ways to present critique more broadly.

Activities:

- **CHANGE IN HOMEWORK FOR THIS CLASS PERIOD (we are pushing everything back one day):** Look at more critiques on blackboard. Select three.
 - Identify the critique. Use box 4.1 to identify the question that you think the writer/speaker is answering.
 - Describe that critique. Write one-two sentences that detail what the writer/speaker is critiquing. For example, you cannot just say the writer/speaker is critiquing advertisements. Instead, detail what the writer/speaker is saying about who makes advertisements, who sees them, how are they not working, and what is wrong with them.
 - Evaluate the quality of the critique. You cannot just say the critique is good or the critique is bad. You must write two-three sentences that detail why the critique is good or bad by addressing the following: did you ever consider this critique before you saw it presented here or is it obvious; does the critique interest you; why or why not; and who is this critique meant to interest the most?

- Practiced evaluating critiques for homework, so now we are going to look at some of the genre critiques that they did not explore in groups Thursday. Grading Rubric and Game Covers. Have them do a few together as a class.
 - Ask them to identify and describe the critique
 - Evaluate the quality of the critique

- Work on revising own critiques. In groups of three, share the specific critique you planning to make. Thinking about what did for homework and discussed during class today, re-evaluate your critique by answering the following questions:
 - What exactly are you critiquing (that is, what question from box 4.1 are you answering and what specific critique are you making)?
 - What weakness in the genre does this critique address?
 - Is the critique obvious? Why or why not?
 - Who is this critique meant to interest the most?
 - After you've answered these questions, consider the strength of your critique. If your critique is weak, work in groups to craft more insightful critiques. If you believe your critique is strong as it is, identify why and how you would defend this critique against those who would call it weak.

Homework: In addition to homework cited above, select two genre that you are thinking about using to present your critique and explain why you selected them for this project. One paragraph.

Thursday 11/05

Goal: To acknowledge the variety of genres in which critique is presented and to consider why it is presented in those means.

Activities:

- We have looked at how you develop critique and how you create an insightful critique. Tuesday we looked at [Amanda]’s, [Veronica]’s, and [Ryan]’s. Briefly review what you did with [Amanda] and [Veronica]. Then return to [Ryan]. Acknowledge that didn’t get far in class. But then say something like “[Ryan]’s idea that the posters focus on characters and not plot is a classic content critique. But not necessarily very helpful or insightful as we discovered. But what can be helpful in these cases is to question WHY—why might the movie posters focus on characters and not the plot? What values and beliefs does this represent? (have [Ryan] and others provide a few answers) Asking WHY can move you beyond surface level content critiques and into what those first ideas represent and mean. Might then have them return to their critiques and ask the WHY question at this time to see if it helps.
- After looking at how you can develop a critique, now we will turn attention to how people present their critiques or what genres people use for critique. Let’s start with a freewrite.
- Freewrite: Reflect back on the past two weeks of class since we started the third unit. Have things felt similar to or different from the first two units? Why or Why not?
- Have one student write on the board and the students create a list of the genres they have viewed the past two class periods. Ask them to add even more possible genres of critique.
 - Ask them all to write down this list of genres.
 - The point here, I hope, is that critique can be presented in nearly any genre, and they get to select what genre they want to present their critique in.
- Have them select a few of those genres as a class. Discuss why the writer/speaker may have selected this genre and what specific rhetorical/generic features (content, format, diction, sentence structure, et.) did they have to take into consideration when they composed in this genre.
- Return to their paragraphs they wrote for homework.
 - Flip it over and revise based on discussion just had. Do not look at first one.

- Write their critique at the top of another sheet of paper. Hand to classmate. Have classmate write the paragraph without seeing the other two.
 - Then combine all three into one NEW paragraph with two genre choices and explanations for why. Indicate which one of the two you are more interested in right now.
 - Will look at these and will email you if see any major problems by Friday.
- GET OUT ASSIGNMENT SHEET AND REVIEW IT.
 - Write one question that you still have about this writing project on top of the sheet.
 - Ask classmate to answer it in writing. If can't answer it, indicate that.
 - Hand to second classmate and follow the same procedure. The second classmate must read the question and the first person's response AND answer the question, even if the first person responded. They can agree, disagree, or add details.
 - Hand to third classmate and follow the same procedure. The third person MUST respond.
 - Pass back to original question asker. If no one can answer the question, then the teacher will (but don't tell them beforehand).

Homework: Complete draft of critique that you have presented in a manner of your choosing

Tuesday 11/9

Goal: To revise texts that present their critiques and to preview/explain self-reflection piece.

Material: Peer Response Sheets

Activities:

- Each student puts their text and peer review sheets on a desk.
 - The text and peer review sheets **STAY ON THE DESK** and the **STUDENTS MOVE AROUND THE ROOM**.
 - I don't know how long it will take for them to review the texts since they are in different genres, but I would like for each person to get at least **TWO** responses.
 - 35 minutes

- Discussion of any remaining questions and of self-reflection piece.
 - Get out assignment sheet and review it.
 - Write one question that you still have about this writing project on top of the sheet.
 - Ask classmate to answer it in writing. If can't answer it, indicate that.
 - Hand to second classmate and follow the same procedure. The second classmate must read the question and the first person's response **AND** answer the question, even if the first person responded. They can agree, disagree, or add details.
 - Hand to third classmate and follow the same procedure. The third person **MUST** respond.
 - Pass back to original question asker. If no one can answer the question, then the teacher will (but don't tell them beforehand).
 - 30 minutes

- Self-Reflection Piece Explanation
 - While no "page requirement," can't imagine it could be done successfully in less than 3 full pages.
 - Need to make sure addresses two areas
 - First—why you decided to present your critique as you did, what genre did you use and why? This should be about 1-2 paragraphs of explanation, about a page, if not more.
 - Second—select at least 2-3 specific and significant rhetorical choices (but no more than 4) that you made in your genre (whether that be a content, diction, sentence structure, format, or structure choice) and explain **WHY** you made those particular choices.
 - You must be specific here and provide evidence from your text. For example, I chose to use individual words, such as "power" and "fight" rather than complete sentences, such

as “Use your power to fight against the advertising industry,” because.....”

- You will want to select the 2-3 most important rhetorical choices that you made because you cannot explain all the choices.

- If time permits, last five minutes—writing prompts to get started on self-reflection piece.
 - I chose to present my critique in [insert genre here] because.....
 - I made [insert specific rhetorical choice 1] because....
 - I made [insert specific rhetorical choice 2] because....
 - I made [insert specific rhetorical choice 3] because.....

Homework: Draft of Self-Reflection Piece

Thursday 11/12

Goals: Revise Self-Reflection Piece

Activities:

- Revising Content
 - In groups of three, have the person read his or her paper aloud SLOWLY.
 - The other two group members will take notes on why the writer chose the genre, which rhetorical choices made, and why made?
 - Share responses with reader. Make sure all three parts are present and discuss which parts need more development.

- Revising Evidence and Analysis
 - Select one of the rhetorical choice description and explanation.
 - Box the evidence and underline the explanation.
 - Ask a partner to answer the following questions for the evidence:
 - Is the evidence clearly described? If yes, how so. If not, what can the writer add?
 - Is there enough detail of the evidence? If yes, how so. If not, what can the writer add?
 - Has the writer used specific quotes or details from the text?
 - Write each sentence of your explanation on a separate sheet of paper leaving several (3-4) blank lines/space between each sentence.
 - Ask and answer “so what” after each of those sentences.
 - Hand to a partner. Have the partner also answer the so what for each of those sentences.
 - Revise explanation by combining and expanding on you and your partner’s so what answers.

Homework: All of the project due.

Appendix 6: Common Interview Questions

- 1) How would you describe this third unit?
 - a. What were the goals?
 - b. Is this unit similar to what you have done in other classes?
In what ways? Or How is it different?
- 2) What makes a good writing project three?
 - a. What do you think Kristen is looking for in this writing project?
 - b. How well do you think your project will please Kristen?
- 3) What was your first reaction to the writing prompt?
- 4) How comfortable did you feel with this unit?
 - a. Compare your comfort level in this unit to unit 1 and 2. Different? Why?
 - b. How did your comfort change over the course of the unit?
- 5) If there was a continuum, on one side the most conventional genres for the classroom and the other the least conventional. What examples would you put on either side? And where would you place your critique?
- 6) At the end of this unit, do you feel more or less comfortable responding to assignments in different ways?
- 7) In the future, do you think that you are more or less likely to choose a less common genre in response to an assignment if given an option? Why or Why not?
 - a. Do you think you will encounter more assignments that will give you options? Why or why not?
 - b. How about the self-assessment piece for unit 4? Have you thought about what genre you will use? Would you have thought about this genre before unit 3?
- 8) Would you like to add anything else?

Appendix 7: Collated Survey Responses from “Writing Experience” Section

	For School	For Work	Outside School and Work
<u>Papers/Essays</u>			
Summary	10	3	3
Description	10	4	3
Personal narrative	9	1	
Opinion/position paper	10		1
Book report	10		
Interpretation of a piece of literature	10		
Lab write-up/report	7		1
Analytical essay	10		
5-paragraph essay	10	1	2
Research paper/report (with information/sources provided)	9		
Research paper/report (with information/sources you found)	9		
<u>Informal writing</u>			
Notes on presentation (e.g. meeting, lecture)	10	5	1
Notes on reading	10	2	2
Freewriting	10	2	4
<u>Presentations</u>			
Oral report or speech	10	3	3
Powerpoint slide show	10	2	1
Informal oral presentation	9	5	5
<u>Professional writing</u>			
Business letter	6	3	1
Resume	8	9	4
Professional article	4	1	2
Journalism	7		1
<u>Public Writing</u>			
Letter to the editor	2		
Web page text	2		4
Web page design	5		4
Blog or online journal entry	1		9
Social networking profiles (ie, MySpace)			10

<u>Correspondence</u>			
Email	10	7	10
Personal letter	4	1	9
Listserv discussion	2		2
Online discussion board	6		5
Blog or online journal response	3		9
Instant Messaging			9
<u>Creative writing</u>			
Poetry	10		5
Spoken word	8	4	4
Short stories	10		
Long fiction	5		1
Creative nonfiction	4		
Song lyrics	5		4

Appendix 6: Individual Survey Responses for “Writing Experience” Section

Veronica

	For School	For Work	Outside School and Work
<u>Papers/Essays</u>			
Summary	X		
Description	X	X	X
Personal narrative	X	X	
Opinion/position paper	X		
Book report	X		
Interpretation of a piece of literature	X		
Lab write-up/report	X		
Analytical essay	X		
5-paragraph essay	X		
Research paper/report (with information/sources provided)	X		
Research paper/report (with information/sources you found)	X		
<u>Informal writing</u>			
Notes on presentation (e.g. meeting, lecture)	X		
Notes on reading	X		
Freewriting	X		X
<u>Presentations</u>			
Oral report or speech	X		
Powerpoint slide show	X		
Informal oral presentation	X		
<u>Professional writing</u>			
Business letter	X	X	
Resume	X	X	
Professional article			
Journalism			
<u>Public Writing</u>			
Letter to the editor			
Web page text			
Web page design			
Blog or online journal entry			X
Social networking profiles (ie, MySpace)			X
<u>Correspondence</u>			

Email	X		X
Personal letter	X		X
Listserv discussion	X		
Online discussion board	X		
Blog or online journal response	X		X
Instant Messaging			X
<u>Creative writing</u>			
Poetry	X		X
Spoken word	X	X	X
Short stories	X		
Long fiction			
Creative nonfiction			
Song lyrics	X		X

Michael

	For School	For Work	Outside School and Work
<u>Papers/Essays</u>			
Summary	X		
Description	X		
Personal narrative	X		
Opinion/position paper			
Book report	X		
Interpretation of a piece of literature	X		
Lab write-up/report	X		
Analytical essay	X		
5-paragraph essay	X		
Research paper/report (with information/sources provided)	X		
Research paper/report (with information/sources you found)	X		
<u>Informal writing</u>			
Notes on presentation (e.g. meeting, lecture)	X		
Notes on reading	X		
Freewriting	X		
<u>Presentations</u>			
Oral report or speech	X		
Powerpoint slide show	X		
Informal oral presentation	X	X	X
<u>Professional writing</u>			
Business letter		X	

Resume	X	X	
Professional article			
Journalism			
<u>Public Writing</u>			
Letter to the editor			
Web page text			X
Web page design			X
Blog or online journal entry			X
Social networking profiles (ie, MySpace)			X
<u>Correspondence</u>			
Email	X	X	X
Personal letter	X		X
Listserv discussion			
Online discussion board			X
Blog or online journal response			X
Instant Messaging			X
<u>Creative writing</u>			
Poetry	X		
Spoken word	X		
Short stories	X		
Long fiction	X		
Creative nonfiction	X		
Song lyrics			

Lucy

	For School	For Work	Outside School and Work
<u>Papers/Essays</u>			
Summary	X		
Description	X		
Personal narrative	X		
Opinion/position paper	X		
Book report	X		
Interpretation of a piece of literature	X		
Lab write-up/report			X
Analytical essay	X		
5-paragraph essay	X		
Research paper/report (with information/sources provided)	X		
Research paper/report (with information/sources you found)	X		

<u>Informal writing</u>			
Notes on presentation (e.g. meeting, lecture)	X		
Notes on reading	X		
Freewriting	X		X
<u>Presentations</u>			
Oral report or speech	X		X
Powerpoint slide show	X		X
Informal oral presentation	X		X
<u>Professional writing</u>			
Business letter	X		
Resume	X	X	
Professional article	X		
Journalism	X		
<u>Public Writing</u>			
Letter to the editor	X		
Web page text	X		X
Web page design	X		
Blog or online journal entry			X
Social networking profiles (ie, MySpace)			X
<u>Correspondence</u>			
Email	X		X
Personal letter			X
Listserv discussion			X
Online discussion board			X
Blog or online journal response			X
Instant Messaging			X
<u>Creative writing</u>			
Poetry	X		X
Spoken word	X	X	X
Short stories	X		
Long fiction	X		
Creative nonfiction	X		
Song lyrics	X		X

Amanda

	For School	For Work	Outside School and Work
<u>Papers/Essays</u>			
Summary	X	X	X
Description	X	X	X

Personal narrative	X		
Opinion/position paper	X		
Book report	X		
Interpretation of a piece of literature	X		
Lab write-up/report	X		
Analytical essay	X		
5-paragraph essay	X		X
Research paper/report (with information/sources provided)	X		
Research paper/report (with information/sources you found)	X		
<u>Informal writing</u>			
Notes on presentation (e.g. meeting, lecture)	X	X	
Notes on reading	X	X	X
Freewriting			
<u>Presentations</u>			
Oral report or speech	X		
Powerpoint slide show	X		
Informal oral presentation	X		
<u>Professional writing</u>			
Business letter			
Resume	X	X	X
Professional article	X		
Journalism	X		
<u>Public Writing</u>			
Letter to the editor			
Web page text			X
Web page design	X		X
Blog or online journal entry			X
Social networking profiles (ie, MySpace)			X
<u>Correspondence</u>			
Email	X	X	X
Personal letter	X		X
Listserv discussion			
Online discussion board	X		
Blog or online journal response			X
Instant Messaging			X
<u>Creative writing</u>			
Poetry	X		

Spoken word	X		
Short stories	X		
Long fiction	X		
Creative nonfiction			
Song lyrics	X		

Bradley

	For School	For Work	Outside School and Work
<u>Papers/Essays</u>			
Summary	X	X	X
Description	X	X	X
Personal narrative	X		
Opinion/position paper	X		X
Book report	X		
Interpretation of a piece of literature	X		
Lab write-up/report	X		
Analytical essay	X		
5-paragraph essay	X	X	X
Research paper/report (with information/sources provided)	X		
Research paper/report (with information/sources you found)	X		
<u>Informal writing</u>			
Notes on presentation (e.g. meeting, lecture)	X	X	X
Notes on reading	X	X	X
Freewriting	X		
<u>Presentations</u>			
Oral report or speech	X	X	X
Powerpoint slide show	X		
Informal oral presentation	X	X	X
<u>Professional writing</u>			
Business letter		X	X
Resume	X	X	X
Professional article			
Journalism	X		X
<u>Public Writing</u>			
Letter to the editor			
Web page text			X
Web page design	X		X
Blog or online journal entry	X		X

Social networking profiles (ie, MySpace)			X
<u>Correspondence</u>			
Email	X	X	X
Personal letter			X
Listserv discussion			
Online discussion board	X		
Blog or online journal response			X
Instant Messaging			X
<u>Creative writing</u>			
Poetry	X		
Spoken word	X		
Short stories	X		
Long fiction			
Creative nonfiction			
Song lyrics			

Lauren

	For School	For Work	Outside School and Work
<u>Papers/Essays</u>			
Summary	X		
Description	X		
Personal narrative	X		
Opinion/position paper	X		
Book report	X		
Interpretation of a piece of literature	X		
Lab write-up/report	X		
Analytical essay	X		
5-paragraph essay	X		
Research paper/report (with information/sources provided)	X		
Research paper/report (with information/sources you found)	X		
<u>Informal writing</u>			
Notes on presentation (e.g. meeting, lecture)	X		
Notes on reading	X		X
Freewriting	X		X
<u>Presentations</u>			
Oral report or speech	X		
Powerpoint slide show	X		
Informal oral presentation	X	X	X

<u>Professional writing</u>			
Business letter			
Resume		X	
Professional article	X		
Journalism	X		
<u>Public Writing</u>			
Letter to the editor			
Web page text			
Web page design			
Blog or online journal entry			X
Social networking profiles (ie, MySpace)			X
<u>Correspondence</u>			
Email	X	X	X
Personal letter			X
Listserv discussion	X		
Online discussion board	X		X
Blog or online journal response		X	X
Instant Messaging			X
<u>Creative writing</u>			
Poetry	X		X
Spoken word	X		
Short stories	X		
Long fiction	X		X
Creative nonfiction	X		
Song lyrics	X		X

Ashley

	For School	For Work	Outside School and Work
<u>Papers/Essays</u>			
Summary	X	X	
Description	X		
Personal narrative	X	X	
Opinion/position paper	X		
Book report	X		
Interpretation of a piece of literature	X		
Lab write-up/report	X		
Analytical essay	X		
5-paragraph essay	X		
Research paper/report (with information/sources provided)	X		

Research paper/report (with information/sources you found)	X		
Informal writing			
Notes on presentation (e.g. meeting, lecture)	X		
Notes on reading	X		
Freewriting	X		
Presentations			
Oral report or speech	X		
Powerpoint slide show	X		
Informal oral presentation	X		
Professional writing			
Business letter	X		
Resume	X	X	X
Professional article	X		X
Journalism	X		
Public Writing			
Letter to the editor	X		
Web page text	X		
Web page design	X		
Blog or online journal entry			X
Social networking profiles (ie, MySpace)			X
Correspondence			
Email	X	X	X
Personal letter			X
Listserv discussion			
Online discussion board			
Blog or online journal response			X
Instant Messaging			
Creative writing			
Poetry	X		
Spoken word			
Short stories	X		
Long fiction	X		
Creative nonfiction	X		
Song lyrics	X		

Mallory

	For School	For Work	Outside School and Work
<u>Papers/Essays</u>			
Summary	X	X	
Description	X	X	
Personal narrative	X		
Opinion/position paper	X		
Book report	X		
Interpretation of a piece of literature	X		
Lab write-up/report			
Analytical essay	X		
5-paragraph essay	X		
Research paper/report (with information/sources provided)	X		
Research paper/report (with information/sources you found)			
<u>Informal writing</u>			
Notes on presentation (e.g. meeting, lecture)	X	X	
Notes on reading	X	X	
Freewriting	X	X	
<u>Presentations</u>			
Oral report or speech	X	X	
Powerpoint slide show	X	X	
Informal oral presentation	X	X	
<u>Professional writing</u>			
Business letter		X	
Resume		X	X
Professional article			
Journalism	X		
<u>Public Writing</u>			
Letter to the editor			
Web page text			X
Web page design			X
Blog or online journal entry			X
Social networking profiles (ie, MySpace)			X
<u>Correspondence</u>			
Email	X	X	X
Personal letter			X

Listserv discussion			
Online discussion board	X		
Blog or online journal response			X
Instant Messaging			X
<u>Creative writing</u>			
Poetry	X		X
Spoken word	X	X	X
Short stories	X		
Long fiction			
Creative nonfiction			
Song lyrics			

Derrick

	For School	For Work	Outside School and Work
<u>Papers/Essays</u>			
Summary	X		X
Description	X		
Personal narrative	X		
Opinion/position paper	X		
Book report	X		
Interpretation of a piece of literature	X		
Lab write-up/report	X		
Analytical essay	X		
5-paragraph essay	X		
Research paper/report (with information/sources provided)	X		
Research paper/report (with information/sources you found)	X		
<u>Informal writing</u>			
Notes on presentation (e.g. meeting, lecture)	X	X	
Notes on reading	X		
Freewriting	X		
<u>Presentations</u>			
Oral report or speech	X	X	X
Powerpoint slide show	X		
Informal oral presentation	X	X	X
<u>Professional writing</u>			
Business letter	X		
Resume	X	X	X
Professional article			
Journalism			

Public Writing			
Letter to the editor			
Web page text	X		
Web page design	X		
Blog or online journal entry	X		X
Social networking profiles (ie, MySpace)			X
Correspondence			
Email	X	X	X
Personal letter		X	X
Listserv discussion			
Online discussion board	X		X
Blog or online journal response	X		X
Instant Messaging			X
Creative writing			
Poetry	X		X
Spoken word	X	X	X
Short stories	X		
Long fiction			
Creative nonfiction			
Song lyrics			X

Ryan

	For School	For Work	Outside School and Work
Papers/Essays			
Summary	X		
Description	X		
Personal narrative	X		
Opinion/position paper	X		
Book report	X		
Interpretation of a piece of literature	X		
Lab write-up/report	X		
Analytical essay	X		
5-paragraph essay	X		
Research paper/report (with information/sources provided)			
Research paper/report (with information/sources you found)	X		
Informal writing			
Notes on presentation (e.g. meeting, lecture)	X	X	

Notes on reading	X		
Freewriting	X		
<u>Presentations</u>			
Oral report or speech	X		X
Powerpoint slide show	X		X
Informal oral presentation			X
<u>Professional writing</u>			
Business letter	X		
Resume	X		
Professional article			
Journalism	X		
<u>Public Writing</u>			
Letter to the editor			
Web page text			
Web page design			
Blog or online journal entry			
Social networking profiles (ie, MySpace)			X
<u>Correspondence</u>			
Email	X		X
Personal letter	X		X
Listserv discussion			
Online discussion board			X
Blog or online journal response			
Instant Messaging			X
<u>Creative writing</u>			
Poetry	X		
Spoken word			
Short stories	X		
Long fiction			
Creative nonfiction			
Song lyrics			

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