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Thesis of
Holland R. Cutrell

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts
Composition, Rhetoric, and Digital Media

Nova Southeastern University
Halmos College of Arts and Sciences

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An Analysis of Class in Composition from 1970-2010

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Composition, Rhetoric, and Digital Media

Holland Cutrell

Halmos College of Arts and Sciences

Department of Communication, Media, and the Arts

Nova Southeastern University

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ABSTRACT

Class and socioeconomic status in composition and rhetoric remains a topic that is felt, yet not often discussed. The language students use is highly indicative of their class background, and everyone has a slightly altered form of discourse they prefer (Zebroski, 2006). My thesis examines the issues working-class students have faced with literacy acquisition and discourse assimilation from 1970s–mid 2000s. My analysis illustrates how composition and rhetoric has evolved from the error-centered and hyper-correct culture of the 1970s to the technologically dominated, media driven production powerhouse that affects every aspect of college and beyond. To most effectively address how working-class student language usage within composition classrooms has evolved, this project includes a metanalysis from the 1970s to mid 2000s of composition and rhetoric scholarship that deals with working-class college students and pedagogical shifts in first-year writing. This analysis reveals that instructors who validate socioeconomic diversity in language employ teaching practices that enable working-class students to draw from their culture and linguistic backgrounds, their narratives of self, and their own lives outside of the classroom. My findings gesture towards another major shift for the future of composition and rhetoric, one that accepts greater student diversity in language and class background; recognizes more varied forms of academic writing that include narratives and collaboration; and encourages the acquisition of different types of multimedia literacies.

Keywords: Socioeconomic, class, composition, blue-collar, language

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Introduction

At the time, I did not know I was working-class. I grew up on a small farm in rural Tennessee and I am a first-generation college graduate. The schools I went to were small and many of my teachers spent their time corralling rowdy students rather than engaging the class in discussions over our reading or encouraging us to develop a more stylistic voice when writing. There were a select few instructors (I could count them on one hand) that I remember who pushed me to write more, compose outside the boundaries of simple 5-page essay assignments where the students were never taught to cite sources or adhere to specific academic conventions. And I did go beyond what was expected of me in those classrooms.

I am glad I did because I cultivated the skills I would need to write this thesis in an accepted form where educators of higher education and college composition classrooms will read and understand just why some of their students are less talkative, less inclined to offer their opinion during academic class discussion, unable to attend a late-night writing workshop, or simply less-interested in writing in general. My thesis explains why a consideration of socioeconomic status is so imperative in the composition classroom. A student's class background affects far more than their purchasing habits, where they allocate their time, or where they go on vacation next (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013). Indeed, class background influences the way individuals speak and write, the kind of knowledge they find valuable, and even ideas of what higher education can provide for them (Rose, 1985; Peckham, 2010).

I understand that class has many definitions that range from purely economic focused to more of an individual self-appraisal. For the purpose of my thesis, I will defer to Martin et al. (2018) who define social class in terms of "the values and beliefs one uses to understand their

socioeconomic culture within a broader contextual environment" (p. 11). Class will therefore be determined to mean how one defines themselves given the cultural, economic, and social capital they have/had within their socioeconomic culture. My research looks at how language coincides with class and how the way one speaks is reminiscent of their background and culture. When issues of socioeconomics are discussed, class is at the forefront of the matter. I chose to view class through this social economic lens because class within the confines of college composition is felt the most this way.

Unfortunately, within the confines of the academy, where middle and upper-class learners dominate, socioeconomic status is viewed as a taboo; it is something not fit for discussion, but rather a thing to be demonstrated through one's mannerisms and discourse practices (Bloom, 1996). Creating space for more open discussions of class can help alleviate the sense of alienation working-class students may experience when entering university for the first time (Mauk, 2003). Performing a historical analysis allows me to better track the evolution of class throughout college composition from the 1970–mid 2000s. I chose to survey literature from the past forty years to track key experts in the field and the advancement of their views on class in the composition classroom because the progression of socioeconomic acceptance is understood best through the voices and discoveries of those who influence the scholarship surrounding composition and rhetoric. I focus on class because a person's social class affects everyone, regardless of their race, gender, or other individual affiliations. Class is felt in terms of personal narratives and how people learn languages, dialects, and social mannerisms from their home (Tingle, 2004). The economic circumstances surrounding one's household will have lasting effects that follow an individual throughout and beyond college, informing their choices, biases, and (importantly for this thesis) language practices (Rose, 1985).

To best explain how the views of working-class language practices in college writing settings have evolved, I have performed a metanalysis of scholarly works over the last forty years (1970-mid 2000s). I begin my research on scholarship surrounding working-class learners in the academy after open-admissions in the 1970s when colleges opened their doors to a more diverse student body (Sheils, 1975). With that diversity came socioeconomic issues of dialect and culture, and many professors did not understand the class disparities of their blue-collar students because teachers at the time usually hailed from middle and upper-class backgrounds (Wolfe, 1972). Scholars would argue these students did not understand how to effectively communicate and were somehow less cognitively inclined compared to their more privileged counterparts (Wolfe; Sheils). Eventually I noted the move of the Conference on College Composition and Communication's (CCCC) resolution on language called "Students' Right to Their Own Language" (Students' Right, 1974). The document was the first step in the 50-year move toward a more democratic classroom. I finish the 1970s chapter by describing the carry-over practice of error-centered pedagogy that served to correct student mistakes after they occurred rather than process written oversights as they happened (Shaughnessy, 1977a). Later, remedial courses would serve to remedy grammar, syntax, and spelling errors before students got to more advanced, collegiate writing, but not until the 1980s (Rose, 1988).

The 1980s theorized ways to create more effective working-class writers and establish a place for composition in higher education (Villanueva & Arola, 2011). I begin the chapter with a consideration of Flower & Hayes's (1981) cognitive process theory to help explain why some students had more trouble writing from a position outside of themselves. This meant cognitive process theorists noticed students who were deemed "poor writers" often lacked the ability to

conceptualize or abstract thoughts. During the early 80s I found that Flower & Hayes (1981) as well as other scholars like Lunsford (1979) theorized working-class students who could not adhere to academic discourse conventions were lacking in cognitive ability; however, cognitive process theory failed to account for a learner's class culture and how their background affected that student's ability to conform to the standards of academic discourse. The following section related to cognitive process theory discusses remedial writing courses, a slightly altered model of error-centered pedagogy from the 1970s (Rose, 1988).

Learners labeled cognitively deficient found themselves in remedial classes, further adding to the question of whether students were learning to write academic discourse, or simply going through the motions to get another grade. The other large movement for inclusion in the 1980s composition classroom I deem relevant to working-class learners is collaborative learning. Collaborative learning introduced professors to a working model of a more democratic classroom, though perhaps not as visionary as Elbow's (1998) teacherless writing class, nor as structured as Trimbur's (1989) organized discussion of consensus and dissensus. Collaborative learning would provide students opportunities to engage in discussions with their peers without the pressure of feeling like they need to be correct, and the practice could expose students to different avenues of thinking to expand their knowledge of class cultures.

I focus more on personal language practices in academic writing settings in the 1990s. Using scholars like Alberti (1998) and Tingle (2004), I create a case for the use of personal pronouns in college compositions and self-narrative to bolster student arguments. My discussion includes the use of discovering writerly voice, which would go on to influence student and teacher perceptions of objectivity, finally asking if academic discourse can truly be considered value-free (Elbow, 1991). I then move to the emergence of validating personal

experience as a form of class acceptance and study. The greater focus on causing composition courses to acknowledge personal experience would have far reaching effects for the working-class and for others trying to understand class and its affects in general because class is felt in terms of stories (McMillan, 1998).

My final chapter will cover changes to college composition scholarship in the mid 2000s and how technology, university business practices, and shifting conceptions of literacy all influence the success or struggle working-class students have in higher education. The chapter begins with a discussion of how colleges started functioning more like businesses when it came to the allocation of tuition dollars (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013). Rather than invest in funding better financial aid programs or the design of classes that could better fit working-class students' work schedules, many universities spent their tuition dollars on hedge fund investments or nicer amenities like bigger dorm rooms (Armstong & Hamilton). I also detail working-class issues of time investment with commitments like family responsibility and work outside of the classroom.

The 21st century continued to further inclusive student language practices, with shifting ideas of narrative and, in turn, literacy acquisition and mastery. Work within composition classrooms allowed students to focus more on composing and analyzing their personal histories and how those background cultures inform the value system that constructs their beliefs (Lu, 1992; LeCourt, 2006). For blue-collar students in particular, a deeper examination of the culture surrounding their class would help them remain connected to their old working-class heritage while moving toward a more middle-class work environment (Reeves, 1998). I look toward scholars like Lindquist (2004) and Le Court to conceptualize how identity and

discourses are closely associated with student identity and how they function in the composition classroom.

Since emotional labor exists when individuals attempt to assimilate to another form of discourse, conflicts between a person's home culture and the language culture they are entering can arise (Bartholomae, 1985). It is within composition's best interest to mitigate the amount of emotional discord working-class students experience because doing so will not push the blue-collar student to resent their family and community, but rather treat working-class culture as another tool in their arsenal they can use to construct a compelling academic argument (Lu, 1992). I also break class discourses down into what Peckham (2010) termed restricted and elaborative code to better explore the differences between working and middle and upper-class discourse. My breakdown serves as an example of why blue-collar learners normally struggle learning and applying academic discourse due to its overly embellished language and reliance on expanded definitions.

The final section of the 2000s takes language pedagogy into the technological realm. Composition has evolved to accommodate increasingly broader definitions of literacy and what it means to be literate (Rose, 2014). With technology assuming a larger role in both education and the workforce, compositionists are now expected to be proficient in using multiple modes of meaning-making (Brandt, 2001). Now, students who were not as comfortable composing in traditional pen and paper format could create a visual like an infographic or an audio project such as a podcast to showcase their meaning-making capabilities. The move toward multimodal literacy would allow working-class students more flexibility and creativity in crafting compelling arguments because of the wider array of modes available to them (Yancy, 2004).

Throughout this thesis, I discuss the mental and emotional strain working-class students navigate as they strive for a better education. I learned that even though English is the primary language used in nearly all of America's composition courses, different dialects, varieties, and groups all seem to have their own interpretations of what the acceptable form of English to use is. In the past, it was Standard English, the language of the ruling classes, the white-collar workforce that every other non-standard speaker needed to conform to in order to achieve upward mobility (Smith, 1976). Recognition of class and what a person's socioeconomic history affects evolved from simple considerations of an individual's classed language practices to an inclusion of narrative analysis and group discussion over the last forty years of composition (Bizzell, 1982; Lindquist, 1999; Rose, 1985; Elbow, 1998; Zebroski, 2006). Shifting definitions of literacy will continue to help working-class students feel they can make meaning in their own ways, rather than conform to traditional academic conventions. Viewing working-class discourse as a supplement to instead of a deterrent of academic discourse is a massive step in the right direction of validating student class diversity and including a variety of voices into the ever-advancing conversation of representation in higher education.

The 1970s

The 1960s was a time of great societal reform that would lead to radical transformations of America's instructional system. Educational policy went from a local issue to a nationwide topic in the 1960s with the passing of the Civil Rights Act (Mace-Matluck, 1987). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 amended segregation within schools and allowed minority and poor students equal rights to education (U.S. Department of LaborIn 1965 the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA Pub.I.89-1- Stat 27, 20 U.S.C. ch 70) was put into effect and its central aim was to stipulate federal funding for the educational needs of the disenfranchised (Jefferson-Jenkins & Hill, 2011). The Act resulted from a response to the rapidly changing socioeconomic conditions of urban areas as minorities rallied for schools to teach generations skills they needed to succeed in professional industries.

Within the confines of composition classrooms, there were major concerns of student literacy and written communication practices after open-admissions began (Sheils, 1975; Shaughnessy, 1979a). Colleges were accepting students who never received the opportunity to attend before; thus, university teachers were having to deal with varying levels of literacy, and many college professors struggled meeting less-privileged student needs. The diverse language practices lower-class learners brought with them from their working-class backgrounds often conflicted with academic discourse and its 70s focus of correctness, objectivity, and reliance on scholarly voices (Elbow, 1998). Discussions of best teaching methods for the disenfranchised would come to a head in 1974, with the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) releasing a revolutionary statement titled “Students' Right to Their Own Language” that would serve as one of the first steps in accepting class diversity among college learners in the composition classroom with a focus on classed language usage (Students'

Right, 1974). The statement would become foundational for scholars countering error-centered pedagogies with more meaning-based strategies to combat working-class student misinterpretation. Moving away from the hyper-correct writing exercises of the 1970s would eventually lead to a more democratized classroom where students would have greater input in their discourse of choice.

Literacy Crisis

Being proficient readers, writers, and communicators was required for the labor markets to consider anyone a potential employee; however, urban schools once thought to be preparing their students for better work prospects came under scrutiny when these same students were cited as being unable to pass basic reading and writing tests for post-secondary education admission (Sheils, 1975; Peck, 2017). A perceived literacy crisis struck in the 1970s and the lack of able writers and readers was blamed on several key issues (Shaughnessy, 1977b). A shift from expository to more creative and contemporary approaches to composition blossomed in the classroom; however, the pursuit of less academically inclined papers was not linked to a changing pedagogy, but to the proliferation of televisions in students' homes (Sheils).

Compared to today's composition classroom and the encouraged multimedia approaches, Sheils's (1975) concern about television's influence over literacy seems trivial. Sheils's concern stemmed from the overabundance of poorly written papers from those who had not received proper training before entering college. However, it was not necessarily that there was a crisis of literacy, just that professors were divided on how to best handle the issue. Some of them subscribed to the hyper-correct writing culture of the 1970s, as exemplified in the following quote by E.B. White in *The New Yorker.* His sentence said, "Short of throwing away all the television sets, I really don't knwo [sic] what we can do about writing." (Sheils, 1975, p.

3). In the eyes of the hyper-corrected writing culture of the 60s and into the 70s, the sentence would be deemed improper and marked as wrong due to the misspelling of "know." Yet, within the context of the sentence, the meaning is understood even though the word "know" is misspelled- there is no room for misinterpretation. Sheils (1975) also cites English teacher Dorothy Matthews and her comments about how her students cannot organize their thoughts on paper properly. The example is as follows: "It's obvious in our modern world of today that theirs a lot of impreciseness in expressing the thoughts we have" (p. 3). To say this sentence is unintelligible, is akin to saying the student that wrote it doesn't speak English. It is legible and would pass as understandable in some class cultures, just not within the confines of middle-class academic discourse (Rose, 1985). In the context of student literacy overall, it was not student understanding of sharing their thoughts aloud or on paper that lacked; rather, learners could read and write, just not in the conventions preferred by the academy.

Students' Right to Their Own Language

Coming into the 1970s, post-secondary institutions would see a rise in enrollment of more diverse learners in terms of gender, race, and socioeconomic class (Sheils, 1975; Rose, 1985). Teachers had trouble adapting to the varieties of language students carried with them from their home cultures, particularly working-class students. A conflict of interests arose from what professors of composition had been taught (Standard American English) and the nonstandard language varieties students brought to the classroom (Sledd, 1973). To combat discourse discrepancy and outside attacks on students' compositional preparedness, the CCCC's released a revolutionary statement titled "Students' Right to Their Own Language" (SRTOL) in 1974.

SRTOL was in response to the “social upheavals of the 1960s, and the insistence of submerged minorities on a greater share of American society” (Students’ Right, 1974, p. 1). Obviously, the Civil Rights movement influenced attitudes pertaining to the omission of minorities and poorer groups within SRTOL. I would also add that SRTOL was an attempt for teachers to recognize and adapt to the diverse class and culture backgrounds of new students entering universities (Shaughnessy, 1975). Compositionists began to question their assumptions about language, asking does a true Standard American English exist? Is “educated English” based on its inherent, meaning-making superiority or simply the social prestige of those who adopt it? What intrinsic values are being transferred to students through the teaching of Edited American English (Students’ Right)? Language varieties (dialects) have always existed, and many people have had to adapt or become proficient in tongues different than their own (Sledd, 1973). This is not a new discovery, even in the 1970s. The issue arises when one dialect is exhibited as socially superior to another.

As to be expected, many scholars of the time were divided in their reaction to the movement of valuing students’ language rights. On one side of the debate surrounding student language use were intellectuals that held firm to the idea that college was meant to prepare students for work in white-collar workspaces, and the best way to prepare these learners was to teach them the value of written communication (Pixton, 1974; Sheils, 1975; Smith, 1976). However, the group of scholars stating that students did not have a right to their own language in academia believed that only one, correct form of written communication existed (Standard English), and it was to be privileged above any form of speaking/writing a student carried with them (Eskey, 1974).

Though some scholars agreed that Standard English reigned supreme in academia (Pixton, 1974; Smith, 1976), nearly every intellectual possessed differing definitions of what Standard English actually meant. For example, Pixton stated Standard English was "the key to all formal education" (p.247). Shaughnessy (1977) and Bizzell (1978) describe Standard English as a culmination of the conventions, rituals, and practices of academic discourse. While others such as McLain (1976) and Whipp (1979) stated that Standard English was nothing more than a set of rules and power structures imposed on unsuspecting students. Another class of thought attempting to define Standard English and its uses identifies heavily with English possessing different dialects, rather than completely different forms (Eskey, 1974). This notion of dialect rests heavily within the realm of the modern-day term code-switching (MacAulay, 1973; McLain). Scholars like Eskey, Pixton, and MacAulay all referenced Standard English as another type of vernacular preferred by business professionals and the educational system, with Eskey further explaining that Standard English truly establishes its place in written forms of English.

Other scholars of composition felt teaching a student that there was a single, uncontestable way of writing went against that student's culture and denied any personal experience that went into their compositions (Elbow, 1998). Learners coming from educational or class systems that did not prepare them for the conventions of academic discourse were often regarded as "irremediable" and teachers were untrained to deal with the dialects and language practices of these seemingly foreign outsiders in higher education (Shaughnessy, 1977a). The beliefs that less-privileged learners are intellectually deficient often stem from cultural values and background experiences first, and the value practices of the academy second (Rose, 1985). Most professors at the time hailed from a class background very dissimilar to nearly any student

who was female, minority, or acquainted with the "rougher" side of life (Wolfe, 1972). Wolfe's observation of this disparity among faculty and working-class students at Richmond University can be found in his statement, "They [Richmond faculty] thought of their students as stupid and ignorant, unworthy of all their fine instruction—really people who should not be in college at all" (p. 49). Wolfe presents a dichotomy: the superiority of professors who had mastered academic discourse and the conventions that went with it trying to teach students who had never felt superior in the practice of writing—who were only too aware of their shortcomings when it came to succeeding in university (Bizzell, 1978; Rose, 1985).

Until more intellectuals would recognize SRTOL, nonstandard speakers would continue to be pressured to adopt what educated individuals primarily spoke and composed in: Standard or Edited English (MacAulay, 1973; Eskey, 1974). "Students' Rights to Their Own Language" (1974) details the social nature of language, noting that dialects develop, reflect, and determine "shared regional, social, or cultural perspectives" (p. 3). It makes sense that people would make value judgments on a person's intelligence based on the way they speak; linguists agree that the degree of status and influence can be determined through dialectical signs, but that prestige does not make a particular vernacular inherently good or bad (Students' Right). Therefore, adhering to the CCCC's statement means allowing a student to use their home dialect to communicate and attempt to understand or enter academic conversations, and not penalizing that student at the syntactical level because his or her meaning can be understood, interpreted, and responded to with little effort from the standard speaker.

Favoring a standard variety of English places students unfamiliar with the conventions of academic discourse at a disadvantage and causes learners to appear quiet or disengaged when in the classroom (Wolfe, 1972; Bizzell, 1978). When students fail to answer questions because they

did not wish to be made into a poor example or when it seemed like a learner did not care about the topic being discussed (likely because they felt it irrelevant to them), their teachers assumed these learners were not intellectually advanced enough to comprehend the knowledge professors bestowed to them (Wolfe; Seligman et al., 1972; Whipp, 1979). These notions of intellectual inferiority often stemmed from the language use of the working-class students themselves because the language of blue-collar learners is not as polished or as reliant on curated voices as academics would like it to be (Bizzell, 1978; Shaughnessy, 1977a). Scholars like Shaughnessy (1977a) even go so far as to state these students' reliance on little more than an "honest face" when creating an argument acts like an inhibitor to entering academic conversations (p. 319). Working-class students' command over their own language was doubted and these students became unnecessarily classified as unworthy and incapable of succeeding in higher education.

Error-Centered Pedagogy and the Democratic Classroom

Teachers during the 70s were quick to mark what a student did wrong, yet reluctant to ever highlight what was done well (Shaughnessy, 1977a; Elbow, 1971). Error-centered pedagogy led students to both resent and resist their vulnerability as writers (Shaughnessy, 1977a). Working-class students have too often been criticized for their *attempts* at achieving a standard that their privileged peers grew up hearing, and this leads to uncertainty as well as a lack of confidence in their own abilities. Professors who focus on mistakes serve to amplify an underperforming student's doubt that the world of higher education has a place for them. Wolfe (1972) was one such professor that had experiences that informed his approach to teaching working-class students. Wolfe taught at both prestigious and lesser-known schools, giving him unique insight to the different views of education middle and lower-class students maintained. During his time at Richmond University (one of the first colleges to employ open-admission

policy), Wolfe noted, "Students there [at Richmond University] are not sure that higher education is something they deserve, as it is a new experience in their family. They usually received poor grades in high school, so they put themselves down, blaming themselves for their failures and developing little confidence that they are capable of doing what they want" (p. 53). Again, I think it's worth mentioning "Students' Right to Their Own Language" (1974) set out to abolish the feelings of deep-seated failure by not privileging one social dialect over another, and if teachers can reassure doubtful students like the ones Wolfe mentions, it may help blue-collar learners stay less resistant, standoffish, or staunchly disengaged.

The later part of the decade would also indicate a case for reassurance with their use of language in the composition classroom. McLain (1976) affirms students use nontraditional ways of communicating to deal with different dialects of English in the classroom in his essay about the standard rules that govern English. Notable characteristics of the study of English (especially its written forms) are that prescriptive rules of the language are not easily defined, and possible violations of these directives "are unequally proscribed" during student assessment (McLain, p. 244). Conforming to these rules are supposed to make a student's writing and speech "correct." Never diverging from prescriptive grammar rules stifles a budding writer's style and narrative voice (Fulwiler, 1990). Even some of the most famous and prolific writers and speakers do not follow every rule in a Standard English handbook; scholars of the English language also disregard guidebook instructions on how to write the correct way (Bizzell, 1978). Students that go about adopting academic discourse into their own system of dialects are not perceived as talented writers taking advantage of their own style and mixing it with another, as they should be. There would remain a grand misconception in the early to mid-1970s that students who did not fully grasp the discourse of the academy were at a disadvantage both from any aspect of

achieving upward mobility and from failing to sound educated enough for others to listen (MacAulay, 1973; Smith, 1976).

However, scholars like Wolfe (1972) and Elbow (1973) presented an option for combating working-class student ambivalence by offering the idea that teachers and students should move toward a more democratic classroom. Elbow's (1973) approach to teaching writing was perhaps one of the most radical ideas to come out of the 70s. He supported taking teachers out of the classroom, which advocated removing the stress of crafting a compelling argument with perfectly precise academic discourse, stating that students should instead freewrite, produce a piece of composition in the language that seems natural to them before they begin to feel trapped in an endless cycle, relentlessly searching for flaws (Elbow, 1973). Rather, in an attempt to exercise what "Students' Right to Their Own Language" (1974) calls the "right to their own patterns and varieties of language," Elbow allows his students to exercise a nonstandard variety of English first, and then gradually move toward the discourse of the academy later. I believe what was most notable about Elbow's (1971) approach was that he did not continually press for students to make their writing more like academic discourse; he did not craft comparisons among prestige dialects and that of the working-class.

Elbow (1971) recognized students worked more comfortably among themselves when the instructions allowed learners to interact with each other's writing, commenting freely and without fear of judgement. His approach acted like a precursor to the collaborative learning pedagogies that would become popularized by Bruffee (1984) in the 1980s. Shaughnessy (1997a) also turned the focus of scholars from their previous, narrowed view of syntactic error to the broader picture of literary skills a learner possessed. Her efforts paralleled Elbow's (1973) in a move toward more student-centered pedagogy, and they both offered some of the most

effective ways of handling student doubt that would affect how professors of composition would conduct their classrooms in the following decades.

As to be expected, Elbow's (1971) methods for incorporating "Students' Rights" into his teaching practices was debated among scholars who asked the CCCC to reconsider their statement and regress to what Pixton (1974) calls "common dialectical ground ... the centrality needed for precise communication" (p. 247). The reason why some wished for the retraction of SRTOL stemmed from a sort of confusion that had teachers reconsidering what was and what was not imperative to teach students in order for them to achieve successful mastery of the English language. I resist the idea of a common dialectical ground, affirming a more social aspect of language; what is common for a particular class group may be very uncommon for another (Whipp, 1979). Notably, Eskey (1974) felt that diversity within student speech and composition was necessary for said student to fully express themselves. He writes, "Nothing good can come from rejecting a student's language, or attempting to impose an unfamiliar set of forms on a student in the midst of expressing himself in what is for him the most natural manner" (Eskey, p. 769). Eskey is not blind to lower-class students' resistance to the created paradigm that places 'good' English on a pedestal while downplaying every other linguistic variation. Hence, when a professor privileges one model discourse over all else, they deny other forms of meaning making that could possibly be just as coherent or better than what they teach. If students, especially working-class learners, do not feel their needs are being met or their struggles taken seriously, then teachers should expect nothing less than skepticism and apathy toward their attempts at education (Wolfe, 1972).

I argue "Students' Right to Their Own Language" needed to be applied in the 70s to assist underprepared learners in their transition to college. Affirming a learner's command over

their personal communication style increases their confidence in writing and, more importantly, establishes a sense of belonging so these students no longer feel like strangers in a middle-class world (Mauk, 2003). Though the journey to valuing a student's background experience and personal language preferences would be a long one, professors who ascribed to the old ways of teaching standardized English would eventually faze out (Brandt, 2001); however, their defense of Standard American English and its relevance in higher education would continue for nearly two more decades before scholars would more completely implement pedagogies that credited students' personal language practices (LeCourt, 2006). Overall, a greater extent of awareness from teachers and a higher grade of communication from working-class students can be suggested from the reports of learning obstacles in the 70s. Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds have been penalized because of their speech and writing especially, with teachers going so far as to make snap judgments of a student's intelligence and aptitude based on their speech style and tone (Seligman et al., 1972). These kinds of preconceived notions about blue-collar learners have led underprivileged students to believe that a right to education is something they cannot possess without heavily conforming to middle class values inherent within university (Wolfe, 1972).

One of the largest endeavors of the decade to create a more inclusive space for working-class students and their language practices was "Student's Right to Their Own Language," and the scholarly conversations it sparked were rife with controversy. Educators were beginning to question the standard ways of speaking and writing, asking themselves if what they lectured was ethical, necessary, or valuable for their students (Pixton, 1974; Smith, 1976; Bizzell, 1978). Thus, the careful scrutiny of years of English teaching would soon begin to transform the discipline. Scholars' consideration of their students' backgrounds and dialects generated theories

of discourse and social structures within higher education. These theories would come to fruition in the 1980s, paving the way for a more welcoming place where working-class students could make their transition.

The 1980s

The 1980s was a time of transformational research and theorizing, all with intentions of creating a space where composition studies would be taken seriously and teachers would finally have an answer to why some students performed better than others. Composition was still gaining traction in the 1980s, with education administration worried that writing and the teaching of writing was not as important as teaching math or science (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Since administrators refused to place composition studies alongside scientific research in terms of importance, composition as a discipline was severely underfunded and overcrowded with underprepared students (Villanueva & Arola, 2011). In an attempt to create a level playing field, composition scholars tried constructing and popularizing their own form of a scientific method for teaching writing students (Villanueva & Arola). Composition theory would evolve from these scholars' efforts but writing professors would ultimately come to discover there was no exact way to teach composition (Bizzell, 1982); however, the methods they designed would go on to shape the discipline, continuing the 1970's trend of moving toward more student-centered pedagogy.

The latter part of the 1980s would have scholars exploring other options rather than a deficient mindset to assist working-class students in their journey of mastering academic discourse and the culture surrounding it without losing their own identities (more on class identity covered in the 1990s). Since this thesis emphasizes working-class language practices, I will only be analyzing cognitive process and social constructivist theories like collaborative learning that pertain to composition as I feel these movements had the most influence over how college teachers reckoned with working-class learners. I choose cognitive process theory to show how detrimental cognitive process practice was to working-class learners because the

theory essentially boxed these students in, and a large percentage of underprivileged learners would end up in remedial courses as a result of poor writing (Rose, 1988). Toward the middle of the 1980s, cognitive process theory lost traction and would be replaced by more social constructivist theories that took students' socioeconomic upbringings into account (Bizzell, 1982; Bruffee, 1984, Trimbur, 1989; Zebroski, 2006). Socially based theories would also lead scholars to analyze their students' home language practices, background, and culture and look to how these things affected different learners' writing (Bizzell; Bartholomae, 1985).

Cognitive Process Theory and Remedial Writers

One of the most controversial theories to emerge from the 1980s was the cognitive process theory, popularized by Linda Flower and John R. Hayes (1981). Given the circumstances of higher education and their investment in the sciences and neglect of composition, it is understandable that theorists of composition would attempt to design a pedagogy based around methodological and quantitative approaches to student writing performance (Flower & Hayes). However, as scholars would come to discover in the 1980's age of theorizing and beyond, it is nearly impossible to craft a one-size-fits-all pedagogy for teaching writing. Cognitive process theory has roots dating back more than fifty years in Jean Piaget's (1936) childhood developmental model that assessed children's concrete and abstract reasoning abilities from infancy to adolescence (Flower & Hayes). Piaget's developmental classification system was being applied to discussions of remedial college-age writers in the 1980s and I believe it does not do justice to the cognition processes of adult writers (Rose, 1988). It places a mark of inferiority on the writing practices of those who cannot follow the model, and a label that signifies an intellectual deficiency has lasting consequences for college students trying to get ahead in higher education.

Cognitive process theorists like Lunsford (1979) and Flower and Hayes (1981) seemed convinced that it was a student's brain power, not their cultural upbringing or personal learning history that classified them as "poor" writers. These deficient writers were faulted often for being self-centered and being unable to remove themselves from the topic they were tasked with writing about (Lunsford). Lunsford details an instance where she asked her students to read "ten consecutive issues of a comic strip, choose one of the major characters, and infer the basic values of that character from the information provided in the ten issues" (p. 279). She goes on to note that students marked as "basic writers" had trouble articulating character values that were unlike their own, instead describing these characters after reading only a few sentences and attributing values that aligned with their own ideas of what makes a good hero. Lunsford attributes students' failure to abstract themselves from what they've read as a lack of cognitive maturity on their end.

If related to working-class ways of thinking, Lunsford's (1979) cognitive deficiency analysis can be critiqued by taking note of basic writers' background. Working-class culture is one that values personal experience and people hailing from this culture often describe things based on their idea of a reputable source—their experience (Rose, 1985; Lindquist, 1999). Again, if professors are honoring "Student's Right to Their Own Language," then they must credit a students' personal experience as a valid component of students' writing and meaning-making capability. Students were also still categorized by the number of errors present in their writing compared with their more advanced peers, a carry-over from the 1970s that would continue to persist into the later part of the decade. (Shaughnessy, 1977a).

There was no set way to test a student's intellectual ability to think and process and yet cognitive process theorists would continue to base their views of student intelligence off of how well learners could distance themselves from the subject they were writing about (Flower & Hayes, 1981). After all, if students unfamiliar with the workings of college composition were to "invent the university" for the written occasion, then they would have to have some ability to abstract themselves into writing "from a position of privilege" (Bartholomae, 1985, p. 528). The issue I have with applying a cognitive process theory to working-class learners has to do with the actual amount of evidence scholars had to justify creating and adhering to a theory like this. Most support for cognitive process theory resulted from past tests performed on a select body of learners, and these tests were not replicated (Flower & Hayes; Bizzell, 1982).

Cognitive process theorists held some fundamental ideas of writing that were grounded in a "set of distinctive thinking processes" (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 254). The well-developed writer should have the ability to de-center themselves or think from a different frame of reference than the one they call their own (Lunsford, 1979). The basic writer is deemed as such because they cannot reason abstractly, analyze concepts or situations they've never been exposed to, or their vocabulary is simply not developed enough to explain what they believe in academically acceptable ways (Rose, 1988). Cognitive process theorists viewed working-class writers as egocentric victims of their situation, unable to think past a single perception of a topic (Lunsford, 1980). Scholars who advocated cognitive-based approaches to teaching writing would come to interpret their students' written shortcomings as "in need of remediation" and these students would go on to find a place in remedial writing classrooms that really did not help them figure out how to reason abstractly or use academic discourse to the best of their ability (Rose, 1985).

The group most affected by cognitive process theory was remedial writers. Remedial or basic writers were defined by their thinking process being somehow "fundamentally different from successful writers" (Rose, 1988, p. 325). These learners are said not to have reached a level of cognitive maturity that will allow them to write according to the standards set for college-level composition (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Lunsford, 1979). Students categorized under the basic cognition standard cognitive process theorists popularized were sorted and placed into remedial composition classes with hopes they would be retrained in the correct way of writing for university.

Contrary to the goal of improving the overall content and value of remedial writers' works, most remedial programs of study were structured to provide a simple overview of basic mechanics, syntax, vocabulary, and reading comprehension (Rose, 1985). The skills remedial courses taught were similar to the error-centered classes of the 1970s, but differed in their approach, meaning remedial courses aimed to fix a student's foundational knowledge of writing, whereas error-centered classes would simply correct a mistake in hopes of improving a student's future composing. The abilities that remedial courses teach are important to creating decent works of writing, but those abilities do not reflect the learning goals of normal composition courses—courses where teachers believe their students can produce effective arguments with little margin for error; they (remedial writing courses) are "self-contained" (Rose, 1983, p. 110). I would argue that this "self-containment" Rose (1983) discusses contributes further to a working-class student's impression of college being inaccessible to them.

The implications of being labeled "remedial" can be devastating on a student's educational future, even if categorical placement is meant to be "value-free" (Rose, 1988, p. 326). Though the first time remedial is used to label students happened in the 1970s, the

1980s would see a more complete version of remedial course work with complete syllabi detailing students needed to work on how to cite sources according to a set standard, sentence structure and thought organization, and what counted as acceptable discourse to write in, to name a few examples (Long & Boatman, 2013). Discourse and social perceptions of it would become a central focus for scholars interested in how a student's home language practices would help or hinder them during their higher education experiences.

Since language is social in nature, it is easy for individuals to make snap impressions of those who speak or write differently than they. A stunning example of this type of opinionated assessment of a person can be observed in Rose's (1985) account detailing his interaction with a student he calls Millie. Millie was attempting to work with Rose on a prefix test that assessed her ability to decipher underlined parts of words through multiple choice answers. She did not understand how the test worked and Millie often chose the answer that described the entire word rather than the underlined portion; it wasn't until Rose directed her attention to the emphasized prefix did Millie finally comprehend what was expected of her and she started selecting the correct answers (Rose). Millie was anxious when she sat to take the test because throughout her life, Millie was placed within an illiterate group of students who were told what they did wrong, but not praised for what they did right. Another point to make about Millie was that she came from a poor, working-class background, yet she is expected to recognize and perform to the curriculum's standards.

Rose's (1985) example of Millie and the struggles she faced being labeled remedial illustrates major failings of remedial courses—the fact that student understanding and literacy comprehension should be at the foundation of remedial classes. Rose himself states that the phrasing of the test questions given to Millie seemed intentionally unclear. It is not usually a

student's ability to make meaning with words that lies at the root of their problem to write in a way that academics deem suitable. Rather, I assert that working-class students' placement in remedial classes is due to their inexperience with the conventions of academic discourse (Bartholomae, 1985; Bizzell, 1982). Bartholomae argues that students must "invent the university for the occasion" or that students must continually find and maintain a balance among personal history and experience, academic language and style, and authority of scholarship, research, and analysis in their writing (p. 523).

Acknowledging a student's background and how personal experience guides their thought process and writing ability signifies a shift in pedagogy toward the middle of the 1980s. Theories like collaborative learning and social constructivism helped scholar and student alike discover that much of the language that was (and is) being taught in composition classrooms is socially constructed and often indicative of a particular discourse community (Bizzell, 1982; Bruffee, 1984). Collaborative learning would serve as a working example of the social construction of language in action.

Collaborative Learning

Although there are many others, two important scholarly works speaking to the significance working collaboratively had on teaching pedagogy in the 1980s were Kenneth A. Bruffee's (1984) "Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind'," and John Trimbur's (1989) "Consensus and Difference in Collaborative Learning." Both works combine discourse theory and collaborative learning theory in a way that attempts to explain the creation and maintenance of academically sanctioned knowledge and those who hold power over certain discourses (specifically academic discourse). Trimbur distinguishes collaborative learning from other types of group work, noting that collaborative learning "organizes students not just to work

together on common projects" (p. 441). Trimbur acknowledges how students engage in negotiation practices that challenge and teach them how to debate amongst themselves. Cooperative learning worked to take teachers out of the center of the writing classroom by making some compositions and grading a group responsibility (Elbow, 1998). According to Bruffee, collaborative learning methods have provided social context where students can actively practice and engage in conversations valued by higher education communities.

Working collaboratively gives all students a chance to converse and exchange ideas. On the surface level, cooperative learning lets young scholars identify points of agreement and areas of contention within their circle of peers. They discover how to navigate controlled conversation among equals rather than inside of an established hierarchy (Bruffee, 1984). Unless a child has been exposed to dialog amongst their elders about oppression and hierarchical systems, the first time an established language hierarchy is truly considered is (hopefully) during college. Realistically, no educator should expect the same degree of social awareness from students of varying backgrounds.

To address the criticism that unequal power structures get replicated within collaborative learning settings (Balasooriya et al., 2010), I recommend practices for facilitating student groups, so these hierarchies do not become reinforced. One way teachers can aid in preventing a reenactment of control is by randomly assigning team roles to each learner in a group. If done correctly, it can include students traditionally excluded in group discussions (quiet or preferring to work alone) and restricts learners who like to assume leadership roles and divvy out work (Balasooriya et al.). Another avenue that teachers can take to avoid power plays from students working in a group is to pair learners with complementary strengths together

(Balasooriya et al.). Students normally know their strengths and weaknesses and teaming up with another peer who enjoys doing the work that one student hates is a good way to encourage equal participation among learners.

Diving into the second and more theoretical position of collaborative learning takes the conversation into a place of analysis. As students work in partnership with one another, they begin to learn what theorists such as Bruffee (1984) and Trimbur (1989) term "normal discourse" (Bruffee, 1984, p. 403) or "consensus," (Trimbur, 1989, p. 442) and "abnormal discourse" (Bruffee, 1984, p. 409) or "dissensus" (Trimbur, 1989, p. 449). Normal discourse acts as the preserver of discourse conventions of knowledge and abnormal discourse challenges or attempts to generate new knowledge (Bruffee). Researching and considering where a community's knowledge practices arise from will allow students to uncover what is often included (accepted) and excluded (rejected) by discourse communities.

Teachers who incorporate collaborative learning practices into their classroom have the ability to do the following things: let working-class students identify the reasons why they have not been introduced or exposed to academic discourse, and let middle-class students recognize their socioeconomic position and benefit preparing for college-level communication and composition (Trimbur). Compositionists in the 80s proposed providing resources to get unfamiliar students comfortable with academic discourse as well as allocating enough time for said students to fully explore what is provided would alleviate any mental strain these learners may experience.

Collaborative learning serves as an excellent opportunity for students to learn the social nature of language—how it is produced and tweaked to mean different things within various communities. As Trimbur (1989) explains, "The point of collaborative learning is not simply to

demystify the authority of knowledge by revealing its social character but to transform the productive apparatus, to change the social character of production" (p.453). If working class students are in a position where they can come to an understanding through engaging with the academy's normal discourse among peers where there is no notable power dynamic determining who may speak and who remains silent, then those students have a non-threatening and potentially constructive, socially uplifting way to absorb academic discourse.

Discourse and Conventions

Discourse theory involves the social nature of language and the preservation of the language used by said society (Bizzell, 1982; Bruffee, 1984; Trimbur, 1989). Every form of discourse contains conventions or commonplaces that define it. Discourse itself is defined by certain ways of thinking and using language within a particular context (Hyland, 2009). However, discourse also includes ways of "behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking" that influence perceptions of language and the people that use it (Gee, 1989, p. 6). Discourses are determined by commonplaces and commonplaces used inside of a discourse carry power because they "determine the meaning of an example," and "A commonplace determines a system of interpretation that can be used to 'place' an example within a standard system of belief" (Bartholomae, 1985, p. 538).

Within the context of the writing classroom, Bartholomae's (1985) discussion of commonplaces gave teachers an excellent starting point to instruct students how to recognize diverse discourses according to the systematic language practices they employ. Bizzell (1982) and Bartholomae agree that students would have an easier transition to academic discourse if they understand the commonplaces that belong to that community.

Academic discourse is loosely defined as a set of attitudes, habits, and practices that structure the thinking and research methods of academics (Bartholomae, 1985). According to Thonney (2011), there are six definable standards of academic discourse in writing: responding to what others have written about a topic, stating the value of one's work, acknowledging differing viewpoints, writing from a position of authority, using discipline-specific vocabulary, and highlighting factual evidence. Working-class discourse commonplaces differ between the type of knowledge learned in school and the kind garnered through experience, with greater preference placed on practice rather than study (Luttrell, 1989). People from working-class backgrounds normally attribute family, community, and work influence to back their language and writing skills, as opposed to cultivated expert voices (Luttrell).

The working-class notably resists levied authority and their defiance is understandable in the context of where they and their community have spent a good majority of their lives—working in subordinate positions and being told exactly how to do their job with little need for questioning. Often, blue-collar students compose with a working-class convention, commonsense, serving as a stand in for intellectually curated sources (Luttrell, 1989). Common sense is explained by working-class students as "real intelligence" because it is widely understood as essential to communicate within their inner circles (Luttrell, p. 37). Contrasted with academic discourse's trust in curated voices and lengthy research, working-class discourse's reliance on a mere "honest face" to support their claims can leave a disconnect when these learners are attempting to write for academia (Shaughnessy, 1977b). However, I believe scholars in the 1980s were creating spaces advocating a mindset or theory that acknowledges these students hail from diverse discourse communities. As Coles and

Wall (1987) state, learners from various walks of life "all inhabit and are inhabited by the discourses of popular culture, politics, religion, family, work- each one competing in the formation of our consciousness" (p. 312). Coles and Wall touch on the importance of accepting a broader definition of literacy, one that realizes that multiple characteristics inform personal literacy proficiency.

Composition professors' pedagogies in the 1980s had begun to shift to include more commonsense perspectives, and while most composition teachers still taught the value of academic discourse, the significance of preaching from a position of superior discourse was beginning to wane (Myers, 1986; Luttrell, 1989). The view that knowledge is context-dependent led scholars to question commonplaces they had internalized, wondering how diverse conventions would intersect when they allowed students to input their own language customs. Allowing students a right to use their own language when composing not only helped students develop their own writerly identities, but also worked to implement social constructionism, another highly important theoretical pedagogy in the 1980s (Myers). Social constructivist theory admitted both scholar and student alike to analyze the formation of discourse conventions and figure out reasons why certain conventions signified a higher standard of social class if used (Myers). The social nature of language was always felt but lacked a committed analysis of the hierarchical power structures that continued to praise the middle and upper-class speech patterns while discounting lower-class voices who disrupted the status quo. Social theories of language would work to change that.

Social Constructivism and the Future

Trimbur (1989) and Myers (1986) elaborate on the power dynamics of social learning when they detail appeals to the authority of consensus and reality through language. When

evaluating language communities participating in collaborative learning, Trimbur noted that knowledge is created and maintained by those that hold power within discourse communities when he states, " … we could name the conversation and its underlying consensus as a technology of power and ask how its practices enable and constrain the production of knowledge, privilege and exclude forms of discourse, set its agenda ignoring or suppressing others" (pg. 447). Here, Trimbur implores composition scholars to look more deeply into the true discourse underlying collaborative learning and try to explore other, difference-producing options such as a rhetoric of dissensus. Myers echoes Trimbur's complaints of consensus, arguing that if students exercise agreement in the classroom, they leave no room to question the social context in which the language of consensus works to conceal social class.

Academic language and style, authority of scholarship, research, and analysis are considered essential to the mastery of academic discourse, and command over the conventions that govern composition within higher education is what writing instructors strive to teach (Bizzell, 1982). Also, the commonplaces of the academy seem to only be accessible by assuming a position of privilege, meaning a writer must establish and speak through a posture of authority (Bartholomae, 1985). So, since academic discourse is presented as the dominant and most accepted form of communication in university, social constructivists urge purveyors of the discourse of the academy to ask why those values are the norm (Bizzell; Bartholomae). Social constructivists wanted to understand why the social capital surrounding academic discourse relates to a disruption of the power structures interconnected to working-class identity.

Standards of academia stem from longstanding ideological foundations that were established, according to a more Marxists sociological perspective (Myers, 1986), to keep the

oppressed individuals in their place and to impose unnecessary authority, scheduling, and reproduction of social stations (Myers). Myers explains the risk of not training students to recognize where certain values originate from and how they are perpetuated when he notes, “Knowledge is not uniformly distributed in our society... If we turn a blind eye to social factors we are likely merely to perpetuate the provision of different kinds of knowledge for the rich and poor” (p.167). Myers is moving toward the point that those who determine what aligns with current, discourse community consensus hold power over those seeking admittance into the discourse. Thus, he explains how an interference of authority to those living in its shadow is essentially teaching a group of people traditionally unaware of the structure of control how to undermine or critically analyze it, thereby giving individuals who simply accept their station in life the tools to deconstruct it, to examine it, and (possibly) to change it (Rose, 1985; Myers; Coles & Wall, 1987; Rose, 1988).

Attempts to change how the U.S. higher education system works have consistently been made in the past, but adherence to the hierarchical structure of academia makes any conversion challenging. Myers (1986) notes how ingrained ideology of class and economic systems are within higher education, writing about how students and teachers simply accept things like capitalism, despite its contradictions, or fail to question why structures of oppression continue to subjugate the working-class and support the upper-class. Further, school imparts more than just academic knowledge: “they teach work according to schedule, acceptance of authority, and competition among individuals and between groups. They [schools] also help provide a justification of the hierarchies of society, so that, for instance, people accept that manual labor should pay less than mental labor” (Myers, p.156). According to Myers, schools teach a mindset resonant of middle and upper-class culture. If a student is familiar with upper-class values, then

they should do well with the expectations placed on them in composition classrooms (Bloom, 1996). It makes sense then, that students unfamiliar with the expectations of higher education often experience a sense of isolation and begin to feel that academia is not accepting of them and the working-class identity learners carry with them (Rose, 1985).

Mental work like research, analytical conceptualization, and rhetorical scenarios can conflict with working-class notions of knowledge (Rose, 1985; Luttrell, 1989). Consistent conflict from home, work, and school often skews a blue-collar student's sense of belonging and identity and even when a student or instructor acknowledges the creation of knowledge and those who maintain what can be considered new knowledge, it can still cause confusion, questioning, and sometimes anger in a learner (Rose; Coles & Wall, 1987). Educators in the 1980s started to recognize an internal war students fought when attempting to mix another, far more rule-dominated discourse into the myriad of others already at their disposal. Scholars practicing social constructivism found value in stepping back and analyzing the socioeconomic weight academic discourse possessed (Rose; Coles & Wall). Academic language's appeal to objectivity often stifled student individuality by excluding any form of the personal in student writing (Raymond, 1993; Alberti, 1998). Issues of identity would evolve in the 1990s to further incorporate ways for student composing to open ways for learners with a style of communication that has been looked down upon in the past to express themselves without fully denying their personal history.

The 1990s

The 1990s would see student-help theories like collaborative learning and revamping remedial writing in the 1980s come into play. Teachers of composition were furthering their practices from error-centered approaches and transitioning into an instructional system that included narrative analysis, diverse discourses, and cultural and social contexts in which writing happens (Bridwell-Bowles, 1992; Lu, 1992; Marinara, 1997). Universities would see an increase in professors from working-class backgrounds focus more on students' socio-economic conditions because these teachers' past college struggles parallel blue-collar students they now taught (Daniels, 1998; McMillan, 1998; Sullivan, 1998). Accepted student discourse would become more diverse and personal experience would become valuable in working-class student compositions (Lu; Elbow, 1998). Appreciating diversity in students' cultures, languages, experience outside the classroom, and socio-economic positions would have lasting effects on writing pedagogy and its approach to students not hailing from middle-class backgrounds.

Culturally, the 1990s was a time of celebration for individuality and cultural difference (Harrison, 2010). The U.S. manufacturing industry was in decline and the service industry was rising; America was becoming a country of consumerism with capitalism fueling the increasing wealth gap among class groups (Harrison). With the release of the World Wide Web around 1991, the ability to connect and learn with technology compounded, ushering in what Harrison termed the Information Age. It seemed only natural that exposure to such connective technology would lead to a greater acceptance of language and cultural diversity, further placing academic discourse in a place of scrutiny.

Academic discourse is still privileged by some scholars in the 1990s (Hyland, 2009), but compositionists' teaching practices expanded to include discourses unrelated to the

academy (Elbow, 1991). Diversity within student discourses is more apparent and the idea of teaching students to critique rather than conform to academic discourse starts to bleed into composition practice (Bridwell-Bowles, 1992). A massive shift in teaching perspective has students rethinking the inclusion of the personal in their academic writing, and more professors are concerned with promoting empowerment rather than continuing to submit students to the whims of the university (Marinara, 1997; Alberti, 1998; Lindquist, 1999). This shift in teacher perspective would include a clearer recognition of student discourse that relied on narrative in student compositions. It was a callback to expressivist theories developed by Britton et al. (1979), scholars who pioneered expressivist pedagogy with his referral to language as expression of the self (Lofty, 2009). Britton et al. believed expressivist language was the language of learning, and the 90's use of individual expression in student compositions would lead to a steady move toward greater questioning of the social power of academic discourse and what knowledge is privileged in the academy, and an expanded class-based look at literacy (Lofty).

Changes to Perceptions on Discourse

The 1990s supported progressive styles of teaching composition that gave students space to include more authentic voices in their writing and physically see and hear the ways they "cross boarders of identity" and define themselves not by institutional standards, but by calculating their growth as a writer of many discourses separate from the academy (Alberti, 1998, p. 3). For instance, Marinara (1997) had a composition class full of working-class adults she designed around work outside of school so her students who worked after class could better connect and write about the subject matter. Marinara wanted to show her students the value of

writing without always having to worry about meeting the conventional requirements of the academy by allowing them to compose in a similar style that they used inside of their workplace.

As Elbow (1991) notes, academic discourse is not the preferred format for most writing styles (especially outside of university). Adding to his point about what type of writing workplaces prefer, Elbow acknowledges one of the pitfalls always deferring to academic language creates when he states, “The use of academic discourse often masks a lack of genuine understanding” (p. 137). Bridwell-Bowles (1992) approves of Elbow’s sentiment of refraining from *always* using academic discourse in the writing classroom and has her students challenge the traditional academic essay by recommending they try out alternatives, such as “a more personalized voice, an expanded use of metaphor, a less ridged methodological framework ...” (p. 350). The above-mentioned teaching practices make room for more diverse language practices, giving students a right to their own language style, if I may.

Theorists during the 1990s recognized that a broader view of human discourse is important, yet the usefulness of academic discourse continued to stand equally significant. During the 1990s, a massive emphasis on school restructuring was ongoing (Lynch, 2016). Composition programs allowed teachers more choice over their instructional materials and a less stringent emphasis of a common, outdated curriculum, and significant stress was placed on re-structuralists to make schools inviting places where student need would be at the forefront of educational programs (McNeil & Bellamy, 1994). Academic discourse would not disappear in the 1990s, but ideas about its usefulness would come under scrutiny (Elbow, 1991).

Progressive composition traditions of the 1990s pushed back against the undying 1970s carry-over of correctness and working-class students’ fixation on it (Shaughnessy,

1977a); however, blue-collar students have been exposed to what Alberti (1998) terms as an obsession with correctness and complete disavowal of the personal. According to Alberti, “An obsession with correctness, with ‘not talking ignorant,’ as some of my students put it, is the mark of those outside cultural privilege looking in. For these students, academic writing is precisely writing that excludes the personal in all forms” (p. 4). The personal Alberti mentions here refers to the use of “I” in academic writing. Alberti’s conception of “I” in academic discourse is meant to challenge prevailing assumptions of objectivity and assist working-class students in constructing their own intellectual identity when composing for university.

The resistance to including the personal in writing stems from a question of the writer’s authority. Scholars who opt for the use of the personal in academic settings normally already have an established voice, one where the use of I makes sense because that writer has already proven they have something of note to add to the ongoing conversation of the field (Raymond, 1993). Like Raymond says, “The important question for writers ... is not whether the authorial I is allowed, but whether it is earned and whether it is effective” (p. 482). Determining the effectiveness of the personal in compositions would be the focal point moving forward with expository writing in the 1990s. Later, as we see, using the personal and determining one’s voice when writing would influence teaching pedagogy into the next decade.

Voice in Writing

There are several scholars who have explored what it means to have an authentic voice, cultivate a personal style of composing both in and out of the classroom, and integrate individual experience into academic writing. Voice in writing usually indicates a piece of writing belongs to a particular person, one who should be easily identifiable by his or her expression on the page (Fulwiler, 1990). The 1970s and 80s teaching pedagogy that relied heavily on mimicry did

not allow much room for a personal voice, but there were scholars who attempted to make strides forward for the field in this area (Lunsford, 1979). Other scholars like LeCourt (2006) offer what she calls a performative view of composition, which demonstrates that class positions are not fixed, but rather fluid and ever-changing. Translated to composition pedagogy, expressing one's socioeconomic position through writing opens avenues of discussion that would otherwise be charged during traditional speech acts (Clark, 1994; LeCourt). When a working-class student pens their situation to paper, they are essentially becoming critical analyzers of their own lives.

One route working-class students especially can pursue is tapping into their personal experiences to craft narratives full of knowledge that draw from backgrounds they defined before the academy (Soliday, 1999). And these students do have much to offer in terms of experience; it is the academy that effectively de-skills working-class learners by not recognizing the skills they bring with them from outside of the classroom (Marinara, 1997). Allowing working-class students to incorporate their stories into academic writing functions much like the storytelling aspect of their culture where experience is used instead of academically-backed sources for bolstering an argument. The stories I consider next include the knowledge working-class students bring with them to the classroom, and storytelling within composition became more of a negotiation between outside and academic literacies (Marinara).

By incorporating a more story-driven approach to composing in academic discourse, working-class students began to develop their own voice in writing, otherwise known as a writer's authorly presence (Fulwiler, 1990). On a grander scale, the students using personal experience to support an argument are not assimilating to the discourse of the academy; rather they are creating a space for negotiation between the knowledge their culture finds valuable and

that which is privileged by the academy (Marinara, 1997). Acknowledging alternative literacies like mechanical proficiency or hospitality service credits working-class experience and works to unify their culture with that of the academy. In the 1990s recognizing different types of cultural intelligence created a place where students from less privileged backgrounds felt accepted, yet when students used discourse that differed from the kind favored by academics, these students were said to be digressing or were termed basic or remedial and in need of rescuing from their less advanced language communities (Lu, 1992).

To counter the large emphasis on remedial education in the 90s meant teachers would need to create or ask their students about topics where they could write in the voice of the expert (Alberti, 1998). Giving these students an opening to develop a personal authority on tangible topics like their jobs, families, or financial responsibilities and student writers transformed from hesitant, basic writers into composers who were confident in their subject matter and voice (Lu, 1992, Elbow, 1991). When students were granted the ability to critically analyze the culture they originated from and the barriers of entry they faced attempting to move into another culture, they opened another route of discourse—one that countered "the mystical authority of academic modes of understanding" and surrendered that unquestionable authority to the students learning it (Ernest, 1998, p. 29). Throughout the previous decades, giving students more opportunities for cultural analysis were done through collaborative learning or simple discourse analysis; however, the methods employed by scholars of the past did not necessarily facilitate profound change within the thinking of the academy, it merely made accessing the standard, rhetorical conventions of the college composition easier (Elbow; Soliday, 1999).

Narratives in Composition

In the 1990s, many professors of composition would recognize the influence individual history, culture, and choice have on their students' writing style and language practices, and this observation seems promising when promoting narrative and diversity of discourse within higher education (Marinara, 1997; Elbow, 1998; Soliday, 1999). Professors like McMillan (1998) advocate using narratives to understand social class because, he says, we understand our own social class in terms of stories. Composing narratives to understand class in the 1990s is different from narrative/expressivist writing of the 1970s in that it has progressed to include a wider range of audiences than friends, teachers, and trusted adults (Tate et al., 2014). There was also much greater emphasis on defining who was being addressed and why in composition in the 1990s that continued to develop into the next decade. A more thorough look at developmental writers and their engagement with audience awareness would occur in the 1990s (McAlexander, 1996).

Renewing focus on audience in the 1990s gave students more of a purpose for writing, and the rationale for stressing a writer's audience could better situate composition as a worthy discipline that carried significance outside of college and into the workforce (McAlexander, 1996). According to McAlexander, cultivating an appreciation for audience awareness in students is yet another method of improving these students' written communication on both "emotional and intellectual levels" (p. 28). Better emotional connection can happen using storytelling and personal narratives because exercise of the personal in writing has the capability to elicit a moving reaction out of an audience who relates to the story a composer tells (Lu, 1992). For writers to elicit a response from their audience, writers must possess some knowledge of that audience's preferred discourse community and some knowledge of the work

done by experts within that community (Bizzell, 1982; Bartholomae, 1985). Thus, to best address issues of audience awareness, McAlexander suggests composition teachers in the 90s assign different roles to students when performing peer reviews, write down their own initial reading responses, or designate an audience in their class's earlier assignments to gauge students' comfort level when deciding their audience.

Scholars writing in the 1990s recognized that teaching audience awareness involves learning about an author's cultural heritage and backstory (Elbow, 1998). In the 1990s, expressivist pedagogy was revamped into what is now called neo-expressivism, and neo-expressivist teaching practices work to blend academic and personal discourse to offer more stylized ways of creating academic compositions for the underprivileged (Tate et al., 2014). At its core, expressivism can provoke a meaningful analysis of students' social class and how it alters their position as authors (Sumpter, 2016). Expressivist pedagogy affirms storytelling as a method learners can use to diverge from the past standards of academic discourse conventions because it opens other pathways for personal narratives to serve as evidence when crafting an argument or rhetorical piece. (Sumpter).

Because of the emphasis on cultivating voice and validating home experiences in the 1990s, students felt like they had a place within the academic world of writing, feeling like their beliefs written in a discourse familiar to a broader audience will mean something (Elbow, 1991; Soliday, 1999). The push towards personal writing allowed students to feel as though their compositions belonged less to the university and more to their personal portfolios. Giving working-class students personal rights to their writing connects underprivileged learners to their roots because they feel they have something easily shareable with the community they came from.

I personally feel as though I get more from my education when I share it with close family members. Being able to discuss my work with people from my community that I trust just feels different and more meaningful (more real) than having a structured, back-and-forth conversation about my topic of choice with strangers. While my family can likely be biased, they are not afraid to tell me what they get from a piece I have written, and often, they come up with critiques or revisions pertinent to the working-class community that neither I nor my teachers ever considered. It means more when not only my college professors comprehend the writing I am doing, but also when my working-class family members are able to understand a complex idea or theme I am analyzing because I can see my composition reaching a broader audience than those confined to academia.

Though much more freedom was given to students when selecting the kind of discourse they could compose in, similar issues from the 70s regarding feelings of alienation among professors and students persisted in the 90s (Wolfe, 1972; MacKenzie, 1998; Lindquist, 1999). Teachers would acknowledge working-class language and even encourage some assignments to be completed in a more familiar discourse; however, the instructors themselves would often continue to assume positions of authority (Elbow, 1998). Spellmeyer (1996) noted how some writing professors continued to justify the work they did as more meaningful when he states, “To justify the privileged status of their work, these specialists must show that their thinking is somehow superior to common sense-more inclusive, more penetrating, more rigorous” (p. 897). After researching why some students simply did not grasp rhetorical theory and could not compose outside themselves, Spellmeyer discovered that it was not necessarily a student’s lack of cognitive ability that predisposed them to failure. Rather, teachers who opted to use high-functioning language often derived from theory during their instruction

were found to be privileging their discourse and their status as gatekeepers to university (Spellmeyer). The discourse Spellmeyer describes here is exactly the kind of language that estranges those unfamiliar with the abstractness, the theoretical perspectives, the ideologies of the middle and upper-class (Bloom, 1996; Soliday, 1999). It's not that working-class students are "anti-theoretical," it's more like they prefer knowledge that can be immediately used to further their economic position (Wolfe).

To conclude this chapter, I wish to discuss how lessons from the 1990s can continue to impact compositionists today. Composition teachers can attempt to implement story-driven narratives, open work-based discussions, and integrate what students bring with them outside the classroom into their personal compositions. A good starting point should be before class even begins. Professors of teaching writing should first examine their own expectations and existing biases before teaching writing. I want to place special focus on Lindquist's (1999) notion of "*what if"* because of compositionists' reliance on the theoretical (p. 244). Lindquist's notion alludes to working-class resistance of the abstract, and as mentioned before, working-class individuals often struggle to grasp abstract concepts since working-class discourse practices often exist with more concrete reasoning backing up blue-collar logic. Concrete reasoning can be identified in writing in the form of experience, storytelling, or personal narrative. Asking students to write abstractly should be attempted after allowing space for working-class students to become more comfortable with their writing (Lindquist).

One of the simplest ways to acknowledge a student's personal discourse is to allow them to craft arguments where the writers themselves get to choose and flesh out their own audience. My idea draws from Elbow's (1991) work that states group discourse conventions are used to establish communities of speakers who possess their own ways of

discussing things. Another way for students to study and understand a discourse community's conventions is to engage in discussions of difference, or what Clark (1994) calls, "a recognition of the necessity of difference" (p. 63). I believe one of the best approaches to engage with Clark's call to appreciate difference can come in the form of open classroom discussions where teachers can facilitate conversations about student background and culture and how one's personal history influences their communication practices and individual discourses.

I would then encourage professors and learners alike to compare their home discourses with that of Standard English taught within higher education, analyzing the pros and cons of what writing within the confines of each convention gives the writer. Does one convention allow for more personal forms of expression at the cost of revealing a biased viewpoint? Can composing with academic discourse come off cold and inaccessible to readers unfamiliar with its conventions, regardless of whether the author makes mindful arguments? Delving into questions like the ones above is an effective way for teachers to help their students identify the diverse customs afforded to each discourse community and their members.

The practices I have listed are the culmination of ideas from scholars of the 1990s. Greater use of the personal in college writing allowed teachers and students to explore and better craft their own personal style and voice (Alberti, 1998; Elbow, 1998). As composers advanced both in style and writerly voice, they grew more comfortable with their craft. The 90s composition classroom also experienced a resurgence of expressivist writing and that led to the use of personal narrative and storytelling becoming more acceptable within composition classrooms. The advent of these expressivist techniques would teach composition students the value of writing in other forms of discourse besides academic.

There was also a renewed focus on audience occurring in the 90s classroom, and professors broadened their students' imagined audience from strictly academically inclined to more like what they would encounter in the real world. The shift in focus included an exploration of audience through discourse and more expository writing. Scholars' main goal in the 1990s was to make the college writing classroom more democratic in nature. The democratic classroom is one where student voices are better realized and heard, and where a writer's compositions could benefit them outside of academia. Overall, the 90s classroom would offer greater accessibility to students unfamiliar with academic discourse by creating access points through accepting students' home discourses and providing space for learners to write in their home languages.

The 21st Century

The 2000s had scholars asking some of the hardest questions about class and how it affects students' lives and college experience. Intellectuals inside of composition and rhetoric began taking very strict note of how students' home languages, cultural and classed values and beliefs, and upbringing influenced how these students perceived the academy and searched for their place in it (Mauk, 2003; Kinloch, 2005; Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013). Difficult topics about rising tuition, greater standardized placement tests, and the not-so-honest promise of upward mobility for the disenfranchised through education were happening, yet the gap between middle and upper-class college graduates and the working-class strivers continued to widen (Peckham, 2010; Stuber, 2011; Rose, 2014). The 2000s would see tremendous increases in connectivity, business and economic boom, and an increasingly wider wealth gap among the rich and poor (Stuber; Klugman & Lee, 2019). College enrollment skyrocketed and more people than ever were educated or trying to become educated due to new educational requirements for jobs that previously did not require degrees to work (Klugman & Lee).

Tuition rates for universities continued to rise because of decreased federal funding being replaced by "market principles" in higher education (Abbott, 2005). Abbott's concern referred to surge of standardized testing and constant evaluation of student and teacher performance in attempts to meet the idea of a standard curriculum. Government educational policy prompted efficiency within schools, treating them less like institutions of learning and more like businesses trying to maximize production and profit (Abbott; Rose, 2014). There was a disconnect in communication between educators and policy makers; there was little besides critical pedagogy that theorized to make the classroom more accessible,

democratic, and welcoming to students seemed to be implemented because administration was more concerned with creating competition among learning communities rather than uniting them with a common goal (Abbott; Rose; Peckham, 2010). An example Abbott cites is the implementation of computer learning. Schools had enough money to fund computer labs and training courses, but administration levied much of educational funding toward more niche educational specialties like healthcare or business (Garrett, 2021). However, with the invention of person computers (PC) came the mass adoption of digital rhetoric inside of the composition classroom (Palmeri, 2012).

For decades, higher education has been hailed as the great equalizer and one of the best options for upward mobility for those looking to change their future in favor of more and better financial and career stability (Stuber, 2011). However, colleges in the 21st century are acting more like businesses than schools with investments in hedge funds and letting big business companies fund their programs (Rose, 2014). This kind of high-risk investment hurts students who rely on financial aid programs to pay for school when these programs hardly cover half of the costs for most working-class students (Rose).

Finances and Politics in Higher Education

Higher education institutions would have their public believe that rising tuition costs go toward better academic and financial aid programs—college recruiters tout the value of their institution's education and highlight the success of their alumni, all to justify the rising cost of education (Ornstein, 2019). However, parents and students alike know prestigious universities not necessarily for their stellar educational programs, but rather the social and business networking opportunities afforded to students by attending a respected college (Ornstein). A recent example of the importance upper-class parents place on the value of attending a high-

ranking university is the College Admissions Scandal in 2019 (Hess, 2019). The scandal involved schemes of falsification of academic and athletic portfolios, as well as bribery of admissions administration (Ornstein). Institutional screening allowed these constructed profiles to go unchecked and scholars started to question the validity of college admissions or determine reasons why colleges were selling out to families who could pay their way through the system (Hess). The implications from the College Admissions Scandal of 2019 concern socioeconomic class and the obvious disadvantage the lower-class is placed at in higher education in the 21st century.

According to Armstrong and Hamilton (2013), college funding for academics and financial aid has decreased since 1998, with tuition dollars supporting student services like more luxurious residences and athletic programs rather than educational programs. As noted by Armstrong and Hamilton, “Four-year residential colleges and universities have long depended on the patronage of upper and middle-class families and have consequentially provided the social experiences desired by this constituency” (p. 240). The upper and middle-class families often have legacies built off generations of college-goers, and the purveyors of these generational lineages harbor certain expectations for their children’s university experience, especially since they donate large sums of money to the schools they graduate from (Armstrong & Hamilton; Huddleston, 2019). For those in the middle, it is a case of maintain an outward appearance of affluence while suffering the financial consequences, meaning middle-class students have essentially the same experience and resources as the upper-class, but they often borrow money in order to meet the current costs of educational attainment (Pfeffer, 2018). In essence, if schools are run like businesses, then colleges will cater to their highest paying customers, not those depending on their reward programs.

Unfortunately, the mentality of schools operating like businesses has only worsened coming into the 2000s. The wealth gap among students is becoming more apparent in higher education, and Pfeffer (2018) has found that the gap is increasing over 10 years into the 21st century. Pfeffer discovered that educational attainment correlates the most positively with family wealth, more so than parental educational attainment or occupation. Pertinent to my thesis, family wealth predicts the likelihood of a child staying in school, what resources will be available to that student, and the comfort (or lack thereof) of a safety net in case of a personal or family emergency (Stuber, 2011; Silva & Snellman, 2018).

As indicated by my thesis, throughout the past 40 years working-class students have taken issue with the beliefs inherent in a middle-class education (Wolfe, 1972; Rose, 1985; Lindquist, 1999). However, blue-collar parents came to recognize the importance of a college degree and encouraged their children to attend university (Wolfe). In the 2000s working-class families would begin to feel the effect of a widening wealth gap that would go on to govern student financial resources (Stuber, 2011; Trimzy, 2018). From 1992-2016, the number of jobs that require some form of higher education rose from 18 percent to 25 percent, with professions that traditionally did not require college degrees suddenly calling for them (Khine, 2019). Work that conventionally employed working-class individuals saw about a 30 percent drop from 1992 to 2016 (Khine). Couple the decreasing employment opportunities for underprivileged families with the increasing wage gap among the upper and lower-classes, and the fact that increasing college costs contribute to a lack of blue-collar attendance becomes clearer (Peckham, 2010; Trimzy; Khine).

Lower-class households lack essential resources like parents with college degrees or college pathway mentors that white-collar students have, and this deficiency limits working-class

students' acclimation to cultural and social domains of college (Stuber, 2011). Still, examples of college as a place of belonging and a place to grow and learn heavily persist within working-class homes (Silva & Snellman, 2018). If we look at a working-class students' hopes of their collegiate reality (in a working-class student's case, an example would be college education equals upward mobility, better pay, and less manual labor) and contrast that with the majority of blue-collar student realizations throughout the process of attaining their degree (college degrees do not guarantee financial stability and the debt accrued to afford the cost of a degree offsets true financial gain), we see the fiscal risk blue-collar learners take when deciding to enroll in college (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998; Thering, 2012).

Another gamble students from less affluent backgrounds take is working to pay for college while attending it (Mauk, 2003). Dedicating time to work limits the amount of time working-class students spend on academic pursuits or extracurricular activities that incentivize learners to network (Mauk; Stuber, 2011). These same students often commute to and from school, adding stress and more time away from scholarly work (Mauk; Stuber). Also, working-class students typically have family responsibilities like caring for a sick family member or helping tend to younger relatives that take priority over their schooling (Rose, 2014). With so many obligations distracting these students from academic work and life, there is no wonder why disadvantaged students are either slow to grasp or fail to understand the importance of academic discourse and the social manners of the upper classes.

The writing classroom can work to relieve the stress working-class students feel when faced with outside responsibilities by implementing a number of small changes that can make higher education more accessible to the disenfranchised. A simple, but underused solution that can be employed at the classroom level is providing a definition of terms for first-generation or

working-class students who may be unfamiliar with the lingo often used inside of composition courses (Ardoin, 2018). Language like metacognition, open-source, formative and summative assessments, and 21st century skills can all be expanded upon to avoid learner confusion. Ardoin highlights an instance of Louisiana State University's efforts in dismantling the language hierarchy of higher education when she cites the college's online catalogue that describes a list of college terms and their meaning. In addition, professors and other university staff should try and use full names of any departments, programs, or offices to aid with the effort of accessibility for the disenfranchised (Ardoin). With reference to the composition classroom, rather than have several terms for the same thing like basic writing or English 101 and abbreviations such as COMP or WRIT, I would suggest agreeing on a single term to identify the type of class a student is signing up for.

Another example of institutional development in the right direction is the advent of what Ardoin (2018) calls "class identity centers" (p.81). Similar to race-based services, class identity centers described above are redefining what working-class college spaces can look like and accomplish. Mauk's (2003) discussion of creating a space for underrepresented groups like blue-collar students goes a long way in helping these students feel more at home in academic spaces because they have access to a physical area where they can interact with others who have alike backgrounds and cultures. These spaces may prompt discussions about class and the impact it has on college experience and attainment—discussions that could also find their way into composition classrooms as student paper topics.

As discussed in previous chapters, working-class students are at a disadvantage when recognizing the time commitment, financial burden, and class-per-credit system (general education requirements and elective courses) college demands (Rose, 1985). As a working-class

student myself, I was a little underwhelmed at general education courses. They seemed like a review from high school, but the writing courses did teach me some expectations of college composition. The elective courses frustrated me because even though colleges state these courses make their students well-rounded, most extra credit courses only amount to more time students must spend in university to attain a degree. More time equals more money spent, more time in class means less time spent garnering tangible work experience required to get a job after college.

The importance of general education courses has been contested among faculty and students (Awbrey, 2005). A study performed by Thompson et al. (2015) suggested that students view general education requirements as time consuming and less relevant to future careers than their major course work. Students concerned with affording college often opted to complete gen ed. classes at another college because they believed those courses would "cost less, be easier to pass, and fewer students would be enrolled in the courses at other institutions, thus more individualized attention from the instructors would be possible" (Thompson et al., p. 289). Thompson's et al. discovery, I believe, is better situated when applied to elective gen ed courses, rather than required classes. When students are given the option to select courses simply for a few credits, they will often take the path of least resistance, meaning learners opt to take general courses that involve less effort and time commitment, so they can focus their energy on the major courses they need for their degree (Thompson et al.). In this way, higher education would lose worth in a working-class value system since it is difficult to categorize sociability and the value of classed rhetoric seen most prevalently within these general education requirements.

Colleges have demonstrated the worth that first-year writing courses bring to their students, but other elective courses like golf or yoga do not round out a student's educational journey as well. I recommend colleges in the 2000s work to better demonstrate the worth certain gen ed classes provide and reduce the number of general classes needed for a completed degree. An example of engaging general education courses that benefit the working-class student is first-year college experience courses (Malinga-Musamba, 2014; Ardoin, 2018). Though these types of classes have been offered since the 1970s, the 2000s classroom marked a changed resurgence of first-year college experience courses that were geared toward preparing unfamiliar learners with the inner-workings of higher education (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The more hybridized first-year experience courses of the 2000s incorporate multiple facets of other general education classes like writing about an experience outside of the classroom, or creating a report of what a student discovered after exploring the community surrounding their college (U.S. Department of Education; Ardoin). Because of the inclusion of other academic disciplines such as writing, gen ed courses like first year experience courses could take the place of less-sensible class-for-credit courses like bicycling or weightlifting.

Negotiating Their Place in the Academy: A Move Toward the Democratic, Student-Centered Classroom

Within working-class culture, there is no need for lingual embellishment—these people normally "take the route of least resistance" when expressing a point due to their background circumstances of maturing in a blue-collar world (Peckham, 2010). When form is chosen over or alongside function, it signals social class membership (Peckham). Working-class language is considered less precise and less disposed to variation, and from a middle-class point of view, the absence of changeability makes blue-collar English inferior (Bloom,

1996; Peckham). Lindquist's (1999) findings from her ethnographic study of working-class barroom rhetoric confirm blue-collar individuals' appeal to function over form.

Lindquist (1999)'s appeal to working-class barroom rhetoric echoes Peckham's (2010) discussion of how working-class individuals do not distinguish adjectival from adverbial forms of a verb like "do" and "did." Fundamentally, saying "He done good" carries the exact same meaning as saying "He did good;" the only difference is each utterance indicates the speaker hails from a different social class background. One can see where lower-class learners may wrestle with the demands of expanding their ideas when composing if what they write on paper is considered too brief or now expansive enough by the standards of composition. Lindquist notes many working-class communities believe formal education opposes the "real world" because it does not always teach "immediately applicable, practical knowledge" (p. 234). Her discovery provides insight into the inward battle working-class students fight. These students realize they must conform to academic discourse; thereby inadvertently adopting values that go against their personal blue-collar convictions to succeed (Tingle, 2004).

However, teachers in the 2000s recognized their students have varied experiences to draw from when responding to prompts, participating in discussion, and interacting with their peers. Professors also allowed their students to choose their own topics rather than respond to preconstructed prompts (Beaton, 2010). Selecting a subject students are interested in gives them an opportunity to challenge academic discourse and its conventions. Writerly autonomy is achieved through a learner's selected topic by experimenting with various audiences and practicing composing in the discourse preferred by said audience (Beaton).

Though the discourse of the academy remained privileged and prolific throughout the past 40 years, debates over which language holds power and the values implied in using intellectual discourse gained traction in the 2000s and have revealed discrepancies between academic language and students' home language (Bizzell, 1982; Peckham, 2010). There is an emotional dimension to language that academic discourse tries to ignore by preferring rational and argumentative logic; however, class is understood personally as emotion and only speaking/writing in terms of academic language largely blocks any connection with class background and values (Linkon et al., 2004; Lindquist, 2004; Zebroski, 2006). If students' personal language practices and cultural histories are to be respected and acknowledged as appropriate ways of communicating in college composition classrooms, then it is important to describe the limitations of academic discourse along with its strengths.

In the past, students unfamiliar with the discourse of the academy were told they must locate themselves within academic discourse or risk alienation and dismissal of their intelligence/legitimacy in college (Bartholomae, 1985; Elbow, 1991; MacKenzie, 1998; Reeves, 1998). In more recent years, scholars such as Mauk (2003) and Kinloch (2005) recognize greater numbers of blue-collar students or students who have never been exposed to the demands of higher education are "unsituated in academic space" (Mauk, p. 369). Mauk and Kinloch's observation further explains working-class students who encounter obstacles like finances, differing language practices, and unfamiliar social networking are prone to simply give up if they feel assimilation is not possible. However, acknowledging working-class students' language variety also works to reinforce their changing sense of identity through recognizing and responding to their differences.

Like social and cultural class background, classed language too plays a part in determining the worth and success of a student in higher education. In the past, people who held their way of speaking above someone not using the same language codes discounted that person on the basis of language alone, going on to assume their intelligence was superior to another's. The basis of classed superiority can be explained through Peckham's (2010) classification system of elaborated and restricted codes. To describe elaborated code Peckham states, "In comparison to an elaborated code, a restricted code offers few word choices, limited use of modifiers, and ... simplified syntax" (p. 33). Restricted code is what is most often used by working-class individuals due to their culture and the work leading community figures do. Restricted code has come to embody the language practices of the working-class community.

Take my dad, for example. He is a loading dock worker and I asked him how he and his coworkers communicated, expecting some sort of restricted code being used. His answer confirmed my hypothesis. "You're in a loud work environment so you don't talk much, or you just talk very little, or you can only use hand signals. We work far apart, especially when outside so we'll yell a couple words back and forth, giving a hand sign like holding up a one or a two on our fingers" (T. Cutrell, personal communication, April 29th, 2021). He also notes how repetitive his work environment is; unvaried labor can easily lead to what Peckham (2010) terms "ritual exchanges" (p. 33). Speakers that use ritualized exchange understand how to respond almost without thinking, and it is easy to see how this translates to working-class rhetoric.

In the writing classroom, student usage of restricted code has often been penalized because of how college writing courses award argumentative language.

College composition courses teach students how to create arguments and counter arguments through evidence-based writing (Lin et al., 2020). Normally, the language used to construct lines of reasoning draws from Peckham's (2010) other designated language code: elaborated code. Elaborated code is distinct from restricted code in that it has a larger pool of names for the same thing to draw from. Peckham states, "An elaborated code emphasizes word choice, careful modifiers, and a variety of syntactic structures to show relationships between sentence elements" (p. 33). It is the language used by intellectuals and elaborated code shares similarities with academic discourse since it aims to be as unambiguous as possible. Speakers of this discourse "make themselves explicit through language" (Peckham, p. 34). The 2000's classroom has shifted away from elaborated code, accepting other ways of explication when it comes to how students express their arguments through their compositions (Lindquist, 1999; Peckham).

Pedagogical Responses to Student Need

Learning to speak in a way that commands authority places tremendous strain on working-class students' perception of their personal histories (Tingle, 2004). For working-class students to not feel their past class connections are being warped, teachers like LeCourt (2006) and Lindquist (2004) propose a merging of the two speech styles. Academic discourse and other, more community-based discourses from the home do not have to conflict with each other. There can, and should be a middle ground, where disparate linguistic styles can inform an alienated speaker of another discourse by analyzing the two in concordance of the other (LeCourt). LeCourt's theory of discourse meshing affirms Peckham's (2010) inclusion of restricted code inside of the composition classroom, moving toward a pedagogy that is more student-centric and democratic in nature.

LeCourt (2006) is asking for greater institutional acknowledgement of working-class knowledge, which does call back to 1990's pedagogical shifts, but what LeCourt does differently in the 2000's classroom is recommend that college faculty view socioeconomic class through a different lens. Rather than categorize class under the vast umbrella that only recognizes one's social stance through their background circumstances and family economics, LeCourt advocates professors widen their lens where they can see and take note of current circumstances acting and helping determine a student's social class position. In the classroom, LeCourt calls for special attention to be placed on the rhetorical situation when writing with certain prompts in mind, encouraging teachers to remind their learners that composing involves a series of choices that destroy and reconstruct the identity of the writer. The ability to conceptualize writerly identity as fluid and not confined to a single "performance" can help students with working-class affiliations see that they do not have to conform to academically imposed discourse to write well.

Technology in Composition

With the 21st century came the information age where technology is more accessible and digital proficiency became more important for schools to teach due to the speed at which technology was advancing (Rivoltella, 2008). No longer is a "basic" knowledge of traditional, print reading and writing acceptable; now nearly every educated American applying for a middle-class career is expected to have some proficiency of more advanced literacy practices like creating digital visuals on a computer, or crafting a Power Point presentation to accompany a meeting (Rivoltella). The 2000's classroom capitalized on the need for technically skilled workers and professors of composition and rhetoric started permanently shifting their teaching pedagogies to offer students greater opportunities to experiment with different types

of genres not traditionally recognized as "correct" in the eyes of the academy (Brant, 2001; Rivoltella). Professors achieved more student-centric classes by including more occasions for learners to give input about the subject matter they were working through, and student feedback could come in the form of journal reflections, teacher evaluations, or conversations where the entire class debated without involvement of a professor as proctor (Elbow, 1998).

Multimodal practices also offered students greater democracy in the classroom. Multimodal composing was being theorized and practiced all the way back in the 1970s and 1980s, though it looked a little different than the digitally dominated classroom pedagogy of today (Palmeri, 2012). In the earlier decades, teachers stressed the importance of composing through multiple modes, and there were attempts at practicing creative writing using more visual approaches or employing sound (Palmeri). Also, in concordance with Flower and Hayes's (1981) study of the cognitive writing process, Palmeri identifies the practice of rearranging and playing with alternative pathways of thought and subject matter to write about. A composer who explores different angels or views of their subject should be more successful with coming up with a writing process that works best for them than the writer who continues to stick with a single way of drafting.

Multimodal composing can enhance traditional alphabetical teaching of writing (Palmeri, 2012) because writing is a multisensory process. According to scholars who ascribe to multiple means of production, even if you are only writing words on a page those words carry meaning beyond the page (Dunn, 2001). Visuals, sound, and other sensations like feeling, taste, and smell can be communicated through words. It's not just ideas that are important here and noting the multiple dimensions of what text can evoke bodes well for working-class individuals prone to

writing concretely rather than abstractly (Dunn; Peckham, 2010). Giving students more options to learn how to compose in a way that better fits their learning needs is an example of the movement to a more student-centered pedagogy/democratic classroom.

In addition, Palmeri (2012) states an obvious, but often overlooked fact about writers: people who compose do not do so in one mode (alphabetical, aural, visual). Words carry more than their alphabetical meaning, so when a writer is engaging in the process of creating meaning with their words, that composer must also think about what images, sounds, or feelings their words can conjure (Palmeri). The implementation of technology in the classroom in the 1990s has made Palmeri's statement very true and, considering the history of multimodal composing, it makes sense that composition teachers would naturally make the shift toward digital media. Technology has had a major impact on literacy acquisition during the 2000s and digital media has influenced the composition classroom in terms of broadening the available platforms for students to make meaning (Hess, 2018).

The move to digital rhetoric began in the 1990s, but (like I have demonstrated throughout this thesis) theories that started in the 90s did not come to fruition until the 2000s when scholars recognized the need for media studies theory and technology within composition (Hess, 2018). The field acknowledged how technology would alter perceptions of who were and were not literate—no longer was mastery of creating arguments on paper "good enough;" now the composer needed to possess the skill to repurpose their argument into different mediums of expression. Though classrooms were integrating digital technologies into their curriculum did not mean students in these classes fully understood how to use the technology for their assignments (Spinuzzi, 2001). Compositionists of the 2000s would meet the increasing need for digital education democratically by allowing for open workshops during

regular classroom hours where students could work with their digital devices alongside possibly more competent classmates and the professor (Sweeny, 2010). Teachers would also request their students reflect on what literacy affordances social networking and other technology offer outside of the classroom (Sweeny). Sweeny's example of some professors issuing assignments via text message or social media post found that these teachers were creating a space where their class felt more connected and like part of a community.

Of course, any discussion of digital technology should examine issues of accessibility that are normally related to a student's resource allocation. Turning the focus back to individual socioeconomic positions shows that learners from wealthier backgrounds can afford internet access, portable computers with enough power to download and use select programs professors recommend, and additional digital resources that expedite their composing process when compared to their working-class counterparts (Banks, 2005). Though access to computers and other technology has been remedied by increased funding for public libraries and school computer labs, the problem of usage remains divisive for lower-income students (Neuman & Celano, 2012). If the occasion permitted, middle and upper-class learners were often accompanied by a parent or other adult that guided students though how computer interfaces worked, how to search topics, and other digital procedures (Neuman & Celano). Their less-privileged counterparts received little to no attention from older adults, and were left to figure out how to work computers on their own. As expected, working-class learners left to chart the internet without supervision either found games to play, got lost in the algorithm, or got frustrated and left the scene (Neuman & Celano).

Despite the concerns listed above, digital media opens previously unexplored avenues for students who may have struggled with traditional writing conventions in the past (Palmeri,

2012). The very act of selecting a medium though which will best communicate a student's a point to their audience can affect student perception of academic discourse. What I mean is digital rhetoric in the composition classroom offers students endeavoring to grasp the discourse of the academy another way to achieve their goal. Composition's shift to multimedia production as a recognized form of literate practices has, in my opinion, connected much of the work done inside of university walls to work performed by future employers. The joining of school labor and how student effort can translate to the work they will do outside of college provides the working-class need for function in their compositions and will help blue-collar learners better adapt to the analytical work they must do alongside the functional writing.

All things considered, college has been and is still a place where people go to learn skills that will help them succeed in the technologically dominated workforce of the modern era. Every career path possesses its own discourse preferences that students will be exposed to, but the choice of whether or not these students will conform to the language practices of their institution is their decision (Students' Right, 1974). The concept of choice has become more present in composition classrooms in the 2000s, and teachers of composition are steadily adapting to more fluid language identities their students bring, working toward a democratic classroom (LeCourt, 2006). If the material being taught in these spaces is inconstant and unrelated to the material realities students find themselves in, professors of composition now can offer learners a chance to create multimodal works that draw on popular culture, background histories, or other issues more prevalent outside the university (Mauk, 2003; Sweeny, 2010).

Students arrive at college with preconstructed identities. Their self-narratives are usually a direct result of family and school influence, personality, and work experiences if they have any (Lindquist, 1999; Silva & Snellman, 2018). Students from different class

backgrounds unsurprisingly have dissimilar narratives for attending college. Silva and Snellman note working-class students and their families often structure going to college as "salvation" or believe that attaining a degree will help these students "escape" their current bleak reality. Middle-class families rarely doubt going to college (the upper classes see it as a given, part of life), and it therefore serves as a "safety net" (Stuber, 2011; Silva & Snellman). While working-class students can attend the same classes and interact in discussions of critical thinking, blue-collar knowledge historically has not been valued in academia. Underprivileged learners also lack the financial support from family to participate in extracurricular activities and organizations, leading to estranged students who sense that higher education has no place for them (Stuber; Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013).

However, if university composition classrooms can recognize the richness of linguistic diversity and the possible applications acknowledging more than a single standard of speaking and writing can have in the classroom, then higher education can move into a pedagogy more accepting of linguistic differences, which in turn makes working-class students' transitions less complicated (Kinloch, 2005). Diving into more digital media pedagogical practices will better cement the field of composition because of its cross-disciplinary practices and it has the potential to fully establish space connecting the academic world with that outside academia, providing blue-collar students with connections to the real world they are familiar with (Mauk, 2003). Like middle-class students are accustomed to the expectations and rigors of university standards, working-class scholars should have a grounding point when it comes to negotiating their own place in higher education, and that foundation begins with appreciation, not denial, of blue-collar experience and the language that lends itself to class culture.

Conclusion

To conclude, I would like to restate that I am in no way advocating the complete abolishment of academic discourse in higher education institutions. On the contrary, I acknowledge the discourse of the academy is useful in some instances such as when writing to specific intellectual and specialized audiences or when composing for a particular discipline like scientific research assignments (Smith, 1976; Elbow, 1991). However, as I ask for a reconsideration of colleges' partiality toward academic discourse and the values inherent within it, I also ask that more educators get involved in the move toward a more student-centric college experience. We need faculty from other departments besides composition giving credit to learners from different class-backgrounds and their practices of identity. Those who influence university decisions like board members and administration should be dialoguing with teachers regularly, asking for updates on how their less-privileged students are coping, interacting, and performing in their classrooms. Consider integrating something like an institutional evaluation that comes from students. Similar to teacher evaluations, ask students for their rating on how streamlined the admissions process was, if what they were promised before enrolling was what they received, how well their financial needs were met—the list goes on.

One of the main focuses of this thesis is communication and I discuss how imperative it is that we acknowledge all kinds of communication and ideals, not only those stemming from higher class values. Though working-class students came to staunchly deny middle and upper-class customs due to the fear of being labeled as "one of those paper shufflers and pencil pushers who act as if they are in control and give orders to others on what is from the beginning a bad job" (Tingle, 2004, p. 228), throughout the latter half of the 1980s and into the next few decades beyond, teachers of composition have endeavored for a better understanding of working-

class language practices and cultures. Their work included challenging and dismantling identity by thinking critically and analyzing distinct rhetoric, rhetorical situations, and how language commands power within the hierarchies of higher education. Modern compositionists have (for the most part) accepted the languages of those hailing from less-privileged backgrounds. Teachers' work with the inclusion of personal narrative in writing, multimodal and digital composing projects, and opening discussions of socioeconomic class and its affects has valued difference, in turn, crumbling barriers in the way of working-class students' education. Compositionists have realized there is no fast-tracking a student unfamiliar with the language customs of the academy. It takes time.

At the tangible classroom level, I suggest composition professors develop additional courses and reevaluate current course curricula encouraging the use of home languages and prompting discussions of class. Emphasize multiple literacies that allow meaning to go beyond the page and onto an image or within a musical score. Incorporate sessions where students have a chance to talk about how their speech patterns are informed from their class background. Play with the omission of the personal verses the addition of it; help students realize what the addition of personal narrative can add to an academic piece. Additional research could study the effectiveness of each of the methods I listed above. I would also recommend more studies be conducted on how colleges can better accommodate their working-class students so these learners can begin to feel more "situated" in academic space (Mauk, 2003).

Professors do not be afraid to personally engage a student that comes from a blue-collar background, a student that seems disengaged, especially professors that hail from a working-class background themselves. For working-class learners, you may be one of the most

approachable people in their new university life. Discuss your background if the opportunity arises when classroom dialogue breeches the topic; compare your stories of struggle with that of your students. Discover new ways along with the learners in the composition classroom to make socioeconomics more visible, whether by creating a multimodal work or performing research like I have in this thesis. Lastly, make sure to involve more than just those in the composition and rhetoric department, because after all, writing reaches across all disciplines and can carry the conversation of class throughout university halls, making working-class voices heard and blue-collar culture valued.

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