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## An Affect Theory of Composition

Lindsey L. Novak

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**AN AFFECT THEORY OF COMPOSITION**

A Masters Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate College of

Missouri State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts, Writing

By

Lindsey Leigh Novak

December 2015

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# **AN AFFECT THEORY OF COMPOSITION**

English

Missouri State University, December 2015

Master of Arts

Lindsey L. Novak

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the effect that being published in an online journal has on students' attitudes about writing and their willingness to revise. The impetus for the study was a combination of frustration at seeing the students in the Writing Center devaluing their own work, as well as my own experiences within the academy at large. The problem was that these students were neither seen as “good writers” within an academic setting, nor believed themselves to be such. The methods employed were the creation of a WordPress webpage, with a URL redirect (“boldjournal.org”) which served as a forum in which to display select student writing collaborated on within the Writing Center. The sample size was a population of 11 students chosen to be featured in the journal. An analysis of their texts reveals that students responded positively, became more confident writers, and embraced writing as a process. If students are given an opportunity to feel like “real writers” early in their academic career, they will feel an open invitation to the “academic literacy club.”

**KEYWORDS:** writing center, transitional spaces, subjectivities, writing process, microaggressions, academic literacy club, affectivity, peer tutoring

This abstract is approved as to form and content

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Dr. Margaret E. Weaver  
Chairperson, Advisory Committee  
Missouri State University

**AN AFFECT THEORY OF COMPOSITION**

By

Lindsey L. Novak

A Masters Thesis  
Submitted to the Graduate College  
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December 2015

Approved:

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Dr. Margaret E. Weaver

---

Dr. Lyn F. Gattis

---

Dr. Lanette L. Cadle

---

Dr. Julie Masterson: Dean, Graduate College

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To my crazy parents, who loved me while still giving me something to struggle against, truly defining that family means loving each other anyway. We definitely do.

And to my sweet husband, who is my true partner in this world. Sometimes, it seems like we speak our own language with each other, one we created together. I'm excited for all the things we'll create together.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **The Restricted Voice: The Possibility of Change**

I grew up in Southeast Missouri, in a town called Poplar Bluff, denoted by its placement right above Missouri's "bootheel," represented by forming a "U" shape with the index finger and thumb. I spent my formative years on the beautiful Current River, knew the wasp only as a "dirt-dauber," and saw Ronnie Milsap at the Sikeston Bootheel Rodeo. In many ways, the natural setting was idyllic for a childhood. Sometimes, though, the most rural of settings leaves a path for an institution to come along and unify these communities: For me, rural and religious went hand-in-hand.

When I say that I grew up in church, what I mean is that I spent every Sunday morning, evening and Wednesday night there; I played hide and seek in the church's basement with the pastor's kids and was baptized several times because I think both I and the other kids my age liked the little tub that was used. Westwood Baptist Church was a fundamental Baptist denomination in which my parents found community, stability, and grounding. Married, mid-twenties, starting a business and a family, the panicked sentiment which likely made them latch onto the church becomes more understandable to me, and I sympathize with it more deeply with each passing adult year of my own. Their church membership and compulsory attendance was a result of young parents feeling insecure in their place in the world, wanting a haven from the things they heard they should fear. For a girl growing up, though, it seemed to mean navigating inflexible rules, harsh judgments, and indictments on mere curiosity and humanity. Culottes in the summer, private Christian school the rest of the year. Everything had morality attached to

it. I was told who my friends could be (other church kids). In 6<sup>th</sup> grade, my parents removed me from the public elementary school I attended, in which I was involved in a WINGS type program, relocating me to an unaccredited, wholly inadequate private Christian School, K-12. Vacation Bible School, Focus on the Family, Promise Keepers, True Love Waits. I grew up surrounded by rhetoric—boxed in by it, growth stunted because of it; no wonder I became so fascinated with it.

### **And So We Have Internalized This Horror of the Dark**

It seemed that the beauty of the natural environment in which I grew up was being contrasted with such a fear surrounding natural human tendencies. My parents' reasoning, that they were so active in the church because without it, "who knew what kind of sins they'd give in to!" really never made much sense to me. Why is it "God" who is keeping you from doing horrible things? Shouldn't it just be human decency? And so, in my experience, feminization of the rural body meant a moralization of rural *bodies*. We, women particularly, were taught to be ashamed, that our bodies were temptations and dangerous, that our bodies had to be covered; if anyone saw them, we were gravely sinning.

In Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, she "illustrates the way cultural fields are regulated by binary frameworks that reward or punish certain performances. She focuses in particular on the cultural field of gender identity. As noticeably gendered people, she says, we are required to imitate certain performances. If we don't, we get 'in trouble'" (qtd. in Grimm 72). This kind of neuroticism, more often than not, leads to an inability to connect with oneself, an aversion to one's own body, rather than the intended modesty

for which the church had hoped. Helene Cixous talks of, “The little girls and their ‘ill-mannered’ bodies immured, well-preserved, intact unto themselves, in the mirror. Frigidified. But are they ever seething underneath! What an effort it takes—there’s no end to it—for the sex cops to bar their threatening return” (1525). What were they so scared of? In the fundamental Baptist church I was brought up in, women were not allowed to be pastors, nor hold any position of “real” authority—deacon, music director, youth pastor, etc. Cixous again, “They have wandered around in circles, confined to the narrow room in which they’ve been given a deadly brainwashing” (1525). The brainwashing is that it—everything—is our fault. A man not being able to control himself: our fault. Rape, crimes: all our fault. I came to realize why I, too, had been seething underneath for so many years.

### **I Am the Dark Continent**

Throughout my childhood, there grew an increasing sense that nothing was ever just for *me*. Five years of piano lessons were spent learning hymns, which I then performed at various recitals, church services and the yearly Christian summer camp. My accomplishments and successes were direct reflection on my parents, and even more tangentially on their relationship within the church. I felt small, restricted, like I was not allowed to grow, to branch out. I was allowed to be one thing, and this narrow line I was walking was not letting me become a real person, my own person. It was only natural, then, that they took my rebellions to heart, too. I began to question whether the alarm system in my house, seemingly set earlier in the day every year, was serving to keep the amorphous bad out, or me in. At 15, I was sent to a Christian boarding school.

Teenage girl with a journal is definitely a cliché. I started keeping a journal at 15, going on 16, years old. My parents decided that year to send me away to a Christian boarding school, since I would not act like the good little Christian girl I was being told to be—mainly, this consisted of listening to the music I wanted to listen to, and spending time with friends I wanted to spend time with, regardless of whether or not my parents approved. Frankly, I was tired of being told what to do, which did not just come in the form of normal expectations parents have for their children, but delved into an attempt to control every aspect of my life, personality, and who I was as a person. In the summer of 1999, I was unceremoniously shipped off to boarding school. With three days’ advance notice, I had more time to pack than many of the other teens were given, as several had escorts show up at their houses, guiding them along with their magically pre-packed luggage, through airports and awaiting cars. Though our parents had spent months planning our departure, purchasing hiking boots in our respective sizes, because we “would need them,” we had only days to prepare, if that. You would have thought we robbed banks. We were the baddest of the bad.

My life was defined by what I was not allowed to do. *Simpsons* were off limits; *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* were evil; *The Smurfs* were banned; even *Care Bears* were disallowed for some reason or other. Might seem insignificant, but to a child ... When my school friends would talk about this boy group, or that cartoon, I had to try to steer the conversation to something I could relate to. Eventually, I was just the weird kid. Adults may relate about more important things, but these things are the entire world of children.

Instead, I was given Christian substitutions: did you know, there are Christian rap groups, Christian rock, Christian pop, Christian metal, Christian punk, and even Christian ska bands? Some sample lyrics of a Christian ska band, called The Supertones: “We want this whole band to be a big love letter/ so we play the ska and it makes you feel better/ God's got love for us, so we got love for you/ it's your life, so what you wanna do?” This is followed by a peppy trumpet solo, in the style of non-Christian band, the Mighty Mighty Bosstones. Everything had to be labeled Christian, and I use the word “substitution” loosely. “Oh, no I haven't heard the new Chris Cross song, but I know DC Talk! Do you guys know their song, ‘Jesus Freak?’ ‘I don't really care if they label me a Jesus freak...’” You know what, though? I did care...

The list of things I was not allowed to do was enormous, and insane:

- I was not allowed to listen to the radio
- I was not allowed to wear pants (it had to be skirts, dresses, or culottes)
- I was not allowed to go to parties
- I was not allowed to watch most cartoons growing up, or most shows that aired when I was a teenager : *Power Rangers*, Nickelodeon, *Ren and Stimpy*, the list is too long to print
- I was not allowed to read Goosebumps books, any books my friends were reading. I was handed things like the Left Behind series. I couldn't even read Nancy Drew

Of course, I did do these things, and I kept getting caught. And caught. And caught. So, this was my rebellion, and what wound me up in a boarding school, with a

sliding scale of delinquents—from products of overly controlling parents like my own, to full-fledged drug dealers.

Fifteen is a formative age, and something gets cemented in your brain, being labeled as a delinquent even before you know how to do laundry. The summer I was shipped off, I had been learning how to drive, taking a summer Driver's Ed class at the high school. I had a boyfriend, as serious as any romance in a small town is at that age. I had yet to rob that bank, but I did begin sneaking out of the house, lying about where I was coming from or going to—as it seems, it was frequently, but that's likely because I was caught nearly every time. I was not allowed to go to parties, even birthday parties, if they were for friends my parents didn't approve of. I was barely allowed out of the house except for school and church three times a week. Maybe it was that my parents were imagining worse fates for their eldest daughter, just beginning to drive and experiencing the freedom that comes with it; maybe it was that my father was extremely stressed with the pending sale of his business being negotiated, and my acts of delinquency were too much to deal with.

In August of 1999, I was told I was being sent to boarding school in Branson, Missouri. I had three days to pack. We made the four hour drive from Poplar Bluff, and I was dumped off with my bags, not knowing what to expect. I cry. I would be staying in a room with three other girls my age along with a “big”: the kids sent to the school were known as “littles,” and the young, just-out-of-college age women who apparently had a heart for “troubled teens” were the “bigs.” That night, they had pasta salad, with those colored spiral noodles. I didn't eat.

What I do know is, boarding school was not all bad. There is a camaraderie that comes from living in close quarters, at a young age, with those other than family. Cycles synced. Illnesses were passed around, and weathered, together. Fellow housemates took on a variety of roles: running partners, makeup artists, jam band accompaniments, all-purpose carousers. A closeness set in that can only come from sharing a place where there is no other choice. General cattiness that usually weaves through most girl relationships had no fuel here, because, unlike at home, where girls retire to their separate quarters at the end of the day, we had nowhere else to go. *This was home.*

The boarding school, named Shelterwood, was Christian-affiliated, though it was non-denominational. What that means is, my parents were worried about it being too “secular” and it turned out to be a relief from their heavy-handedness. For one, I was allowed to wear pants, instead of only skirts, dresses or culottes. There was a girls’ house and a boys’ house just across the path, both separated by a gazebo, which was a common area; it turned out to be the gathering area where anyone with an acoustic guitar would play, badly. The kitchen was located in the lower level of the girls’ house, and both houses would trade off preparing, cooking, and cleaning up after dinner.

In times of turmoil, every girl needs a safe place. Since the ones being forced on me—church, Jesus, Christians—were proving harmful, I had to forge my own. I began to write things down, sometimes reflections and truths, other times stories or escapist writing. This was the first time I experienced the notion that I had a place where I did not have to apologize or pretend. This was also a time in which I found power in writing things down, then tearing them up. I experienced catharsis through writing for the first time, at a critical time. On the outside, I was pulling out my eyelashes because even my

own body no longer felt safe. On the inside, I desperately needed a place for *me*. The simple act of journaling became a way for me to try on different subjectivities, some being forced on me and others I wanted to try out on my own. I could explore ideas without committing to them—or getting in trouble for them. In this way, writing almost became a kind of cure, and it was certainly one of the only places truly mine. The rest—piano, gymnastics, etc.—were all a performance for an Other. This was for me. I learned to place no faith in institutions, religious or academic, but on the blank page.

### **Breaking the Codes that Negate Me**

I spent some time trying to ascertain what it was I felt was so lacking during my adolescence, and I realized it was the absence of transitional spaces, opportunities to explore and discuss without judgments, finalities or absolutes. In my work with the university's Writing Center, I saw this as my goal: create a space that honors the process of learning and writing. Writing offers a perfect transitional space to students, the training wheels of thought. Some of the students I would meet with in the Writing Center were Basic Writing students in English 100 classes. As much as I sometimes wondered why they were at college or how they wound up there, they must have done their fair share of wondering the same. I wondered how many of these students were placed in that Basic Writing classroom through simply subjective things regarding writing instruction and assessment, such as a teacher who only wanted things written in active voice or third person all the time, no matter the rhetorical situation. Textbooks, to this day, still drill into students the idea that writing has to be one way, all the time—standardized—and do not allow for the different subjectivities for which writing allows. No wonder students are



disappointed, “hate writing,” or feel as if they “aren’t good writers.” Writing instruction has been stifling their voices, downplaying ambivalence, pursuing singular subjectivities, and minimizing differences.

Nancy Grimm, in her book *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Post-Modern Times*, has spent some time meditating on these differences, which she saw daily in her time as Director of the Michigan Technological University Writing Center. Grimm admits in her book that her initial, knee-jerk reaction to writing and difference was to try to eliminate idiosyncrasies, try to *erase* them, too. For Grimm, this realization was a revelation; for me, her book meant that someone had put into words exactly what I had been feeling in my own Writing Center, and noticing with a sinking pit in my stomach.

“Postmodernism,” Grimm says, “reminds us that all claims to truth are grounded in specific discourses that favor some over others and that individuals *hold tightly to their beliefs because of what the beliefs do for them not because they have a greater claim to truth than others*” (22). Grimm’s words were a lightning bolt to me, as she connected, not only with the dominant discourses I was seeing voiced in the academy, but the discourses of my childhood, as well. I began to piece together why the hierarchies and dominant discourses of the institution that I hoped would free me from an oppressive past were serving to restrict in the exact same ways.

Grimm turns to psychotherapist and Howard political science professor Jane Flax in her book to illustrate the importance of taking on different subjectivities in writing practice. In opposition to the modernist idea of a “freely choosing, knowable, and autonomous self,” Flax suggests a replacement theory of celebrated multiplicity of subjectivities (qtd. in Grimm 72). Grimm relates that Flax’s ideas appeal for two reasons:

“For one, she weaves together three strands of theorizing (feminist, postmodern, and psychoanalytic), alternately allowing one strand to compensate for the weakness of the other. For another, she grounds her analysis in considerations of her practice as a therapist and in her triple minority status (white, Jewish, and female) at Howard, a historically black college where she has taught since 1978” (72). Grimm relays also that she finds grounding in Flax’s belief that dominant beliefs are harmful, especially to an ever-evolving identity.

“Appropriately mobilized, a sense of ambivalence might be put to constructive use in writing” (72). To do this, Grimm says, “we need a more fluid understanding of subjectivity, one that allows us not only to **account for our differences** but also to **reorganize ourselves in relationship to others**, thus avoiding the problem of insisting we have only one essential self to which we must at all times be true” (72). This is what Flax means by a “transitional space.” Flax comments that “the task of therapy is not “the discovery (or construction) of a solid, unitary, pristine, and undistorted self, lying somewhere deep down inside” but rather the development of multiple ways of organizing subjectivity” (qtd. in Grimm 74). Ambivalence, then, is not the negative it has historically been associated with, and from which academic institutions have historically shied away. “Ambivalence,” Judith Butler tells us, “is at the heart of agency” (qtd. in Grimm 71).

What I find so useful about both Grimm and her expansion of Flax’s theory stems from the realization that reproducing the norm happens so easily, almost unconsciously. Grimm says that “Those of us who are white and middle class need to recognize that we, too, are raced, gendered, and classed subjects rather than just ‘normal’ people” (73). This is why an institution can be set up as liberatory and progressive, and still fail to hit the

mark—because there are multiple marks to hit, one for each different student. Accounting for and celebrating difference, instead of trying to eradicate it or homogenize it, is very, very difficult.

### **Writing is for You**

I agree with Grimm, that writing can, and must, be this transitional space, the place to explore these multiple subjectivities. I argue that students cannot begin to fully think critically about the world in which they live, or about a text, until they've learned to think critically about themselves. This is the problem I have with the same assignments given over and over again in academic and instructional settings. Grimm says that we must question the academic institution if we are to make any headway with the “literacy myth” (83). She says of the academic, “To him, school has been fair, and it seems intuitively obvious that one would follow directions and do what the teacher requires. To him, truth lies in the details of the assignment sheet. He has had few occasions to doubt that teachers ask students to do meaningful work. He may imagine his work in the writing center as an effort to extend and implement the good intentions of teachers” (Grimm 102). As far as my own Writing Center went, I would say it was staffed with a mixed bag of those who, like Grimm, saw themselves as academics and a few outliers like myself, who were completely capable of studiousness, but did not always feel following an assignment to the letter was the way that they learned. I knew myself well enough, especially given my background, that I sometimes had to turn ideas around in my mind, perhaps reformulate them, move in opposition to them, or even walk away from them for a while, before I learned. The important point is that not everyone learns the same way.

This is the first principle which must shift, must be called into question according to Grimm. Through writing and work which is meaningful, something is learned about the self, too. This does not happen in the history paper about the background of tea, or the researched argumentative paper written about obesity, as fascinating as those topics are. I saw these papers nonstop in the Writing Center, and I was assigned them constantly as a student myself. It was not until graduate school I was once, ever, asked to write a narrative. Instead of indicting the assignments, I believe I am condemning the intent—who the assignment is for: is it for the instructor or the student? What is the best way for the student to learn? To constitute meaningful experience, something must be learned about the self through the exploration of the “thing.” In fact, Cixous’ words spoke to a broken place in me. When she said “writing is for you,” I realized all of the ways I had been contorting my academic writing to fit what I thought was expected of me. I was taking myself out of it, altogether. I had fallen out of love with writing.

Just as I resented the lack of transitional spaces growing up, students resent being robbed of them, too. Some students I worked with, particularly for classes not within the humanities, would get almost paralyzed and unable to write, out of fear of a “bad grade.” Many courses, when requiring a writing assignment, still do not honor the process of writing, and simply construct a firm due date on which the one and only draft of a student’s paper is due. Multiple drafts of essays, while allowing the student to reformulate and rearrange ideas, allow students to take several different points of view, multiple subjectivities, during the course of an assignment. Grimm says that “Transitional spaces serve as defenses against the fear of multiplicity, ambivalence, and uncertainty. This fear often tempts us to try to collapse all our worlds into one... [rather than]

challenge or **play** with the limits or restrictions required by the outer world” (75). And when she mentions “play,” I immediately think of Derrida’s play, the “joyful affirmation of the play of the world” (Derrida 292). My first reaction to Derrida was vehement. I knew, “this is flipping everything I was taught upside down.” He frightened me, too. “What do you mean the center is not the center?” That free play is first, before presence. The quantum world is ruled by this idea, and I don’t know if Derrida realized this. But rigidity of structure corrals play, disallows movement, which is what a living thing does—it moves. Derrida saw language as living, instead of a dead thing. Gloria Anzaldúa was not just talking about the dirt when she spoke of “*renacimientos de la tierra madre*, a constant changing of forms” of her homeland (1604). She saw language as inextricably linked to this reincarnation, too. Allowances for difference, for multiple subjectivities (especially in language) do not fix identity, but let it change forms—and in changing forms, be strengthened.

### **There’s No Room for Her if She’s Not a He**

I was continually apprehensive that I’d be alienating someone with my comments on the church, or academic practices, or even for discussing my experiences as a woman. I wondered, how do I keep from alienating the students in the Writing Center, when I am an outsider myself? I turned again to Nancy Grimm, who agrees “with Flax’s argument that the ability to **listen in ways that do not simply reproduce relations of domination is dependent on our ability to regard ourselves as Other**” (73). And I realized I have been operating as Other my whole life. Refusing to submit to the misogyny and repressiveness of the church, all the way through graduate school, where, denied an

assistantship (when the majority of graduate students attend with one), I had that outsider status continually reinforced through a litany of “well, if you’re a GA this,” “if you’re a GA that” in most of my classes. I’d hear things like “If you’re a GA, you can use the scanner in the GA office to scan your paper,” but I was not. I felt like my position as not a part of the GA group was continually reinforced. Grimm offers, “It is difficult if not impossible to hold individuals responsible for oppression because oppression is ‘a consequence of often unconscious assumptions and re-actions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions’” (105). These microaggressions, though unintentional, were reinforcing my position as outsider.

Similarly to what Grimm says about “well-meaning people” and “good intentions,” microaggressions are also an unconscious confirmation of a bias (105). They are things like washing or using hand sanitizer after shaking someone’s hand or an audible “hmmm” after a particularly salient or directed point. Microaggressions give a person’s, sometimes unspoken, beliefs away. So a skeptical “Okay...” after a point made in class by a student, who already does not feel particularly part of a group, resounds very loudly. When a person is already placed at a disadvantage, all the little things that reinforce said disadvantage stick out. For instance, my husband had a female best friend who either decided she didn’t like me, or just agreed with him early on when we fought, broke up, and so on before really falling for each other and becoming a couple. After we got married, we took a trip and stayed with this woman and her significant other, during which time she was certainly polite. The only time she slipped and gave herself away was through the microaggression when I showed her my engagement ring, and she said that it

was “very simple.” Microaggressions tend to not be things a person feels justified in blowing up over; they are more often things that take a person aback momentarily.

What the microaggressions I experienced in my composition classes did was galvanize me in my position in the Writing Center. The recognition of the dejected writer, perceiving that discouragement, became instantaneous for me. Watching a student back away from writing, a result of believing he or she “couldn’t write,” “wasn’t a good writer” absolutely broke my heart. Though I can only speak from my own experience, Grimm says that “writing center workers need to be able to re-describe what appear to be failed performances, and for this to happen, they will first need awareness of the ways they have internalized social norms” (72). At the very least, to really help and connect with students in the Writing Center, tutors have to be able to empathize and remember a time in which their writing wasn’t “perfect,” either; the tutors have a right to an angry reaction at seeing students immobilized by faulty writing instruction. The writing instruction being offered to some of the students I worked with was taking writing away from them. I knew it, because I was living it, too. Notably, my experience growing up was likely different from Grimm’s. She makes mention of the fact that she initially was trusting of the institution’s “good intentions,” while I have a learned, inherent distrust. It’s amazing, then, that Grimm was able to come to this revelation, from around the other side of the table, and which I enthusiastically echo. I almost feel as if she took the words out of my mouth, though actually, she was able to verbalize a frustration I’ve felt my entire life, before I even had words for it. What I am suggesting is that being an “Other” has allowed me the necessary insight to understand what Grimm is trying to do; this is

also why I felt compelled to find a way to create such a transitional space in my own campus Writing Center.

Working in the Writing Center, I realized my ability to listen in this way, not reproducing the “norm,” became my mission. It was deeply ingrained in my distrust of institutions and my subversive beating heart. I found that I agreed with Grimm; the indictment boiling in my blood was that “we hold individuals rather than institutions responsible” (Grimm 108). Wrongly.

Ultimately, Grimm left me with a shaky ground concerning what to do next, how to “fix” the literacy myth—the idea that simply giving a person the “gift” of literacy will necessarily change his or her status, class, financial situation, or place in life. There must be an acknowledgement of privilege (and those left outside it) and a re-thinking of basic assumptions. She mentions a student she worked with in her Writing Center, who, as she spent more time delving into the issues, began to take note of their differences: she had an urban upbringing, he a rural one; she engaged with school while he backed away from it; she told herself she enjoyed writing, but he considered himself “not a writer.” She says “the focus of my job was to fix Keith, to help him read and write more like the mainstream; my job wasn’t to contextualize Keith’s work or to argue for changes in attitudes toward students like him or to suggest changes in teaching practices. Keith—and the many equally likeable students who followed him—gradually led me to the realization that the institution of higher education to which I had pledged my professional life was **not fair**” (Grimm 101). To be fair, Grimm says that tutors must necessarily meet students “where they are,” not hold impossibly high standards—which the tutors



themselves have assimilated from the institutions—that may not be useful or helpful to the students seeking their help.

I'm still bothered by the unfairness of it all. I can perfectly envision several students whom I know have been wondering whether their writing even matters, whether what they have to say matters. I know this, because I have been wondering the same thing. In the Writing Center, we are not gods, we are not “rock stars,” we are not the liberators. At best, we are triage. Our job is to stop the bleeding quickly, efficiently, and move on to the next critical patient as pragmatically as we can. Grimm's acknowledgment that “writing centers are considered to be backward places for students ‘with problems’ or for students ‘who need help’” preceded the work I did, became an association made the second I identified as “Writing Center consultant” (2). It preceded the students who frequented the Center, too.

Perhaps it is my conditioning that causes me concern that, because I am pointing out a flawed system, I will come across as ungrateful. I can be grateful to my parents while acknowledging things which might have been detrimental to a healthy sense of self. We can be grateful to have a campus writing center while still acknowledging the perceptions surrounding it which need to be changed. Grimm draws us once more to the idea of the institution and the question of its fairness. She says, “Even the existence of a writing center on campus is proof that the institution is committed to improving individual performance” (Grimm 102). Yet, there are those magic words: “individual performance.” What about the students who don't seem to want to work? Grimm relates Linda Brodkey's argument that “students refuse our invitations to literacy when we literacy educators fail to take into account their differing political, social, historical, and

economic histories” (102). Just like with Keith, though it may at times be revelatory, we—as educators, as tutors—must meet students at their level. It is not our job, Grimm would say, to commandeer a student’s essay or for appropriation to occur. If a student chooses to write his or her essay on deer hunting, or whatever it may be, our job is to help that student write the best researched essay on deer hunting that he or she possibly can—not to take that away from him or her and “help” him/her pick a “better” topic. It is about fostering their abilities while honoring the differences students bring.

Can writing instruction be fair? This is the question I keep asking. In my opinion, the answer is probably not, based on all the other extenuating circumstances and differences that are just out of reach of the instructor, out of his or her control. What can be changed, immediately, though, is an open invitation to, what Grimm accurately calls the “academic literacy club” (103). Restrictive environments have felt eerily similar to me, whether they are in regard to literacy or the Lord.

The goal of my thesis is to explore ways to create this open invitation. In my thesis, I research student writing and what effect positive and negative reinforcements have on students' intrinsic motivation to write. I explore the symbiotic relationship between the writer and his or her writing, and what role affect plays in the writing process. Furthering the foundation Grimm has built, I examine ways to explore subjectivities through writing and offer an experiment in which students go through the process of exploring them, too, under the title of “published author.”

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **An Affect Theory of Composition**

For some time now, I have found myself fascinated with the in-between states, the liminal spaces in which we live our lives. In spite of a highly verbally-oriented mind, coupled with years of higher education, when overcome by life forces beyond my control, I find myself struggling for words that do not come. Ineffability, it is called, when the words aren't even formed enough to get stuck in your throat. As the field of Composition has shifted to a focus on the process, its own in-between state, I found myself with a growing interest in the mindset before putting pen to paper (or obliterating the blinking cursor): the state of being affected or disaffected and the ways in which this encourages or, conversely, inhibits writing and its practice. Embracing writing as a process requires becoming comfortable in the in-between.

Kenneth Burke, in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, wherein he explains his identification theory, has said that “belonging is rhetorical” (28). Burke says of identification that it contains the “implication of division” (22). Because I had already been marked as an outsider, I found myself identifying, not with the cohesive insider group, but *with the division*. Being an outsider allowed me a certain sensitivity with students coming into the Writing Center, the institution of outsiders. In Nancy Grimm’s highly relevant work, *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times*, she has stated that “writing centers are considered to be backward places for students ‘with problems’ or for students ‘who need help’” (2). At the first mention, which was always muttered, of “I’m not a good writer,” my ears perked up. What had led these students to believe this? One of the

most shocking observations I made was that these discouraged writers were in fact not the worst, but the ones with the most potential; this is because they clearly demonstrated a level of care about their writing—enough to be discouraged about it, and pull up a chair at the table. Recently, in her article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, “On Yoga and Teaching Writing,” Megan Fulwiler compared getting on the yoga mat with continuous, buildable writing practice; what is called for is an invitation to become lifelong writers: “If our larger intention was actually to invite students to become lifelong writers rather than college students passing a course, how might that shift the ways in which we read and respond to their writing?” (Fulwiler) Given the types of writing assignments I continually encountered, the same researched argumentative papers, I was becoming disappointed with the dearth of opportunities for writers to develop flexibility, to stretch.

Theorizing about students’ discouragement has been highly neglected, in all areas of study, because it is chaotic. It goes against everything that writing wants to be: a contained, structured, coherent form. But how do we fit people into those forms? Affectations are often the impetus between writing and not writing, as I was finding through the students frequenting the Writing Center.

### **Affectivity**

The state of being affected goes so hand-in-hand with the state of being human that it should be definitional. It is the part of ourselves that causes embarrassment, as Ben Highmore, in “Bitter after Taste” says, “Affect gives you away” (118); this is the dial we prefer to turn down instead of up, to 11. To Highmore, affect is “your personal polygraph machine” (118). Being affected can be embarrassing; it is the used Kleenex we keep

wadded up. It is the thing we don't reveal in polite company, the blush. Affect humanizes us all.

Affects are simply intensities, and correlate in many ways with what happens in the moment we sit down to write. Eric Shouse further explicates the definition in *M/C Journal*, an online journal of media and culture, separating the affective domain from the emotional: "Affect is the body's way of preparing itself for action in a given circumstance by adding a quantitative dimension of intensity to the quality of an experience." It is "the magic," for lack of a better term. Affectivity is "what makes feelings feel" (Shouse). Canadian social theorist Brian Massumi, in *Parables for the Virtual*, goes on to say that the body has a language all its own, and "infolds contexts" (Massumi 30). In other words, affect presents aspects of ineffability, combined with the messiness of trying to bring some of the person to the page, what Peter Elbow called the "self revealed in words" ("Method" 119). When we have trouble finding the words, it is often because we are affected. To a young writer—who may enjoy the play of language, or have a poetic bent, or even may just appreciate the catharsis that comes from writing—s/he can be destroyed when s/he finds that the very thing s/he loved about writing is not what the instructor wants to see.

In "An Inventory of Shimmers," Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg explain that affect makes its home within a liminal state: "Affect arises in the midst of in-between-ness: in the capacity to act and be acted upon" (1). It occupies the space within tension; it is *promise* and *potential*. Finally, affect also necessitates movement. Massumi states "approaches to affect would feel a great deal less like a free fall if our most familiar modes of inquiry had begun with movement rather than stasis, with process always

underway rather than position taken” (4). The kind of writing that embodies this principle is life-like; it takes a shot at a moving target (humanity, emotions, things in flux) and attempts to define it, fix it, momentarily. Regarding writing practice, this is the very reason that the process is so important; it implies that the conversation is not over, never over, instead of the closed door that is the product.

### **Affect’s Role in Composition**

In order for the writer to connect with the reader, a border must necessarily be crossed between self and other. This writing calls up from the page. The word “resonate” is often used to describe things a person connects with, on an affective level. To resonate, to strike a chord, is to vibrate; this is a transference of energy. The person writing must imbue his or her words with his or her metaphysical presence, in order to be “heard.” It stands to reason that, if affects are felt intensities (Massumi), then affected writing will be nothing if not *intense*. Affect lends immediacy, and like a broken leg, demands instant attention rather than dismissal. Affected writing, in this way, grabs the reader, says “pay attention,” and the reader must. Like a speaker rattles the chest, the most moving writing resonates across multiple planes of existence.

The longer I study Composition, the less I am able to deny that fact that writing is messy. In “Writing Shame,” Elspeth Probyn delineates that, “There is a shame in being highly interested in something and unable to convey it to others, to evoke the same degree of interest in them and to convince them that it is warranted” (72). In other words, a transfer of affect is needed. Writing that is disaffected is not life-like. I have watched young writers in the Writing Center, observed as they engaged or disengaged with their

ideas—their engagement causing a fury of connections, analysis, and an inexplicable proficiency with language as they try to express their ideas. Composition instruction has not allowed for (human) complications, to its detriment. According to Diane Davis, in her work of fractured genius (*Breaking Up [at] Totality*), she acknowledges “...there is a precious little bit of *writing* going on in comp classes ... students are commanded to ‘know’ their audience and their (lone) purpose ... are rewarded for grounding their inscriptions in ‘common places’ (the same) ... pretending to have mastered something ... perpetuating the myths of community and identity via the strategies of clarity and linear presentation” (Davis 238, emphasis in original). Paulo Freire, in the important *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, says that an oppressor consciousness “tries to deter the drive to search, the restlessness, and the creative power which characterizes life, it kills life” (60). The irony is that, time and again in the Writing Center, consultants find that excitement and intensity were the parts slashed through on students’ papers by the instructors, returned with the internalized sentiment that the students “can’t write.”

While working in the Writing Center, an English 110 student brought me a paper, thoroughly frustrated. She was almost in tears because the graduate assistant had given her draft a “C,” on which the lonely comment I found was “Too vague.” I found the vague comment about vagaries... ironic. In fact, the girl had a surprising first draft. The paper was a comparison between mass media practices and Plato’s allegory of the cave, in which she illustrated the ways which news media “casts a shadow on the wall,” portraying that shadow to the world as reality. It was one of the most surprising freshman papers I read all year, and I can only interpret the graduate assistant’s comment of “Too vague” to mean the graduate assistant did not, in fact, understand the concept or perhaps

had never heard of Plato's shadowy allegory. I liked her paper, frankly, and saw a hundred opportunities the graduate assistant could have taken to encourage the student to be more specific, in several different places. There were no comments specific to the student's paper, or helpful. The graduate assistant could have written, "Tie this concept together more strongly here \_\_\_\_\_," or "I'm unsure how this concept relates in this instance here \_\_\_\_\_," but the one, lonely comment was, ironically, "vague," too. Instead, the student was considering trashing the draft. The student, confused, had no idea where to go with the paper, or for what, specifically, the graduate assistant was looking. This is giving nod to the process, while never actually teaching it. The graduate assistant was deafly asking the student to engage more with her paper, while not simultaneously engaging with her about it.

In a recent *New Yorker* article by George Saunders, he says that the goal in instructing writers is to lift them up rather than encourage defeatism. Admiring the workshop approach of one of his peers, Doug Unger, Saunders says, "He accepts you and your work just as he finds it, and is willing to work with you wherever you are. This has the effect of emboldening you, and making you more courageous in your work, and less defeatist about it" (Saunders). The truth is, all writers get defeated, and writing is incredibly difficult. It is only those instructors who remember this, too, who are doing it right and make an impact.

In fact, with the students in the Writing Center, it was that very excitement and intensity which I chose to foster, their errors and false starts stemming from a simple fact: no one had shown them *how* to navigate the writing process. I tried to take pragmatic approaches, listening and looking for the fissures in their writing, places I could make the



most impact within a less-than-an-hour timeframe. There were weaknesses, cracks in their writing process. Some students had no idea how the library's search databases worked. I'd show them the different databases to search relevant to their field, how to filter results and read abstracts, and how to simply fine-tune a search phrase to get more accurate article results. Sometimes, this is what an entire session would consist of. One student had no idea how call numbers worked, or how to find a book she was looking for, so I marched her up to the stacks and showed her how to track it down. Some students were lost as to how to pick a topic for their first year composition papers, and mistakenly tried to write about things they thought their instructors wanted to read. More than anything, I was disturbed at the frequency with which these students were blamed for their errors or false starts when they had never been shown *how* in the first place. I once read that people are more capable of seeing others responsible for their actions, and thus able to condemn them, based on the amount of self-efficacy they perceive the people had in the action or decision. The more we are able to justify that a person chose wrongly, the more we are able to judge him or her. I would certainly consider a pat "C" grade on a rough draft, without explanation, blame for error or false start.

Peter Elbow talks also of the inhibiting versus enabling audience ("Closing My Eyes" 51). As mentioned earlier, when students are able to sit down with an inviting audience, and talk through some of their ideas, it is amazing to see the level of detail they come up with, arguments strengthened, perspectives considered, and connections to text forged. There is absolutely a difference between this sort of environment and ones in which they feel judged, anxious about their grade, or simply dismissed. With an inviting audience, the writing itself improves: "what we think somehow arrives more coherently

structured than usual” (“Closing My Eyes” 51). On the other hand, an inhibiting audience “makes us feel dumb when we try to speak to them: we can’t find words or thoughts” (51). This is why the balance between instructor and enabler, in the writing classroom, must always tip toward empowerment. The composition instructor may not always be cognizant of the fact that s/he has the power to actually take the words from the student; if the instructor doubts this, s/he need only spend some time in the Writing Center, where the inhibited student turns for “help.” Like the girl who was tearfully ready to toss her draft about news media and the cave allegory, this is how words get taken and a writer’s confidence undermined.

### **Product versus Process**

Donald Murray’s article, “Teach Writing as a Process Not Product” cautions against teaching toward the finished product, what he calls the autopsy, because “repetitive autopsying doesn’t give birth to live writing” (3). He continues, “No matter how careful our criticisms, they do not help the student since when we teach composition we are not teaching a product, we are teaching a process” (Murray 3). Freire tells us that, “Sadistic love is a perverted love—a love of death, not of life” (59). In other words, a love of the autopsy. Diane Davis, responding to Avital Ronell’s pronouncement that she writes “for writing because it died” (xiii), replies that “writing, as a harnessing of language for the making manifest of ‘reality’ most certainly did die;” we are working over “the dead” (Davis 231).

Writing is, again, a messy process, and necessarily so; this is because it is a person doing the writing. Every idea is an embodied idea, and Probyn says that “We

work ideas through our bodies; we write through our bodies, hoping to get into the bodies of our readers” (76). Gilles Deleuze, in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, following Spinoza’s idea that we don’t know all that the body is capable of, the “not yet” of its liminal space, reinforces my point, that it is a dangerous idea to fully separate the person from his or her writing: “The body of the writer becomes the battleground where ideas and experiences collide, sometimes to produce new visions of life” (89). It is all too easy for the instructor to disembodiment the product from the person, but pushing too far in this direction serves to not only silence the writing, but the writer.

“I’m not a good writer.” It was as if this was the mantra of students coming into the Writing Center. One student after another was coming to me, repeating this. Their instructors told them they didn’t have a “voice” or said their writing was “vague.” What did that even mean? We tried to figure it out together, these students and me. Whether an instructor has 50 college freshman or 130 12-year olds (as I currently do), he or she should be deeply invested in them both as students and as people. This is especially important in writing instruction.

### **Humanizing Pedagogy**

In fact, Paulo Freire would say that, “Any situation in which ‘A’ objectively exploits ‘B’ or hinders his and her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression. Such a situation in itself constitutes *violence*, even when sweetened by false generosity, because it interferes with the individual’s ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human” (55, emphasis mine). This holds true regardless of whether the oppression is intentional or unintentional; microaggressions are harmful even

when the person committing them is unaware of it. This is as true in regard to writing as anywhere else. Peter Elbow maintains that students must go “through conviction and self” rather than around or away from it (“Method” 123). Sally Gearhart decried that “the heart of most pedagogy is condescending and acutely expressive of the holier-than-thou mindset,” an “attitude of ‘let me help you, let me enlighten you, let me show you the way’” which is “devoid of respect and openness” (195). As Gearhart relates, there is a violence to rhetoric as a means of persuasion and equal measure of violence in the one-sided lecture, a classroom wherein an instructor is not prepared to learn and be changed alongside his or her students. That is the sweetness of the false generosity of the “liberator.” Grammar instruction, as with any and all other writing instruction, can be implemented with respect. Or, at least, instructors can teach in a way that acknowledges that they themselves once had to learn these things, too. The attitude that there are those who are “good enough” to come to writing and those who are not has to become obsolete. Remembering that they have “been there” themselves will serve to end mocking or disregard for where students are at in their own writing process. As Saunders said, writing instructors should offer nothing less than, “We say: I think I might be a writer. They say: Good for you. Proceed” (Saunders).

The composition instructor is a tightrope walker, performing a balancing act between juggling “people” and “world.” Part of the problem is the hierarchical mindset, the “either/or,” the binary. The dynamic of a classroom, disparate from the individualized setting of the Writing Center, can allow for students’ patterns of error to go unacknowledged, creating further disenfranchisement between students and instructor. Because of this, I am hyper aware when this is the case with students I encounter in the

Writing Center. Students aren't getting the specific help that they need, while some instructors believe that their students just don't want to learn. In my graduate composition classes, I heard graduate students complaining often about their students, once even having to be told to not curse loudly in the GA office about them. It may be the case that these students desperately need to approach the teachers, in good faith, for this help, but they may not always know how, or what they need to ask. The approachability of the instructor also factors in greatly. Freire says that, "The only effective instrument is a humanizing pedagogy in which the revolutionary leadership establishes a permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed" (68). The process is the dialogue, working with (not against) students on their papers is the dialogue, setting up grading expectations that stimulate re-vision—*that is the dialogue*. Their moments of excitement must be reflected instead of deflected (or deflated).

### **Différance**

It seems that standardization, especially when it comes to an act so embodied as writing, dismembers the very part of writing that makes it so engaging in the first place. If being affected is consubstantial with being human, isn't affected writing the aspect that differentiates what a person writes from what an artificial intelligent being could write? Maybe we don't need to "fix" all the differences because these are what make the writing meaningful and knowable.

What is called for is an embrace of difference, because it is in difference that meaning is made. Derrida, too, promoted a liminal space in which "play" was made possible, a "joyous affirmation of the play of the world..." (292). A child actually learns

volumes during play, and no one has studied this more than Lev Vygotsky. Play and dialogue, even in the classroom, lead to more risk-taking (and subsequently reward) for students. If more is explored, the student stretched further in the zones of proximal development, then more is necessarily learned. Referencing Vygotsky, Kenneth Bruffee calls writing, “displaced conversation” (8). Bruffee notes, “If thought is internalized public and social talk, then writing is internalized talk made public and social again. If thought is internalized conversation, then writing is internalized conversation re-externalized... Writing is at once both two steps away from conversation and a return to conversation” (7). Derrida intentionally points out the fact that *différance* is both different and deferred:

Henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no center, that the center could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the center had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play. This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse—provided we can agree on this word—that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. (Derrida 280)

Writing does not happen in the kairotic moment, but has a delay; this is why speech is held in higher regard than written language. Therefore, a “back and forth” in the classroom allows for a conversation which lecturing does not. It also allows for student differences to each add to the conversation, edify it, instead of get lost in the stream. What Derrida calls *différance* is how we come to know things, differentiate one from another. We discern things, and, consequently, revel in them, knowing them by their difference. I ask, sincerely, can we not do the same with writing?

Perhaps these missteps begin early in the writing instruction process; even now, teaching at the middle school level, I am finding our given textbook and curriculum to be

very heavy-handed on the “rules,” the standards. Active voice is preached from day one, with no room left for rhetorical occasion, a time when perhaps passive voice might be called for or needed. Things are one way, never the other, and these hypotactic narratives, I believe, are dangerous. While it may be true that 12 year olds hold a low capacity for ambiguities or cognitive dissonance, wiping them out altogether as a result seems cheap and wrong. Sadly, this is how we begin writing instruction. This is what I mean by “killing difference” in language, and it clearly starts long before experiences in higher education, where more learning could take place if not for all the “unlearning” that has to be done, too. More is learned through writing that takes risks. Further, the rhetorical situation, the kairotic moment, stirs up differences; these differences are preferable, and the exact point where meaning-making occurs.

Roland Barthes, in *The Neutral* described these differences as shimmers, “an inventory of shimmers, of nuances, of states, of changes” which require a “passion for difference” (77). Like the end-product closes the door to the process of the conversation, norming the writer dulls his or her sparkle. Michel Foucault has pointed out that normalization not only homogenizes, but simultaneously *marks* difference: “The power of normalization imposes homogeneity; but it individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialties and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another” (184). He continues, “It is easy to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces... all the shading of individual differences” (Foucault 184). This marked difference could be celebrated, all while still given instruction and “cultural capital,” by calling for writing that “blows minds” instead

of “stabilizing identities” (Davis 235). Of course, this goes against everything that makes the teaching of writing replicable, repeatable, and easy. There is no easy task in taking each student’s paper, holding it up to the light and turning it this way and that, polishing each in the way it requires; however, those looking for easy jobs should not enter the arena of composition instruction.

“Representational servitude,” as Diane Davis calls it, needs to be dismissed, “Not writing ‘for’ another purpose, not writing as mastery, but writing for writing’s sake... as a pressing of the limits of discourse” (235). Luce Irigaray calls this representational servitude the “economy of the Same” (64). Peter Elbow, in “A Method for Teaching Writing,” notes that “The notion of judging an essay solely on whether it contains conviction and a self will set some teachers’ teeth on edge: ‘This kid has plenty of *conviction* and *self* in his words—too much! What he needs is to reason carefully and write a decent sentence.’ This response is difficult to avoid. But maybe it’s necessary to go *through* conviction and self rather than away from them or around them” (123).

Perhaps the breakdown does not begin at the focal point of student, but within the erroneous foundational beliefs and goals of the institutions themselves. Nancy Grimm tells us that “persistent modernist beliefs hold us back” (3) One persistent modernist belief in the classroom is the idea of a noble objectivism: that, simply, a paper can be written by a human being, containing his assemblage of facts, and may remain objective. Journalists learn from day one that if they are writing and collecting facts, they are no longer able to be purely objective. Facts are objective; their assemblages are not.

One of the most frustrating aspects of Writing Center work is noticing a pattern where blame is placed versus where it should be: of course, student writing can cause



frustration, and of course, there is a sliding scale of skill level, but the majority of the time, I found blame placed most often on the student by ineffective instructors. Taking the time to learn about student differences, most especially in their writing, can make the difference between a student becoming a “life-long writer” and “hating writing.” Megan Fulwiler, associate professor of English at the College of St. Rose wrote in an article in *The Chronicle*:

Like many people who teach composition, I am routinely stopped in the hallway or at the copy machine by colleagues who bemoan the state of student writing (which is always perceived to be in perpetual decline). From the "invasion" of texting to plagiarism, student writing touches a nerve for almost every faculty member I encounter. Implicit in their complaints are deeply entrenched assumptions about writing that persist despite over half a century of research on how we write. First among these is the assumption that writing is primarily a set of discrete skills (correct spelling, knowledge of documentation styles, fluency with punctuation) that should have always already been mastered along a receding line of accountability. In addition, many faculty members seem to perceive writing as separate from—rather than integral to—the knowledge and discursive organization of a discipline. Finally, faculty complaints about student writing reveal how removed many teachers can be from their own writing process. How often have they faced a blinking cursor or blank page unsure of where to begin?

To return again to Nancy Grimm, the problem is clearly not solely the individual instructor's, but the “deeply entrenched assumptions” about writing that are the norms of the modernist institution that is higher education. This really makes sense when the framework of writing instruction itself is examined: “If a student is not writing well, the problem, in modernist understandings is presumed to lie with the student” (Grimm 2). Just as the best writing exposes limits, and bleeds past them, writing instruction is going to have to confront its limits as well. “Just as postmodernity pushes against the limits of modernist beliefs, so does writing center work expose the limits of existing literacy practices in higher education” (Grimm 2). Like Foucault points out, the marking of difference is produced by homogenization. What we do with that difference, how we

view it, *feel* about it, is what is in question. Do we celebrate it, or sand the edges down? “Within a modernist framework, writing centers will be chronically undervalued because they are expected to mask contradictions or contain differences” (Grimm 3). This undervaluing often comes in the form of shepherding of the basic writers and ESL students to the Writing Center’s fix-it shop, the place where they “belong.” I am of the mind that enough has been done to oppress, most especially through composition instruction, and it hasn’t worked; it’s time to take a different tactic. It is time to allow students who want to come to writing to have the confidence to think of themselves as writers. When those students say “I think I’m a writer,” writing instructors say “Proceed,”—not, “No, you’re *not good enough*.”

I felt like the students coming into the Writing Center were being underserved, and, like trying to scoop sand with a fork, my contributions were an exercise in futility. I could explain their assignments to them, help them formulate a topic or argument while visualizing their audience, lend perspective to their assertions, encourage them to reword or restructure for clarity—but I just couldn’t pick up all the pieces of their broken writer egos. The difference the instructors could have been making was to not unspokenly tell these students they “weren’t good enough.” I couldn’t make them believe they were, in fact, “good writers,” even though some of the things I was reading were incredible. One girl was writing her paper for Experimental Psychology on the frequency with which law enforcement shot and killed black suspects over white ones (and this was a full year before this very issue became the powder keg it turned out to be). Students were writing relevant, critical, original, fantastic papers, and I wanted to show an appreciation for some of the amazing writing I was seeing from students, because *no one else seemed to*

*be doing this*. Other than students in classes which make a Writing Center appointment required, the students who came into the Writing Center had been told they *needed* to be there, for some reason or another. They came in with their heads hung, and I knew the feeling. Was it that their ideas were, in fact, vague, or that their instructors weren't hearing them out? Several instances of papers with "Go to the Writing Center" as the *only* comment told me that the students who were coming to me in the Center were finding an inhibiting audience in their own professors.

Sometime during the year, I got really angry. I was tired of seeing real potential muted. A conversation with the Director of the Writing Center followed. We agreed that the students of the Writing Center deserved a place to have their work showcased and their voices heard. That day, we decided to create a journal for the Writing Center.

## METHODS

Perhaps it was the transactional nature of “academic writing” with which I was struggling, and the way it was affecting students I was trying to help. I was finding the term problematic. Bartholomae writes, in a follow-up to the groundbreaking

Bartholomae/Elbow debate:

Most discussions like the one we are about to have begin or end by fretting over the central term, academic writing. It is clear that this is not just a contested term, but a difficult one to use with any precision. If, for example, it means writing that is done by academics, or the writing that *passes as currency* within the academy, then it is a precise term only when it is loaded: academic writing—the unreadable created by the unspeakable; academic writing—stuffy, pedantic, *the price of a career*; academic writing—pure, muscular, lean, taut, the language of truth and reason; academic writing—language stripped of the false dressings of style and fashion, a tool for inquiry and critique. (Bartholomae 62, emphasis mine)

Even whilst arguing for academic writing to be a part of an undergraduate education, Bartholomae himself admits the transactional nature of it. Deep down, what I was attempting with the journal was subverting these transactions, creating our own. It was as if we had created our own “Monopoly money” within the Writing Center, trying to pass it off as the real thing. Like Grimm, I had good intentions.

Patricia Bizzell, in describing the transactional nature of academic writing when basic writers come to college, said that in abandoning home dialects they would “learn very little while concentrating on the language problem” and that we should “provide many opportunities in school for ‘expressive’ speaking and writing in the students’ home dialects as important ways of learning prior to, or perhaps instead of, practice in ‘transactional’ language using the Standard dialect” (16). In fact, Bizzell accurately depicts many students I met in the Writing Center, their frustrations, and our tendencies in how we perceive them:

If they experience the problem as difficulty shaping a paper—what I’ve called a problem of unfamiliarity with academic discourse conventions—they may not see their problem as having to do with writing at all. They may just complain, ‘I don’t know what the teacher wants.’ This kind of bewilderment increases if they begin to see their problem as a thinking problem—as I’ve suggested, this view often leads to a radical loss of self-confidence. When teachers see students’ problems in only one of these ways—when they see it as only a dialect problem, or only a thinking problem—they risk similarly narrow views of basic writers’ experiences. (Bizzell 17)

As mentioned previously, I was understanding how these students were feeling, even though I was not ESL/ELL, because I felt the same frustrations. Further, I truly believe, as college enrollment rises, the students with gaps in their educational foundation (mine coming from unaccredited Evangelical schooling) will rise. We have to find a way to work with those students, instead of segregating them all. They are becoming the majority. Even further, as Bizzell mentions, it is erroneous to believe it is a cognitive issue. These students may love to write, be very creative, and are simply frustrated they cannot do it the way “we” say to do it. The deeply unfair nature of this scenario is part of why I created the journal, and also part of why I didn’t bombard the students with rounds of drafts.

### **A Peer Tutor**

The idea of peer tutoring was a progressivism, in and of itself. Students coming to college were avoiding help and programs offered by the schools, because of who they were staffed by—professionals and instructors. It was an extension of the traditional classroom setting. If traditional instruction was failing these students, then what was needed was an alternative, which peer tutoring (in the form of writing centers) was able to offer. Nothing changed about the content of instruction, just the social context in which it was offered (Bruffee 4). If given space, students could teach each other; Bruffee’s

vision followed closely with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, because it was peers that Vygotsky believed would be able to reach down and pull struggling learners up within that proximal zone, as well as peers who could understand and relate.

Bruffee postulates that “what distinguishes human beings from other animals is our ability to participate in unending conversation” (4). Talking, communicating, *builds*, and the way to get students visiting the Writing Center—the ones who are availing themselves of an alternative form of help—to start thinking of their writing in terms of how to grow it, expand on it, epistemically, is to keep the conversation going. The way that I envisioned keeping this conversation going was by developing a journal that showcased student writing from the Writing Center. My hope was that the journal would get students thinking about writing as a way of knowing, of learning about the world. I hoped they would see the changes they made on their drafts during their consultations in the Writing Center, as well as subsequently, similarly to how their thoughts change as they learn. Most importantly, I hoped their invitations to be included in the journal would provide an open invitation to the “academic literacy club,” because I was frustrated they had been shut out of this community and labeled as “others.”

The inception of the journal began with a frustrated conversation between myself and the Writing Center Director. Initially we both found the same frustrations. In “The Idea of a Writing Center,” Stephen North delineated the common perceptions surrounding writing centers in academia: “In their minds, clearly, writers fall into three fairly distinct groups: the talented, the average, and the others; and the Writing Center's only logical *raison d'être* must be to handle those others—those, as the flyer proclaims, with ‘special problems’” (435). The more the Director and I talked, the more we also

acknowledged a growing resentment. The Writing Center had clearly become a place where ESL students camped out, yet we were seeing less and less evidence of the Writing Center being a place where we improved the writers, not the writing. North said that “in a writing center, the object is to make sure that writers, and not necessarily their texts, are what get changed by instruction... Our job is to produce better writers, not better writing” (438). We wanted recognition as a Writing Center, and I wanted recognition for the students, too. I wanted to put their writing “in everyone's face.” I wanted to hold it up in defiance of all the perceptions surrounding the Center, the students, and their writing. I knew full well that the students were capable of important, moving, eloquent writing and I wanted them and everyone else to know it, too. We did not want the Writing Center to continue to be perceived as the “fix-it shop.”

The truth is I was getting burned out. The ebb and flow of the semester, the hours and hours in the Center with nothing to do in the beginning, followed by the crushing rush which we could never fully accommodate at the end of the semester was unfulfilling to me. As a Writing Center, we insisted that we were not just an editing service, but in every way our actions spoke otherwise. I was feeling a machinelike churning imperative to push out one perfect paper after another, ceaselessly. I was a cog. I wanted to do more.

Ultimately, I suppose I was trying to take a page out of Stephen North's playbook and his “Idea of a Writing Center” as a place that attempts to fix cracks in the writing process. North says, “In axiom form, it goes like this: Our job is to produce better writers, not better writing” (438). Through repeated encounters with dejected students who did not consider themselves to be writers or had internalized the idea that they were not “good” at it, I became more and more convinced these cracks in the process were in

fact crises of confidence. I turned to Mina Shaughnessy and her explanation of mismanaged complexity to support my assumptions. Shaughnessy delineates that there are three ways in which complexity might be mismanaged during the writing process: one is an unfamiliarity with written English language patterns (as became increasingly clear by the slower pace and special problem sets surrounding the ESL students), two is little exposure to the writing process, and three, students' self-conception in an academic setting (their perception of personal agency or subjectivity). Aside from the special problems that result from the ESL instruction, Shaughnessy proposes that the answers to the other two pedagogical views are that the students should begin to "behave as writers" and that "confidence is essential to the writing act" (Shaughnessy 73). These ideas formed the basis of my conception of the need for the Writing Center journal.

Through this project, I was undertaking a rudimentary exploration of positive reinforcement in regard to the writing process. I have felt for some time that all of our methods revolving around writing instruction skew towards a negative: grammar standards, corrections, and all the ways students' writing can *improve*. Not all professors, but too many, forget the simple mention of what the student is doing right. On the other hand, I oftentimes felt like a silly cheerleader in the Writing Center, the "You *are* a writer!" girl.

I wanted to see if students' confidence could be improved and if students would begin to behave more like writers if I provided an open invitation into the "academic literacy club." Figure 1 below is a screenshot showing the layout of *bold*.



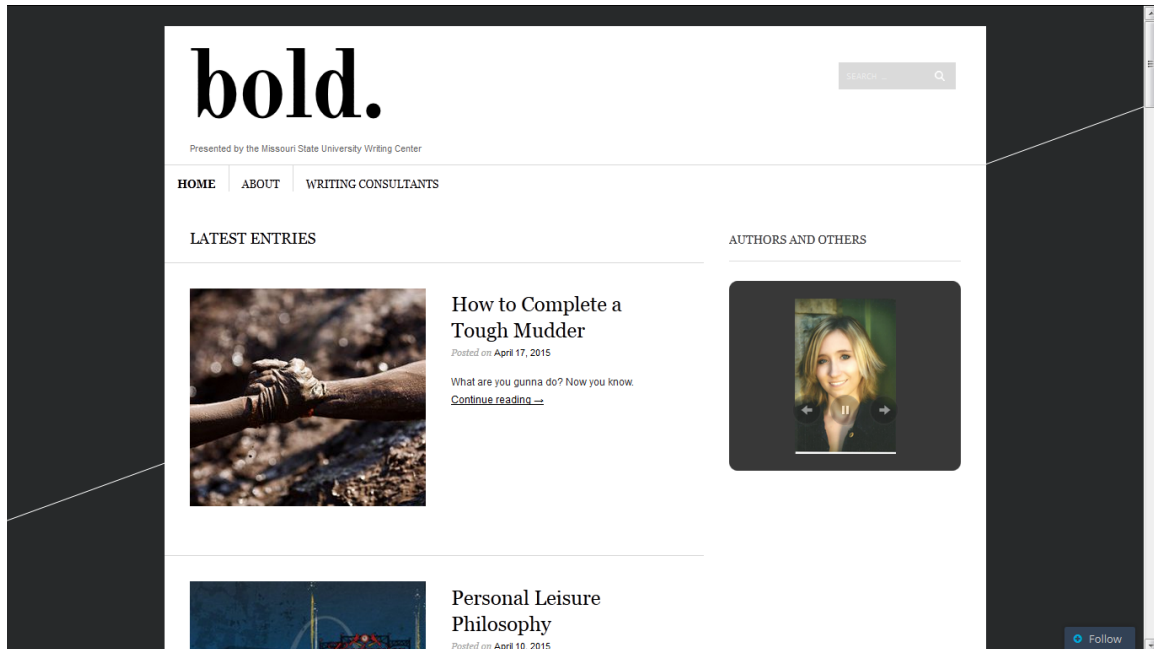


Figure 1. *bold.* Screenshot 1

The experiment was to involve students I was helping in the Writing Center. I wanted to find out if being published in a journal increased their confidence enough that they would spend more time working on their writing. The journal I created would be housed online and exist for the sole purpose of displaying students' work. I truly began to believe if I created the journal and called myself its editor that I would have a bigger, more sweeping impact than I was having as a tutor. I was speaking truth to power by attempting to call my own out of thin air.

This is how I began my second year working for the Writing Center. I was insistent on this project, and spent part of the summer pinning down the Director and getting him to agree to it. Let me be frank when I say that, though I very much appreciated his greenlight and support, the work behind this project was entirely my own.

The first week of the semester, we met to discuss details about the journal, such as its design, its function, its role in the Writing Center, and a plan of action for its

implementation. We concluded the meeting with the next steps: I would draft both a letter of request which would be emailed to the students we wished to publish, as well as a form to keep in the Writing Center which the consultants could fill out when they wanted to suggest a particular piece of student writing for submission to the journal. I drafted these form letters and presented them along with our vision for the journal at the first Writing Center meeting of the semester in 2014. Articulating and presenting this vision took the form of simply telling the other writing consultants about the idea and conversations the Director and I had. Below, in Figure 2, is another screenshot of the *bold* layout.

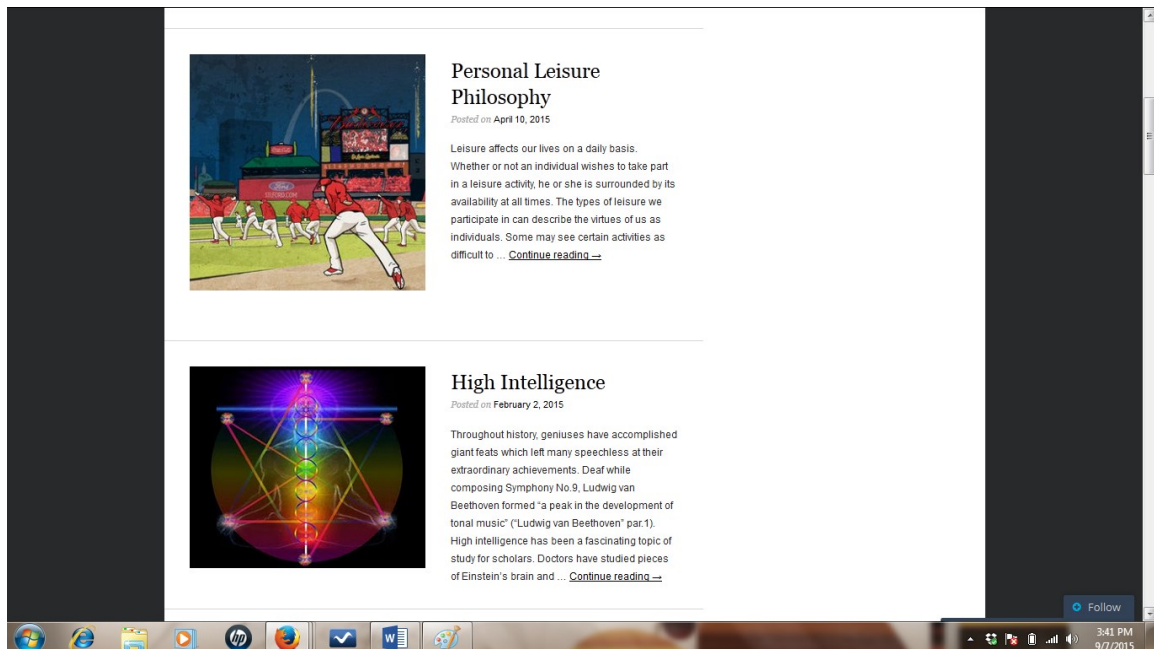


Figure 2. *bold*. Screenshot 2

I decided to have a “nomination form” for the consultants because it seemed to make this process appear more formal to the students. I also wanted the consultants to pick and choose what they submitted. I may have been basing this idea on my own

experiences the year prior, because I definitely had an idea in mind of the kind of papers I was asking for; I had seen a handful that fit the previous year, and assumed the new consultants would see them, too. In Figure 3 below is a screenshot from *bold*.

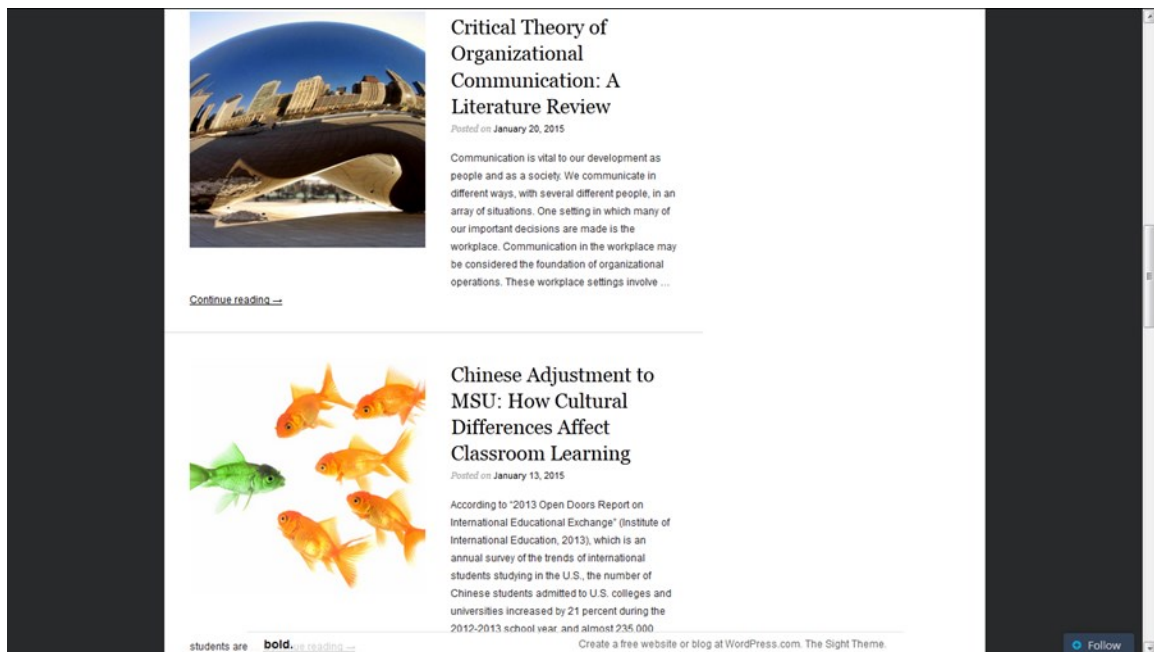


Figure 3. *bold*. Screenshot 3

However, I realize that my conception of the kind of papers I was asking for and theirs may have been totally different. I was seeking consultant buy-in, and hoped that including them in the posts (with what they felt was strong in the submissions and their own photos beneath the authors') would incite them to support the journal. This was also to emphasize that the journal was selective. I didn't consider a form for the students to self-select because I knew not every paper coming through the Writing Center would meet the criteria.

The form letter I created was in the form of a Congratulations email soliciting the student's paper for the journal. In it, I referenced his or her specific paper, the actual

consultant the student met with, and made mention of why his or her paper was chosen. In the form letter, I requested 1) a copy of the paper in a Word document, 2) an author picture, and 3) a brief bio (Appendix A).

The response was positive, with the consultants appearing excited about the journal and its reasons for inception. Everyone seemed to be on board. Several of them remarked what a good idea the journal was. Figure 4 is a screenshot displaying the layout of the WordPress.

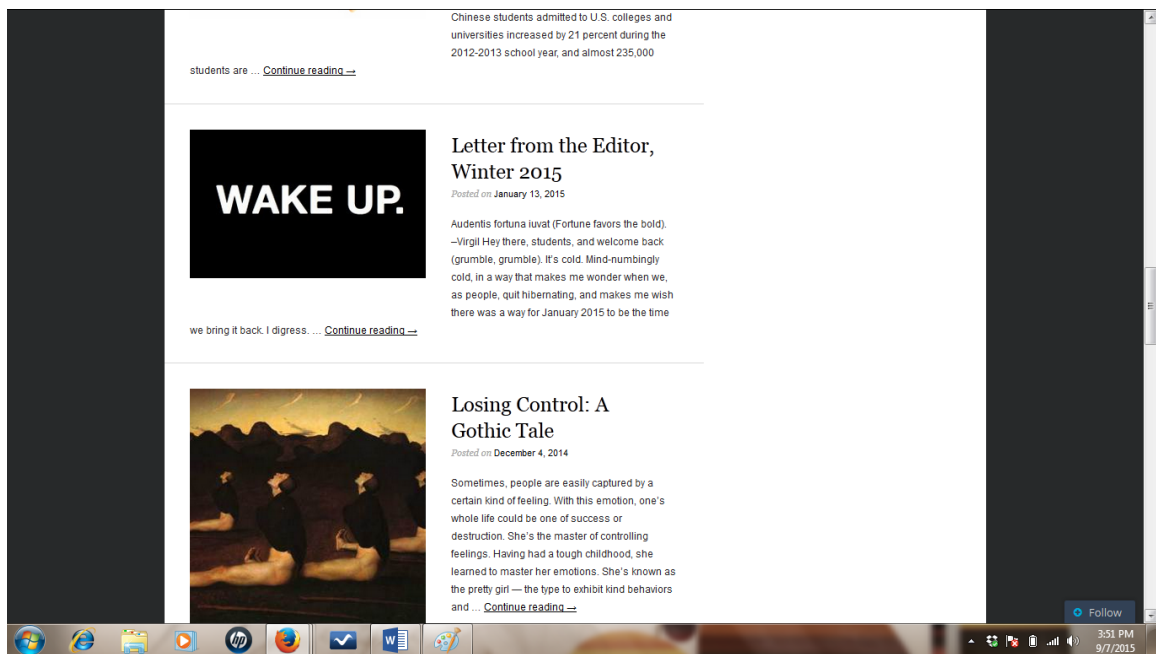


Figure 4. *bold*. Screenshot 4

Next, the Director contacted the office of Web and New Media on our campus and got the domain set up. Initially we thought it would be a good idea to host the journal with the missouristate.edu URL because we felt it would lend legitimacy to the site. The Director left me to "play around with it" and I quickly found that I had no real control over the way the site looked or how it functioned. I could not change the background

picture from the generic picture of a walkway on campus to our journal's name and header page. Below is another example of the site in Figure 5.

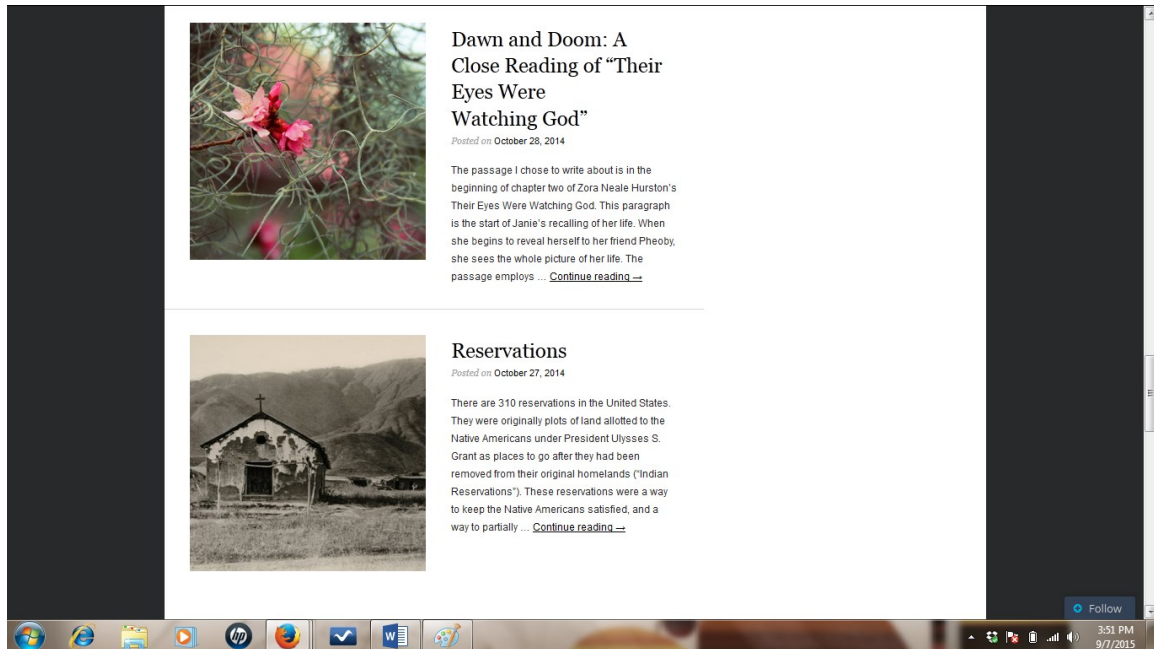


Figure 5. *bold*. Screenshot 5

I could not change the look of the posts to appear more as entries instead of groups of hyperlinks. More than this, I was especially put off by the inclusion of the word blog in the URL. I was aware of the connotations of the word “blog” versus “journal.” I was aiming for legitimacy; not just anyone can be published. I wanted the students to see the journal as selective, as a legitimate, selective part of the “academic literacy club.”

Right away, the Writing Center Director and I both realized that the aesthetic of the journal was important to us. In meeting, we had spent some time looking at other online journals associated with other universities, and found that a clean, modern, white-space filled page spelled coherency and attracted the eye; it was easy to read. There was a crispness of simple black font atop lots of white page which seemed to lend immediacy

and importance to the words themselves. Since distractions were minimized, the words were the only thing for the reader to focus on and be drawn in.

This is the aesthetic we aspired to with our journal as well. I decided to name the journal *bold* which was both an aesthetic play on the word (formatted in italics—perhaps I was making a comment on how “writing” takes place now: with a word processor, and commenting on the specific frustration of formatting which goes along with it) as well as a descriptor of the kind of writing we were seeking.

On September 14, 2014, I sent an email to the office of Web and New Media, the office which had created and authorized our domain name. Since I could see that the publishing platform was a Web Press, I asked two questions: number one, could we customize the URL to be the name of the journal instead of including the word blog, and number two, did we have control over the look of the page? In Figure 6 below is an example of the aesthetic of the *bold* page in WordPress.

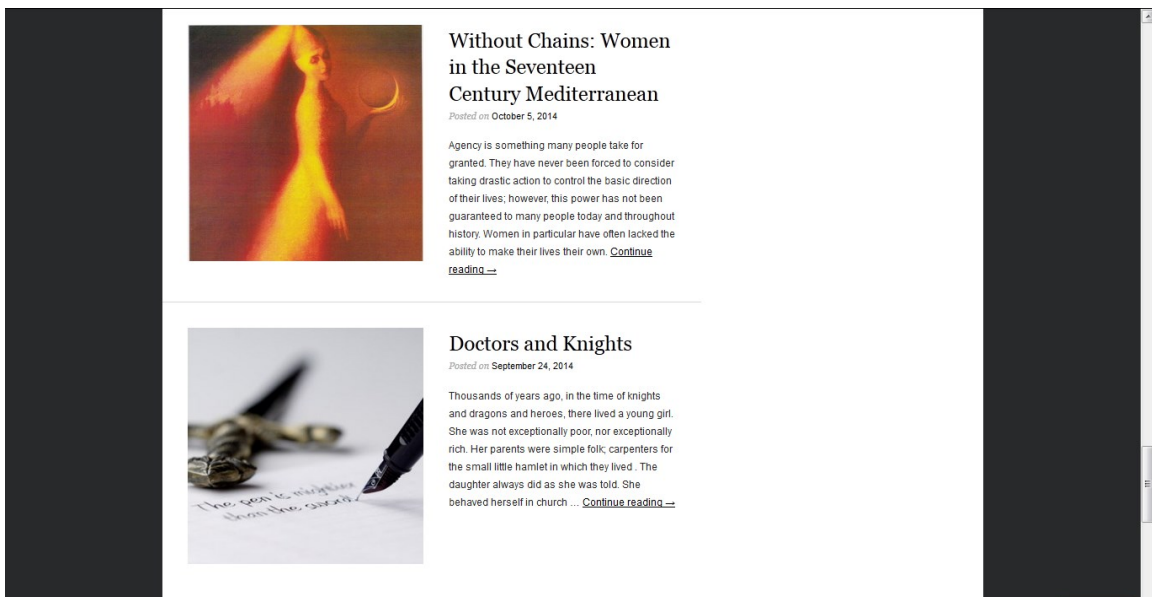


Figure 6. *bold*. Screenshot 6

A screenshot of the MSU Web Press template is below in Figure 7.

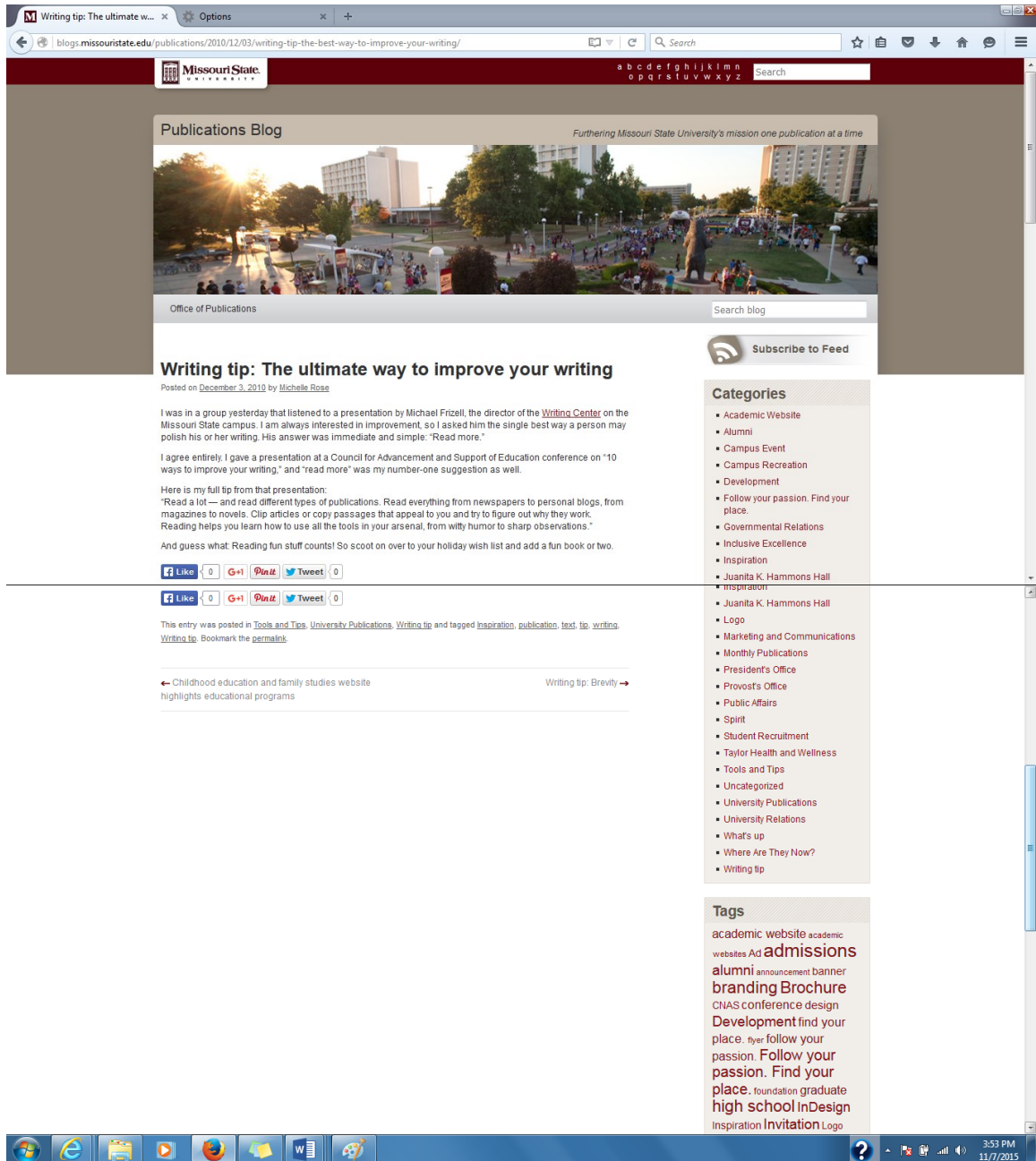


Figure 7. MSU Web Press Template

The next day, I did receive an email back from the New Media Producer. He informed the Writing Center Director (who was copied on the email) and I that we did not have the capability to customize the URL, and that we also were not able to change the Web Press theme from its designated Missouri State theme. The email from the New Media Producer did say that we could change the imagery, layout, and widgets, but I had not found that to be true while trying to customize it myself. Frankly, trying to fit within the parameters which Missouri State had applied to its Web Press theme was proving to be too restrictive.

As a result of this conversation, the Director and I reevaluated the hosting platform for the online journal. Since we both weren't sure what the journal would look like or how it would work on the Missouri State domain, he kept the option open to move our journal to another host not associated with Missouri State. Since we were having this trouble and not able to achieve the functionality within Missouri State's domain, we decided to move the journal to our own hosted WordPress. I did some research into the WordPress platform, and found out that we could pay \$18 a year for a URL redirect in order to call it "boldjournal.org." With that, *bold* was born.

### **A Credential**

Every year, the proliferation of small presses and increasing number of tables at AWP was causing me to seriously question the very idea of publishing itself: How did these presses form? Has the internet changed publishing drastically and permanently? Why can't I do this, too? I really liked a few university-run platforms I had seen, namely *Kiosk*, an "award-winning publication of student fiction, poetry, and art compiled and



designed by a staff of literature and design students” founded in 1989 in the English department of KU’s main campus in Lawrence, as well as the online literary journal also at KU, *The Siren*. While both formats publish fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, their content differs. *Gravel* “produced by the MFA program in creative writing at the University of Arkansas at Monticello” was also a point of inspiration, publishing poetry, flash prose, creative nonfiction, fiction, and multimedia in an online format.

One thing these journals had was a collaboration on their respective campuses between the creative departments. The art department was heavily represented within these journals, especially *Gravel* and *Kiosk*. Though I desperately wanted this for our Writing Center journal, a few things factored into this just not happening for *bold*. First, it was mainly me who created, designed and started the journal. I had no idea how to do this, and certainly had no experience with such an endeavor. Second, since the Writing Center did not advise or work with students in the art departments, we really had no reason to include them in the journal for anything other than aesthetics. The idea, going in, was that the journal would represent work of students who visited the Writing Center, and be presented as an artifact of that collaboration—a “look what we can do.” Even though it would have “looked cool” to use art/photography/etc (and I still wish I had figured out how), I didn’t know how to justify it, or make it happen if I did.

I was slowly figuring out how to use WordPress, and now almost had the opposite of the problem we originally had with the Missouri State domain. I had so much functionality at my fingertips that it took some time exploring to get used to it. I now had the capability, for instance, to add additional pages to the site, so I added one that contained our mission statement and another with the pictures and first names of the

consultants who worked in the Writing Center. The Director asked all of the consultants to submit pictures of themselves for the Writing Center page on Missouri State's site (in order to put a face to the name) and I wanted to keep that continuity with the journal.

On September 10th of the fall semester, a Writing Center consultant sent me an email recommending a student she had consulted and worked with in the Center. The student's paper was the first submission to the journal. Since I had been checking the Writing Center for filled-out forms at least twice a week, I was ready to get started; I wanted to put some content up, since the site was ready to go. In Figure 8 below is a screenshot of a post in *bold*.

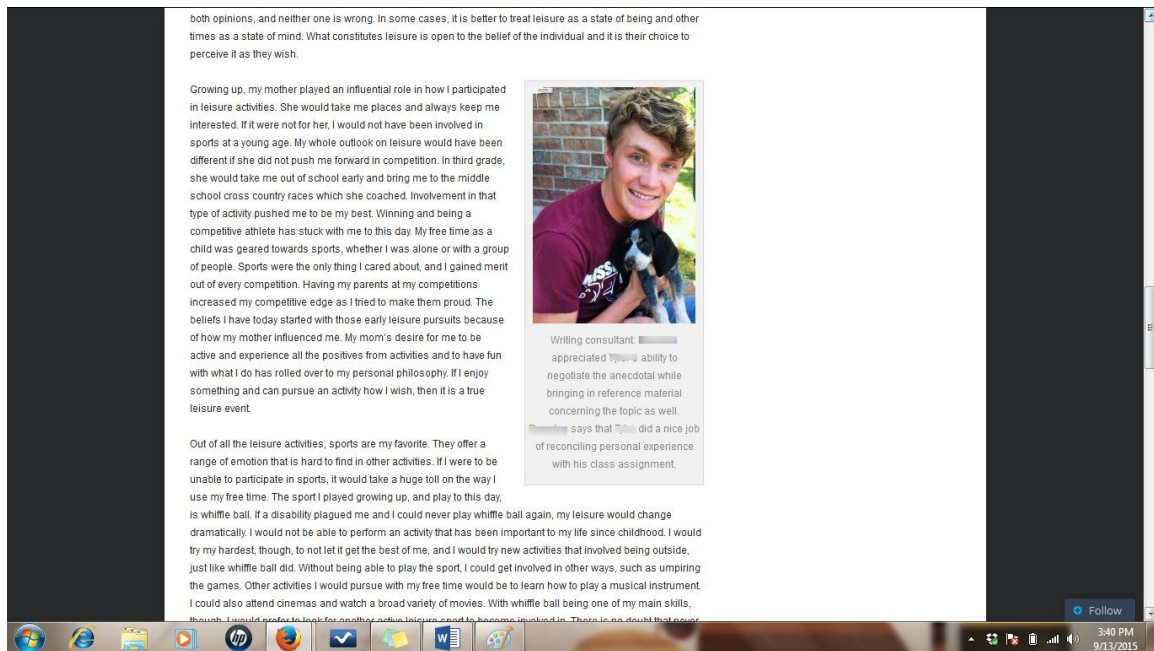


Figure 8. *bold*. Screenshot 7

The consultant didn't fill out the form I made (they apparently got lost right away), but she remembered the project and sent me an email with the student's

information. She included the student's email address and I emailed him with the "Congratulations" form letter I had written (Appendix A).

I think my decision to ask for a photo and a short bio along with the paper submission came from the idea that I was trying to humanize these writers. Though I know it's unfair to say that instructors dehumanize their students, I do think the longer we stare at a paper, the more we tend to forget about the person who wrote it. I wanted reminders of the person who wrote the piece all over the page. I wanted it to be apparent in their words, and the person reading to be able to look at the writer's bio and picture, and think, "Yeah, this sounds like something he or she would write." Since the most enjoyable writing I would read in the Writing Center came from the type of writing Elbow said was a "self revealed in words" ("Method" 119), I wanted to put the focus on the person and not just the product, the "writer and not the writing," as North said (438).

I included the student author's photo and bio at the top, followed underneath with a picture of the consultant who worked with him or her on the paper and submitted his or her paper to the journal. I included the consultants' photos to illustrate the idea that the work being done in the Writing Center was a collaboration of sorts. I also had little to give the consultants in return for sending me submissions, so I wanted to acknowledge them within the posts, as they had helped with the papers. Instead of a statement that the student writers needed "help," I saw it as photographic evidence of peer tutoring as a collaboration.

If not already apparent, it was crucial to this project that the students I contacted from the Writing Center believed this publishing endeavor to be legitimate. Several aspects of this came into play with how I set the journal up, as a result. For instance, this

is why the subject line in the Congratulations email I sent out was “Journal Publication.” Changing the URL from a “.wordpress.com” to “boldjournal.org” was first and foremost. This act alone very much reinforced the rhetorical idea of “naming” and changing the perceptions of something by giving it a new name—a WordPress transformed into a publishing format, at least in the students’ eyes.

The way I structured the “acceptance” letter also was an attempt to convey this idea. In the letter, I wrote that their consultant “submitted” them and that their “piece stood out from the rest and fit these specifications nicely.” These rhetorical strategies were attempting to mimic those of the “academic literacy club.” Figure 9 below is another example of a post within *bold*.

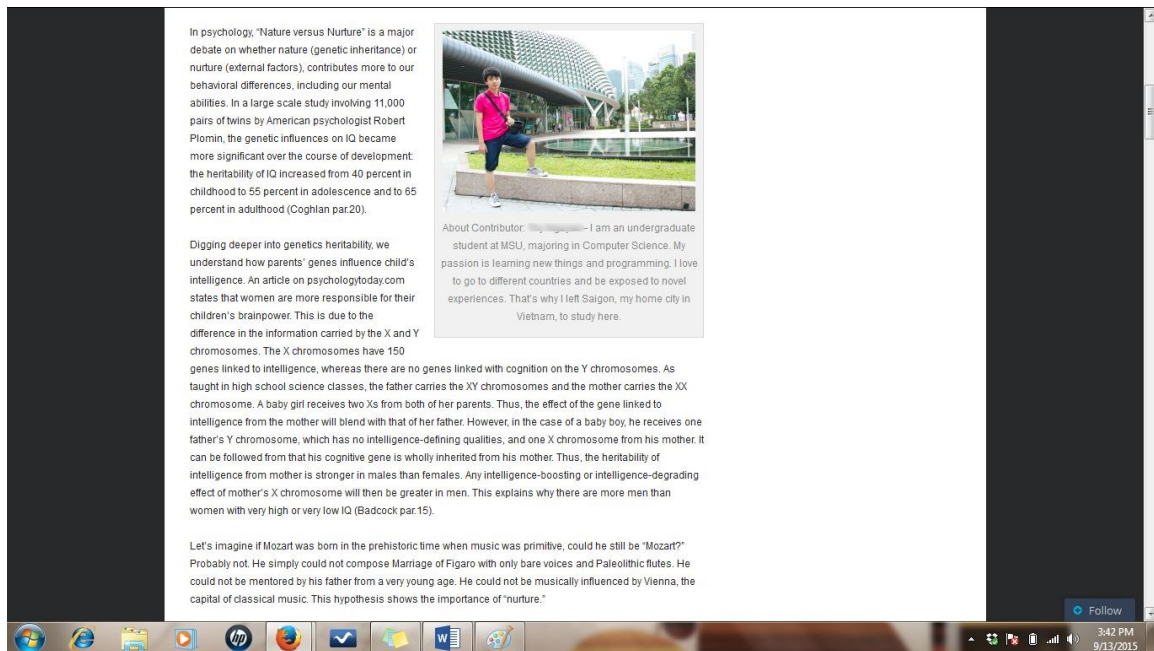


Figure 9. *bold*. Screenshot 8

## Patterns

One of my intended goals for the journal was to find a way to help students from the Writing Center begin to view their work as *valuable, buildable, and not something to be thrown away* when it is “done.” I wanted them to begin to see the writing process as never “done.” A successful and strong writing practice is built as a series of conversations over time. As far as the scope of this project went, my intention was to utilize the peer tutors, already staffed by the Writing Center, as ongoing writing coaches. In Figure 10 below is another example post.

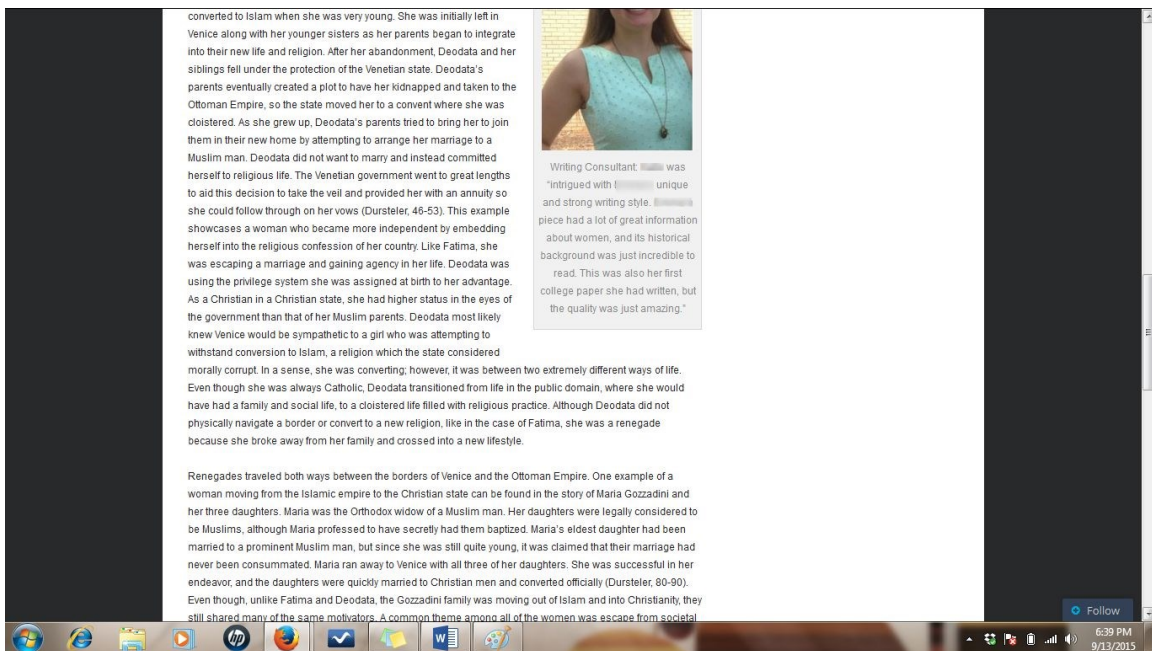


Figure 10. *bold*. Screenshot 9

The way to fight the tendency of students to utilize the Writing Center as a one-off editing service for their academic assignments (I believed) was to have the consultants give their own “assignments” or project goals (adoptive writing teachers). For instance, when I would be working with a freshman on a Project Four paper and he or she

needed to be doing more research, we would discuss specific phraseology and research strategies, then I would give him or her a date to have the paper updated and have him/her make another appointment.

This worked wonderfully, and kept the student from simply “using” me to “fix” their paper. Similarly, when the consultants would send me a student’s email to solicit a paper they felt was interesting, unique, or strong, I had hoped that they would work with that student through multiple drafts to get the piece ready for the journal. This was not something I asked of the consultants, but something that they indeed ended up doing on their own. This really impressed me, and showed that many consultants working in the Writing Center come to embrace writing as a process, almost automatically. In Figure 11 below is a post a student submitted for his informative research paper.

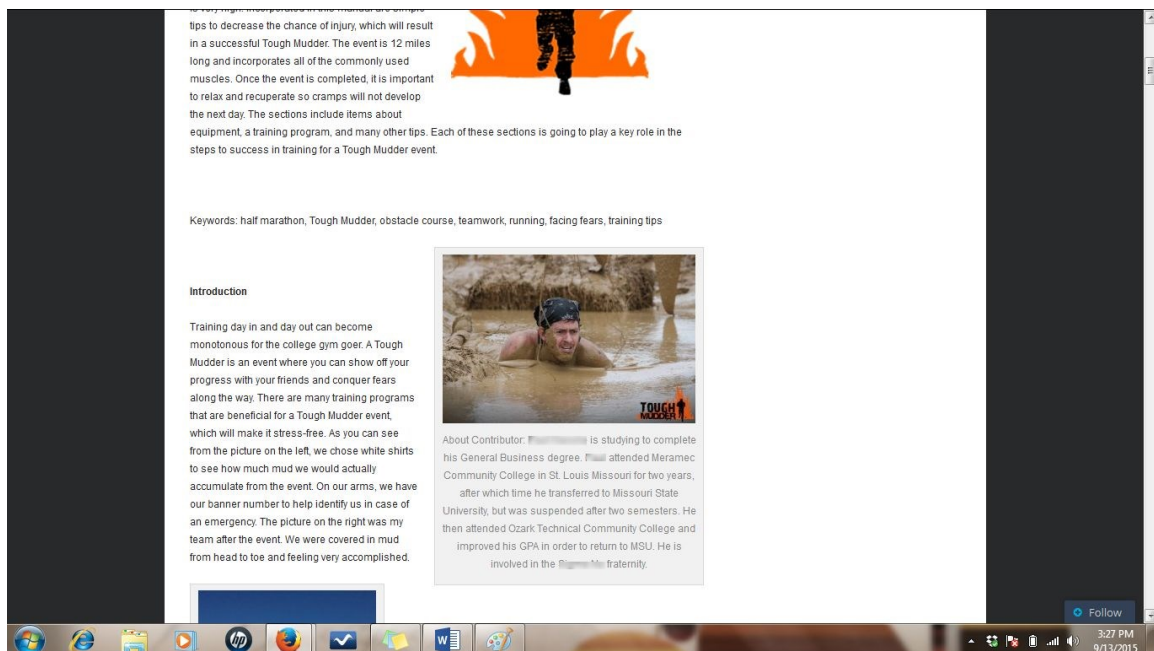


Figure 11. *bold*. Screenshot 10

Unfortunately, this didn't happen in every case. In fact, I may have overestimated consultant buy-in when I first presented the idea. Clearly, I was relying on the consultants to send me the students' info and recommendations, and this was a big reason they came sparingly. I honestly don't know if I gave the consultants enough (or any) reason to send them over. I would have ideally liked to have been able to choose from a veritable slush pile of student papers, but I had to put up all the submissions the consultants sent me, if we were to have any content on the site at all. This became an issue on one paper, which was borderline unacceptable, I felt, because I had to change it so much for syntax issues. Figure 12 below is an example of a post in *bold*.

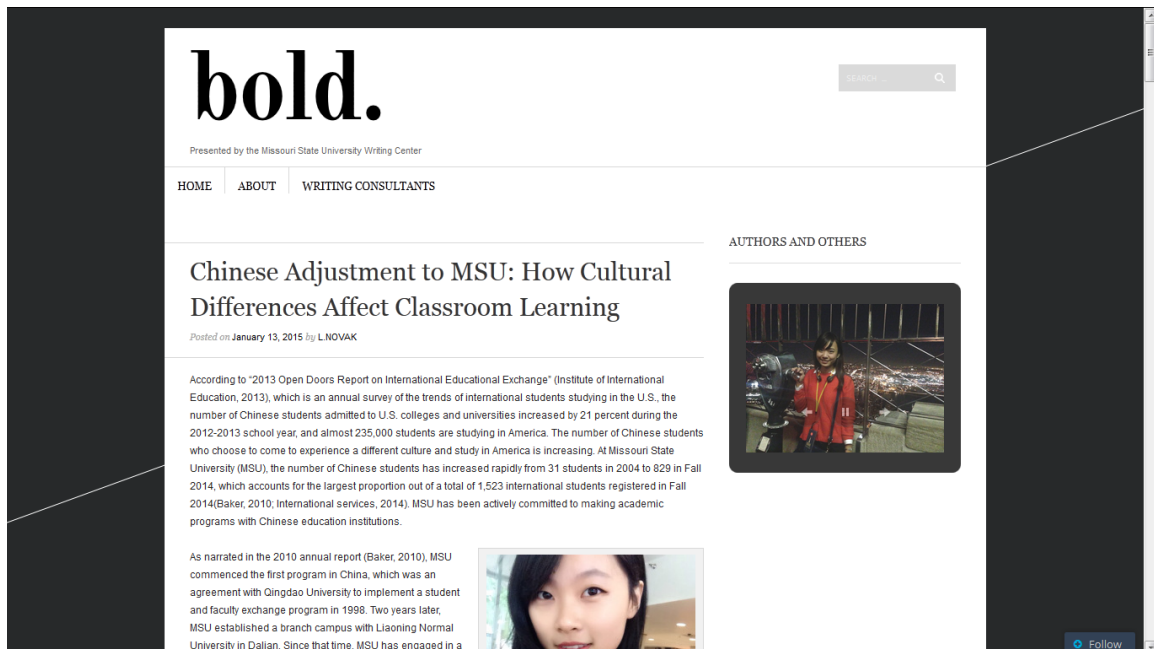


Figure 12. *bold*. Screenshot 11

Obviously, to be featured in the journal, the student contributor had to make an appointment in the Writing Center and consult with a writing consultant. I wanted to feature different styles of writing, from personal statements, to research papers, to written

speeches. Because the journal was an afterthought, I don't know that any students made an appointment specifically to get into it. I had assumed that since the student had already worked with a writing consultant, by the time the paper reached me it would at least be a second draft. Figure 13 is an example of a post in *bold*.

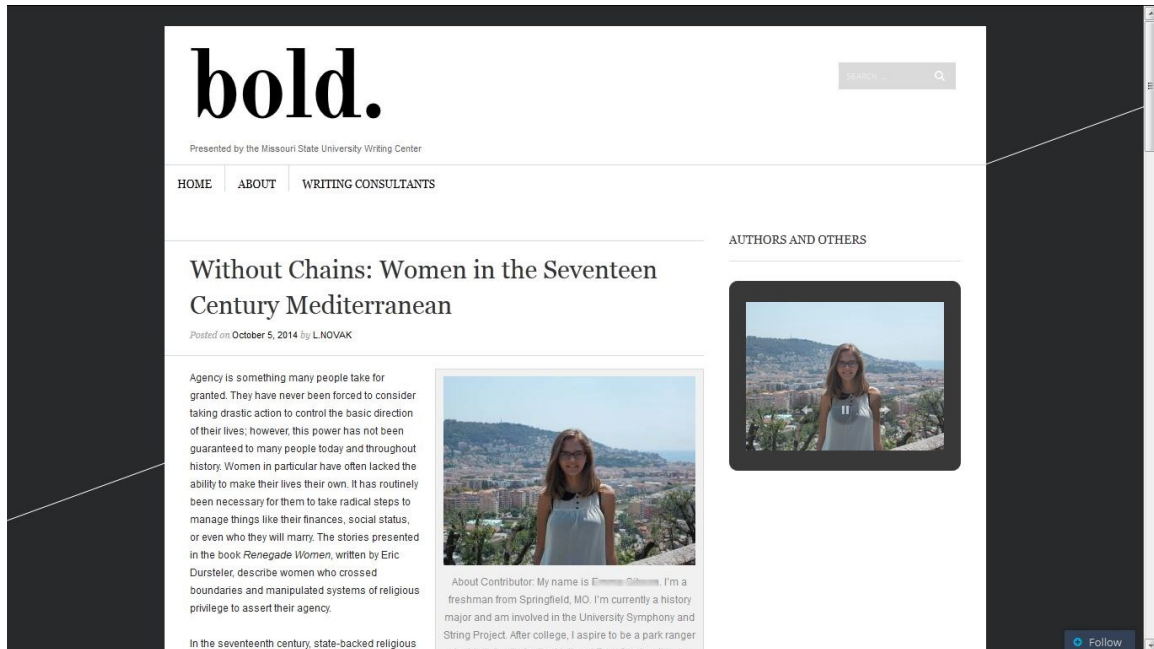


Figure 13. *bold*. Screenshot 12

Because of that, I had ideally hoped to only make surface or line edits on the paper (eliminate redundancies, clean up punctuation, etc.) as needed. What I was hoping to avoid were the higher order concerns, such as organization and clarity. I definitely did not want to re-appropriate the students' text as my own, and was hopeful that for the most part the higher order concerns (HOCs) would have been addressed before, during, and after the Writing Center consultation.



Though ideally, I would have liked to have worked with the student through several drafts of his or her paper, in the end the product was a looming deadline. If I did not put up something on the page as a result, it looked like nothing was being done. There was nothing to show for all the hard work. This is the maddeningly familiar battle between writing as a product and writing as a process—the process can go on forever, and eventually a person just wants a product to show for it. Based on the pressure I felt to produce some content, I just opted to do the editing; I also felt like this fit within the realm of my self-appointed title as “editor.” Figure 14 below is a screenshot of a creative writing submission by a student.

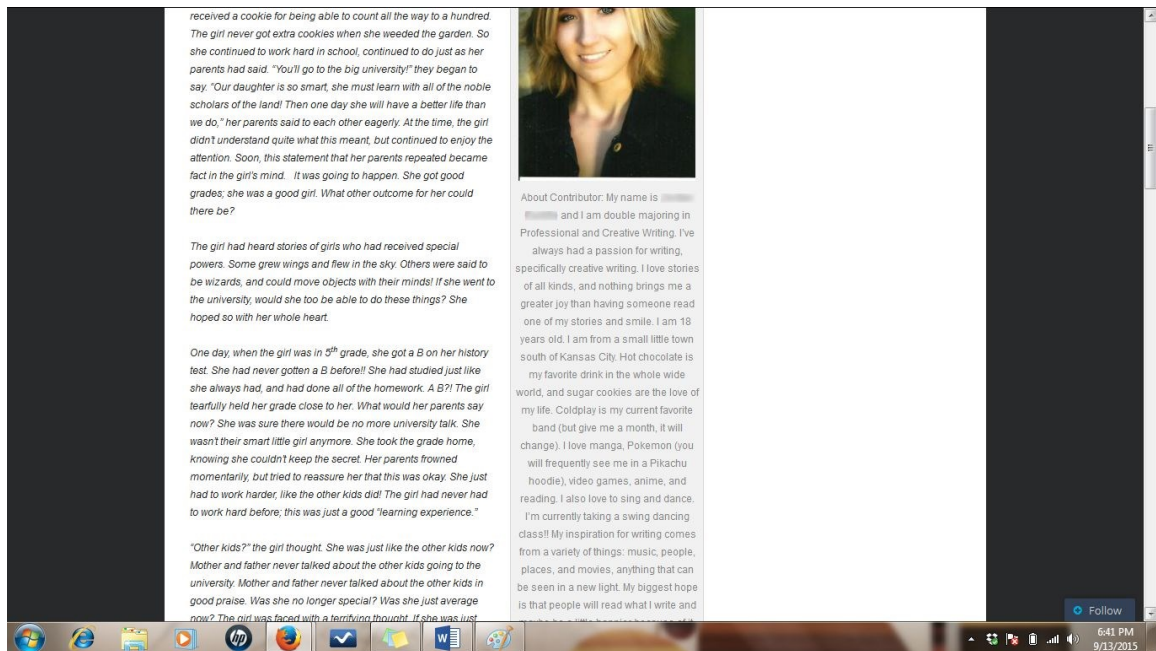


Figure 14. *bold*. Screenshot 13

## Confidence

I once heard that, “if you write, you are a writer” (or, “...paint ...a painter,” etc.).

A goal of this project was to remove the barriers to entry to a writing profession, a

writing career, or the very idea of being “a writer.” Working at the Writing Center, I grew to very much resent the idea that a person can be “not good enough” at the thing that he or she does or likes to do. It seems in higher education, there is a need to qualify those who possess enough skills to master their trade; however, for writers, I genuinely believe these barriers to entry needed to be removed, as I truly saw potential in students, even if they needed more practice and “skills training” with writing. To put it more simply, I believed even the most basic of writers has the potential to surprise us, to become the next \_\_\_\_\_ whomever.

As far as my little journal experiment goes, I do believe it “worked,” that it gave all 11 of these students a confidence, a message that something they had written had served a purpose beyond the assignment for which it had been written. I believe being included in the journal told each of them, hopefully in the way he or she needed to hear it, that his or her writing was valuable, desired, and told him/her in as many words to “keep going,” to *keep writing*.

## **Feedback**

I received incredible papers that year for my project/flagship journal. I received 11 submissions of student work nominated by seven different consultants, which is exactly how many pieces I published. The pieces ranged from “Without Chains: Women in the Seventeenth Century Mediterranean” to “Dawn and Doom: A Close Reading of ‘Their Eyes Were Watching God.’” The former, a review of the book *Renegade Women*, relayed:

The stories presented in *Renegade Women* describe women who crossed boundaries and manipulated systems of religious privilege to assert their agency.

They securely grabbed control of their lives by sacrificing the familiarity of their homelands and leaping into an unknown culture and religion. These women broke through the restraints traditionally placed on the social and physical mobility of the female gender. This book highlights the strength and ingenuity of a demographic that is often hidden from view in studies of the seventeenth century. It explains the broad themes of religion, privilege, and society through a unique and specific lens.

There were times I emailed students asking for their papers, but got no response. My next step was to send a follow-up email, asking once again for the paper (Appendix B). Probably 1/3 of the papers I received came from the second attempt to collect them, with varied apologies about finals, etc.

It was nice to see that most of these students did not respond, not out of disinterest, but because of being busy students! There were a handful, though, who simply did not respond.

Another writer submitted her essay on Indian reservations, which denoted a touch of guilt at being selected for a scholarship based solely on (what she believed) her American Indian background. This same writer submitted a somewhat sarcastic bio, but I felt like it served to relay more about her as a person:

About Contributor: [REDACTED] was born in the 14th most inhabitable place in the world, Springfield, Missouri, where she continues to reside to this day. She plans on declaring a major in psychology at MSU within the next week. She has ethnic ties to the Oglala Sioux, and used their miserable history to persuade the school to give her the Multicultural Leadership Scholarship. In the future, [REDACTED] plans to repay her people, and work for their betterment, although she has yet to work out specific details. She has no hobbies to speak of, and spends most of her time wishing that she was at school, or [REDACTED] where she works. The only regret in life that [REDACTED] has is not being born in 1975, so she could have been a horrible teenage Nirvana fan when it was socially acceptable.

This writer also submitted a picture of Nirvana as her author photo, but I kept it, because this is the sort of personality of these writers I was hoping to convey. I wanted to humanize them.

One of the submissions I struggled with most was from an ELL student: it was a story, somewhat in the Gothic vein, about a girl and her spiral into apathy and depression. It was clearly at least somewhat of an autobiographical representation, but it was the fact that I had to rearrange so many of the sentences to make them clear and readable that had me concerned with posting it. I was concerned that it wasn't, after my changes, an accurate reflection of her writing. I was worried that she would be upset at how much I altered. I was very concerned with being careful to not re-appropriate these students' texts and, especially, ideas. So, as an editor, it became problematic when I would have to change things for syntax and hope they didn't lose or change meaning. I did end up making lots of changes relating to sentence structure, as a result of poor syntax. While the author had demonstrated introspection, reflection, and even creativity, I was judging her writing as not acceptable based on the very things I was attempting to combat; I debated whether or not to include it. I talked with the Director and he told me to use my best judgement. I relayed that my hope was to show, with the journal, the best side of the Writing Center, the superb writing that came out of it as a result of the consultations. The issue was really that the piece felt "trite" and was certainly poorly written, in spite of the fact that the student actually revised it several times. I felt a conflict in myself, because on the one hand, I deeply believed it helped the ESL student to write the story and go through the process of revising it; I just also felt as if it simply wasn't very good. At the time, I blamed it on her writing and its lack of skill, but what I was really struggling with were the inconsistencies within myself.

IRB approval was not required for this project, as it was not determined to meet the IRB definition for "research" (Appendix C).

## RESULTS

To contextualize and reiterate Shaughnessy, what I was trying to uncover with my research and journal project was whether the relationship between internalized confidence as a writer and practice with writing was dually reinforced. Is there a symbiotic relationship between the two? What effect do positive and negative reinforcements have on students' intrinsic motivation to write? Which comes first in the chicken and egg scenario: is it more important to get students to enjoy writing, then teach mechanics, or teach it and hope for the best? As it applied to this study, I found that the students I worked with in the Writing Center did indeed need more grammar instruction, definitely needed more writing practice, but I hoped to spur that on by edifying their writer egos as a result of being selected to appear in the journal.

I remembered a student who hailed from St. Louis, the one who easily fit the bill of “basic writer,” the one I wondered how she even found herself at my academic institution. She wrote like she talked—full of colloquialisms and BEV. I was not so much judging her as wondering how exactly it happened that she got so far behind. In *Kairos*, a study done on “The Converging Literacies Center” by Shannon Carter and Donna Dunbar-Odom mentions that “The work of Deborah Brandt clearly reveals how class as well as race, ethnicity, and gender work against students who come to school ‘behind’ their wealthier peers, not because of failures of intellect, of course, but because of failure to own the means to achieve success as it is measured in the academy.” For a while before my time as consultant in the Writing Center, I had felt like my persona in the academy, and “academic voice” was not representative of me, and with this student, as

well as others, I saw clearly it was failing to *speak* for, to represent her, too. In “Approaching the Paideia” by Ralph Wahlstrom, Wahlstrom makes mention of Richard Lantham’s *The Electronic Word*, a “rhetorical paideia.” Wahlstrom “was excited by Lantham’s work and drew heavily upon his optimistic blending of the senses and writing in developing scholarship.” Wahlstrom says that “students were ready for just this kind of writing. They were the products of a media-heavy culture in which the senses are constantly bombarded with sound, image, and motion.” This could account for the feeling I was getting, that texts in the traditional sense were no longer holding students’ attention. We weren’t speaking their language. Despite fears with the journal, that it appeared informal in its format, this is perhaps a reason it was, in fact, better to present the journal in a digital format. It had the share-ability and function to be more accessible to students.

I began to notice a pattern that these students “bought” it, this idea that they were “real writers.” I was not just “Lindsey Novak,” I was “Editor,” and this was not just tutoring, but an opportunity:

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Thursday, November 20, 2014 4:43 PM  
To: Novak, Lindsey L  
Subject: Re: Journal Publication Request

Hi Lindsey  
I am sorry about being so late to respond.  
I have been busy with my study and work.  
Thank you for being interested in my paper.  
I will do it in this week!  
Thank you!  
Best regards,  
[REDACTED]

The significance of the above student email to me is that it gave the student a clear mission and deadline for the week regarding her paper. She was committing to work

additionally on it, aside from the parameters of the assignment for which she had written it. She was embracing the writing process instead of just the written product.

### **A Mission**

After sending out the solicitation emails (11 in total), five of the students responded that they were still revising/wanting to edit their papers before sending them. Some were very hesitant to send based on the fact they wanted them to be “perfect,” or wanted to make more edits to them. Representative of 45% of the sample population, this relays a pattern that soliciting these students’ work for publication gave them a *mission* and encouraged them to work harder on their writing, with the only reward being offered that of some kind of recognition. They were beginning to “behave like writers,” which Shaughnessy emphasized as crucial, as well as an increased sign of internal confidence in themselves as writers (73).

### **A Platform**

Re: Journal Submission

██████████

You replied on 1/20/2015 2:56 PM.

Sent: Sunday, December 14, 2014 9:33 AM

To: Novak, Lindsey L

Miss Novak,

I apologize for taking so long to get back to you. I have had a busy couple of weeks. Thank you for accepting my work for the journal, it is an honor. Here is the information you have requested. Once again, thank you and have a nice Christmas break.

██████████

Psychology Major

Missouri State University

Above is an example email that came from a student I had to reach out to a second time, after the Congratulations email soliciting his paper. This is indicative of the fact that I was trying to use work from busy students, many of whom were college freshman, adjusting to the demands of college work and life for the first time. I imagined this was a crucial time for them, both as students and as writers. If I could slip that idea into their heads early, as freshman, that they truly were good writers, my hope was that it would echo throughout the rest of their education and perhaps careers.

Through the lens of affect theory, this experimental pilot study sought to examine the impetus for writing and the shift between it being compulsory or organic, extrinsically versus intrinsically motivated. Does making students believe there is a forum for their voices prompt them to speak? The research certainly showed it promoted a sense of pride in the students toward their writing, hence the need to “clean it up” before sending it. This also reflects a desire to engage more with writing and to behave like a writer. These students did see themselves as writers:

Dear Lindsey Novak,  
Thanks for your email. It's quite an honor for me to get my paper published in the Writing Center journal. I'll review it and send required material to you as soon as I can.  
Sincerely,  
[REDACTED]

Ms. Novak,  
I will have it edited and revised as soon as I can. Thank you very much.  
[REDACTED]

Dear Lindsey,  
I am still working on my piece for the last paragraph, due to the busy schedule. And I hope I could modify it before this Friday.



And for this piece in the attachment is only the first section. And I hope I could get a chance to work on the last two.

Anyway, I hope you would like it. Please feel free to contact me, if there is anything wrong in my work.

Regards.



Another pattern I should have predicted (but didn't) was the proliferation of ELL/ESL students being submitted to the journal. My experience as consultant in the Writing Center absolutely supported the fact that this is the majority of the students who seek out the Writing Center for help. It was direct correlation, then, that the percentage of ELL/ESL students who frequent the Center were represented in the Journal. 4 out of the 11 total student entries were representative of the ELL/ESL students, which comes out to about 36%.

Again, I did not send them revision suggestions, both because the students had already revised their first drafts with the writing consultant, as well as because of time constraints. Ideally, I wanted to publish around eight pieces a month. This was really an issue that came down to me feeling like the journal needed “content,” something filling up the page. I was also afraid that if I waited too long after the students had their tutoring sessions with their consultants that they would lose interest, or not be as committed, or even get too busy with the semester (which did happen a few times, based on their emails). It also was simply because I had no idea what I was doing. My goal was to give these students a place to showcase their writing outside the classroom, for someone other than just their teacher. I wanted them to feel like “real writers.” The reason I shied away from the term “blog” for the journal, accurate though it may be, was that even these students inexperienced with writing knew that “real writers” get published. That is the legitimation that is the goal of every writer—seeing his or her name as a byline. The fact

that this writing was digital, and therefore they would not see their name in print (at least in a copy that they could hold in their hands) offered its own dilemma. Though there is not any difference between these students not holding a physical copy of their papers and us not reading physical copies of books, this imaginary leap, from paper to screen, probably is becoming less noticeable to younger generations. Cynthia Selfe, the founding director of Computers in Writing-Intensive Classrooms (CIWIC) and Digital Media and Composition (DMAC), who prioritizes first people, then teaching, then technology has offered: “Technology is not really as important as the people. So, we ask things like, does the technology get in the way of what we are doing? Or does it help us in what we are doing? What is the upshot?” (qtd. in Voss 18). Additionally, of composition and digital rhetorics, Selfe has stated that, “if composition instruction is to remain relevant, the definition of ‘composition’ and ‘texts’ needs to grow and change to reflect people’s literacy practices in new digital communication environments” (3). This is true, and I think this shift comes easier for younger students. For example, the Director of the Writing Center and I both hesitated about the digital format of the journal, because in our minds, it wasn’t “really publishing.” To some in his, and even my own, generation, “being published” meant holding a printed copy of your words with your name on it; however, we both also recognized and felt excited by the possibilities that a digital format could offer. In creating this journal, the Director and I believed that digitally, we would have the added benefit of flexibility in style and share-ability through the hyperlinks.

I began to seriously doubt the legitimacy of the journal. It may have begun with my own insecurities, but began to feel like no one *cared* about it. I wanted someone to care about it. Though I purported to have “good intentions” in creating it, perhaps this

gave away my true intentions: recognition. It wasn't so much the benefits to the students that I was second guessing; I knew they were getting a boost of writerly confidence from it. It was the journal's hoped-for impact that was not living up to my expectations. I wanted it to be important; instead, I felt like I was shouting into a void. The "Letters from the Editor" I wrote each semester, I realized, were, underneath it all, to *me*. I was projecting. "What you write, and what you have to say, *matters*." I don't think, though, that I really believed that. The day I presented the journal in front of my composition class, the instructor rushed me through, and instead of being all but hoisted on a chair through the town (as my delusion went), I slunk back to my seat, the words "*no one cares*" ringing through my head. I found myself asking if I should just shut the whole thing down, and wondering if anyone would even notice. I wondered how other journals did it—how they published student writing, made it look so slick—and if they had the same dilemmas with needing content, how they chose it, and how they handled ethical issues with editing it.

I had trouble with another poorly written paper the next spring. I had to change it so much, I hesitated, because there was an imaginary line I did not want to cross, one in which I put words in these students' mouths or changed their meaning. Revising for clarity is tricky and there is a fine line between it and appropriation of the text. For example, in Figure 15 below is an excerpt of the paper when I got it.

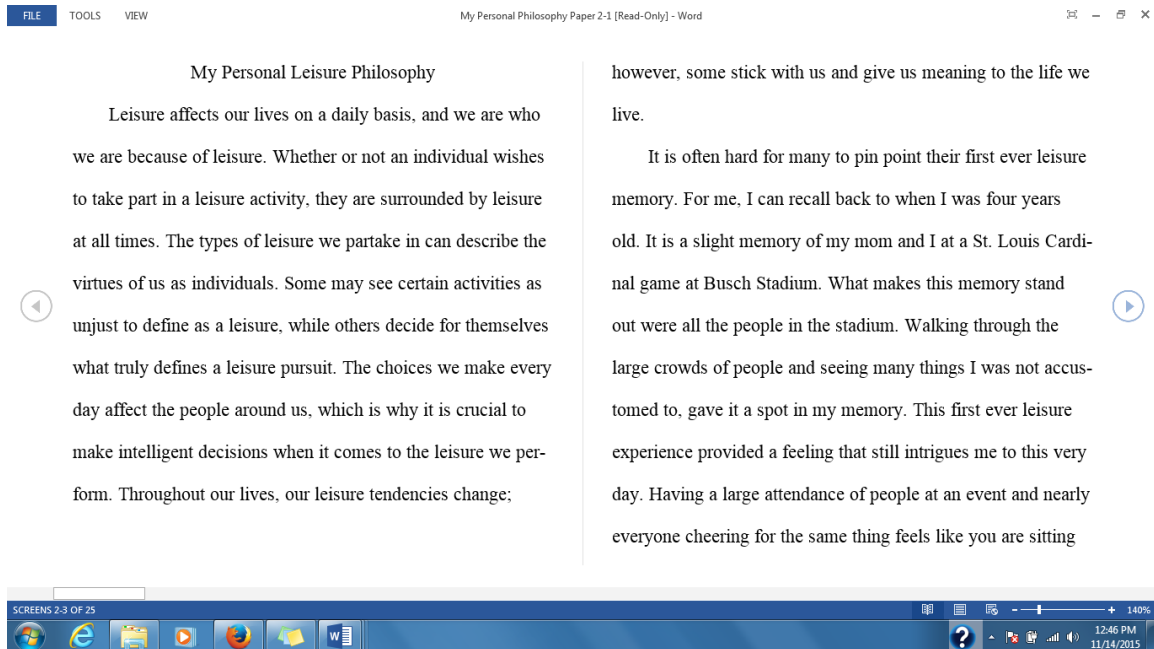


Figure 15. Student Paper “Before”

My concern was that in revising for clarity that I was changing the meaning. From the very beginning, I took out “we are who we are because of leisure” because I frankly had no idea what that meant. What this speaks to, though, is how subjective the writing and revision process can be. Though I may not have understood what he meant, someone else may have. Ultimately, I was asking these important questions in my mind: Whose paper is this now? Why am I revising it this way? Should I show the student these changes? What if he or she doesn’t agree with them? Should I let him or her make the ultimate decisions about the paper? Am I even required to publish it? What does this say about me if I don’t publish it? Is this piece representative of a Writing Center collaboration? And why exactly did I think this whole thing was a good idea in the first place? In Figure 16 below is an excerpt of the same paper, after my edits.

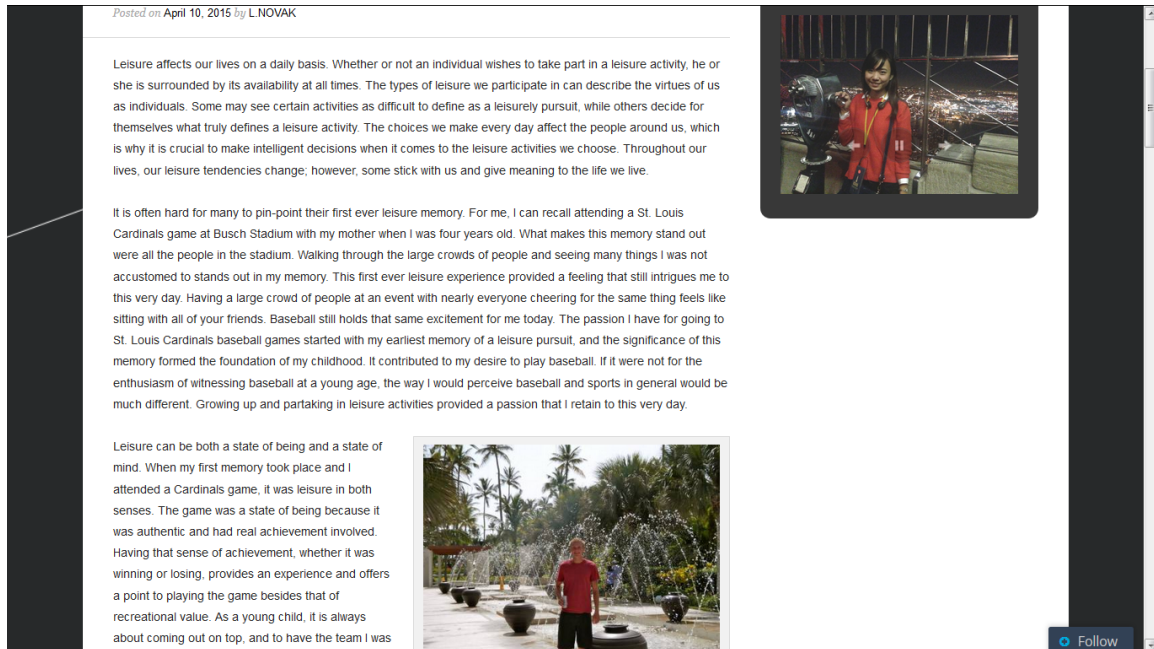


Figure 16. Student Paper “After”

## Ownership

Beth Hewett, in “The OWL Construction and Maintenance Guide” talks about the move to a more “Socratic” questioning of the writer in consultations (whether in a strictly online forum or in person) as part of the remedy to the idea of the Writing Center as a “fix-it shop.” The expressivist turn helped change the goals of the Writing Center from product oriented to process oriented, and writer focused. Hewett says “Expressivism reveals itself in both traditional writing centers and OWLs, where many consultants encourage student ownership of the writing and choose not to write on, or embed comments in, the writer’s essays. For some, the primary concern is who ‘holds the pen’ or types on the keyboard, which symbolizes textual ‘ownership.’” From my own year spent as a consultant in the Writing Center, I had deeply internalized this idea. In “Minimalist Tutoring,” Jeff Brooks says that “When you ‘improve’ a student’s paper, you haven’t been a tutor at all; you’ve been an editor. You may have been an exceedingly

good editor, but you've been of little service to your student. I think most Writing Center tutors agree that we must not become editors for our students and that the goal of each tutoring session is learning, not a perfect paper" (170). Here is where I realize I was experiencing cognitive dissonance. I was now calling myself Editor, a title, but had not shed the idea of myself as tutor. My role as editor was a "perfect paper," especially if the journal was meant to showcase the writing being brought to the Writing Center, collaborated on, and ultimately improved; if I was to showcase that work as a "final product," it had to be perfect. This went against my modus operandi as tutor; I had shifted roles, ones which conflicted in their goals.

I began to wonder about why I doubted the legitimacy of the journal, why I believed it to not be "real." Perhaps this harks back to what I mentioned previously, that I was doing this all on my own. Maybe I should have been seeking more help, but I didn't know where, what, or from whom. This was new for the Writing Center Director, too. None of us were pros. Why did I feel as if I was deceiving everyone about *bold* being a legitimate journal or myself being a legitimate editor? I reminded myself that, at one time, legitimate publishing houses called themselves into being, too, and all it took for them to be "real" and "legitimate" was a different kind of paper with a man's face on it.

### **"Real writers" and "real writing"**

As an English major, and then graduate student, I had been experiencing such a disconnect between the head and the heart. I wondered as well if the students in the Writing Center noticed it in their studies, too. Bess Fox, in *Computers and Composition*, traces this disconnect, an academic push away from the body and explores healing in

multimedia writing. Nancy Mairs' rebuke of the Aristotelian "prison-house view of the body" allows her to explore her life with multiple sclerosis while condemning that this view "obscures contemporary theoretical understanding of knowledge and thought as embodied, as reciprocally embedded in daily physical life" (qtd. in Fox 267). This is the exact disconnect I had been feeling in the academy, that it wasn't *real life*. Jack Selzer notes that, even though the academy has greatly expanded its exploration of culture and materiality, the focus is more on "webs of discourse than webs of kinship" (qtd. in Fox 267). The goal of writing as connecting has been systematically eroded since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Fox says "Academic antipathy to the body means that our theoretical understanding of its centrality is not translating into classroom practices. Although we talk about writing using metaphors of the senses, as is evident in the language of revision and voice, rarely do we teach writing as a *messy physical practice*" (267, emphasis mine). I felt that if the instructors assigning the papers I had seen brought into the Writing Center couldn't remember their own messy writing processes, the students were going to continue to be systematically stifled and frustrated. Tanya Titchkosky said that "bodies are not things they 'have' but things they 'are' and 'do,' and that one of the things bodies do is write" (qtd. in Fox 267). One of the reasons I felt this shift in perspective on student writing was important, and hoped to bring a bit of it about through the creation of the Writing Center journal, was because I felt I had seen a pattern of instructors responding to the product of the students' writing, instead of the person. I truly felt if the instructor would engage more with the student writing the paper, we would have been seeing more of the things I was looking for in the Writing Center (lots of comments and questions in the marginalia).

It wasn't until I was introduced to the idea of performativity that I understood writing is a performance. There was something wrong, something broken, in the way the academy was asking these students to perform their writing. Selfe argues that "An ideal of writing as an intellectual rather than physical or embodied practice may also prevent students from imagining themselves as 'real' writers and from imagining the writing they produce in the classroom as real writing. Because students imagine real writers as doing intellectual and not physical work, they do not associate their own messy physical practices and messy physical products with real writing" (qtd. in Fox 268).

Even though I felt ultimately disappointed with the journal experiment, this had more to do with seeing my own limitations, and unfulfilled and, perhaps, unrealistic expectations; however, for the students, based on their correspondence and reactions, the journal experiment seems to have had some success and lasting impact. It seems that it did indeed get them beginning to think of themselves as "real writers." Just as Grimm had to realize all the ways she had internalized the ideals of a modernist institution without questioning, I had fallen back on them (even while questioning the institution) when I had no suitable replacement. When my goal was to show potential in the students who came to the Writing Center, I still judged their work based on the criteria of the very "academic literacy club" I was questioning.



## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The instances observed in the Writing Center are disturbing, illustrating perfectly all the ways writing should not be taught. Remarking that a student fails to understand a concept (instead of explaining it to him or her), writing “too vague” as a one and only comment on a draft, or telling an ESL student to “go to the Writing Center” to simply avoid doing the work with him or her constitutes a refusal to engage with the writer as a human being during the messy and, often, painful process of writing. This is not how to teach writing, but kill it, ensuring young writers never write again. Intentional or not, microaggressions denote an underlying attitude about student writers, as well as a chosen amnesia regarding writing instructors’ own struggles with the blank page. Those who teach writing must be sympathetic to a young writer’s cause, acknowledging that he or she is already setting out on a mission which our society has deemed irrelevant, at best. Like Grimm points out, standardized writing instruction may be full of good intentions, but often misses the mark when it comes to different writers and their specific needs. Writing instruction cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach, no matter how easy this strategy might make teaching writing.

I suppose I am calling out writing instructors unable or unwilling to be *surprised* by their students’ writing. In “The Tidy House,” David Bartholomae writes about his first experience teaching freshman composition (a class in which at least half were basic writers). He talks of his first assignment, at which he got back a quite surprising paper, the “f- you” paper. He calls the paper “a written document of some considerable skill and force—more skill and force, for example, than I saw in many of the ‘normal’ and

acceptable papers” (173). Of all the papers Bartholomae received during his graduate work, this is the one he kept, calling it a “skillful performance in words.” I am not saying that we should encourage the “f-you” paper, but that we should still allow ourselves as writing instructors to be surprised, to allow ourselves to be affected by students.

I saw downright useless marginalia, (such as, “I don’t think you really understand this concept”) and refusals to read papers on which were then scribbled “Go to the Writing Center.” When I would sit down with a student in the Writing Center, and s/he had no idea what the instructor was looking for regarding his or her paper, yet was expected to discern it, somehow, through osmosis, I would let out a silent scream. It seems that the idea that students don’t want to work is held out as justification to place the onus on the students to teach themselves. Above all, I felt moved to study affect in writing because of all the ways writing instruction has historically ignored the body, ignored the *person* doing the writing. Perhaps this is why the antimodern ideas of the body, emotion, and affect have taken so long to emerge as an area of inquiry. Gloria Anzaldúa said of writing, that “It is like a cactus needle embedded in the flesh... an endless cycle of making it worse, making it better, but always making meaning out of the experience, whatever it may be” (1595). In this sense, I decided to declare war on attitudes of inclusion and exclusion, disregard for difference, outmoded beliefs on what writing instruction should do, ineffective treatment of the process, and oppressive tactics in the composition classroom, where nothing less than an open invitation to become lifelong writers should be acceptable.

If practice with writing and self-perception/confidence as a writer are 2/3 of Shaughnessy’s formula for finding some modicum of success in writing, then it stands to

reason that we need to not be neglecting those areas. If our goal as writing instructors is to get our students to write widely and often (and I believe this should be the goal), then we should be doing things to promote an affinity for writing. We should be giving students positive associations with the writing process. Will this work for every student? No. Will every student want to or become a “lifelong writer,” or even should they all? No. But I remain incensed at the way some professors teach writing or handle writing assignments. I not only saw neglect, through my two years of exposure to many students and their papers in the Writing Center, but observed an air of disdain towards students and their writing. It truly was as if some of their professors had forgotten how hard writing truly is, and what it was like for them to be staring at a blinking cursor, too.

Opportunities for further research would certainly revolve around digital rhetorics and perhaps test students’ perception of the legitimacy of being published in print form versus only digitally. The scope of this study was small and limited to my own experiences and interactions in my own campus Writing Center. Too, it was hard to find much about publishing writing from writing centers; it frankly hasn’t been done. I do think that if other universities considered putting together an elegant and professional journal of writing from writing center students, perhaps with collaboration with the Arts Departments, it would go a long way to show that these students have much to contribute to the “academic literacy club.”

As Saunders related, a person who has chosen to teach writing as a profession’s job is to say “Keep going” in response to young writers, not “Stop right there. You’re not good enough.” Isn’t that the point, for young writers to improve? Personally, I now have 120 12-14 year olds, some of whom string together sentences through entire paragraphs; I

wouldn't think for a second to belittle or discourage them. I mark their errors, and point out their strong qualities. There are *always* good points. It took finally finding a handful of my own instructors who knew this was the way to do it, this is the way to teach writing with heart, compassion, and empathy. This is why I can do that now, too. The thing that is crucial, the reason it killed me to see dejected students in the Writing Center, is that writing will play an important role in these students' lives for the rest of their lives, no matter what field they go into, what job they have, whatever it is they do. Or, at least, it should. This is the platform we preach from as writing instructors. Writing is too important to take away from a student. Refusing to engage with a student, giving pat answers and minimal comments, flatly tells the student that he or she is not "good enough" or important enough to be taken seriously. This is why I emphasize the importance of an open dialogue with the student. Students already know that they are not part of the "academic literacy club"; even in the Writing Center, they view the consultant as an authority. The ability, in those situations, to put aside hierarchy and status, to engage with another person and extend an open invitation is crucial—and it's rarely seen.

Affects, as well as emotions, are fluid and changing and not a solid ground on which to build any sort of pedagogical theory. I would argue, though, that this is logocentric thinking and likely why the intersections of affect and emotion with writing practice has been so little studied. I would argue that those places of changing tides in a student's writing, the places displaying affect and emotion, are exactly the points we can connect. To refuse to do so constitutes a refusal to connect as a person.

Writing can be healing, and while we are working it out on the page, we are also working out parts of ourselves. Even while studying a topic, we are rearranging our

position toward it and why we have approached it in the first place. Writing can be impersonal; we can certainly take an impersonal tone and decide to distance ourselves from the words and ideas. I don't believe that's the goal of written communication, though, or that it should be how it functions. What I loved about writing at 15 years old became the thing that was threatened in academia—a safe space, at times just for me, at other times, a way to find out who I was and what exactly I believed, and even other times, a way to communicate those things to the greater world. What I remembered, and almost lost, about writing was its ability to change me. Writing can be the place we are allowed to be wrong, or, more accurately, the place to work ideas out. That's the beauty of a liminal, transitional space which allows us to explore multiple subjectivities. Writing should connect. Why, then, would we not attempt to connect to each other through writing? Affected writing breathes, it has a heartbeat, it is imbued with the spirit of the person writing it; affected teachers allow themselves to hear it, and respond in kind.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A.

From: Novak, Lindsey L  
Sent: Wednesday, September 10, 2014 6:09 PM  
To: [REDACTED]  
Subject: Journal Publication

Dear [REDACTED],

Congratulations!

Your piece, "America: Land of Predetermined Fate" has been selected to be included in the Writing Center journal, bold. This is a new, innovative format wherein we get to show off what we do and impressive work we see from students like you. We are looking specifically for work in which we feel a sense of who the writer is, or that he/she took a risk in some way. The consultant you met with felt that your piece stood out from the rest and fit these specifications nicely. We want you to know that your voice was heard, and encourage you in your writing to keep that brave tone.

Please reply to this email with:

- An attachment of the paper you brought to your session
- A brief bio (can be humorous, but must remain appropriate)
- A picture of yourself that you like

Your piece will appear on our journal, along with your bio and picture, as well of the bio and picture of your consultant.

Thank you for trusting the Writing Center with your work, and thank you for being bold.

Sincerely,  
Lindsey Novak, editor

## **Appendix B.**

From: Novak, Lindsey L  
Sent: Tuesday, January 27, 2015 6:44 PM  
To: [REDACTED]  
Subject: Journal Publication Request

Dear [REDACTED],

A little while back, I sent you an email because the consultant you worked with in the Writing Center, [REDACTED], thought your paper on intelligence was a good fit for our journal publication. I understand this is a busy time of year! Since I have not heard back from you yet, I wanted to check in and see if you would be interested in being published in our journal. If so, just reply with an attachment of your paper, a brief bio, and a picture of yourself that you like. I will take care of the rest, and let you know when your work appears.

Thank you,  
Lindsey Novak, Editor

## Appendix C.



### Institutional Review Board (IRB)

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**DATE:** January 23, 2016

**TO:** Thomas E. Tomasi, Associate Dean of the Graduate College

**CC:** Margaret Weaver  
Lindsey Novak

**FROM:** Office of Research Administration on behalf of the IRB

**RE: Lindsey Novak thesis - NO IRB APPROVAL REQUIRED**

The IRB has reviewed the thesis "An affect theory of composition," and determined that an IRB protocol and subsequent approval was not required because the student's work does not meet the IRB's definition of "research" (see 45 CFR 46).

However, the IRB notes the student and thesis committee members should be advised that this determination should have been obtained before the project started. Should the determination have been made that IRB approval was required, a retrospective approval or exemption cannot be granted.

Please feel free to contact Joseph Hulgus, IRB Chair or the Office of Research Administration if you need additional assistance.

Office of Research Administration  
Carrington 405  
(417)-836-4132  
IRB@missouristate.edu

Joseph Hulgus, PhD, IRB Chair  
PCOB 128  
(417) 836-6522  
josephhulgus@MissouriState.edu