

**“It’s Essentially Writers Talking about Writing”:
The Roles of Reflection in a Co-Curricular Writing Studio Course**

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What is Writing Studio?

As writing programs shutter basic writing courses in favor of more ethical models of instruction and seek alt-pedagogies that foster agency and access, *writing studio* is gaining interest. “Studio” varies but is usually a co-curricular, supplemental experience wherein students discuss their writing projects and writing classes (Grego and Thompson *Teaching/Writing*; “Writing Studio”). Studio might allow students taking first-year composition to receive additional support on tough assignments by creating space for workshopping drafts. Some institutions have positioned studio as an alternative to basic writing business-as-usual, placing students into “regular” comp *and* a one-credit, concurrent studio (Lalicker), and evidence is beginning to suggest that studio fosters student success as signified by retention and persistence (Chemishanova and Snead). As such, writing program professionals at open-admissions institutions may be particularly interested in the roles studio can play in demystifying academic writing and supporting student success.

Studio has no content beyond student writing and takes as its subject matter whatever artifacts and concerns participants bring into studio. Class size is typically 8-10 and the teacher acts as discussion leader, sometimes clarifying institutional practices to make writing instruction, expectations, and conventions more transparent. Students receive feedback on drafts, as they do during a writing center consultation, but studio also emphasizes discussion *about* writing and the writing process. Studio’s small enrollment size and supplemental-curricular ethos make it an ideal learning site to discuss explicitly the transfer of knowledge among various rhetorical-cum-instructional situations. Studio cohorts, comprised of students from diverse academic backgrounds with varying degrees of proficiency, provide a site for students to access the kinds of implicit knowledge that can get them over barriers. Students being given access to transfer of knowledge and the kinds of coded language of writing assessment and instruction fosters a *reflective experience*, which we find to be a crucial component of studio.

Grego and Thompson define studio as “a different way of being with student writers...a spatialized and spatializing methodology for institutional change” (*Teaching/Writing* 20). They lay out a reflective, student-centered pedagogy geared toward helping students reflect on the places they occupy within the academy while also giving students access to directing studio discussions. Indeed “studio” suggests a locus of activity (think of an artist’s studio/atelier) where students work on writing they deem important and provide a space that is suggestive of intimacy and comfort. Grego and Thompson also build on critical geography (Soja) and the notion that the real place and imagined space are always converging and creating new possibilities. Studio paradigms typically spin Soja’s “third space” as a metaphor for the pedagogy’s balance of attending to the extant, material concerns of students and fostering imagination with respect to literate activity—Soja’s notion of new possibilities. Ideally, studio occupies an unfamiliar, creative new space within the familiar confines of the campus; spatially, studio serves as a space participants have unique access to. Studio also builds on the work of compositionists Jonathan Mauk, who argues that writing teachers increasingly need to account for the “spatial and material conditions that constitute the everyday lives of students” (370), and Nedra Reynolds, who reminds us that pedagogy ought to account creatively for the ways writing happens in real places so that a critical spatial understanding is a key to rhetorical success for our students. Given the emphasis on *understanding* spatial spaces, building opportunities for students to reflect on the contexts of their writing is key.

Studio is small and student-centered but the scope encompasses broader, institutional or programmatic matters. Tassoni and Lewiecki-Wilson describe how their conception of studio widened:

This model has shifted our attention from merely working to change composition pedagogies to asking more productive questions about relationships: How do students understand the rhetorical situatedness of writing and academic culture more generally, and how do teachers communicate (or not) their objectives to students and other teachers? (69)

Tassoni and Lewiecki-Wilson illustrate how studios can foster institutional and programmatic change by creating “space” where students can articulate how they access and navigate the academy’s literacy demands. Change happens if we listen to the voices speaking in those spaces and calibrate accordingly.

The field has begun to look at reflection and metacognition as core goals of post-secondary rhetoric and writing classes, self-awareness no longer on the periphery. We explore the diverse ways in which students who enrolled in our studio during its pilot phase reflected on writing. One of the strengths of the studio model is to help students become more aware of themselves as writers and access the metacognition of different writing events to foster the transfer of knowledge from those writing events into their courses. We were interested in collaboratively inquiring into student learning in the context of writing studio but, more specifically, we wondered what students were doing when given *sustained* chances to comment on writing. We looked at their written reflections and conducted open-ended interviews with studio participants about their experiences. Our data consists of student reflective texts, the notes students kept and posted on class wikis, and interview transcripts. All were spaces where students articulated from their own perspectives the thinking and writing taking place in studio and beyond. We found that reflection both fosters and demonstrates burgeoning awareness of the writing process. We contend that studio uniquely strips away ephemera and distraction to frame student texts as content, providing fodder for multiple forms of useful reflection. Because this increased self-knowledge and focused opportunity for metacognition fosters student success, we argue that studio ultimately has particular utility in pedagogical settings, like open-admissions, where students can uniquely benefit from increased clarity about what, why, and how academic literacy means.

Our own studio grew from a working group assessing the viability of the basic writing course on our branch campus (MacDonald and DeGenaro). In addition to redesigning our basic writing curriculum, the group recommended piloting a one-credit studio as an additional way to serve diverse student populations and start building writing electives that foreground reflection. Students concurrently enrolled in any first-year *or* upper-level writing intensive course could enroll. The class asked participants to bring artifacts—usually works-in-progress from their writing classes, but artifacts could also include assignment sheets or end comments on drafts—to workshop *and discuss* them with other participants, thereby increasing their reflective understanding of the writing process. Students also completed several reflective writings geared toward assessing their learning, charting their work in studio, and thinking

about literacy in and out of writing classes. A tenure-stream professor served as instructor and an experienced campus writing center consultant was embedded in the course to help lead discussions and provide additional feedback on artifacts. A student kept minutes of each session, tracking the conversation and highlighting keywords used to discuss artifacts to provide a living artifact representative of new knowledge being made. During that initial pilot semester, three sections were offered, each capped at ten. A total of 24 students matriculated. Programmatically, “studio” was conceived as a *big tent* elective for L2 writers, honors program students, regular clients of the Writing Center, and anyone else interested in sustained, collegial support for their writing. Course goals included gaining a vocabulary for discussing writing, getting better at providing constructive criticism in peer review, seeking assistance from campus resources when struggling with challenges, and understanding one’s strengths and weaknesses as a writer. Learning outcomes focused explicitly or implicitly on reflective capacity and metacognitive understanding of the writing process.

Reflection, Student Agency, and Studio

In her entry on reflection in *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies*, Kara Taczak succinctly addresses reflection’s role in student success, asserting that reflection “throughout the process” is fundamental to the acquisition of higher-order literacies. Taczak describes reflection as the nexus of cognition and metacognition, student consideration both of “what they are doing” and “why they [did what] they did” (78). Taczak concludes, “Reflection...must be worked at in order to be most effectively learned and practiced” (79). The “Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing”--developed by NCTE, WPA, and National Writing Project--names “metacognition” as one of “eight habits of mind essential for success in college writing.” The Framework defines metacognition as “the ability to reflect on one’s own thinking as well as on the individual and cultural processes used to structure knowledge” (5). The push to foreground the related constructs metacognition and reflection to increase student understanding *about* writing has frequently led to the adoption of portfolios (Harrington), but the

turn toward teaching reflection has also animated the *writing about writing* approach (Downs and Wardle), and, we would add, the value of studio pedagogy.

Reflection is the key to studio's ability to foster agency. Yancey suggests that reflection is "the writer inventing him or herself" (*Reflection* 68) and argues that reflection constructs students as "agents in their own learning" (ibid 5). Yancey has focused on the ways reflective writing tasks can foster learning and empower students, building their capacity to make writerly choices as they navigate rhetorical situations in and out of the academy. In *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*, Yancey's three types of reflective writing largely focus on agency and self-awareness: *reflection-in-action* (revising one's work with critical awareness), *constructive reflection* (developing a writerly identity), and *reflection-in-presentation* (making critically aware statements about one's writing for a real audience) (200).

Harrington builds on Yancey's emphasis on reflection's potential for capacity-building by suggesting that giving students opportunities to perform reflective writing tasks shifts the agency to students and facilitates the type of learning that should be at the center of foundational writing classes:

Traditional course goals convey a *teacher* agenda--reflective writing allows *students'* agendas to come into the classroom in a powerful fashion. And more than anything else, students should emerge from their semester(s) of composition as writers who understand and manage their own agendas. (47, emphasis ours)

Building more systematic opportunities for students to think and write reflectively and critically about their own writing, learning, and literacy practices has the opportunity not only to increase student agency (Harrington; Yancey, *Reflection*) but also to create a feedback loop for writing programs to listen systematically to student voices and invite students to be program stakeholders. Further, programmatic experimentation with alt-pedagogies like studio provides students access to opportunities that engage a range of reflective writing modes and genres, from self-assessments to wikis focused on thinking about process. These modes and genres can then be actionable documents within writing programs.

If Yancey and Harrington both emphasize reflection as a means to accessing self-awareness and individual agency, then an equally important set of roles for reflective writing in the classroom *also* exists

and that can *also* be facilitated by studio pedagogies. Reflection can also engage theoretical and/or epistemological understandings of writing. That is, reflection can be an occasion for students to practice making inferences about language, literacy, composing, and revising in ways that go beyond the purview of the self. Sommers offers an especially useful treatment of this expansive conception of reflection in the classroom, describing his basic writing students' end-of-term *reflections-in-presentation* in which he asks them to focus on their "beliefs about writing" instead of the more common heuristic points and prompts like the individual strengths and weaknesses of the writer (99). Sommers argues this shift to a focus on epistemological matters deepens the quality of the reflection and aids in knowledge transfer, as students internalize a broader, more portable comprehension of writing's complexities. Beaufort picks up on these themes, stating that giving students a sense of how they think "enables the learning to deepen" (24). She makes a case for reflection as a crucial component in teaching writing for transfer and emphasizes that providing students chances to infer knowledge is key: "Introduce reflection/metacognition," she advises, "about deep structures, broad concepts." She calls this the "wider picture," wider than reflecting on a solitary piece of writing, wider than a sense of the student's own process and product (33).

Conceptualizing writing in order to be effective across contexts seems to require not only commenting on one's own texts but also on epistemological truths and insights *about writing, language, and literacy*. It was this diversity of conceptions of reflection that prompted our inquiry. Given the ways reflection can foster access and transfer, we wanted to gauge and describe how reflection looked when it was central within a specific context. We wondered if students were more inclined to focus on self-knowledge or an exploration of abstract/epistemological truths about writing?

Methodology

To understand student reflection in studio in a critical, nuanced, and actionable way, we designed a qualitative study that would foreground student voices and inquire into how studio participants were articulating their strengths and weaknesses as writers, their understanding of what was transpiring during their studio sessions, and their perceptions of the writing process writ large. We operated within a

methodological framework we call *collaborative-contextualist*, defined as a methodology that draws on the skillsets, institutional and material situations, and subject positions of multiple change agents engaging in inquiry in real rhetorical situations. This approach centers on collaboration and assumes the most influential, ethical way to change writing programs is to involve as many program stakeholders as possible in each phase of inquiry. Further, this methodology assumes that being change agents is a fundamental goal of researchers (cf. Cushman; Mauk; Porter et al). This collaborative methodology is also suggestive of the value of drawing on multiple skill sets and knowledge bases of researchers/change agents staked to particular institutional contexts. Institutionally, studios occupy a middle “space” between instruction and tutorial paradigms and we wanted our identities as Writing Program faculty *and* Writing Center professional to represent that hybridity. Further, meaningful and ethical inquiry ought to avoid a top-down approach wherein only, say, the program director engages in knowledge construction within the programmatic milieu. Finally, since the studio pedagogy integrated writing center consultants, it made sense for the complementary scholarship also to integrate what center staff know about tutoring and our *local*, institutional dynamics, from *their own hybrid points-of-view* as senior-level consultants.

We also define our inquiry as *contextualist*, drawing on Cindy Johaneck’s demonstration that both “place” and rhetorical or institutional situation broadly defined—rather than rigid adherence to a methodological community—determine what methods are operational (3). In *Composing Research: A Contextualist Paradigm for Rhetoric and Composition*, Johaneck foregrounds a broad conception of “context” in which investigators consider a range of situational, “rhetorical issues” (112), including personal, local, institutional, or disciplinary matters above and before specific questions of method and data analysis. Our concern was primarily institutional and programmatic, and collaboratively we wished to put scholarship in service to a programmatic context wherein 1) we hoped to create meaningful electives for students, 2) we wanted to understand reflection in order to think about ways to integrate reflective pedagogy into the program’s curriculum, and 3) we considered our inquiry a form of programmatic assessment (i.e., understand reflection in order to understand student learning and in turn foster access and success among diverse student-writers). In Johaneck’s paradigm, “context” becomes not

only a concern but also a methodology, meaning that at every turn the project considers what kind of knowledge is being discovered and constructed and what that signifies for the actual spaces where a research question is posed. She writes, “While place might determine what research methods are *possible*, the research question determines what research methods are *necessary*” (3). Johaneck’s emphasis on what is “possible” in real contexts is uniquely suited for inquiry into studio and other institutional programs seeking to imagine alternatives, curricular or otherwise. Johaneck’s paradigm is also productive because of how serious she takes the notion of place, a guiding concern of studio. It was *necessary* to involve Writing Center staff to inquire into nuanced issues of reflection. Doing so made it *possible* for the studio space to have access to new diverse sets of skills and abilities. The fact that the research was taking place in the hybrid studio space also unleashed additional possibilities. On the intersections of location, writing, and human potential, Nedra Reynolds writes, “Places evoke powerful human emotions because they become layered, like sediment or a palimpsest” (2). And so *our* interactions were important parts of making sense of student perspectives.

Given how intertwined collaboration and investment in our own local site is in our methodological approach, we now clarify our subject positions, and how those positions layer on the place where our project unfolds:

Jerrice: My involvement with studio began prior, when I was a member of the basic writing workgroup, assembled to evaluate our basic writing course. I was asked to research other studio programs and read and provide feedback on student writing from a writing center perspective. Although at the time I was an advanced writing center consultant and a graduate student pursuing secondary teaching certification, my then subject position derived equally or more so from experiences when I was an undergraduate student taking Composition on the same campus. This perspective provided a much needed view regarding pedagogy, instruction, and curriculum development for first-year writing. I adjusted according to what aspect of my perspective would provide the most benefit, although it seems clear that all of my perspectives have their own subjectivities. Since my position evolved into co-Principal Investigator for the studio project, it is safe to say my personal stakes evolved too, especially when I

entered a doctoral program in writing studies and rhetoric midway through the project. With this change in positionality came a change in perspective on program assessment and institutional research. My professional goals as a future faculty and administrator of a writing program clearly became an influence on my positionality as a co-researcher.

Tony: As a then-new part-time faculty member, I was pleased to have the opportunity to participate both in program assessment and institutional research--especially as those two tasks were put in service of ethical curriculum development. I was teaching creative writing and first-year writing (at the time of the studio pilot) and found interviewing students an excellent way to relate further to our local population and get to know students on our campus more deeply, and, in future semesters, believe I was a more effective studio instructor because of this experience. I brought the perspective of a writing teacher and an M.F.A.-poet to the project, but I also believe the work is having a positive impact on *my* professional life, as I co-presented a version of this research at WRAB (Writing Research Across Borders) and, like Jerrice, did a year ahead of me, began a doctoral program in rhetoric and composition. Ultimately, I remain a strong believer in the ethos of studio courses, particularly the embedded Writing Center tutors, being a former undergrad consultant myself.

Bill: Commenting on studio's collaborative ethos, one of our respondents said, "Instead of one voice, now I have many." As program director, I feel similarly. Many voices fill my head and I choose not to separate my role as "administrator" from my role as "researcher." In supporting various stakeholders and trying to build capacity, I have many voices but, when I was a WPA (as I was during the studio launch), I tried to create venues for exchange. My subject position as WPA involved being a "researcher" who was addressing institutional and ethical imperatives and student needs while also inquiring into something with curiosity. Is it possible to be a researcher working to support (again—"build capacity" in) L1 and L2 writers on campus, including those in upper-level writing-intensive courses on a campus without a serious WAC program? Is it possible to be a researcher working to support colleagues whose careers and professional development aspirations you want to support?

We gained IRB approval and then sought context-rich, empirical data to teach us about the nature of reflection in studio: the minutes that students kept during each studio session; three rounds of reflective writing that students in studio completed during the term; and transcripts of interviews we conducted with participants. Student writing and interviews were deep dives into student points-of-view to understand in open-ended, qualitative ways how they conceived of their own literate lives and experiences. We conducted interviews in the Writing Program office, around mid-way through the pilot term, asking students questions about their experience in studio, their three-credit writing classes, and their perceptions of the writing process. Interviews were recorded on program iPads *and* the voice recognition feature of Google Docs. A partial document with errors would be created in Google Docs that we could then go back and edit by listening to the iPad recording. We also coded the data collaboratively, either in the Writing Program or around Bill's dining room table. We looked and listened for indications of self-awareness, evidence of knowledge about writing and literacy, and related matters. Our goal was descriptive and taxonomical, that is, we wanted to describe what students were doing and saying vis-a-vis *reflection*. Thus we did not use a prefabricated set of categories or terms (beyond our broad interests in charting self-awareness and the ability to *reflect* on literate practices), instead engaging in a process of discovering what specific themes might emerge from the data itself and looking at connections and trends among those themes (cf. Saldana; Warren and Karner).

Analysis & Findings

One studio participant (pseudonyms used throughout) succinctly summed up her experience in studio as “essentially writers talking about writing,” a useful blurring of the binary between self-awareness and epistemological-awareness. Whether students were using concrete discourse to assess their strengths and weaknesses or inferring abstractions about the nature of academic writing, they consistently engaged in *writing talk*, discourse about the processes behind written communication and its contexts. Though thinking in binaries can be limiting, we found the following spectrum, illustrated in Figure 1, useful to consider the student reflective texts we were reading:

Number of <i>reflections that focused on the self</i>	25
Number of <i>reflections that focused on writing as an abstraction</i>	12
Number of reflective writings that do both	15
Number of reflective writings that do neither	8

Table 1: Categorizing Reflection

Participants used a variety of discourses in their reflections, as the student voices below attest. Most often they were describing artifacts they had brought into studio for discussion and assessing the positive and negative attributes of those artifacts or inferring insights about the writing process based on those workshop sessions. Some used specialized discourse—including disciplinary language from writing studies—to reflect on and evaluate their strengths and weakness; at other times, they used everyday lingo, a function of various factors including whether they were currently first-year or advanced undergraduates. The various specialized and non-specialized discourses that circulated during studio enhanced students’ reflective opportunities and fostered access to transfer.

On one hand, reflections that *focused on the self* tended to make declarative statements about students’ own individual strengths and weaknesses as writers or often proactive goals for improvement. These statements tended to be concrete: “*I did x.*” or “*I struggled with y.*” Reflecting in this mode, Malak identifies a precise troublespot and offers a precise goal: “I would also like to improve my diction and syntax ... I am concerned that my writing will not be the way my professor likes it.” On the other hand, students whose reflections *focused on writing as an abstraction* moved beyond statements about their own textual practices toward a consideration of concepts like genre or rhetorical situation. Kathy reflected on how her conception of “good writing” has broadened after seeing “different types of writing” produced for classes across-the-curriculum. Kathy’s approach is different than the explicit goal of self-improvement because Kathy is not talking only about her writing; indeed, she resists a solipsistic objective in her reflection. She uses a reflective opportunity to *theorize* about the broad but very compelling question:

what is “good writing” and “how do we begin to define that?” Students whose responses skewed more towards making broader inferences about writing and the writing process -- *I learned that academic writing is x* -- manage to offer an intellectual musing on the writing process and oftentimes illustrate that musing with examples from studio (witness the frequency of reflections that combine both modes of reflection).

We see in student reflection a good deal of value across both self-assessment and the ability to infer abstractions about writing. Studio’s singular foregrounding of opportunities for sustained reflection seems to provide venues for both modes of expression and their attendant potentialities for confidence, self-awareness, and metacognitive understanding--of value in particular for students unfamiliar with the norms and conventions of academic literacies. While both categories leave the student in a position to have better success, reflections on the self tend to be more goal and final product oriented. Ali writes, “I hope to transfer what I learn from the course to my real paper,” seeing the reflection within studio as a means to the end goal of higher grades on high stake projects in Ali’s discipline. While there’s nothing at all wrong with this student’s outlook, limiting the uses of reflection and improvement only to the context of a single grade on a single writing project without consideration of a broader context (e.g., what insights writ large were gained from close study of the text), leaves Ali very close to Yancey’s tragic figures, described in her article: exhausted, the end result as their only means of self-assessment (“Getting” 13).

Why then it is important that students achieve both self-awareness *and* an epistemological awareness as writers? Simply put, so that students do not settle for “exhaustion” as the only result of all the “talk” about writing. The opportunity studio provides to groom self-reflection habits that can lead to improvement in writing, in critical thinking and analysis, and hopefully have a broader impact across students’ college experience--particularly when writing prompts foster reflection that elicits both concrete self-awareness and a chance to engage in abstract insight-building. As Sommers demonstrates in “Reflection Revisited,” the value in emphasizing reflective moments regarding writing hugely outweighs the potential “chore” of this task. As we consider how best to be of service to “basic writers” (the departure point for our own institutional inquiry) and other students less familiar with or confident about

literacy demands of higher education, we see value in considering ways to scaffold reflective prompts that foster both self-awareness and a more coherent sense of writing-as-abstraction.

We observe that reflections focused on the self are often aspirational and post-mortem. Mallory tells us in her interview that she “hopes this course gives [her] the proper tools to write and revise my writing before I turn in my papers.” The benefit of reflection (abstractly) and studio (concretely) is that both of these aspirational goals should be met by the end of the semester. Studio is built around revision and workshop, therefore after fourteen weeks of practice, Mallory *should* hopefully have developed revision strategies to improve her writing process. Mallory definitely will have access to a new and deepening vocabulary for literary terms, writing devices and conventions, and other concrete “tools” to apply to her process. She renders reflection as an evaluative process where the desired outcome is a better grade. Self reflections also tend to connect how students write to their material realities, such as schedule, other classes, work habits or spaces, etc. Furthermore, students often named specific strengths and or weakness, through varying levels of specificity, development, and engagement. For example, Courtney “could not even edit [her] peers’ work,” showing a limited awareness of a perceived skill deficiency. “I was not sure what to look for or how to give good and useful advice,” she concludes, identifying an actionable perceived trait.

On the other end of our spectrum, student reflection skewing towards “writing as an abstraction” shows less pragmatic goals. Like Kathy waxing poetic about “good writing” and “becoming a better writer” (in terms vague and unspecified), these learning expectations *are* result-based for the self, but go *beyond* the scope of an A paper. We believe that writing is a foundation for some kind of learning, or insight, beyond achievement, beyond post-exhaustion, beyond the grade. As Kathy says:

It’s just kind of interesting seeing how other people write. Like, I’ve noticed that my writing is more analytical...It shows me that other people write so differently. There’s technical writing, there’s engineering, and there’s just like a big variety.

This examination of experience, transcending both the self and a concern for external evaluation, ponders the -difference across genre, discipline, and individual voice. While lacking concrete objectives,

reflections like Kathy's have the potential to pay dividends later--e.g., during subsequent terms when a student might find herself needing to use very different genre conventions and recalling a broad (and useful) insight about academic writing.

Finding 2: Reflection reveals and fosters deep engagement with writing's complexities.

Studio's foregrounding of reflection seems to have fostered a sense of nuance and complexity. In both our interviews and in their reflective writings, participants said they appreciated the fact that they got feedback from *all* members of studio (instead of, say, a single peer-review partner in a normal composition class). These students mentioned that it wasn't just about the volume of input, it was also about the diversity of ideas contributing to a wider sense of the possibilities. Several even mentioned learning from moments where they received *contradictory* advice.

What emerged from interviews was a representation of the complexity of the writing process--an ability, willingness, and orientation toward engagement with subtleties and contradictions. Some framed their insights within the emphasis studio places on student perspective. For example, several participants reflected on how they negotiated feedback from multiple points-of-view. They found that when figuring out how to accomplish tasks, there was rarely a single correct answer or a single way to succeed. They spoke in the interview context of the plethora of perspectives and how the ping-ponging of ideas about writing ultimately revealed the imperative for writers to make hard decisions informed by audience expectations. Similarly, informants often praised their emerging understanding of their agency within a cacophony of competing perspectives about written communication. Representative comments include:

- "Everyone has their own way of writing."
- "There are so many different ways one paper can be."
- "You put it (a draft or work-in-progress) through so many filters and then see it."
- "Instead of having one voice, I now have many."
- "I learned from hearing from the room."

· “[You get] the best of however many worlds there are in the class.”

On one hand, these sound like positive assessments of *any* peer review session, but there’s an especially acute willingness to listen to the wisdom of “the room,” even when the room provides disparate advice. Students in studio seem to be reflecting on the value of moving beyond simplistic, black/white conceptions of writing. There is *agency* behind the statements students make *about writing* as they reflect on literate practices. It is striking that, often, their statements offer epistemological claims on literacy and academic writing, as they generalize from their experiences and the experiences in “the room.” These statements also sound a bit like general statements about the value of subjectivity, and we reiterate that we certainly are not claiming these are necessarily *eureka moments*. On the other hand, there is power in the type of subjectivity being claimed: “I have...” and “I learned....” Such affirmations illustrate burgeoning agency and a willingness to make claims about the writing process writ large. One respondent’s agency was especially pronounced, as he explained in his interview how he had the opportunity in studio to reflect on his technical writing instructor’s assessment of his writing, which he felt offered a too pat assessment that it suffered due to “cultural dimensions.” The student, of a non-Western racial background, commented that, “Writing is different for every writer no matter where they’re from,” elaborating, quite astutely, that differences in one’s composing style or surface features are hard to connect definitively to racial or ethnic identity. This student’s narrative suggests the utility of agency.

Yancey says in *Reflection in the Writing Classroom* that writing reflectively gives students a chance “to understand and articulate the pluralism of truth” (19). Building on Yancey, we argue that reflection also fosters an understanding of truth’s *complexity*, and the complexity of writing, including the range of choices that writers have. The implication here--particularly for teachers in open-admissions settings--is that foregrounding reflection in spaces like studios can make transparent both expectations as well as the range of possibilities open to students trying to navigate those expectations.

Finding 3: Studio is a social space.

When respondents discussed studio in interviews and described the course in their written reflections, they also frequently used the word “talk” to describe interaction with other participants. We were especially struck by the aforementioned participant who summed up the course by saying “It’s essentially writers talking about writing.” Notably, she doesn’t call her classmates “students” but rather “writers,” and positions “writing” (not “our papers”) as the focus of the conversation. Most notable, though, is the choice of the verb “talk” over “workshop,” “edit,” or “peer review.” Her diction is wrapped up in an ethos of socializing that positions writing itself as a social act. During interviews in particular, participants often used a form of the verb “to talk” in their discussions of studio. Even more often, they described variations on the theme of workshopping-as-conversation. There emerges an implicit definition of reflection that might read, *to talk about something*. The connotation is collegial, friendly—as if the space of studio involves not only artifacts and an embedded writing center consultant but possibly a pot of coffee and some comfortable chairs. This description is consistent with the connotation of “studio” as a singular space. Indeed, as we assessed studio, a positive attribute that emerged was the social potential on a primarily commuter campus to foster community and a space for intellectual exchange.

Implications

Our findings suggest students can most productively thrive when given venues to reflect on *both* their own writing processes *and* on written communication writ large. The present study not only underlines reflection as a core component of postsecondary writing instruction but also makes the case for a foregrounding of diverse opportunities for reflection. Alt-pedagogies like studio that disrupt basic writing business-as-usual, for instance, can more substantively strip away what some students perceive as “excess” and foreground reflection in substantial and sustained ways. Indeed, our program’s trajectory suggests reflection might have the most utility for students when incorporated vertically in multiple sites including but not limited to co-curricular sites like studios. Further, reflection seemed to have the most value—as Yancey has argued—when not relegated to the margins of a course or a curriculum. Reflections on “self” and reflections on writing-as-an-abstraction both serve to demystify literate practices like

academic writing, offering a marked utility for open-admissions students, students from underserved communities, and others less familiar with the conventions and cultures of higher education. Studio participants reflected on the writing process *throughout* their time in the course, sometimes with structure (e.g., precise writing prompts) but usually without. Many participants even attributed their own learning to the fact that much (perceived-to-be-) extraneous material was stripped away in the context of studio; all of their learning stemmed from their own writing and their own reflections thereon (no outside readings, a/v materials, etc.). It is axiomatic in writing studies to say that student writing should be the subject of college writing courses. Perhaps the corollary ought to be: *reflection on writing should be the subject of college writing studios*. But just as student writing develops most effectively when practiced in college writing courses *and* other classes as well, reflection also develops when practiced in multiple places.

Useful, productive reflection can take the form of writing about *the self* as students build greater awareness of their own process and their own strengths and weaknesses. Equally, reflection can entail writing about writing, as students generate ideas and notions about literacy and language. Both are valid, especially inasmuch as the reflective artifacts we studied that fit into both of these camps show in equal part students thinking deliberately and critically, albeit about two distinct points on the rhetorical triangle: the writer and the text. So building on Yancey, programs can serve an array of student needs by thinking innovatively about how to integrate a *range* of reflective tasks. Often, the field has emphasized “reflection-in-presentation” (Yancey, *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*), for instance, when they compose a portfolio cover letter. Useful, of course, but can programmatic initiatives that transcend “the three-credit comp class” build even more sustained and varied chances to reflect? Perhaps.

We think it would be useful for more scholars inquiring into student success and invested in pedagogies and programmatic initiatives geared toward increasing access to utilize methodologies that are collaborative and focused on institutional change. Specifically, we see additional need for inquiry into how studios function with different levels of programmatic and institutional support and different amounts of collaboration across units. The present study suggests a need for additional inquiry into studios collaborating with writing centers and particularly with writing center consultants--who, locally

(and elsewhere), are a great and sometimes underutilized asset. Equally, longitudinal research in particular focused on the impact of sections running *without* an embedded writing center consultant (currently our arrangement due to budgetary restrictions) would be valuable. And more broadly, what does interfacing with Writing Centers look like for studios, pedagogically and spatially? *Collaborative-contextualist* work attends to local situations and we think the present scholarship also opens doors for additional case studies, ethnographies, and institution-specific inquiry at open-admissions settings-- empirical work establishing correlation between both studios and reflection-based pedagogies and various measures of student success. Moving forward, such data-driven inquiry could provide evidence for those of us invested in fighting for the resources needed to enact such change at our home institutions.

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