Mutually Humble Collaboration in College Literacy Courses: Same Papers, Dialogical Responses

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Dedication

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Abstract

Each fall, first-year college students enter required composition courses with the expectation that they will learn the necessary skills to write competently for their collegiate careers. Quickly, students who survive and thrive discover that complex factors such as experience, academic cultural etiquette, self-regulation, and relationships with professors and classmates combine to set them on paths of success or failure. I examined the literacy induction experiences of college composition students at a private Christian college in the Midwestern United States through a constant comparative analysis framework utilized in a grounded theory research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, 2008; and Charmaz, 2007.) Through surveys, interviews, and observations in three composition classrooms, I used social cognitive and sociocultural frameworks to focus on participants' and their professors' actions and perceptions. Using data from the interviews and observations in a positive deviance selection process (Pascale, Sternin & Sternin, 2010), I narrowed my focus to four participants whose narratives revealed grit (Duckworth, 2016), growth mindset (Dweck, 2015), and evidence of mutually humble collaboration (MHC), the theory that emerged from this study, which serves as the super framework over the themes I examine. My findings indicate that professors and students facing literacy challenges who engage in mutually humble collaboration establish dialogical relationships (Freire, 2009) that foster passion and perseverance leading to success. In this study I address the pragmatic question of how sociocultural concepts such as scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978), and the dialogical relationship ending the oppressor - oppressed cycle described by Freire (2009) may be initiated.

Keywords: mutually humble collaboration, grit, literacy

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Chapter One: Introduction

Overview of the Study

This chapter introduces the problem and rationale inspiring this qualitative grounded theory study and begins with a brief introduction of theories framing the work. An explanation of the significance and impact of the study moves from a general to specific explanation of literacy education expectations in higher education. The chapter concludes with an introduction to the study's research questions. The chapter offers a brief overview of the assumptions stemming from the problems presented with in depth discussions laid out in the following chapters.

Problem and Rationale

Thirty years ago, I became curious about the unique characteristics of student groups who underperformed within my high school English classrooms. After I transitioned to teach in higher education 13 years ago, I continued to develop the desire to improve my pedagogical understanding of entering college students in order to adjust my literacy-teaching efficacy. Driving this desire, and this dissertation, is the question of the efficacy of entry-level English composition courses as a primary means of equipping students to function in higher education coursework, specifically within the institution in which the study took place. Entry-level college literacy courses serve as gatekeeping mechanisms to prepare capable students and to "weed out" incapable students who are seen as liabilities (Clycq, Nouwen, & Vandenbroucke, 2014). As bell hooks (1994) points out, literacy education is a powerful force of social justice, a catalyst for empowerment and for "teaching to transgress" (i.e. deconstruct) the status quo. This study examines

students' and professors' diverse experiences within freshman composition courses. Historically, colleges require entry-level literacy courses as the means to bring underperforming groups of students to acceptable levels of literacy performance. Freshman composition courses tend to be generic in scope, with high student to instructor ratios and generalized reviews of basic academic writing principles. This study originated as an intentional examination of the ways students find success or empowerment through their literacy education with regard to the direct relationships they encounter with their instructors who have some means to distribute means to power (Lipsky, 1969).

Limitations of Typical Predictors of Literacy Success

A commonly professed purpose of college education is to integrate educated citizens into the stream of competent workers in American society, but a nationally recognized survey by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2012) indicates that we are failing to produce literate graduates who are ready to read and write competently in the workplace (Graff, 2015). The question of successful literacy preparation of all college students stands as an equity and justice issue with far-reaching pragmatic implications affecting college students in particular and the national interest in general. From conversations and observations in a small, private college where I am a faculty member, and at a Big 12 state university where I completed my doctoral studies, I am confident in asserting that a significant number of twenty-first century higher education students enter their first classes deficient in reading and writing, basic literacy abilities. Students entering higher education often struggle to write at acceptable fluency levels to meet departmental minimum grade requirements.

In most national and state educational settings, standardized measurements of students' fluency and proficiency in literacy and mathematics have been the accepted indicators of their potential to succeed within the academic setting (Rooney, 2015), yet these standardized measures of achievement depend upon the relationship of motivation to engagement in both students and teachers. Simply having the ability or the cognitive powers to perform does not translate perfectly into actual performance, nor is fluency a direct outcome of a person's ability to pass a standardized test. Motivation to perform, to develop literacy skills must accompany acceptable standardized test scores.

Lortie (1975) recognized the differences between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation in teachers, and wrote about how the differences directly affected their teaching effectiveness. Research since then has attempted to reveal the power of intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation related to the positive and negative valences of achievement goals (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002; as well as Maehr & Zusho, 2009), and the effects of students' relationships with teachers as motivational influences (Wentzel, 2009). Still, pressures from SAT and ACT college entrance exams, No Child Left Behind measurements of "annual yearly progress," and Common Core Standards rely upon powerful extrinsic motivation to push students to perform while simultaneously restricting their access to higher education. When attached to standardized testing, demographic classifications aggregate human beings into gendered socioeconomic groups, providing opportunities for culling and advancing human beings in a "sorting mill." Meanwhile, these impersonal and aggregating assessments do not always

accurately represent subgroups of those aggregated categories (Lee, S., 2009; Moua, 2007).

Literacy and Learning Identities

Teachers determine students' academic/pedagogical needs by gaining perspective of their personal culture, and histories in order to know them as human beings with unique identities, backgrounds, capabilities, and needs (Freire, 2009; hooks, 1994; Lee, S., 2009), and then matching challenging assignments with students' abilities to succeed:

> Literacy improves in situations with appropriate challenges, ones that stretch students' abilities. Appropriate challenges call for special effort from learners, but they are not defeating. They strengthen students' will to succeed. They are at the cutting edge of students' abilities – neither too easy nor too demanding. Appropriate challenges are tasks that students are unable to accomplish at first, but are able to accomplish with the help of others or with reasonable individual effort. Such levels of challenge allow students the pleasure of exerting themselves and experiencing success. (Moore, Moore, Cunningham, and Cunningham, 2011, p.31)

Though Moore et al. (2007) speak specifically to the concept of teaching close reading, they reference the connection between reading and writing instruction. Indeed, the two are inseparable. Anything less than knowing individual students' abilities to perform combined with the valuing of their goals and desires is the mere application of standards with the outcome of gate keeping. The act of empowering learners to succeed demands that educators know their students' dreams well enough to work beside them as collaborators and encouragers.

Increasing Student Diversity

Homogeneous classrooms do not exist in the twenty-first century, if they ever did exist. Increasingly globalized economic and political systems, sophisticated means of communication and transportation, and international business communities impact K–12 and higher education classrooms. Multiple first languages and cultural backgrounds enter classrooms in private and public colleges and universities, and educators must prepare for the diversity represented before them. Along with exciting cultural cross-pollination comes the challenge of differentiating instruction to meet students' broad ranges of need.

In one section of college composition that I taught in the fall 2015 semester, students came from states including Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, Texas, Illinois, Nebraska, California, and Washington, and from countries including Canada, Congo, and China. Students came from rural and urban areas. Expectations and cultural differences became very apparent as we entered the first week of class. Some had completed college preparatory composition courses, and others had little or no writing experience. Students' immediate past contexts were also diverse. One student came from a military discharge; one from a "walk-about" across Eastern Europe, and a couple of others came to sample the course to see if college were for them. In other words, the class hosted the "usual" mixture of student abilities and intentions walking into most entry-level college classrooms. Many entering college students arrive unprepared to write at the next level, and require remediation.

College composition and literacy courses offer entering students the necessary literacy training for success in most of the other higher education coursework they will

take. The English composition professor carries the burdens of expectation from college administrators who know that retention of students is associated with their ability to read and write at required academic levels, and upper level course faculty wait with anxious expectation that incoming sophomores be well prepared in the literacy skills necessary for completion of their degrees. The "lowly" English composition professor carries heavy responsibilities.

Complexity and Standardization

The central issue of literacy experience and performance serves as a focus point in standardized testing (e.g. ACT, SAT, TOEFL), and universities require entry-level literacy courses to prepare students for their academic careers. The concept of literacy competence at collegiate levels includes reading and writing but encompasses more than that. The State of Minnesota's Board of Teacher Education has established three entry-level exams in the Minnesota Teacher Licensure Exams, two of which center on literacy and fluency respectively. The third, a mathematics exam, requires the test-takers' literacy proficiency in the symbols and languages of mathematics.

In its 2004 position paper, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) attempted to clarify the comprehensive nature of literacy:

> Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their

> goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society. (UNESCO, 2004)

The National Council of Teachers of English notes in a policy research brief titled "Literacies as Disciplines," that even the term "literacy" has a complex and expanding set of meanings:

> Research over the past few decades shows that literacy is not a single or monolithic entity. Rather, it is a set of multi-faceted social practices shaped by contexts, participants, and technologies. This plurality is reflected in the many ways terms are taken up and used in literacy research. For example, a survey of studies published in the *Journal of Literacy Research* found a wide range of meanings associated with the term *context,* which suggests that many related terms, including literacy, have multiple meanings. The plurality of literacy extends beyond the print-only world of reading and writing to new and developing technologies, along with visual, audio, gestural, spatial, or multimodal discourses. (NCTE, 2011)

Professors of college composition are asked to bring students to levels of proficiency primarily in reading and writing, and are expected to encourage students to develop contemporary emerging literacy skills including digital Internet literacy, learning management systems, and word processing software.

In this study, I define "context" as the preparation for literacy practice within the collegiate environment, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening in multiple modalities, both traditional and developing, as found within ENG131, a college

composition course. The expectation of Cadler College, the private Christian college where I conducted my study, is that participants taking the course would be prepared to respond appropriately to the institutional expectations in areas of exposition, argument, analysis, and narration, and that they would be able to conduct basic research using MLA or APA formatting styles. The 2015 catalogue describes ENG131 in this way:

> This course emphasizes the fundamentals of effective writing in the context of elements of rhetoric: writer, audience, and purpose. Students write narrative, informative, and persuasive compositions and a documented research paper. (Cadler College course description)

Higher Education Literacy Expectations

The Cadler College expectation is that incoming freshmen would have English skills commensurate with the notation accompanying the State of Minnesota's Department of Education Standards in Writing for all students, grades 11 and 12:

> Note on range and content of student writing
>
> For students, writing is a key means of asserting and defending claims, showing what they know about a subject, and conveying what they have experienced, imagined, thought, and felt. To be college and career ready writers, students must be able to independently take [SIC] task, topic, purpose, and audience into careful consideration, choosing words, information, structures, and formats deliberately. They need to be able to use technology strategically when creating, refining, and collaborating on writing. They have to become adept at gathering information, evaluating sources, and citing material accurately, reporting findings from their

> research and analysis of sources in a clear and cogent manner. They must have the flexibility, concentration, and fluency to produce high-quality first-draft text under a tight deadline and the capacity to revisit and make improvements to a piece of writing over multiple drafts when circumstances encourage or require it. To meet these goals, students must devote time and effort to writing, producing numerous pieces over short and long periods throughout the year.
>
> (2010, p. 84)

Those basic literacy expectations are carefully contextualized in content areas of science, mathematics, social studies, and English language arts in the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Standards. The complexity and reality of a politicized expectation that post-secondary content area educators know and effectively teach every student each of these expectations as it relates to specific content areas is perhaps fodder for future research, especially since many content area instructors in higher education institutions may have minimal to no pedagogical training or experience.

Literacy and the Identity of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students

The literacy experiences of on-boarding higher education students represent a range of ethnic and cultural diversity. Moua's dissertation (2007), An *investigation of factors impacting Hmong students' completing a four-year-postsecondary degree*, identified low performance of Hmong students in higher education literacy courses to be a factor limiting graduation success. Similarly, in a statistics course project I conducted, I found that first-year Hmong students experienced challenges in earning high marks in Cadler College composition courses (Bouchard, 2013). Though their writing makes

sense, they at times revert to Hmong grammatical structures. For instance, in Hmong, number is designated by the adjective preceding the noun. One chicken or six chicken indicate the number of chickens, and the need for a singular or plural noun designation is unnecessary. The reasoning is sound, and yet does not comply with standard English inflections. Similarly, I have observed LatinX students whose first language is Spanish struggling to achieve mastery levels in academic writing, especially in English grammar syntax or spelling. Syntactically, adjectives may fall after nouns, or spellings may comply with the logical Spanish constructions, rather than the more complex English ones. Likewise, students from Congo exhibit their own French-related language rules in their English compositions, and so on.

Typically, six to eight sections of ENG131 College Composition run each fall semester and four to six sections of ENG132 Writing & Literature run each spring term at Cadler. The data provided by Cadler College's office of the registrar - longitudinal statistics affirmed Hmong students' lower performance in comparison to other students divided by race. Aggregated, Asian average ENG131 scores equaled 2.96 Fall 2015 and 3.69 for Spring 2016. The change reflected the loss of two of the six Asian students, both Hmong (Cadler College Registrar, 2016). Granted, the *N* is too small to make any statistical observations, but my consistent experience in 13 years' composition teaching at Cadler College is in congruence with this one school year's two semester data.

In spite of these initial literacy performance challenges, many Hmong students persist to earn higher education degrees in their chosen fields. Within the total population, Whites and non-Hmong Asians consistently earned higher grades in the

composition courses than did Hmong counterparts. On a 4.0 scale, Whites averaged ENG131 College Composition course grades of 2.69/4.0, Asians 2.96, Hispanics 2.13, and Blacks 1.83 (Cadler College Registrar, 2016).

Hispanic students saw a 50% drop in enrollment from Fall 2015 to Spring 2016 (20 F15, 10 S16). Grades for English courses averaged 2.13 in the Fall 2015 ENG131 College Composition and 2.97 in the Spring ENG132 Writing & Literature composition sections.

At far higher risk rates than Hmong or Hispanic students were Black students. In Fall 2015 ENG131 College Composition 10 Black students were enrolled. The Spring 2016 semester ended with three Black students' remaining, a 70% drop in enrollment. The three remaining students' overall average course scores rose in that period from 1.83/4.0 in ENG131 to 2.17 (Cadler College Registrar, 2016). This statistic does not answer the reasons for the loss of the seven students.

Important to note is the purposeful aggregation of students into groups for statistical digestion and reporting. Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, and Whites provide very broad categories that do not accurately reflect sub-populations within the groups, and which confuse the useful significance of the analyzed data. Cadler's Black students come from a variety of U.S. regions, as well as from several African and Middle Eastern nations. Asians hail from the U.S., China, South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines, India, Pakistan, and Japan. Hispanics may come from the U.S. or from several Central and South American countries. Though these students do not have identical literacy and educational backgrounds, statisticians tag, aggregate and label them

as members of homogeneous cultural groups for the purpose of statistical simplification. I am reminded of a comment from a former African-American student who was disgusted over how he had been treated in a business situation, "I feel disrespected!"

As Pollock (2008) states, the tendency in research is to measure achievement through aggregated, stereotyped groupings in "shallow cultural analysis," thus providing explanatory sets that typify and categorize rather than "examining the real-life experiences of specific parents and children in specific opportunity contexts" (p. 369). Aggregation inserts the deficit-driven, dehumanizing euphemism of "acceptable losses" similar to that ascribed by generals as they report battlefield losses to their constituents (Lacquemont, 2004). From a social justice perspective, I consider viewing human beings as economic data points to be unacceptable. Aggregation minimizes or diminishes the implications of differentiation instructional methods that meet individual students' learning needs. From an economic standpoint, such analysis may serve universities with huge student populations, but smaller institutions can ill afford the loss of even a few students who need differentiated instruction practices. If small colleges choose to see their students as individuals rather than as statistics, they may encourage those students to continue in their studies.

Though the number of participants was small in this study, the eleven student participants are similar to other entry-level college course students within the college studied. Students' ages ranged from 17 to mid-30s with ethnicities including Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White. Both married and unmarried members of both genders were included, as were representatives having civilian and military, and national and

international identities. One international student identified as ESL and international, having been born in one country, raised in another, and then having moved to study in the USA. Of note is that several of the Black students came from the Congo, Nigeria, and Jamaica. Asians included South Korean, Hmong, and Chinese students. White students included those who were born or lived in different countries and cultures around the world, thus qualifying for what Pollock (2008) identifies as TCKs or Third Culture Kids. Each aggregated ethnicity contained students whose first languages may not have been English. Several students self-identified as having learning disabilities needing accommodation with aid from Cadler College's disability services office.

Many of the students with whom I spoke had very little 12th grade writing experience to prepare them for college. Many of these students entered higher education with the hope of finding success, but with little actual knowledge or skill to support their on-boarding confidence, a trend noted elsewhere (Perin, Raufman, Kalamkarian, 2015). Statistical evidence gathered by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) suggests that 38% of American grade 12 students perform at or above "proficient" levels in reading, which implies the wisdom of providing orientation and scaffolding services to improve retention and matriculation (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Though average reading scores remained unchanged from 2009 to 2013, the overall downward trend from the first assessment in 1992 indicates a continued need for improvement (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

United States higher education, public and private, is increasingly open to the cultural/ethnic diversity represented in the global reality. Reflecting this increasing

diversity, the private higher education institution in this study welcomes increasing diversity, with a 14.87 percent increase in 11 years, 2004-2015, from 10.9 percent to 25.77 percent of the student population representing multicultural origins from more than 40 countries (Cadler College website, July 2015; Fisk, C, 2015). As an example, Hmong students, one larger subpopulation present in Cadler College, represent 7.4 percent of total student population (LaQuaye, 2015).

The Hmong and other Southeast Asian immigrants entering the U.S. in the late 20th century found themselves included in the nationally aggregated group "Asians," a category labeled a "model minority," i.e., a group that excels in the strata of "non-Whites" and outperforms "Whites" in several areas of academic achievement, particularly in literacy and mathematics. The resulting stereotype places pressures upon all Asians to perform at higher than average expected academic levels, and puts unrealistic stress upon individual sub-populations of Asians, including Hmong and other Southeast Asian students (Lee, F., 2013; Lee, S., 2009; Moua, 2007; Ng, J., Lee, S., & Pak, Y., 2007; Vang, 2008).

How professors form expectations in the ways they view students of diversity serves to reinforce performance gaps (Schunk & Pajares, 2009, p. 37). Intentionally exposing those expectations may serve as a point for dialogue in deconstructing the "minority" stereotypes within the institution and diminishing performance gaps. The concerns of skin color and sociocultural backgrounds as they encourage or impede human beings' access to higher education continue into the 21st century. Mujcic & Frijters' (2014), study of bus drivers' treatment of people boarding their buses showed little to no

difference in the way people of color were treated in comparison to whites nearly 60 years after Rosa Parks made her famous decision to sit in the front of a Montgomery, Alabama bus. In the same way, educators may subconsciously make decisions about their students based upon skin color, standard or nonstandard use of English, or cultural mannerisms or dress. Without the intentional study and confrontation of the challenges inherent in aggregation as it affects students' access to instruction, the education system itself becomes part of the hegemonic regime.

Referencing the pressures of "model minority" aggregation, I have had conversations with several students from the school's Hmong population in which they have stated that they were "Hmong, not Chinese." One young Hmong woman told me that Hmong men were "lazy" students, and that Hmong female students worked much harder at their studies than Hmong males (an assertion I have not been able to verify from personal experience). Several Hmong students informed me that they were the first of their families to earn college degrees.

Ladson-Billings (2000) posits that the concept of identity artificially imposed upon immigrating ethnic groups coming into relationship with a dominant population necessitates a more complex understanding of the uniqueness of those individual groups. Moua (2007) suggests that positive synergy toward successful Hmong students' matriculation and graduation from postsecondary institutions would come from the finding of a successful balance between being fully Hmong and fully American, while maintaining respect for origins and culture. The generational friction between Hmong and American cultural values and practices can be a source of tension as young Hmong make

the transition into "American culture," which problematically positions first generation Hmong Americans as "Third World" while their children are entering "First World" status (Ngo, 2010). Most of the Hmong students I work with are generation 2.5 or 3, having been born in the USA. At least one of their grandparents was a member of the first generation born in the USA, making them "generation two." As generation two or three Hmong Americans, most have adopted the cross-ethnicity popular cultural identities of their age group, while still acknowledging and attempting to accommodate their parents and grandparents' desires of staying loyal to Hmong traditions (Yang, Personal Communication, 2014).

The Hispanic students at Cadler tend to identify as Americans, while acknowledging cultural differences from the majority White population. Self-imposed segregation may or may not occur, depending on the individual student, and his or her involvement with co-curricular organizations on campus such as athletic groups or certain clubs or social organizations.

In a nearly reverse situation of the "model minority" Asian stereotype, Awokoya and Clark, report the struggles of Black immigrants (around 10 percent of total Black American population in 2010) who find themselves aggregated within the larger U.S. Black population and attempting to make their own way as independent of the larger aggregated population (2008). Instead of experiencing pressure to perform as many Southeast Asians do, many Black immigrants find themselves negatively stereotyped due to the aggregated statistical data that creates performance expectations for Black American students:

> Thus, in the United States, by virtue of their skin color alone, and almost, though not completely, irrespective of generational status, fictive kinship forces many Black immigrant youth to exist in a precarious location that is simultaneously delimited on three fronts.
>
> First, their location is delimited by their often misguided Black American peers who push them to not "act White" and, at the same time, to be Black enough. (7) Second, their location is delimited by their often out-of-touch communities of national origin who push them to be racelessly academically exceptional (as opposed to defining a uniquely Black--not uniquely black immigrant, but rather, decidedly pan-Black--scholarly image as an emphatic, counter-hegemonic challenge to both the "acting White" scholar image and the Black enough anti-scholar image).
>
> Third, their location is delimited by their teachers who push on them--as if it were an addictive drug--the myth of them as racially inferior. (8) (Awokoya and Clark, 2008, p. 53)

Clearly, aggregation of human beings, though convenient for statisticians and lawmakers, plays a dehumanizing role in setting educational policy, and in shaping teachers' perspectives about the human beings who come to their classes.

Pollock, 2008, suggests that instead of looking first to "race-ethnic-national origin or class, the researcher must find specific behaviors regularly occurring and then attempt to identify groups who share those behaviors" (p. 370). Doing so recognizes individuals'

distinct and complex multicultural natures, rather than buttoning them into larger aggregates (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). In other words, each student is unique, and therefore requires some level of differentiation in instruction. This need places pedagogical skill in a complementary position with content knowledge that serves the teaching/learning process.

A second diverse population of students entering the school includes home and privately schooled students who may not have preparation to write with competence at collegiate levels, or who may be prepared at far higher skill levels than their freshman peers. Add differing levels of social skills and knowledge of academic and sociocultural intricacies and the stress to acclimate becomes even more challenging for this particular group of Cadler students (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

A third group to consider, especially in a private non-profit higher education institution required by state and federal law to provide "reasonable accommodation" (ADA 1990, 2008) is a group of students who enter with special learning needs. Not required by law to report their past K-12 identification of special needs, many students with disabilities choose not to do so, and though some professors may attempt to determine each student's ideal learning style or accommodation, not all students are served. Some educators may not approach students who need help because of their respect for their privacy, or because they feel that they are ill equipped to inquire. If students fail to self-identify to the college disability services director, accommodations may not occur in classes. In addition, professors may not have experience or expertise in working with students with disabilities, which may increase stress on both.

Dialogical Instruction

A pedagogical trend in education stems from what Paolo Freire terms a "dialogical" educational perspective (2009), in which teachers immerse themselves in the teaching/learning construct to work beside their students, rather from a raised position of top down authority at the front of the classroom, metaphorically speaking. This study of students of diversity in higher education resonates with the desirability of stepping away from the "banking" method of one-size-fits-all pedagogy and moving toward a dialogical construct in which the voices of each participant speak and the ears of entire classrooms hear each other. To do so, educators must understand the learners' "thought language": the ways in which they see the world through the eyes of their own narratives of history and culture, and through their views of the world (Engeström, 2001; Freire, 2009). Knowing participants' college entrance exam scores, their grade point averages, and their financial aid status is not enough. Teachers need to know their students' unique and personal cultural-historical narratives and ask how these stories influences their higher education literacy experiences (Engeström, 2001). Writer, teacher, researcher, activist bell hooks reminds teachers who would "transgress" the status quo that learning is only effective as it connects with transformative power to allow learners to live their lives more fully (hooks, 1994). I resonate with these assertions and find space within them for my own grounded theoretical construct arising from this study.

In this study, I assert that literacy educators must consider individual learners' development and dispositions as uniquely occurring phenomena within the context of their own personal cultures and histories, per Engstrom, 2001. Instructors need to learn

each student's strengths and needs, rather than assuming the effectiveness of aggregated needs assessed from data sets based on broadly stereotyped culturally or ethnically assigned group traits, such as the "model minority" status assigned to students aggregated into generalized ethnicities or classified with regional biases (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). My findings encourage higher education institutions welcoming students of diversity to seek the benefits of conducting similarly individualized studies in order to improve student performance, satisfaction, and retention.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of the research was to study post-secondary students as they are moving into the higher education pathway via an entry-level English composition course, and to observe their engagement with the literacy instruction activities required at Cadler College, a small Midwestern private religious higher education institution.

I examined participants' literacy perspectives and activities and attempted to understand the context of accompanying cultural and developmental factors prior to and during their experiences as entry-level college students. I purposely selected a variety of students of varying racial, social, and academic performance backgrounds. As I came to know each one of the eleven, I discovered that some participants had learning disability designations from their K-12 careers. Two of the participants had self-identified to their instructors seeking accommodations while others had not. The designations and the self-disclosure may have contributed to these particular students' grade outcomes. As I processed data from observations, interviews, and surveys, I selected four participants to deepen my investigation through a re-interview process. Of the four, two had been

granted special education accommodations in the past, but only one had requested accommodations at Cadler. Two were international students living in the USA on student visas.

Through my research questions, I sought a deeper understanding of the impact and effectiveness of the preparatory English composition courses that entering students are required to take. In addition, I looked for differentiated instruction practices and pedagogical relationships within those classes. I asked the following questions:

1. How does taking the course ENG131 College Composition change literacy stances, practice, and overall academic performance of first year students?
2. Are there uniquely cultural explanations for the students' literacy engagement and performance?
3. How does professor/student interaction affect the literacy instruction process?
4. What are the perceptions of students in the class regarding their overall experience and performance?
5. What are the perceptions of faculty members teaching and working with the sub-population with regard to their teaching experiences and performance?

Theoretical Frameworks

In the following section, I present a brief overview of theoretical frames within the larger frameworks of social cognitive theory, ending the section with a discussion of

self-regulation, a term that starts with Bandura's (1997) efficacy theory, now adopted or assimilated into many theoretical constructs beyond motivation theory. A section on sociocultural theory follows the section on social cognitive theory with a brief discussion of the strengths and gaps within the two major frameworks and explanation of the need for the grounded theory derived from this study. Adorno (1967, 1968) and Wertsch (1985) emphasized the act of seeking to know the "totality" of human sociology and psychology rather than focusing upon one and ignoring the other. In doing this, they offer the possibility of bridge building between two sometimes antagonistic theoretical paradigms. Beach and O'Brien's (2015) discussion of emerging new literacies supports the position that social and cognitive psychological theories become increasingly significant in combination with each added new literacy. I investigate these theoretical frameworks in more depth in Chapter 2, but here I lay out the general principles.

Social Cognitive Theory of Motivation

In the social cognitive theory of motivation, learning occurs through observation and emulation of modeled behaviors or practice, a concept with which sociocultural theorists would agree. The nuance of difference that social cognitive theory presents is the concept of "effective modeling," a theory that teaches learners the "rules" for responding to problems or creating solutions based on effective modeling rather than the social and dialogical conversation that sociocultural adherents espouse.

In social cognitive theories, vicarious learning allows observant learners who have reached developmentally mature stages to learn without actually having to partake or to perform. The repetition of successful modeling leads to a cognitive sense of efficacy

or self-efficacy and increases the likelihood that a subject will take risks and continue to learn (Bandura, 1971; Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1986; Bandura, 1997; Bandura, 2002).

Social cognitive theory is important to this study because the end goal of college composition instructors is to teach students to self-regulate their writing skills in competent and successful ways for future coursework within their college experience. Effective classroom teachers hope to work themselves out of a job as their students "take off" on their own, pursuing and achieving educational goals.

Sociocultural Theory of Motivation

"Sociocultural learning theories take a learner-centered approach. Rather than viewing individuals, sociocultural theories take much greater account of the important roles that social relations, community, and culture play in cognition and learning" (Rogoff, 1990, in Wang, 2006, p. 151). Where the two theoretical frameworks of sociocultural and social learning theories differ is in the contextualizing of participants' social motivations in a networked complex of discourses, power structures and strata, social practices, perceptions of identity, intermingling of purposes and cultures, and availability to literacy options or requirements (Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, and Hemphill, 1999, in Nieto, 2002).

Sociocultural theory examines the complexities surrounding the cognitive processes and investigates the interactions taking place between the participants in any given study and the cultural forces influencing them. The possibility of deeper, richer, thicker descriptions delving into motivation to literacy and learning go beyond individual attributions of motivation. Not only is the ability to read and process texts with

proficiency considered, but so also is the learner's access to languages of agency and socioeconomic, academic, and political power (Freire, 2009; Gee, J. P., 1990, 2004; Nieto, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978, 1981).

A weakness of sociocultural theoretical positions is the lowered emphasis upon actual performance based on ruled constructs and measurable outcomes. The complexities inherent within sociocultural relationships confound and resist the metrification and measurement valued by statisticians and politicians. As such, they allow for qualitative individualization of human characteristics, raising and disaggregating individuals and cultural groups as distinct and unique. Granted, sociocultural constructs are difficult to parse, and are becoming more difficult in a world where borders and cultural rules are in flux and blending (Bhabha, 1994; Massey, 2005). Culture evades capture and resists pinning to a wax dissection board; it is not a specimen examined in a laboratory. Because this is true, a gap of certainty exists that social cognitive theory would assert it fills.

Tensions between Social Cognitive and Sociocultural Theories

While social cognitive and sociocultural theories distance themselves from each other, some believe the time has come for cognitivists and sociologists to look over their adjoining fences with the desire to work toward a more holistic pedagogical perspective of human beings. The intentionality to see human beings not just as psychological learners, but also as humans living in "social, cultural, historical, and political contexts" (Nieto, 2002, p. 5) will provide needed insight. The significance of incorporating and considering the larger sociocultural and social cognitive aspects of humanity impacts

curricular decisions and influences the entire learning community (Nieto, 2002). Human beings are complex, more complex than any one theoretical framework can encompass. Since the theoretical assertions that any one theoretical community makes to describe human beings limits holistic perceptions from other theoretical perspectives, they have political power that translates into establishment of gatekeeping mechanisms and accesses to avenues of power. When any one theoretical perspective drives universal policy, the incomplete view of the dominant discourse limits effectiveness and causes disruption (Foucault, 1980; Freire, 2009; Gee, 2000). This must be true, or why would we have so many conflicting or complex and varied theories vying to describe identical human attributes such as language, literacy, sociology, and psychology, to name a few? The dominant theory accesses power and situates itself to stay in power.

Though theoretical purists adhere to their epistemologies, they need to modify them as new phenomena appear. While clashing viewpoints woo followers and booksellers pander to audiences for profits, wise theorists consider implications of new discoveries and old assumptions. In traversing the mazes of developing theory, we travelers gain insights into human nature as we accept diversity and complexity. Still, though an eclectic perspective may be helpful, the honest researcher must at last settle into one or another theoretical world and make accommodations for epistemologies outside her/his own or create new ones, which is what I am going to do through this grounded theory study. The theory, Mutually Humble Collaboration (MHC) describes the atmosphere necessary to build a dialogical bridge within literacy instruction. Sometimes

new theory complements or accommodates other theories, as does mine. MHC overarches the themes related to student performance identified in his research.

Critical Lenses

Perhaps one way to build bridges across great divides is to gain multiple perspectives from which empathy can develop. Critical lens theory provides opportunities for learners to stop and gain insights into the perspectives of others. The post-modern, post-structuralist 21st Century academy sees little in the way of pure critical thought: a self-proclaimed existentialist may quote idealist philosophy (Plato's concept of the cave) and have no intellectual qualms about having crossed two philosophically opposed worldviews. I view the data and the research through my understanding of three critical lenses as they apply to an educational framework: discourse analysis of inherent power structures within the language of the academy (Gee, 1990, 2000), pragmatism's need to keep up with the ever-changing landscape of what preparation twenty-first century learners need to stay current and proficient in traditional and new literacies (Brice, 2004; Leu, McVerry, O'Byrne, Kiili, Zawilinski, Everett-Cacopardo, and Forzani, 2011), and the Christian world views as they are incorporated into literacy courses in a Christian liberal arts college (Lee & Givens, 2012; Neumann, 2011; Trelstad, 2008). I accept that college students' access to power within the academy is directly tied to their literacy skill and ability to communicate within the milieu of academic discourse and that their work must take on an accepted "standard" appearance, using the vocabulary, syntax, and discursive formats of higher education.

As a literacy professor in a private Christian college, I echo the Psalmist who declared, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14); so is every human being whom I serve. Believing that every human has the capacity, agency, and ability to learn drives my purpose behind this study. That each human is unique in those capacities convinces me of the wisdom for differentiation of instruction, especially in literacy.

Research Significance

This research contributes to the understanding of higher education students' experiences in entry-level course work and attempts to reveal perspectives of students who identify as ethnically and culturally diverse as well as their professors' perceptions of literacy performance and experience within ENG131 College Composition. The study may serve as a format for the study of students aggregated within larger higher education populations and may provide ideas for strengthening diverse students' motivation, engagement, and literacy performance at self-regulated levels within higher education institutions (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2009).

The study's descriptive narratives provide insight into students from minority populations on the campus where I teach. Students of marginal academic ability due to their first generation challenges, regardless of color or culture were included in this study. Following in the research paths of several educational researchers (e.g., Ngo, 2010; Lee, F., 2013; Lee, S., 2009; Moua, 2007; Pollock, 2008), I hope to add useful perspectives that will strengthen the differentiation of literacy instruction for all students entering college. Debnam, Bottiani, Cash, & Bradshaw (2015) report that while teachers tend to self-report as being culturally responsive, their actual performance assessment, via

Assessing School Settings: Interactions with Students and Teachers (ASSIST), is less responsive than reported. This study enriches the body of literature related to cultural responsiveness, which Debnam, et al., define as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them" (2015).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview

In this chapter, I examine research literature in the areas of Sociocultural Learning Theory and Social Cognitive Theory and their intersections with literacy theory. I first examine theoretical foundations that undergird literacy research theory as it interfaces with social cognitive and sociocultural learning theory.

Following the explanation of the central theories, I offer an explanation of the application of Positive Deviance Theory (Pascale, Sternin & Sternin, 2010), through which I selected the study's participants. Next, I present Grounded Theory, [cited here in chronological order] (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998, 2008; and Charmaz, 2006, 2008), through which I constructed Mutually Humble Collaboration Theory (MHC).

Finally, I identify three traits within the discrepant case participants that I suggest as indicators of their academic success. First, the passion and perseverance found in Grit (Duckworth & Gross, 2014; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Perret-Clermont, A-N & Ligorio, M. Ed.). Second, I investigate professor-student relationships creating lines of communication (Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002; Bandura, 1971; bell hooks, 1994; French & Raven, 1959; Ghaffari-Samai, P., Davis, J., & DeFilippis, D., 1994; Kounin, 1970; Landrum, R., 2009), and finally, I present a new theory, Mutually Humble Collaboration (MHC), my creation.

Sociocultural Theory

In this section, I examine concepts related to sociocultural theory affecting this study including foundations, zone of proximal development, scaffolding, and ongoing development of vocabulary and word meaning (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985). In each section, I explicate sociocultural elements relative to this study.

Vygotsky's (1978) theory presented the world of psychology and educational psychology in particular with the idea that human beings experience intellectual growth firstly through social interactions, and secondly, through intra-psychological emulation and the internalization of social actions. Vygotsky emphasized, "For this reason, animals are incapable of learning in the human sense of the term; human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (p. 88). The foundational basis of sociocultural theory as espoused by Vygotsky is that humans learn in social contexts in all aspects of learning mediated by tools, including language (Wertsch, 1985, Ch. 4).

Zone of Proximal Development

Important to the dialogical relationships within the zone of proximal development (ZPD), "…learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers," and which is a uniquely human, culturally organized psychological function (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90). Wertsch (1985) states, "Hence, the zone of proximal development is jointly determined by the child's level of development and the form of instruction involved; it is a property neither of the child nor of

interpsychological functioning alone" (pp.70-71). As the learner progresses, the teacher must move the standards, objectives, and challenges ever higher within the ZPD, which is comparable to a baseball strike zone. The teacher serves the role of the pitcher who places the lesson, the ball, within the perfect strike zone, or ZPD. With the teacher's scaffolding, the student is able to learn or hit the ball. The tension between a lesson's being too easy or too difficult directly impacts the student's engagement and persistence. Lessons that are too difficult are out of the student's reach, and if they are too easy, the learner is bored and unmotivated. The point of perfect tension between what the learner knows or has mastered and what s/he can learn is the ZPD.

Answering one criticism of sociocultural theory, namely its lack of specific instructional prescriptions - educational theorists and practitioners Wass & Golding, (2014) provide structures and practical means of providing students with ZPD-related assignments in order to develop principles first articulated by Vygotsky in the early 20th century. Wass & Golding (2014) emphasize that providing students with tasks that they cannot accomplish on their own, while providing sufficient scaffolding that prepares students to continue learning on their own produces strong gains in learning (p. 682).

Scaffolding

Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding places the experienced leader/teacher in the position of encouraging, modeling, and protecting the learner, whose job it is to strive to grow through the activities including success and failure. The scaffolding teacher, much like a parent, is in a position of power, authority, and greater knowledge and skill than the learner.

In sociocultural theory, the learner is dependent upon the social interactions taking place, the purposes intended in the learning situation, and upon the tools at hand. First comes the socially situated actions followed by cognition (Vygotsky, 1978, 1981). Wertsch (1985) further distinguishes Vygotsky's academic perspective of scaffolding for learning's sake against the "labor" or production perspective of learning/scaffolding:

Given this description of a motive, I turn the two specific activities of interest here – labor and schooling. The motive of labor generally is productivity. When someone is engaged in the activity setting of labor, productivity will be maximized, and other possible motives will be given secondary status. In contrast, the motive of a formal schooling activity may be defined as "learning for learning's sake." In this activity setting, other motives play a second role, and actions and operations executed in their service will be altered or forgone if they interfere seriously with the maximization of learning. (Wertsch, 1985, pp. 212-13)

Academically-oriented scaffolding affords opportunities for failure within the ZPD, creating a "target" to increase the student's learning while expecting struggle and failure as part of the necessary experience of learning. Conversely, the "learning as labor" perspective places pressure upon the lead or scaffolder to make sure the learner does not fail and to ensure that the end purpose or product is completed successfully (Wertsch, 1985). This is an interesting distinction that changes the focus of importance from the growth of the learner in Vygotsky's academic theory to growth of the product in the labor perspective. Vygotsky viewed failure as part of the learning process, with end results not as important as the learner's successful mastery of concepts. The enormous 21st century

deficit-based emphasis (labor-product focus) upon standardized testing stands at odds with Vygotsky's emphasis and encouragement of the learners' ongoing growth through failure and scaffolding through sociocultural activities. Fear of failure is foreign to Vygotsky's theory, much the same as is wise parents' acceptance of their toddlers' falling while learning to walk. Failure is a part of learning in the natural world.

Many 21st Century educators practice what they believe to be sociocultural methods based on Vygotsky's theory. Gredler (2011) suggests that popular misinterpretations of nearly a hundred years of attempted application of sociocultural theoretical methods may have ended the possibility of enacting Vygotsky's original understanding and intentionality of sociocultural theory.

Gredler wrote to expose misconceptions of the ZPD and suggested that Vygotsky did not advocate peer-to-peer scaffolding but rather the child learner's cooperation with a teacher/adult (p.119). In other words, the presence and direction of the adult is essential, not optional. Pragmatically, Gredler suggests that Vygotsky's principles may be applied to rethink current classroom practices such as using ZPD assessment to determine students' internal cognitive processes in order to determine whether they are processing as children or adolescents similar to Piaget's (1969) stage thresholds between concrete and formal operations. Determining this threshold allows the teacher to structure curriculum effectively. The teacher is responsible to design instruction and bring the learner through the necessary instruction to achieve learning success (p.125). What this looks like is putting a learner in a task and observing whether s/he is able to perform it. If so, the task is too easy and therefore not in the ZPD. If the learner must have assistance to

complete the learning task, s/he is in the ZPD. The difference between this assessment and Piaget's is the absence of a series of stages of development defined by age only.

Finally, Gredler (2011) affirms Vygotsky's (1978) position that covering a great deal of content to meet external standards is non-productive due in part to the shallow skimming of ideas without the development of higher mental functions. This concept correlates with the futility of what Freire (2009) termed "banking" instruction, which maliciously loads the learner with dominant discourse concepts but does not allow for individualized response or dialogue.

In opposition to "deficit" theories driving the policies of standardization of testing and top down curricular agendas, twenty-first century applications of sociocultural theory in education are moving toward dialogic classrooms that acknowledge social justice concerns in education. While heavily quantitative, standardized testing systems "cream" the top echelons of higher performing students, they leave the majority of students behind in the mid and lower ranges of normal distributions. These systems work to disenfranchise many more humans than they empower by perpetuating oppressive "banking" education practices (Freire, 2009).

Working within traditional educational systems, educators benefit from the perspectives provided by critical theory and the multiple lenses therein. In the next section, I examine the concepts inherent in critical pedagogy as they relate to this study.

Critical Literacy and Critical Pedagogy

Critical literacy in this study refers to the transformative, rather than the formative power of literacy. It is more than a measurable, quantitative skill used to determine

humans' categorization as "literate," or "illiterate" and more than a way to rate learners for placement in categories. From a critical literacy perspective, literacy provides human beings personal power, agency, and the ability to act autonomously. "Essentially then, critical literacy is language use that questions the social construction of the self. When we are critically literate, we examine the subjective positions from which we make sense of the world and act in it" (Shor, 1999, p. 2). Bean and Moni (2003) state,

> Critical literacy shifts the boundaries of discussion between teacher and students, changes relationships, and generates substantive conversations about texts. The texts themselves become manipulable, transparent constructions that can be accepted or rejected, and in which multiple meanings are explored. (p. 646)

Readers who have internalized critical literacy skills are able to read "against the text" in order to question the underlying assumptions or intentionality therein, and are equipped to arrive at informed perspectives beyond the messages embedded only in the literature. Critically literate humans are able to examine concepts from multiple perspectives through objectively examining concepts in literature through multiple lenses (Cheu-jey, 2014). "Literacy is more than fluency for fluency's sake; it is part of our enacting memory, and allows us to understand the world around us" (Bendix, 2017). As Cheu-jey, 2014, states,

> Imagine what our students would think about reading if our reading instruction were geared toward passing a standardized test? They may become, at best, literate test-wise in the systemized school. Yet outside of the school, they miss out on a wealth of treasures that reading can offer (p. 97).

Huck, (1966) decries the creation of "'alliterate literates,' citizens who know how to read, but don't." Surely, the danger of standardized testing and uniformity of literacy instruction combined with the high stakes, high stress external assessments we are seeing in the twenty-first century puts us at just such a risk. To become illiterate is to become manipulable and oppressed, to be moved and used by other more dominant discourses (Gee, 1999, 2000, 2004). Systems that allow or maintain illiteracy or encourage citizens to remain illiterate are unjust. The use of standardized testing or other educational systems that perpetuate gaps in literacy oppress citizens and keep them from rising within the social circles of power.

The role of the educator in critical pedagogy is to share in the learning experience with students, to allow and encourage more than the dominant viewpoint in the examination of the texts and the content. Rather than forcing students to memorize and regurgitate information, teachers engaging in dialogical instruction encourage learners to construct knowledge, to use their new found literacy powers, and to experience transformation through joining in the dialogical conversations of power (Freire, 2009). Dialogical teaching is transformative and empowering work.

Concerning critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire (2009) presented and denounced the concept of "banking education," which catalogues and categorizes human beings, and effectively disempowers them, rather than empowering them to become self-motivated, agentic learners engaged in life-long inquiries of knowledge and truth (p. 73). The role of educators is to become co-collaborators and partners in what Freire termed "the struggle for their liberation" (p. 75). Freire's Marxist-Christian philosophy of instruction seems

diametrically oppositional to the current world of standardized testing and subsequent gate-keeping mechanisms, which lock learners into socioeconomic strata.

Freire's life work joins other critical pedagogies that champion social justice and equity concepts, first suggested by Horace Mann at the end of the nineteenth century and John Dewey at the beginning of the twentieth. Others followed, including Michel Foucault's (1980) rebellion against "subjugated knowledges," Rich's (1979) argument against the use of language to force humans into expected roles, and Anzaldua's (1990) "multicultural resistance invented on the borders of crossing identities" (in Shor, 1999). All these critical pedagogies have this element in common, they challenge the status quo; they speak in different ways against perceived injustices and inequities, and they work to educate in ways that prod their learners into agentic action against hegemony. Educator and "transgressor" against the status quo, bell hooks (1994) states,

> As a teacher, I recognize that students from marginalized groups enter classrooms within institutions where their voices have been neither heard nor welcomed, whether these students discuss facts – those which any of us might know – or personal experience. My pedagogy has been shaped to respond to this reality. If I do not wish to see my students use the "authority of experience" as a means of asserting voice, I can circumvent this possible misuse of power by bringing to the classroom pedagogical strategies that affirm their presence, their right to speak, in multiple ways on diverse topics. This pedagogical strategy is rooted in the assumption that we all bring to the classroom experiential knowledge, that this knowledge can indeed enhance our learning experience. (pp. 83-4)

What hooks is suggesting is that human beings embedded within education systems have power to recognize and to change unjust pedagogical practices and introduce ones that will welcome and bring power to all students and that each student's personal experience adds to the collective conversation of learning. Ares (2006) supports hooks' emphasis on the societally transformative power inherent in the intentions of critical pedagogy. The intentionality embedded within critical pedagogies requires change of existing societal structures, always with the intent of strengthening weaker members and weakening strong sectors in societies.

Freire's (2009) conceptualization of the dialogical learning relationship lies in the following statement: "Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teacher" (p. 80). Many 21st century educators are developing the concepts related to the dialogical classroom.

Garcia (2012) states that the field of educational psychology, in its movement toward the study of dialogical factors in teaching and learning, is facilitating the shift away from previous objectivist, high altitude engagement, or subjectivist, personal and myopic conceptions of learning. Diminishing are the traditions in which teachers force curriculums upon learners who largely remain silent and receptive toward the communicative or dialogical concepts of learning (see also Racionero, & Padros, 2010). Bakhtin (1984) and Freire's (2009) dialogical critical pedagogies hold increasing sway upon classrooms globally as teachers and students engage in dialogical communication, a horizontal constructivist activity occurring between teachers and learners (Rule, 2011).

One result of this "dialogic turn" (Racionero & Padros, 2010) is the decreasing trust or emphasis upon the power of "experts" within fields and the shift to more "round table" power structures in which many literate voices speak with authority (Garcia, 2012). "The dialogic turn in education corresponds to a move from the constructivist to the communicative view of reality and learning; it is occurring in the context of the shift from the industrial society to the information society" (Racionero & Padros, 2010).

Literacy in the forms of reading and writing becomes the means of empowerment and dialogic action (Rule, 2009, 2011). While Freire (2009) believed the purpose of dialogical pedagogies to be the transformation of society into socialistic equality, Bakhtin (1984) saw the end goal to be the creation of human beings' individual personalities (Rule, 2009), a sort of Maslow-ian self-actualization and realization of person-hood (see Maslow, 1968, 2014). Regardless of their end perspectives, both Bakhtin and Freire emphasized the social justice and moral righteousness of developing dialogic relationships. Both saw dialogue as a continuous and healthy human condition (Rule, 2009, 2011).

Having demonstrated that sociocultural theory impacts contemporary cognitive theory in the early twenty-first century, including educational psychology, I now turn to examine social cognitive theory, a powerful theoretical construct influencing pedagogy across the curriculum in all content areas, and providing additional insight into literacy theory and practice.

Social Cognitive Theory

While sociocultural theories explain the justice issues related to education and incorporate literacy theory as a means to opening dialogic and empowering relationships within societies, they do not provide much insight into the hows of scaffolded instruction. Social cognitive theories, on the other hand, are rich in the specific methods of instruction and measurement to assess effectiveness of instruction aimed at specifically designated developmental target areas. Where Piaget (1969, 1977) delineates specific stages with carefully explained cognitive and social abilities within each stage and attributes specific pedagogical practices for each stage, sociocultural theory does not. Rather, sociocultural theory focuses upon how individuals become part of their cultural community and more specifically, their "historically advanced cultural community" (Matusov & Hayes, 2000). Educators seeking specific methods and steps to scaffold instruction and learning must look beyond sociocultural theory for a complementary theory. Social cognitive theory offers pragmatic answers.

Similarly, sociocultural theory lacks a clear explanation of the developmental maturation of learners and specified practices or actions appropriate in those stages of development. In other words, since sociocultural theory is not stage-based, the question of measurement in development begs clarity. Matusov & Hayes (2000) suggested that this ambiguity in sociocultural theory occurs due to Vygotsky's early twentieth century focus on the learner's integration and full assimilation into "Western high culture" through social skills, customs, and language, that necessarily shape integration of the individual's intellect and psychological processes (Vygotsky, 1978). As twenty-first century globalization continues, the question of just how to define "Western high culture"

becomes increasingly complex and nearly impossible. An increasing ambiguity in what qualities a mature, enculturated, "finished" individual might exhibit confuses the ultimate goals of sociocultural theory. Foundational in sociocultural theory, Vygotsky and contemporaries' work continues to be re-interpreted and modified to meet the times.

Foundations of Social Learning Theory

Miller and Dollard (1941) introduced social learning theory in order to identify social motivations of leaders upon followers (learners) who demonstrate learning through imitative behaviors. Bandura (1977, 1986, 1997, 2002) further developed the theory to holistically describe the complex interplay of social, cognitive, environmental, and psychological factors influencing the learning processes (Kecskes, 2013).

Sociocognitivists' growing understanding of the complexity within social cognitive learning then moved their theoretical positions closer to sociocultural theory adaptive models such as Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework for human development. Human theories have limited capacities, and the need for accommodating increased complexity may have been the impetus to bring social cognitive and sociocultural constructs into collaborative relationships. Those of us who see benefits in both theoretical worlds hope this is true.

For example, a comparison of Vygotsky's scaffolding and Bandura's modeling reveals striking similarities. Bandura's expansion of the concept of modeling from paired individuals to the adaptive depiction of collective modeling in which individuals within groups are able to create collective agreements, goals, and aspirations in order to learn and work together mirrors Freire's sociocultural dialogical principles (Kecskes, 2013).

Despite their similarities, social cognitive and sociocultural theorists ignore each other, almost as though they are two toddlers playing in the same sandbox but unaware of each other (see Piaget, 1969, Preoperational Stage Egocentricism).

Currently, many sociocultural theorists claim Freire and ignore Bandura, similar to the blind men who examined the elephant in the old tale. Each man returned from his examination to describe a part of the whole elephant in detail, and each man's description defied the others' descriptions. The amused listener of the story knows that each individual was indeed describing parts of a whole. In order to make a distinction, scholars must go deeper into the philosophical underpinnings of the two theoretical worlds to see if perhaps their collaboration might develop a greater, more accurate picture of the whole.

Social cognitive theory ignores the constructivist-centric sociocultural position that claims that learners construct knowledge through social actions. It further asserts that teachers and learners must learn pre-existent knowledge in order for the learners to understand intentions and meanings of what is learned (Kecskes, 2013). Socio-cognitivists hold that at developmentally appropriate stages, knowledge and skills are added like building blocks. This position sounds almost empiricist/positivist at core, because it assumes knowledge of prior information or ideas to be essential. Sociocultural theorists, on the other hand, insist that social activities stimulate and strengthen knowledge and understanding. An examination of relevant theories that are changing to overcome the great divisions between sociocultural and social cognitive worlds follows.

Bandura – Self-efficacy Theory

Bandura (1977, 1986, 1997)) first spoke of "self-efficacy" in which learners form beliefs about their abilities to perform based on their past performance, their observations of others performing, influences from others, and positive or negative stress (Schunk & Pajares, 2009). According to self-efficacy theory, successful learners possess agency to act with confidence and receive cues from modeled behaviors of others (Bandura, 1997). Through the cues they perceive, learners set goals, choose which activities to participate in, determine how much energy and time to invest, and calculate how long to persevere in attempting to accomplish goals (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). According to Bandura, emotional responses may provide cues to learners' potential successes or failures, and modeling expected behaviors may influence learners to act through persuasive expressions of confidence in learners' ability to succeed by raising self-efficacy (1997).

Learners with higher self-efficacy demonstrate greater persistence and self-confidence and sustain effort for longer periods than those with lower self-efficacy (Ryan, 1993). Baldassarre, G., Stafford, T., Morolli, M., Redgrave, P., Ryan, R., and Barto, A. (2014) determined that "higher mammals, especially humans, engage in activities that do not appear to directly serve the goals of survival, reproduction, or material advantage" and that "autonomous development and life-long open-ended learning are hallmarks of intelligence" (p. 1). Though Baldassarre, et al., apply this theory to humans, animals, and robotics, internal motivation to learn and succeed seems directly related to what Bandura (1977) first identified as a "self-efficacy" driving internal motivation.

With regard to motivation, two expectancy beliefs: outcome expectations and efficacy expectations serve to motivate or discourage learners' behaviors. Outcome expectancy predicts the likelihood of success or failure, and learner efficacy expectancy provides an estimation of the ability to perform at necessary levels to succeed (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Also, as Schunk & Pajares, (2009) explain, if learners do not possess the capabilities or skills necessary to succeed, they will not likely do so. Additionally, social pressures may cause learners who are efficacious to perform or choose not to perform based upon their perception of how peers will respond to their actions (Schunk, 1995). What makes self-efficacy theory useful to educators is the evidence suggesting that students of all ability levels will perform at higher levels if they have higher perceptions of self-efficacy (Schunk & Pajares, 2009). Combine this likelihood of higher performance with Bandura's (1997) emphasis on the suggestive power that educators have to encourage their students to take risks and to perform, and social cognitive theory provides useful educational tools.

From Bandura's explanation of self-efficacy concepts as internal supports of motivation, I move to expectancy value theory, expanding from Atkinson (1964) work, because it offers additional support for my assertion that the two worlds of sociocultural and social cognitive theories can and should speak into each other.

Expectancy Value Theory

In an expansion of Atkinson's (1964) expectancy value theory, Eccles (Parsons) J., Adler, T., Futterman, R., Goff, S., Kaczala, C., et al. (1983) created an economic system of sorts based on negative and positive implications of engaging in tasks. Choices

to engage and persist or not to do so rely upon perceived ultimate costs associated with options. In a way, the learner becomes an actuary, assessing liabilities and risks versus safety and benefits. Complex sub-factors are at play in this model and depend on the accuracy with which learners know their own limits and the validity in their judgment systems for giving value to potential options. Eccles (Parsons), et al, 1983, emphasized the learners' expectations of success to be influenced by the external cultural milieu in forms of stereotypes for gender, occupation, and family expectations along with personal perceptions of his/her personal self-identities, short and long term goals, vision of the idyllic self, and the self-assessment of personal abilities.

Pragmatically, "subjective task values" stemming from the learner's affective domain, personal goals, and expectations of success include his/her interests, value of achievement, utility or usefulness of achievement, and the estimated cost compared to expenditure of time and energy or even social capital (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). The complexity of the subjective task value system makes it nearly impossible to parse in real-world achievement situations due to the presence of affective memories, cultural pressures, and learner self-identities complicate rational decision-making processes (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

An illustration of the complexities involved comes from Burak, S. (2014) who suggests that musical instrument educators should observe all [my emphasis] the abilities of their students in order to adjust instructional expectations to fit their ability levels in order to motivate them and increase their daily practice times for success. Gonzalez-Morena, (2012) conducted a study of graduate music program students using expectancy-

value theory to examine students' personal and environmental factors that affected their motivational beliefs. Abraham, J., & Barker, K. (2014) developed a tool called the "Physics Motivation Questionnaire" that uses expectancy-value theory motivation assumptions to test the likelihood of physics students to sustain engagement with the subject and to continue within their physics studies. Marinak (2013) conducted a study on the erosion of engagement in some fifth grade readers using a pre-test-posttest design based on expectancy-value theory and reported three possible interventions to increase students' expectancy values and motivation to persist. Clinkenbeard (2012) reports application of several theories, including expectancy-value theory in analyzing motivational tactics useful with gifted and talented students.

From the discussion of the complex nature of motivation, we move to the topic of resilience, fortitude, and tenacity. I am using Duckworth's (2016) Grit as the theoretical lens through which I will examine these essential qualities of motivation.

Growth vs. Fixed Intelligence

In a TED Talk revealing her earliest work, Angela Duckworth admitted that she was seeking knowledge of how to build "grit" or passion and perseverance into students. Teachers and parents were asking her, "How do I build grit in kids?" "What do I do to teach kids a solid work ethic?" "How do I keep them motivated for the long run?" Duckworth's first response? "The honest answer is, 'I don't know'" (Duckworth, May 9, 2013). She followed the comment, which drew laughter from the audience, with a short explanation of the value of growth intelligence mindset, *a la* Carol Dweck, (2009, 2015). Not surprisingly, Duckworth and Dweck combined research efforts and cited jointly in

education motivation theory blogs and news sites (Ripley, 2013**;** Zhivotovskaya, 2009). Indeed, research teams have recently conducted large research experiments focused upon building grit and growth intelligence perceptions in matriculating non-White students of lower socio-economic strata through pre-entry "lay theory" methods that instill counter research evidence in socioeconomic performance gaps. The growing evidence suggests 31 to 40 % decreases in those gaps (Yeager, D.S., Walton, G.M., Brady, S.T., Akcinar, E.N., Paunesku, D., Kean, LKamentz, D., Ritter, G., Duckworth, A.L., Urstein, R., Gomez, E.M., Markus, H.R., Cohen, G.L., and Dweck, C.S. (May 31, 2016). The combined scaffolding of preparatory messaging, integrated academic support services, extracurricular support groups, and encouragement to live on campus successfully scaffolded students who might otherwise have been unsuccessful due to a variety of reasons including learning disabilities or socioeconomic disparities with the rest of the student population.

Dweck (2009, 2015) developed the idea that people tend to see intelligence as being something that is either fixed or able to grow under the right conditions. Fixed mentalities hold learners in patterns that help them excel in certain subjects or skill areas or cause them to struggle or fail in others. For instance, students who see themselves as having fixed math intelligence reach plateaus from which they cannot conceive possible means for improvement or growth. Conversely, students who have growth mindsets believe that they can learn to succeed at whatever they attempt, if they have proper techniques and opportunities to learn and practice. Growth-minded learners view failure as part of the learning process, and though they may become discouraged, they find ways

to compensate or to adjust in order to achieve their goals, unlike learners with fixed intelligence mindsets. By developing the tenacity necessary to add to their passions, growth-minded learners persevere and develop grit, no matter what their tested intelligence or ability might be (Duckworth, et al., 2007; Yeager, et al., 2016).

The need for qualitative sociocultural and quantitative social cognitive theories to coexist stems from their uniquely separate identities. Social cognitive motivation theories lend themselves to quantitative studies, and may be more "friendly" to researchers desiring statistical evidence to support their findings. That several of the studies mentioned in this section were either quantitative entirely or products of mixed methods research speaks to this assertion. As the world moves toward economic and cultural globalization in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, the foundational educational theories founded by Piaget (1969, 1977) (cognitive) and Bandura (1971, 1977, 1986, 1997)(social learning) and Vygotsky (1978, 1981) (sociocultural) continue to influence education, and the walls dividing the theoretical divisions are showing signs of wear. What follows is a brief examination of foundations, current iterations and applications, and finally, evidence of the intersections of the sociocultural and cognitive "camps" within literacy theory.

Literacy, Learning, and Sociocultural and Social Cognitive Theories

O'Brien & Rogers (2016) provide connections between the traditional cognitive explanations and measurements of effective literacy instruction in sociocultural theory by acknowledging that both theoretical positions acknowledge the social situatedness of language and literacy (p. 311). In other words, while sociocultural theorists see learning

taking place within socially constructed situations, social cognitivists cannot deny the importance of social contexts. Simultaneously, the traditional methods of assessing literacy mastery with physical texts within pedagogical settings are mutating into new literacy media through the Internet and through other newer means of communication that cannot be measured easily using traditional psychometric tools.

Alvermann & Moje (2013), reject the traditional developmental and chronological assumptions of social cognitive theories used to define the terms "adolescent" and "adolescent literacy," by insisting, "Rather than view adolescents as isolatable from the adult population, we favor arguments in the literature that show how claims of hierarchical positioning and sameness often preclude accounting for data that support generational interdependency" (p.1073). In referring to the hegemonic powers forcing adolescents through uniform definitions of literacy development and instruction, Alvermann and Moje (2013) reject the traditional social cognitive assumptions and incorporate sociocultural parameters to their twenty-first century observations about adolescent literacy instruction. Their rebellion against quantitative, stage-bound instruction models has roots in earlier literacy researchers' use of qualitative research methods rather than the more traditional quantitative methods (Alvermann and Moje, 2013).

O'Brien and Rogers (2016) suggest that social cognitive and sociocultural approaches work together to provide fuller, more comprehensive perspectives in literacy instruction (p.312). They posit that a collaborative, cooperative relationship "will help us to fully account for the potential of various kinds of literacy practices, policies, and

instructional approaches to benefit a range of learners in particular contexts and over time" (p. 313).

O'Brien and Rogers identify the rise in digital literacies and the expansion of communities that encompass the globe and term this change "the digital turn" (pp. 317-318). No longer restricted by geography, 21st Century humans are forming increasingly literate digital, Internet-driven communities spanning ethnicities, languages, religions, and cultures, all of which are coalescing into new cultures (p. 319). The old systems of psychological measurements situated within distinct geographical boundaries are no longer adequate for assessment of these developing literacies (O'Brien & Rogers, 2016). Bean & O'Brien (2012), in a back and forth email conversation, suggest that old model "infusion" methods of producing standardized, contained curricula with new technologies such as tablets and digital books may only move socioeconomic gaps into the "digital divide" between economically "have and have not" school systems based on their ability to access technology. They suggest that digital literacy has the potential to meet 21st Century learners where they live and to be a powerful and liberating factor that may expand learners' communication and networking into their lives outside formal education.

The most substantial criticism of digital literacy integration into formal education is that a disciplined, long-term directionality becomes lost in the highly temporal, constantly changing other world of technology and Internet. Innovative pragmatic defenders of the changes recommend project-oriented learning integrating digital technologies (O'Brien & Rogers, 2016). Furthermore, Engle (2006) suggest that learners

are more likely to make personally motivated and engaging choices in what they learn if they see their pursuits as having significant relevance over an extended period. In other words, they are willing to invest if they see future profit.

Beach & O'Brien (2015) seem to move toward Engeström's (1987, 2001) activity theory in their work with "app affordances," a concept suggesting that the mind that uses apps becomes something more than the mind or the apps by themselves (in O'Brien & Rogers, 2016). They believe that the activity of using the app gives meaning to the learner's engagement (p. 319). Such integration or melding requires that no longer can sociocultural and social cognitive theories stand apart and deny the significance of the other. Adaptation and accommodation have become pragmatically necessary.

Finally, I conclude this section with Dillon, O'Brien, and Heilman's (2013) position concerning the dangers of being "stuck" within one research paradigm to the exclusion of what other research paradigms may have to add or improve in our understanding of literacy instruction. From a pragmatic standpoint, having multiple theoretical perspectives and methodological tools with which to address literacy pedagogy is advantageous, especially to the diverse learning communities of the 21st Century. We live in challenging times of globalization and integration, and practical praxis should be our goal. In the ensuing section, I introduce the concept of grit, Duckworth's (2016) theory describing how learners who face challenges survive and thrive.

Grit

In searching for a means of describing the combination of persistence, courage, passion and "stick-to-it-iveness" that I observed in the discrepant cases (DC) I selected, I discovered Angela Duckworth's (2016) concept of "grit." In Duckworth's explanation, grit is a combination of passion and perseverance that allows unlikely individuals to find success through their persistence and drive, rather than through IQ or other talent-linked competencies.

Duckworth's premise is that though IQ is one way to predict success, other more powerful factors serve to predict the eventual success of learners. Through investigations with large groups of individuals in schools, hospitals, marriages, and even West Point (Duckworth, A., Peterson, C., Matthews, M.D., & Kelly D.R., 2007), she and her team identified successful individuals who succeeded not solely because of their intelligence or talent but also through their passion, stamina, and perseverance. In predicting the likelihood of participants' performance in difficult circumstances, the concept of grit proved a stronger indicator of an individual's success than his or her measured IQ or other talents or skills. Facing failure, they refused to give in and fought on to reach their goals, even when authoritative figures in their lives recommended that they give up (Duckworth, et al, 2007).

Oddly, high intelligence in other study participants sometimes indicated a likelihood of failure or giving up while grit nearly always was a predictor of a higher success rate (Duckworth, 2016; Duckworth & Gross, 2014; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Duckworth, et al., 2007). Grit is a concept manifested in academic and non-academic cases ranging from schools, to militaries, to marriages and is a powerful concept within

this study as it describes the character qualities of the discrepant cases (DCs) I identified in this study.

Next, I introduce one more concept in order to complete this chapter, the theory that resulted from the grounded theory process that I followed, which describes an essential relationship process that works in tandem with motivation and grit to promote struggling learners' likelihood of success.

Mutually Humble Collaboration

I introduce Mutually Humble Collaboration (MHC), a theory that describes the middle way of connecting teachers and learners dialogically. MHC sees the two sides of the teaching/learning paradigm purposefully adjusting their levels of pride and communication styles to establish dialogical exchanges. In MHC, the teacher seeks to know the student as an individual needing specific instructional differentiation, and the student lowers defenses to engage meaningfully and collaboratively in the teaching/learning structure. The theory embraces Paolo Freire's sociocultural dialogic learning model in order to allow the teacher to use social cognitive strategies to determine each student's literacy skills and abilities, based on the individual, rather than on quantitatively established racial or gender based aggregations. MHC inspired teachers to build bridges to individual students, rather than to teach to the class as an aggregated whole. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 develop the concept of MHC through descriptions of the methods of the study, the findings of the study, and finally, through four case studies.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Overview

In Chapter 3, I present the background and purposes of the researcher and the research and discuss the methodological frameworks undergirding the work. I pose the guiding research questions before introducing the setting and participants and follow them with the study data sources and analysis processes, ending with explanations as to how these elements contribute to answering the research questions.

Background and Role of Researcher

I am white, middle-class, middle-aged, educated, and ethnically and culturally different from many of the students I am studying. Identifying as Christians within the college where I am conducting this study, faculty and students share similar ethoi and religious narratives. From a farming/agricultural background, I can relate to the familial history of students with similar backgrounds, even though my life and my students' lives have diverged from agrarian pasts. My rancher/farmer father did not attend college. With the exception of a few years' studying in higher education and a two-year certificate in business-secretarial training in a Midwestern city, my mother lived nearly her entire life on the farm on which she was born. I note that many of my students' parents are much better educated than my own parents who originated "within" the dominant White culture. I am the first in my family to earn a bachelor's, master's, and (when this dissertation is successfully completed) doctoral degrees. I relate to first-generation college students because I am one.

Though I came from a conservative, agrarian background and my world experience and my students have life experiences far more cosmopolitan than I do, I have an inquisitive mind that is constantly interested in growing personal knowledge and experience of the world. My desire to make a difference in the lives of students, regardless of their socioeconomic status or ethnicity is strengthened by twenty years of experience teaching English and history classes in a western State's public schools (both classified "free and reduced lunch" systems) and a summer migrant education program with students who had low college matriculation rates.

As a lifelong teacher, I mourn when students leave school after their first year, not by choice but because of their inability to adapt to required levels of literacy or other academic demands of college-level courses. In this study, I observed the interactions between students and professors in three sections of freshman college composition. I interviewed those students and professors to understand pedagogical practices and lines of communication indicating effective relationships with students who might have been marginalized by the traditional banking education system. Pragmatically, ideas and practices resulting from this study encourage students and professors to achieving their academic goals through dialogical relationships that allow differentiated instruction.

Because of the teaching, advising, and mentoring roles with which I identify in the study, I acknowledge advantages and disadvantages of this positional stance. First, because I know many students, I believe I am a trusted entity on campus, a status that allowed me to access students' classes and work without adding much negative stress during the course of my research study (Izawa, French & Hedge, 2011). Because the

reverse may be true as well, I have attempted to be watchful for evidence of a "Hawthorne Effect" in which participants or colleagues might have responded in ways shaped by my physical presence or involvement in the study. I was mindful to look for evidence of a "halo or horns effect" in which I might make judgments about the acceptability of participants' statements or actions. By triangulating and dual coding and then memoing data from various observation protocols, dual interviews of students, and interviews of professors, I believe I have taken the necessary steps of seeing from multiple perspectives, and that I practiced due diligence to avoid overlooking "familiar" phenomena that might be important to consider (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, pp 188-189).

As researcher, I asked questions to probe for answers, observed and took careful notes, coded and categorized various data sets using a constant comparative analysis framework, and analyzed my findings in order to realize and to relate my observations in ways that respected the participants and the purpose of the study. I did not take the opportunity to dialogue about diverse college students' literacy experience about their higher education goals for granted. I sought to determine what factors might contribute to successful students' engagement and persistence in freshman composition.

Methodology

In the following section, I re-introduce the guiding research questions and develop the methodological frameworks guiding the study including a description of the grounded theory approaches and efforts to triangulate data gathering and analysis. I included the

use of a positive deviance study (Pascale, Sternin & Sternin, 2010) selection process to narrow the study to four students identified as outlying discrepant cases (DCs).

In the following section, I outline the research questions forming the backbone of this study of students and professors in a freshman composition course, ENG131 College Composition.

Research Questions:

1. How does taking the course ENG131 College Composition change literacy stances, practice, and overall academic performance of first year students?
2. What are uniquely cultural explanations for the students' literacy engagement and performance?
3. How does professor/student interaction affect the literacy instruction process?
4. What are the perceptions of students in the class regarding their overall experience and performance?
5. What are the perceptions of faculty members teaching and working with the sub-population as to their experiences and performance?

I looked for differences in perceptions in teacher efficacy between two of the professors in the study and probed to see how those perceptions related to their sense of efficacy in teaching every one of their students. I observed an attitude of "I can't save everyone, and some people are not meant for higher education" in at least one of the composition professors with whom I spoke during the course of this study. Still, through observations, interviews, and subsequent conversations, I detected instructors' consistent

desire to connect meaningfully and pragmatically with students' composition skills and life plans.

Methodological Frameworks

In this qualitative study, I approached the research while seeking to collect data on the relationships created within the dialogue of the composition classrooms I observed. Because I was intrigued with the possibility of discovering ways of retaining and growing all college students, not just those already doing well in their literacy development, I chose to use the grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). My intention was that my work would provide new theoretical insight into how classroom interactions and individuals' dialogue with their professors affect their sense of efficacy and ability to develop academic literacy skills. I involved three classes in the study in order to compare human interactions in order to compare and contrast data collected from them. Since one of the classes was my own, I was unable to make copious observation notes in it. Therefore, I invited students to interview and provide insight into their experiences in the course.

The conceptual perspective of students' literacy development comes predominately from sociocultural perspectives and recognizes that college entrance, matriculation, and ultimately, graduation pass through social cognitive metrics in the form of external, standardized testing, internal grade point averages, and a language couched in those social cognitive, academic gatekeeping mechanisms familiar to most higher education institutions. Situated at the nexus and sometimes clashing perspectives

of sociocultural and social cognitive perspectives, I sought to bring a pragmatic approach to this study that would be useful in actual praxis.

This qualitative study centers in sociocultural theory, following a grounded theory approach of constant comparative analysis and adjustment to find "saturation" of rich data, and then to analyze and write up the findings, seeking to find patterns and categories of phenomena related to the research questions (Charmaz, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 2008).

Because I recognized that no teacher and no student learns in exactly the same manner, and because I knew that teachers vary in style and effectiveness, I sought to ask questions regarding literacy instruction methodologies tailored toward the needs of students. First, what unique cultural and historical characteristics of a specifically identified, marginalized group of higher education students influence their literacy (and academic) performance? Second, when unique characteristics affecting literacy performance arise, how might dialogue be encouraged to empower individuals or the group as a whole to thrive within the higher education setting? Third, within the studied group what are individual's' perceptions of their higher education experience and performance? Finally, what are the perceptions of faculty members teaching and working with these students regarding their students' experience and performance?

Rather than relying on statistical inquiry based heavily on students' grades and external, formal evaluations, I sought to unpack both students' and professors' perceptions of differentiated engagement and involvement with course requirements in and out of class via observations, surveys, and interviews with student participants and

professors. Observations and interviews took place in and out of class. I administered a short voluntary introductory survey via the online survey tool *Qualtrics* (2015) as a way to gain some sense of students' initial perspectives of their literacy skills. Regrettably, response numbers were so low as to render the survey ineffective in determining statistically important information, but similarity of all responses seemed to indicate anecdotally common perceptions in the few who did respond.

I concur that creating groups or categories of students (including "learning disabilities," "gifted education," "remedial education," and "race") is a risky, unsupportable, perhaps even unethical practice (Tomlinson, 2004). Applied aggregation practices such as the above examples dehumanize because most categories are artificially constructed. Categorizing widgets is acceptable, but clumping human beings into labeled categories is not. The closing doors of categorical bins unfairly trap individuals with exceptional traits. As Tomlinson (2004) states,

> Despite evidence that our identification mechanisms are not consistently reliable, that the specialty groups we create are not homogeneous, that the curriculum and instruction we apply to the various groups are not uniquely suited to those groups alone, and that our interventions are not robustly efficacious, we continue to prefer addressing learner variance via segregation. (p.521)

While aggregation and segregation may provide trends and indicators of massive proportions, the value of zeroing into individual participants' lives proves invaluable when attempting to put human faces on the numbers. Holding these perspectives, I

focused upon gaining individualized knowledge of each student as a unique human learner. This is the purpose of my study.

Grounded Theory

Glaser and Strauss (1967) authored the seminal work on grounded theory. Corbin & Strauss (2008 & 2015) further developed and amended the processes. I connected most deeply with Kathy Charmaz' (2007, 2008) explanation and delineation of the processes involved. In part, I adopted Charmaz'(2007, pp. 9-10) exegesis and development of grounded theory as something the researcher constructs or creates based on analysis of the data, an approach dissimilar to Glaser and Strauss's (1967) position that theory is "discovered" as it emerges from data, as though it exists separately from the observer. In my experience, the creation of theory is an intense struggle requiring a great deal of cogitation and time. The theory did not magically rise from the sea foam like Venus on a scalloped shell. Rather, I created it as I struggled over the data analysis. I must give credit to colleagues who stopped in to discuss the research over the period of struggle. I am forever indebted to them.

The struggle I experienced between creative interpretation and the formulation of a grounded theory via the use of systematic processes of coding and writing memos, and then re-coding and condensing phenomena for analysis was challenging. The need to provide explanation of how one arrives at interpretive conclusions demands warranted assertions "grounded" in observations and supportive evidence. I note that Glaser (2000) warns of the possibility of gathering data and making quick assertions without thorough

creation of a theory because doing so may result in hastily fabricated "theory bits" rather than new and comprehensively insightful theory.

My personal educational experience (graduate student, literacy teacher, and professor) provided me with necessary lenses and perceptivity to "read" students and professors' interactions in this study in order to construct a theory about collaborative educational relationships. I collected information through observations, interviews, conversations, and surveys, and coded that information using initial categorization followed by contemplative, reflective memos of those categories and specific data samples (Charmaz, 2007, pp. 54-5). Finally, I returned to the data and re-coded everything using gerunds to "gain a strong sense of action and sequence," (Charmaz, 2007, p. 49), something that my previous coding in phrases had provided only vaguely. Through this entire process, I used cross-comparative analysis (Charmaz, 2007) by comparing initial field notes with interview transcripts, and then again comparing codes from those notes with follow-up interview transcripts. I then compared those notes with gerund-codes from the field notes and transcripts in order to detect salient points from which to develop theory. I struggled for several months to construct some revelatory concept rising from the study, and discussed my findings and questions with students and colleagues.

By observing professors and students in different sections of the same course, I was able to compare and analyze differences in perspectives between the literacy students I observed and their professors. Interviews with students and professors following the observations added details and provided valuable insights. Finally, follow-up interviews

with four student participants identified as discrepant cases (DCs) from information I gleaned from the initial interviews provided clarification and verification of the theory I had constructed.

Positive Deviance Theory

I used the research approach of "positive deviance" (Pascale, Sternin, & Sternin, 2010) as a lens through which I sampled and selected four final participants whose work ethic, grit, and desire combined to overcome a variety of academic challenges. From an initial pool of seventy-five students, I narrowed the sample to eleven initial interviewees.

I needed a method of narrowing my selection from eleven interviewees to just a few DCs who appeared to be thriving and succeeding in the classes I observed, despite evidence of learning disabilities or other class culture challenges. A UMN graduate student colleague suggested that I use a "positive deviance" selection process, (Pascale, Sternin & Sternin, 2010) so I looked into the concept.

The beauty of the positive deviance selection process is that it uses systems already in place, and therefore it does not require manipulation of the study participants until after the observations are completed, and analyzed data has led to a plan of action. The intentionality of solving a problem or improving an existing desirable condition possibly with capabilities or tools already in hand appealed to me as a pragmatist. Used as a selection process in my study, I chose students I observed who seemed to be on margins of succeeding or failing due to academic ability, social or cultural status, learning disabilities, or other threatening indicators that she or he might be in jeopardy of not doing well in the college composition courses I observed. My intention was to

interview those who successfully passed the course and continued into the spring semester. In the end, I selected four students from two of the three classes.

Since I had access to college composition courses, I could observe dialogue and interactions that might produce participants who would qualify as "positive deviants" (PDs). I selected volunteer participants from a pool of approximately 75 students, not for their academic supremacy but for their thriving in spite of difficult challenges related to prior knowledge, learning disability, and/or socio-cultural identities. I intentionally screened out top GPA students, and considered only students facing challenges who through their demonstration of grit were able to survive ENG131 with acceptable marks, while lower-performing peers with similar traits did not.

Description of Research Site and Participants

Below I describe the educational institutional setting and the participants in the study. The setting is Cadler College, a small, private Midwestern college where I teach, and the participants in the study include both students and fellow faculty members who teach entry-level college composition courses.

Setting. Situated on over 250 acres of rolling hills near several lakes, the college campus is conveniently near a major Midwestern metro area, but far enough removed for urban students to consider themselves living "in the country." A lack of public transportation forces students to have access to personal vehicles or to rely on their friends. There are a growing number of commuting students. Housing for undergraduate students, including a separate apartment complex for students with families, lies on the campus and surrounds the main educational building. The college maintains facilities and

roads year round, including a soccer and football sports complex, softball and baseball fields, a Frisbee golf course, and cross-country track, all utilized by the college and by surrounding community organizations.

Cadler College celebrated a major anniversary in the fall of 2016. Offering on campus degrees in business, nursing, sports management, teacher education, and its newest programs in exercise science and counseling. The school is Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) accredited. An accredited online branch of the college offers bachelors and masters programs including counseling, business, religious ministry, and other degrees.

To study a variety of students engaged in an entry-level literacy course, I selected the prerequisite college composition course, ENG131 – College Composition, described in the college catalog is required of every incoming freshman student who has not completed an equivalent course prior to coming to the college. Some do receive credit for prior coursework done either at accredited colleges and universities or in transitional school-to-college courses, but most enroll in the freshman composition course automatically. Part of full-time students' 12 to 18 credit load, the course can be one of their more time-demanding classes as several papers are required.

In required (rather than elective) courses, professors and students must intentionally engage in attendance and work completion (Duckworth & Yeager 2015). Professors, especially new ones, find the course challenging, especially with the number of papers to read and grade, and many students struggle with coming to a class not explicitly aimed toward their degrees or preferred areas of study (Dryer, 2012). I argue

that students who successfully pass the course demonstrate "grit" in engagement, persistence and self-control, while some of their peers do not (Duckworth & Gross, 2014; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015). Ironically, students' cognitive abilities measured in intelligence tests do not necessarily indicate likelihood of persistence or successful completion of the course. Gritty students having qualities usually un-measured in cognitive research such as self-control, character, along with personality traits, dispositions, and temperament usually do successfully complete the course. (Duckworth & Gross, 2014; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015).

Class sizes for ENG131, College Composition, are limited to twenty-six students per section with minimum section numbers set at eight students. By comparison, a few freshman level courses in history or general psychology exceed sixty students. The minimum and maximum numbers of students in course sections have risen in the last ten years.

Participants Overview. I investigated students and professros in three sections of introductory college composition, the onboarding literacy course at Cadler College. Rather than focusing upon the top 20 percent of the class, I sought students who due to their socioeconomic status, their cultural interactions, or their perceived academic abilities, found themselves in the C or even lower categories, and were working to succeed.

Participants in this study included students in three sections of English Composition, a one semester, three-credit, required literacy course designed for incoming first year students preparing to write for coursework in their degree programs. In this

section, I focus on students. The first literacy course that students encounter upon entry into the college, it is necessarily general in focus in order to accommodate students needing a variety of composition styles, including American Psychological Association (APA), Modern Language Association (MLA), and Chicago Manual of Style (Interview, Mary Sorenson, 7-13-2016). Of the three classes, 28 participants signed permission forms enabling me to interview and gather data for specific use in the study. On that form, the specific research questions along with expectations for participation in the study can be found. Volunteer participants in this study include incoming freshman college students and their composition professors who worked with me to provide personal perspectives. I considered all ENG131 students willing to participate as possible informants. Just as the professors involved in the study, these participants responded to surveys and follow-up interviews that I announced at the outset of the study verbally, and in the agreement to participate form (Appendix A).

Before observations were completed, I began to select individual students for interviewing based upon their participation in class, their ethnicity, race, age in comparison to other students in the classes, and/or appearance of need for differentiation in instruction. An experienced teacher, I also sensed through observation that they might be struggling in the courses. Differentiation considerations included learning disabilities, cultural differences, physical limitations, and English Language Learner (ELL) status. Interviewees represent six male and five female perspectives coming from diverse backgrounds: four Black (three U.S. citizens, and one international student from Congo), two Hispanic, four White, and one Asian, who would categorize herself as “Latina” in

cultural worldview and language, having been born in South Korea but raised in Ecuador. Athletes and non-athletes participated.

All interviewees passed ENG131, though with varying rates of success. Disappointingly, no interviews came from Mary Sorenson's (a pseudonym) class as none volunteered to do so. With the sole exception of one interview via a written response to the interview script through email, all interviews occurred in my office, a room where I could record uninterrupted. Important to note is that the first set of eleven interviews occurred between January 21 and March 25, 2016, in the spring semester, rather later in the semester than I would have liked because the timing prevented me from seeing how the professors began to build relationships with their students from day one.

I intentionally interviewed a variety of students not only to represent qualitatively the larger population of the classes I observed, but also to highlight the unique differentiation of instruction needs within the classes. International students sat in every classroom, as did male and female students of a variety of racial/ethnic backgrounds and first language differences. Each class hosted students from rural and urban communities from the four compass points. Class composition by ethnicity was mostly White, with Asian (Hmong), African-American, and then Hispanic represented. Males and females represented equally in all classes observed. One or two of the students observed were entering after "gap years" before college (Birch & Miller, 2007). Two or three were the first of their families to pursue post-secondary education. A couple either were just out of or still members of the U. S. military in one branch or another. At least one classroom hosted students from a regional addiction rehabilitation organization.

Table 1: Student Participant Interviewees.

Pseudonym participants are the four Discrepant Cases featured in Chapter 5.

Student	Race/Ethnicity	Identity Characteristics	Academic Background	Unique Characteristics
S1, Hye Nan	Korean/EcuadorianA TCK (Adult Third Culture Kids)	International ATCK (Polluck & Van Reken, 2009)	K-12 in Quito, Ecuador boarding school	Elementary Education major, ESL, fluent in Spanish, proficient in Korean, proficient in English
S2	African-American	Soft-spoken, alert, gentleman scholar-athlete	Chicago Public Schools, K-12	Athlete, Basketball
S3	Asian American	Usually quiet, but always in attendance	Wisconsin Public Schools	Communication major
S4	Hispanic American, TCK (Third Culture Kid)	Bright, cheerful, self-advocating, quick-thinking	Schools in Texas and Minnesota, shuttled back and forth	Migrated from TX to MN multiple times, left college to pursue technical degree
S5	White American	Self-identified as having had a breakdown that disabled her progress in education. Persists as her disability allows	K-12 took several more years to complete than expected	Stress-related absences and slow completion of higher education. Completion is in doubt
S6, Chloe Hawkins	African-American	Sociable, friendly, persistent, self-advocating, seeks assistance as needed.	With scaffolding from family, graduated K-12 and is a sophomore in higher education	Dyslexia; found ways to accommodate and adjust to thrive in all classes; ministry major
S7	White American, TCK	*Bon Vivant* nomad, *Gran Boulevardier*, unpredictable, distracted from studies by travel	High potential, but left college to travel	World traveler, Left spring semester 2016 to Malaysia. Teacher Education, history declared, but left school.
S8, Sony Kabila	Congolese, TCK	International Excellent student who adapts to courses and classmates well	Traveled to USA and is completing college education; may settle in USA	Fourth year in USA. Fluent in French and English

S9	White American, TCK	Friendly, but did not seem to connect with classmates	Attended International school in China from grade school through high school	Grew up in China, Left college after first year
S10, Tim Barger	White American	Motivated to become a science lab technician. Studious, personable, self-advocate	Attended public schools and vo-tech in computers during high school	Speech disabilities, K-12. Connects writing accuracy with software code-writing
S11	African-American	West Coast, USA; Excellent student, self-regulating, considerable asset in any class.	K-12 Southern California public schools	Athlete, football, serious student who had set goals prior to coming to college, and who demonstrated self-regulation and persistence throughout the composition course. Ministry major

In this study, "Third Culture Kids," (TCK) or "Adult Third Culture Kids" (ATCK) are defined by Polluck & Van Reken (2009):

> A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture influence and shape the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background (p. 13).

Unique practices varied with each instructor relative to his or her educational philosophy and style. Recognition of the perceived expertise and power held by each instructor based on ethnicity/race and on their educational and authoritative positions

helped to shape the discourse methodologies they chose to communicate with their students and with me.

Instructor Mary Sorenson (a pseudonym) used terms and ideas in a dialogical attempt to connect her teaching style and methods with what she perceived as the college's ethos and expectations of a person in her position. Because I was researching within the institution in which I also teach, I believe I heard what she expected me to want to hear: the language of a professor teaching within a private Christian college. The implications of "Cadler College" lingo include references to Christian mythos/ethos values and expectations and a careful attention to a Midwestern academic work ethic. I had the sense that at times in our conversation Mary carefully measured both diction and delivery in her responses to fit her perceptions of Cadler's cultural expectations.

Another factor I considered is the relatively short time Mary Sorenson had been teaching in comparison to the time Bart Whitman (a pseudonym) had been teaching. The length of experience and the amount of scaffolding each instructor received are factors in their self-described comparative levels of comfort/discomfort about their work (Meristo, Ljalikova, & Löfström, 2013). Bart seemed less inhibited in his dialogue than Mary did and spoke positively or critically at will. The difference between the openness of the two professors may also stem from their gendered positions, but that consideration is not a key element in this study, other than to note its possibility.

Confidence levels between the two instructors were quite different. Significant to this study, Bart Whitman was unapologetic about his position in the classroom as a middle-aged, middle class White male. He purposefully engaged with every student in his

class, though at varying levels. I determined his willingness to probe more deeply with some students and less with others had to do with his sense of efficacy (Bandura, 1977) and with his sense of what students might tolerate or be able to accept comfortably. He exhibited confidence in his subject matter mastery and in his ability to know and connect with his students pedagogically. Mary Sorenson seemed apologetic about what she identified as her middle class Whiteness. Though she seemed confident in her subject matter assignment, she expressed self-doubt about her ability to communicate successfully with students who seemed disconnected.

Chapter 4 connects the question of faculty perceptions with the theory, *Mutually Humble Collaboration* (MHC), which I developed during the data analysis portion of the work. A description of the methods follows.

Data Collection Methods

During the fall semester of 2015, after receiving IRB approval to proceed with the study, I asked and received agreement from professors Sorenson and Whitman to participate and to allow me to introduce myself to their students and hand out permission form (Appendix A). Over the process of the remaining semester, I observed the class, noting classroom activities, location of students spatially, by gender, and by engagement with the instructor. I used Marzano's classroom observation protocols once in each class session (Marzano, 2009). I took scratch notes, which I converted into field notes within six to eight hours subsequent to all observations. At the point of saturation (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 96-122) when I was seeing little to no new behaviors, I stopped observations

and began to contact students for semi-scripted interviews, which I held in my campus office (Appendix C).

I conducted semi-scripted interviews with the professors as well. Interviews lasted from 25 to 40 minutes. During interviews, I recorded and took occasional scratch notes. I personally transcribed every recorded interview, a process that turned a half hour recording into a two to three hour typing session. While this was tiring, I found it provided rich insights for personal reflection and even a re-understanding of students' responses as I listened to voice tones and the redirects and clarification processes of dialoguing with students and professors.

I am aware that my interpretation of the interviews and observations are my own and that from my emic positioning in the teaching of composition courses I have a different perspective than would someone not teaching English composition and observing from an etic position. Recognizing a personal lens of experience based in nearly 32 years' teaching high school and college students in a variety of composition courses, I consider this attribute to be an advantage.

Below I will discuss each source of data and the purpose for collecting each of them by moving spacially from broad to specific data sources.

Classroom Observations. Observations in three ENG131 College Composition sections provided scratch and field notes recording student involvement and dialogue describing interactions among students and professors, including dialogue related to course content and side conversations. Part of the field notes included mapping of student placement and professor movement within each class. I arrived a few minutes before

classes began and sat in a corner of the rooms in order to observe professors and students interact and engage with each other. I had a clear line of sight to the front, sides, rear, and entrances of the classrooms, and I was able to see students' engaging with each other and the instructors. During one session of each professor's class observed, I used Marzano's (2009) Classroom Observation Protocols.

Marzano's Classroom Observation Protocols. Marzano's protocols provided structure to my observations. Marzano's protocols allowed me to structure an observation session from an organized and intentional perspective beyond my own. The benefit of the protocols was the specificity and uniformity of eleven observation checkpoints through which I could gather data on similar aspects of the classrooms I observed. Those eleven checkpoints included eight items that I was particularly interested in comparing: 1) the placement of people within the learning situation, 2) interactions between teachers and students, 3) division and explanation of work, 4) clarity of instruction, 5) evidence of student engagement, 6) evidence of instructors' intentional connection and differentiation with individual students, 7) presence of classroom rules, and 8) evidence of stress or conflict within the classroom setting. Through these protocols, I was able to make very specific observations, and then to compare, contrast, and analyze the data I collected. The protocols with my extensive analysis are available in Appendix E.

Survey Data. In the student surveys, I asked 12 perception questions using a five point Likert Scale ranging from low to high with regard to student participants' confidence in literacy skills, their sense of engagement and agency in the composition course, their self-awareness and confidence as students. I hoped to determine students

and professors' perceptions of their literacy skills, their belief that the school was providing the necessary support for them to succeed in their literacy education experience, and their belief that they were capable of completing a four-year degree within the institution. I asked participating professors 12 parallel questions aligned to the student survey, but directed toward instructors' ability to teach the composition courses, their engagement and motivation to teach the courses, their perception of institutional support, etc., (Appendix Exhibits F & G).

Professor Interviews. Conducting semi-structured interviews with instructor participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) provided information regarding their perceptions of their ability to teach the literacy courses effectively (Appendix D). During the interviews, I used a script to start the conversations and then asked probing questions to follow leads as they appeared. Specific questions aimed to discover instructors' literacy instruction preparation and experience and their affinity and sense of self-efficacy in their personal mastery of literacy skills, and their literacy pedagogical skills related to the college students in their classes.

Since I was particularly interested in professors' understanding and intentionality in differentiation of instruction in literacy, I was surprised at their responses. Neither professor had more than a modicum of teacher training in literacy. Each related a process of trial and error with some scaffolding from other faculty peers. Both felt that they were teaching at adequate levels, though both had some angst over specific student issues. The more educated instructor of the two (PhD vs. MA) communicated with a more relaxed

attitude and seemed more confident in the classroom and in the interview sessions with me.

Student Interviews. I conducted up to four individual, semi-structured interviews with selected students (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to gain information regarding students' perceptions of their ability to complete the college composition course successfully. I also asked them about their strategies for accessing necessary assistance if necessary. Protocols for student questions are in Appendix C.

Prompts asked participants to relate their academic history with regard to literacy instruction and their personal recollection and experiences with reading and writing. More specifically, follow-up questions focused on ENG131 and students' participation and performance and engagement in the course. As participants' individual perceptions of self-efficacy and performance figure powerfully in the study, the final questions sought responses related to their instructors' and their own performance and skills in the course.

Follow-up. I conducted final interviews with four DC participants chosen for their exceptional "grit" or will to persevere and thrive (Duckworth, 2016; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015) centered on their perception of the constructed theory, Mutually Humble Collaboration (MHC). I used open-ended questions to seek participants' perceptions of the theory and asked for specific examples they had observed in ENG131 College Composition and in other classes they were taking. All four gave specific feedback and supported the concepts within the theory.

Analysis Strategies

I observed each class a minimum of two visits and returned to seek a saturation point of data collection. When concepts I identified became clearly defined, and I observed no new phenomena or explanations seeming to appear, I moved to the next step of interviewing students and professors. I worked to analyze my data so that categories I had created seemed thoroughly developed with possible alternative explanations examined (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 266). I converted observation scratch notes to field notes and then coded them in order to establish general categories of phenomena. From the coded data, I constructed guiding interview questions for participants including students and course professors. When I had gathered sufficient data from the coded observation notes, I conducted interviews with students and their professors at the end of the Fall 2015 and the beginning of the Spring 2016 semester.

At the end of the semester, I gathered basic final grade information stating which students had passed the course (per IRB approval). I conducted further interviews to seek student insight into the constructed theory *Mutually Humble Collaboration*. In this particular study, effort was generated to gather data in order to further analyze initial findings and to code evident themes or phenomena. I then sought to build knowledge through ongoing interviews and follow-up research to triangulate and solidify information into assertions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). To reiterate, I revisited the coded transcripts and re-coded them using gerunds, per Charmaz, 2006, in order to increase the sense of enactment in the coding. This re-coding was done in part because I was

struggling to realize a significant theoretical finding. That "Eureka!" moment was still to come.

Observational Protocols. As I observed each class, I participated in the following activities: I drew maps of the rooms, quoted students and instructors, observed body language and facial expressions, noted activities and student responses, timed feedback responses, observed questioning strategies and locations of instructors in relation to the front of the room and to students and student seating areas. From these observations, I formed decisions about which students I would interview.

Though I was interested in the content of the lessons, and I did note specific topics discussed in each session, I was mostly interested in the levels of interest and engagement I observed in students and in the interactions between instructors and their pupils. The content, though important, was typical of composition classes: instruction on writing techniques, grammar, punctuation, purpose and format of essays, etc. I did note techniques or gimmicks used by professors to capture attention and to engage students in the lessons. I also noted student responses to their instructors' teaching. I looked for evidence of relationships between students and students, and between students and their professors as evidence of engagement in learning and pedagogical intentionality.

Interview Protocols. During interviews, I attempted to fill in gaps in my understanding of what I had observed and based upon my notes and memory. I asked students to volunteer background histories of their literacy experiences, the kinds and amounts of encouragement to become literate scholars prior to and during college, and

their sense of motivation and engagement in acquiring literacy as a way to enrich the data I collected from observations (Charmaz, 2007).

Similarly, I interviewed the professors along the same lines by inquiring as to their personal beliefs about what students were learning, what they perceived their personal content expertise, pedagogical abilities and expectations were, and how they perceived and assessed the study participants and their peers in the classes I observed. Because the interview questions came from my reflection on observation notes, I created the questions as I moved through the study.

Table 2. Alignment of Data Sources & Analyses Strategies with Research Questions

Research Question	Data Source(s) & Tasks	Analysis Strategies
What are the memories and experiences these students have had with literacy starting at home in early childhood and moving forward into their formal education, K-12 and college?	Class Observations Scratch Notes Survey Students/Professors (in all sections) administered by professors. Transcribed Field Notes Use notes from observations to form interview questions. Interview participants Interview professors	Scratch notes to field notes" in a three column entry format Process early steps in analysis: code field notes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) Generate interview questions Interview participants & professors Use sociocultural constant comparative analysis
How do they perceive their literacy success to have occurred?	Semi-structured interview with probing, follow-up questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, 199-200)	Listen to tape, call participant to verify questionable responses, transcribe interviews (Patton, 2002, p.384) Additional coding (Patton, 2002, p.464) Use Positive Deviance (Pascale, Sternin & Sternin, 2010) indicators to select individuals from initial interviews for follow up interviews.

How do their teachers and support staff (college) perceive their academic performance within the general population of their classes?	Follow-up interviews, (semi-unstructured 45 - 60 min.) Final grades for ENG131 Write up the gathered data from field notes.	Clarify Survey responses with follow-up conversations (Baumann & Bason in Duke & Mallette, 2011, pp 407-8). Code responses with categories of Subject, Object, Mediating Artifacts, Rules, Community, and Division of Labor (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Maxwell, 2005) Coding of all notes memos into gerunds (Charmaz, 2007) Condense & Combine codes into Themes and seek emergent theory
Are there common traits, characteristics, or phenomena shared by the participants to examine as common factors leading to their literacy performance?		Get writing. (Wolcott, 2009) Emergent Theory: Mutually Collaborative Humility (MCH) as evidence of indicators of grit (Duckworth, 2016)and growth intelligence (Dweck, 2015)

In Chapter 4, I discuss the study findings and provide analysis leading to the discovery of the concept of Mutually Humble Collaboration (MHC), a pedagogical model describing pedagogical conditions in which learners and teachers purposefully collaborate to lower personal defenses or pride in order to accelerate and encourage a dialogic teaching/learning relationship. If "dialogue cannot exist without humility," as Freire (2009) states, then MHC is an investigation into this premise within the context of higher education literacy pedagogy. Essential to the concept of MHC is a dialogical meeting of the teacher and student with intentionality in creating pathways of understanding that both sides see as needful in a relationship Freire termed "teacher-student and student-teacher" (2009). Palmer (1998) expands this concept in this way: "A desire to help my students build a bridge between the academic text and their own lives and a strategic approach for doing so (p. 69).

In Chapter 4: Findings, I explicate the discoveries of my study and further develop the theory Mutually Humble Collaboration (MHC) through assertions based upon data collected in my research.

Chapter 4: Findings

Overview

This chapter explores attributes and expectations of students and professors within the college composition courses I observed. Student and professor profiles and interviews revealed the sense of effectiveness and connection with the content and quality of learning/teaching relationships. Marzano's (2009) protocols for classroom observation provided insight in comparing and contrasting two freshman composition classrooms. (See Appendix E).

After interviewing eleven student participants, I identified four students as "discrepant cases" (DCs) because they exhibited qualities of engagement, persistence, and passion for their work despite various learning disabilities or other hindering factors that might easily have discouraged them from persisting in their collegiate studies. These attributes separated the four DCs from their peers. Using Duckworth's (2016) concept of grit and Dweck's (2015) concept of attitude toward growth mentality as predictive indicators of the potential to succeed through their academic programs, I chose to investigate the four DCs' cases further and this investigation appears in Chapter 5.

Additionally, professors' expectations and engagement with students varied as evidenced by interviews and observations and served as indicators of the levels of encouragement students perceived in the classroom. From these observations, the concept of "mutually humble collaboration" (MHC) emerged to describe the teaching/learning relationship between students and professors necessary to form what Freire (2009) termed "dialogical" instruction.

College Literacy Courses

ENG131 College Composition introduces freshmen classes to collegiate writing and includes refresher instruction in grammar, punctuation, and other standard English conventions. Additionally, students begin to master Modern Language Association (MLA) or American Psychological Association (APA) formatting, depending upon the degree programs in which they intend to enroll. Multiple papers and various composition exercises provide opportunities for students to hone their writing skills. Engaged and persistent ENG131 students spend hours in the college study lab, work with tutors, use peer-editing sessions, conference with their composition class professors and use the online grammar, punctuation, spelling, plagiarism-checking program *Grammarly* at www.grammarly.com (Lytvyn, M., & Shevchenko, A., 2009) to check their work and to point out revision opportunities.

Composition professors I observed looked for evidence that students were receiving instruction and responding through active persistence. Professor Bart Whitman (BW), acknowledged the pressure of providing the means for his students to be able to progress to the next semester's classes and stated his teaching aims: "To get as many students as possible to write at a minimally acceptable academic writing level, given that it's the first of two courses…. In other words, what feeds the bulldog up the line?" (BW Interview January 4, 2016). His teaching style centered on teaching in ways that kept as many students moving forward successfully as possible:

> In terms of pacing, I can adjust to keep students on track with me. I am not just teaching to a unified field, I am responding to individual student needs as well…. One issue is the lack of engagement and commitment to do the work in some students. Students need to review the professors' feedback and make changes in their own writing. (BW interview, January 4, 2016)

One great concern of Whitman's was "the lack of engagement and commitment to do the work in some students…. Students need to review the professor's feedback and make changes in their own writing" (BW Interview January 4, 2016). I found that in comparison to other course sections I observed, BW's students did engage and did persist in visible ways, despite his doubts that his students were engaged. I judged this through observing students' responses in class observations and through their interview responses. His students volunteered to interview with me while students from the other class observed did not, even though I invited them through equal means to participate.

Faculty Preparation & Performance

Three instructors of introductory college composition (names other than mine are pseudonyms) were included extensively in this study: Dr. Bart Whitman, a PhD in Old English Literature teaching as an adjunct; Professor Mary Sorensen, a mastered adjunct teaching two sections of composition; and me, an assistant professor of Education, Language Arts and Social Studies [at the time of the study, ABD PhD C&I Literacy]. The two adjunct professors taught the course outside their normal content areas of expertise as part-time assignments while I taught the course as part of my 12-credit semester loading. The dynamic of hiring adjunct instructors for the initial literacy preparation courses is a

factor to consider. First assumptions might indicate that the use of full time or part time instructors might have an impact on the effectiveness of instruction and learner outcomes. As Bettinger & Long (2010) indicate,

> First, the knowledge gained in an introductory class directly affects student success in subsequent courses. Experiences with instructors may also affect future course-taking behavior. If students choose their courses (and major) based on their knowledge and experiences in a given subject, the mix of instructors they face early in a given discipline could influence their decisions.

The routes to teaching college composition taken by all three instructors are interesting in that they provide some insight into what may be common practice in higher education institutions: filling positions with available personnel rather than instructors specifically trained and experienced in the effective pedagogy of higher education literacy. The exigencies of filling teaching positions under the pressures of funding, logistics, timeliness, and perceived needs has a varied effect upon the quality and effectiveness of classroom instruction and student performance (Bettinger & Long, 2010). My study revealed similarities and differences in the ways just two professors' literacy instruction methods and approaches to students.

Dr. Bart Whitman. Dr. Whitman earned four degrees in English, "none of which is composition or rhetoric-oriented" [his designation], and entered the teaching field via a scaffolded community college experience in which he taught entry-level composition/rhetoric classes (BW Interview, January 1, 2016). The school was looking to hire as many adjunct composition instructors as possible and offered to scaffold around

incoming professors to help them succeed. Since Whitman had no pedagogical training, the schools who hired him offered mentoring "on the go" [his term]:

> My SAT scores placed me out of taking those entry-level composition/rhetoric classes, and I picked up ideas on grading through feedback from humanities professors at the University of Pennsylvania. When I started teaching in 1986 at a community college outside of Philadelphia part-time, the chairman of the department did a wonderful job of helping me to shape how I addressed things in the classroom." (BW Interview, January 4, 2016).

Instruction included direction on syllabus construction, basic advice to stick to the textbooks, and admonitions to follow the basics of grammar and composition. He taught basic paragraph construction, grammatical constructs, and basic entry-to-college-level writing. After one semester, Whitman decided he was able to teach and continued into the next semester. He stayed with the textbook in teaching the first few classes and emphasized that he really learned grammar at the front of the classroom, reiterating the old saying that we do not really learn to do something until we have to teach it. We discussed the irony of our trying to teach students while we believe that without having taught the content, students cannot actually learn it. Also ironic is the sense Whitman had that not much has changed in the way higher education institutions prepare their adjunct faculty to teach within their classrooms even though changing student demographics and diversity, and requirements related to 21st century globalism, technology and content delivery methods have changed dramatically. The process for Bart Whitman has been to

learn “on the go” and to teach in a variety of schools and classrooms as an adjunct professor of English composition and literature.

College composition/literacy instruction has changed greatly from 1986 to 2016, and Whitman connected the constantly shifting access that 21st century scholars have to media and text. He believed that while availability and access to information and text seem limitless, students seemed to read less and less and to retain less information from their reading than their predecessors (Manuel, 2002). One major challenge Whitman felt as an instructor was to convince students to “actually write” and to think beyond meeting basic course requirements.

Both Whitman and Sorenson expressed the desire to see their students improving in their writing skills, and they welcomed evidence of engagement, including respectful disagreement or verbal sparring as evidence of critical thinking. At one point, Whitman attempted to stir his students into a discussion on what constituted “non-spiritual faith” in the United States. Students had no response. “The smoke came out of their ears, and they couldn’t go there” (BW Interview, January 4, 2016).

Several times during my observations, Whitman pushed the limits to the point of making students and me (observer/researcher) feel uncomfortable. He confided: “Disclosure here…. Part of what I am doing is to relieve ennui…trying to keep mentally alert and adroit. That’s one of the things I am trying to do.” He went on to clarify:

> I love my students. They are like my own children. I love them. When I talk about ennui, I don’t mean to disparage them. They are at the level they are, and I think more than one of us educators suffer from, ‘Well, why aren’t you (students)

> Harvard quality?' And so, I really want to avoid that, and I think this is one of the ways that on the face of it doesn't seem like that, but it does end up avoiding that by making them complicit in a mutual learning experience. I am in some ways no better a writer than they are, and they hear that from the first day from me. (BW Interview, January 4, 2016).

In order to understand Whitman's pedagogical stances, I asked if he would be willing to participate in professional development in differentiated instruction techniques in order to serve the unique needs of diverse students in his composition classes. Bart Whitman declined, saying, "The institution has stepped away from basic pedagogical, classic composition/rhetorical instruction." He related how a month prior (December 2015) a colleague had asked incredulously whether he was still teaching the five-paragraph essay, implying that Whitman adhered to old-school methodologies and that adapting to the "new" ones might be unacceptable or impossible for him to do. In response, Whitman identified himself to be what C.S. Lewis termed "Old Western Man," (Lewis, C.S., 1954). As such, he may identify himself as being past the age of changing, or is perhaps unwilling to make changes. He did agree later that he would welcome a bi-monthly meeting of ENG131 & 132 professors to share stories, collaborate to enhance teaching, and calibrate grading practices. As an adjunct, he was willing to go beyond Cadler requirements.

When we discussed the question of how to teach college level writing without teaching students the basics, Whitman responded pragmatically by describing two polarized positions he perceived:

> One pole is that the public schools (K-12) are not teaching the kids [SIC], as much as they want to claim they are teaching critical thinking and college level writing, they're not doing it." [He qualified this statement to say he was not referring to the "upper third" of high school graduates coming from K-12 schools.] "The other pole in terms of this discussion is 'what's feeding the bulldog?' or what is the higher education institution looking for in its students, and as far as I can tell, they want clarity and logic of thinking and expression as integral to what they're looking for. (BW Interview, January 4, 2016).

A phenomenon Whitman found challenging in his content area teaching in 2016 was that very few of his college students read for enjoyment. He mournfully suggested two related factors that may be partially responsible: first, that the media culture in the 21st century is visual, rather than textual; and second, that the pace of literacy is centered on visual media that is fast and easily attainable, requiring very little investment or engagement of time or thought. Supporting Whitman's suggestion, Scott & Saaiman (2016) identified the beneficial effect of teaching reading to South African students prior to their entering tertiary schooling or higher education. In that study, second language students who took an intermediary reading course prior to entry in college not only performed 11% higher in their college work than students who did not but also chose to become readers for enjoyment and personal benefit. Due to cultural and linguistic differences between the two nations, the South African study is not generalizable to American higher education experiences, but the implications suggest further study in the USA may be appropriate.

Professor Whitman's intentional persona of being a provocateur/collaborator seemed to work with most of his students. I heard in several interviews that though they might not totally understand him, his students understood his motivation to be in their best interest. They expressed trust and appreciation, and they chose to persist and succeed in part due to his teaching style and interactions with them. Whitman's openness in telling his students his own writing struggles exemplified an outward willingness to humble himself in order to connect with them, and to encourage them to humble themselves in order to accept his criticism. Whitman's call to a mutually agreed upon letting down of defenses in order to collaboratively accomplish the task of learning to write for college resonated with Paolo Freire's call to dialogic cooperation and conciliation (2009).

Mary Sorenson. Professor Mary Sorenson (MS) has a bachelor's degree in English with a minor in interpersonal communication and masters in English literature. Following her degree program, she took an internship at a private university to participate in basic pedagogical preparation, syllabus construction, and "the basic nuts and bolts of running a classroom" (MS Interview, December 10, 2015). During that internship, she taught three college level classes of interpersonal communication and began to develop a personal sense of literacy instruction through trial and error. Hired by a technical school, she started her teaching career by teaching six students to construct paragraphs. There, she developed the lecture/modeling teaching style that I witnessed in my observations of her classes, which could be described as a combination of humor, pedagogically oriented content games, and lecture/discussion with probing questions to elicit feedback. She

adapted to the different teaching situations in which she found herself by learning the cultures within the classrooms and schools in which she found herself:

> The two semesters I taught technical writing [in a law enforcement program] it was law enforcement heavy because the courses were required before they could take the other courses in their programs….
>
> At Cadler College, I didn't know what to expect. Are they going to be more like the technical students' needing to be told what to do, or are they going to be needing other things? I started by adding a few more activities…adding more religious content, because those aspects were not included in the tech school. Culturally, even though this is a Christian college and very different institution, students were very much the same, wanting more interaction and hands-on activities, and not wanting to be lectured to. They are adapted to Millennial culture, wanting to communicate on Facebook, wanting to Twitter [SIC], wanting it fast, wanting to be entertained (MS Interview, December 10, 2015).

Sorenson's pedagogical stance is that of a pragmatist. She related that at first her teaching was dry with students unengaged, but as she returned to teach in the following semesters, she brought more "hands on" work to her students, including memos, business letters, emails, and business proposals. Similar to the courses in her current teaching assignments, the technical school's introductory writing courses were mandatory and considered by most students to be boring or undesirable requirements. Since most of her students at that time were law enforcement candidates she described

them thusly: “They didn’t see the need to be able to write whatsoever. They thought their jobs were actions and doing, not writing business memos” (MS Interview, December 10, 2015).

Mary attempted to “fix” the motivation issue by giving her students more writing prompts tied with the real life situations they would be experiencing and needing in their work. I observed this trait of adapting her teaching strategies to match her perceptions of her students in the classes I observed. She related that her transition to the school in this study gave her some stress in that she was unsure at first how to adapt to motivate her students, and to adjust to a four-year, rather than a two-year school.

Sorenson recognized an immediate need to adapt to her students’ cultural/development needs, and, like Dr. Whitman, sensed that they “wanted” communication and learning to be “fast” and entertaining. The sense of students’ power over the course delivery or of Professor Sorenson’s lack of agency to do otherwise was apparent. Also interesting was Sorenson’s decision to add “religious content” to fit the institutional ethos (MS, Interview, December 10, 2015).

Perhaps because 21st Century educators tend to reflect self-critically upon their own teaching and the learning they oversee, Sorenson appeared self-deprecating as she described her struggle to connect with the students she was teaching during the study. During our post observations interview, she claimed to have connected far better with students of varying ethnicity and racial appearance at a different institution than she was experiencing at Cadler College. I asked what she was doing to engage or connect with her students:

MS: There are things I am doing that aren't intentional. Games, activities … I give them candy. I learn their names after the first class period. Video clips. Telling personal stories.

D: Do you tell your students you care about them?

MS: Verbally? No. Might be the White thing. They don't tell me they appreciate my class, and I don't tell them how I feel about them. … Or maybe it's a Minnesota thing, might not be a White thing.

D: Are there students you like more than you like others? Geographically?

MS: Yeah, that group in the row by A---. More than the students on the edge. The middle talked to me more than the edge. (MS Interview, December 10, 2015). (See Fig. 1)

To her credit, Mary exerted a great deal of energy toward making connections with her students, though with what she indicated was minimal pay-off. In part, students may not have been able to interpret her tentative advances - candy, name memorization, self-deprecation, and personal story telling - as attempts to connect with them. She reported that some areas of the classroom seemed more responsive than others did. I can vouch for her statement, as this variety of responses was a phenomenon I witnessed every time I observed her classes.

When I asked about the male students seated on the edge at the back stage left who had their feet up on the table, she stated, "At first they were engaged, but then something changed them. They were not engaged as much as they used to be" (MS Interview, December 10, 2015).

I confirmed this to be true during several observation visits. As the days progressed, and students on the fringes of classroom engagement saw themselves as extraneous, their inattentive behaviors increased.

Professor Sorenson's frustration was evident in her expectation of students in her class: "Simply put, follow the directions I give you. Life is a lot easier if you read the assignment sheet that is very detailed and follow the directions" (MS Interview, December 10, 2015). She expressed the desire that all of her students would learn to write better and that they would leave her class knowing how to write better. Still, she expressed great frustration with a lack of engagement and evidence of students' comprehension and appropriate response to her communication:

> That students don't follow directions is one of the things I don't understand. It's in the syllabus. I talked about it in class. I announced it in Blackboard; I do that, too, so I don't think they have an excuse. Maybe it is learned, conditioned behavior. We give students chance after chance in K-12 education, and they expect it. (MS Interview, December 10, 2015).

Similar to Dr. Whitman's experience, Sorenson had no training or background in differentiated literacy pedagogy other than her actual work with students. As a licensed public schoolteacher, grades 5-12, I at least had the benefit of education in pedagogical theory and praxis, and I had the opportunity to participate in continuing education seminar credits offered in annual educators' conferences. Higher education instructors tend to insulate themselves within their content areas, and adjunct professors are usually

not required to provide proof of pedagogical training, especially in something considered as esoteric as differentiated instruction.

Don Bouchard. Although I was the third instructor "in the study," I do not include any warrants from my own classroom. Rather, my classroom is one of the settings because some of the student cases are from my class. Also, my experience as one of the instructors grounds my understanding of the setting and instruction of the other instructors.

As the third English composition instructor in this study, and acknowledging my own personal biases and influences upon this study, I will briefly explain that my own background involves a bachelor's degree in English Education with a minor in history, a master's in education with emphases in educational psychology and literacy, and ABD status in a PhD in literacy. I have been a licensed teacher since 1984, and have taught full time for 29 of those years in public middle and secondary education, including three summers' teaching in migrant education with Hispanic middle and high school students and higher education. Starting in 2004, I moved to higher education and taught traditional 18-22 year olds in various courses and 25 to 60 year olds in the college's Adult & Graduate Studies School in courses ranging from college composition to educational psychology and foundations of education. I have experience in a wide variety of classroom instructional opportunities. For seven years, I have been a professor of teacher education, teaching and supervising teaching candidates in middle and secondary English language arts and social studies including methods of instruction, literacy instruction across the curriculum, and curriculum design.

Philosophically, I started in the teacher-centric side as a die-hard perennialist, believing in the great benefits of introducing my students to the great literature and philosophies found in Western European ideologies. As I grew in my understanding of the implications of "forcing" a dominant discourse (what Gee terms "Big D discourse," 1994, 2000, 2004) upon a "little d discourse," I began to see my students as unique individuals, each having cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds that made my classrooms into uneven opportunities for advancement. Being introduced to Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (2009), and to Parker Palmer's *Courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life* (1998) radicalized me in many ways. I realized that each individual who entered my classroom needed to have a voice and the ability to communicate her or his story to the surrounding world. Being able to read or to write well is not enough, though, as Lee Galda once pointed out to me: "They (our students) need someone who will listen to them, too" (L. Galda, personal conversation, 2011). I focused on being one of those listening ears and reading eyes who would risk seeing and valuing every student as unique who came to my college English classes, and began to change the ways in which I approached the literacy courses I taught.

Professors have the unique opportunity to take a welcoming or an authoritarian stance with their students with regard to introducing dominant cultural expectations or norms. As I learned my way into migrant education in 2002, I observed some teachers who enforced English only rules and caused their Spanish speaking students a great deal of embarrassment because they were English Learners (ELs). These students would come to my classroom and apologize for their Spanish accents. Rebelling, I instead gave them

permission to speak Spanish with each other in sussing out the difficult grammatical or literacy or literature concepts we were discussing in class. I outspokenly embraced the idea that a person who has two languages can think in different ways than a person such as myself who is fluent in only one language. We developed trust as the classes progressed, and my students and I grew.

In my third summer with the migrant school (2004), I moved into the lead instructor position, an opportunity that gave me a little more power in working with other teachers as we discussed how to respect our students and to meld the school's agenda. The goals included helping migrant students reach high school graduation in the K–12 federally funded program known as *Estrella*, while integrating students' familial histories and culture. While we were partially successful, we had a great deal to learn as I prepared to leave the program in 2004 to teach in higher education in a Midwestern State. Still, we were attempting to enact what Paris (2012) termed "culturally sustaining" pedagogy:

> The term *culturally sustaining* requires that our pedagogies be more than responsive of or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people – it requires that they support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence. Culturally sustaining pedagogy, then, has as its explicit goal supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism in practice and perspective for students and teachers. That is, culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster – to sustain – linguistic, literature, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling. (Paris, 2012, p. 95)

I will bring more to this important topic after I examine the professors' academic stances as a way to establish their sensitivities to students' individual differences.

Professors' Academic Stances – Sensitivity to Students who Struggle

Mary Sorenson, Bart Whitman, and I expressed the sensitivity to struggling students in different ways. Sorenson worked with students on a more limited scale than Whitman, partly due to her status as an adjunct having more than one job to maintain. She was willing to work with students and offered to stay after class to answer questions. She checked regularly for understanding during in class lessons and returned students' work with written commentary. She was not often in the adjunct office, and did refer students to the college study lab where tutors worked with their writing needs. I note that on one occasion Mary accused an international student in her class of plagiarizing, and I suspect that the student's action may or may not have been a culturally based misunderstanding. As an observer in the room, I stayed out of the details due to what I deemed to be FERPA concerns, and I am not sure how the matter was resolved. From every instance I observed, professor Sorenson was respectful, even gentle in her approaches to her students. At the time of this writing, that student had enrolled in the fall of 2016, and Mary was no longer teaching in the department.

Dr. Whitman worked with every student. His insistence on individual conferencing forced the issue that each student must talk with him about his or her composition drafts. I did observe an unevenness in students' responses during the in-class conference sessions, though only some of that difference seemed connected to cultural idiosyncrasies. On one occasion, a Hmong student sat respectfully and quietly as Dr.

Whitman explained to her his ideas about how she might improve her writing. Her posture and facial expressions were stoic, and I suspected that she was not enjoying the experience. I did not speak with her about the matter, but I did ask Dr. Whitman about the encounter with her after class. His response was that she was consistently cool in receiving instruction, but that she was a moderately good writer. In other cases, Whitman was animatedly involved in speaking with various students, both male and female of a variety of ethnic/cultural backgrounds.

Students' responses to interview questions regarding Whitman included multiple statements of respect and appreciation for the time he took to work with individuals. One student, Hye, explained that she had completely changed her opinion of Whitman when she re-took the course with him due to low grades in her first attempt. Another described Whitman's course as difficult, but useful in ensuing coursework in the following semester. Another expressed gratitude for his continuous feedback on returned papers.

Concerning my own academic stance, I will say that I am student-centric, dialogic, and reader-response oriented. I see my students as co-learners with me in the classes I teach. Of course, I would state these qualities in writing about myself. The proof would necessarily come from my students' voices and from peer evaluations.

Adjuncts & Implications for Student Retention

First year adjuncts, rather than full-time faculty, commonly teach entry-level higher education composition courses, and those adjuncts typically have less training and experience in their content areas than do their full-time counterparts (Tensions, 2010). Surprisingly, and in spite of the tensions created in adjunct faculty due to their limited

access to input and full compensation within the college (Tensions, 2010), part-time and full-time instructors produced nearly identical results in student evaluations and course grade distributions in a 2009 study (Landrum). While some research indicate that adjuncts achieve nearly identical performance results with significantly less financial and academic support (Ghaffari-Samai, Davis, & De Filippis, 1994; Landrum, 2009), other research suggests that part-time faculty may use less student-centered instruction methods (Baldwin & Warzynski, 2011), and may have negative attitudinal stances that affect their impact upon students (Eagan & Grantham, 2015). My assumption, that adjunct professors would not demonstrate the investment in teaching and in their students proved partially unfounded in my study. While one of the adjunct professors spent the minimal time required to teach the composition course the college, the other spent many hours in an adjunct office preparing lessons, grading papers, and meeting with students. If I can assert that we must differentiate our assessment and treatment of our students based on their individuality, then so must we differentiate our understanding of the human beings standing in the classrooms as teachers. Stereotypes do not meet the requirements of fair assessment.

Students need to see themselves represented in the persons who teach them. When students see themselves represented in gender, culture, and ethnicity in their classrooms, they tend to find better hope of success and of adopting the ethos and ethics of higher education (hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2000, 2011). Whittaker, McDonald, and Markwitz, (2005), explain:

> Second, if the notion that prospective teachers are a fundamental part of the context of the pedagogy in teacher education, then teacher educators must consider who the prospective students in our programs are and whom they represent. At the broadest level this speaks to the need to recruit people of color into teaching along with people from other socially constructed groups that remain under-represented in teacher education programs. It also speaks to the need of teacher educators to carefully depict the experiences of people who are not typically represented within their particular programs as well as to complicate the interpretation of the experiences of those who are represented (pp.135-6).

Student and teacher interactions outweighed all other observational data's significance. I centered my observations in the give and take of classroom processes, on interviews with professors and students, on recollections of the commerce of the classroom, on lecture, question-answer, small talk at the outset of classes and in transitional moments, and on reporting of one-on-one dialogues between students and professors. Consistencies in observations came from the use of an observation protocol and through responses in the one on one interviews conducted with professors and student participants. I observed, recorded, transcribed, coded, and annotated the data until I was confident that I was not seeing new data appearing. Readings of current literature in the field indicated that my findings fit current understanding of pedagogical practices in literacy instruction. What I was observing was that the willingness of the instructors to reach their students in a caring and intentional manner brought engagement from students

and produced quality learning. Professors' intentionality, combined with their physical actions produced results.

Relationships

In considering the affective aspects of students' engagement based on their perceptions of relationships with their instructors and their sense that their professors care for them (Wentzel, 2009), I identified a difference between the two professors described in this chapter. In this section, I intentionally exclude myself. My self-directed observations would not only be tedious in terms of taking a stance toward myself as data, but would, I suspect, be interpreted as self-serving. Dr. Whitman and Professor Sorenson provide sufficient data for the purpose of this study.

Ironically, Dr. Whitman, an eccentric, sometimes sarcastic intellectual, connected on many levels with his students. In class, he teased and "fished" for content-related responses from every student. He conferenced individually with students during class and on campus in his office. He provided multiple opportunities for students to inquire for advice and made himself available to them beyond the institutional requirements of an adjunct professor of English composition. In interviews, his students reported that they believed he genuinely cared about them as individuals and about their work as college students. He moved physically through the entire classroom and interacted with every individual, including me.

Professor Sorenson restricted her relationship with students to the classroom. She moved very little except at the front of the classroom, and stayed in "safe" zones physically and dialogically. She was careful to tie her lessons and the conversations in the classroom to the content, rather than to ask individual students content-connected questions about their personal lives. At no time did she demonstrate that she was taking much risk to connect beyond surface pop culture levels, something that Whitman did often, even to the point of causing some discomfort. As an observer in both classes, I quickly knew a great deal about Whitman's students and about him, but I knew very little about Sorenson or about her students based on their dialogic interactions. Freire (2009) admonishes, "For the truly humanist educator and the authentic revolutionary, the object of action is the reality to be transformed by them together with other people – not other men and women themselves" (p.94). Freire's point shaped my observations of how instructors connect in ways that shared the teaching/learning going on in the classes. Mary Sorenson attempted to maintain a safe distance while "winning students' attention over," and Bart Whitman sometimes became intrusive in his attempts to establish lines of communication with his students, to varying degrees of success. Only Whitman let down his guard to let students in on his own struggles with writing and then offered to discuss their composition questions with them. While Sorenson seemed less successful than Whitman, both professors demonstrated aspects of intentionally humbling themselves to connect with students. These relational observations support Wenzel's (2009), suggestion that,

> Ongoing social interactions teach children what they need to do to become accepted and competent members of their social worlds. In addition, the quality of social interactions informs children about the degree to which they are valued and accepted by others (p. 305).

The same is true in this study; the levels of engagement and persistence that occurred between these instructors and their college age students reflected their levels of collective socialization and individual student-to-teacher bonding. Whitman's students perceived a caring, albeit quirky professor who drew them into a community of learners (one of his stated objectives), and most students attempted to meet his and their expectations. Sorenson, while respectful and "on task" at all times, did not develop the classroom cohesion, did not draw as many students into the circle of the learning community. In her classroom, the disengagement of several students was visibly obvious. Whitman's students were willing to be interviewed, and while Sorenson's students were disengaged to the point of enduring the course and choosing not to involve themselves beyond the walls of the classroom.

Space and Position

Location of students in the classroom and instructors' intentional use of the classroom space and their own movements and interactions directly correlate to students' grade performance (Benedict & Hoag, 2004; Zomordian, Parva, Ahrari, Hemyari, Pakshir, Jafari, and Sahraian, 2012). During the classroom observation sessions, I mapped the seating arrangements of students and noted the movement and attentional

displays of the professors with regard to students' engagement and apparent connections with the instructors.

During interviews with students, I probed to discover the intentionality of where people positioned themselves in the classes. I also asked instructors about their sense of intentionally moving and dialoguing with individual students in class sessions. I found that the locations students chose and the patterns in which instructors probed and moved corresponded to students' engagement and participation, similar to the findings of Zomordian, et al. (2012). The more instructors "invaded" students' personal classroom zones, the more students appeared to be engaged, and the more often they self-reported as "engaged." Hye Nan related that she intentionally sat in the front row "in order to attend to the instructor without distractions" (HN Interview, November 21, 2016). In her case, the professor would have pulled her into the class dialogue, but had she been in the other class, she would have needed to be in the front row, center, regardless of her personal ability.

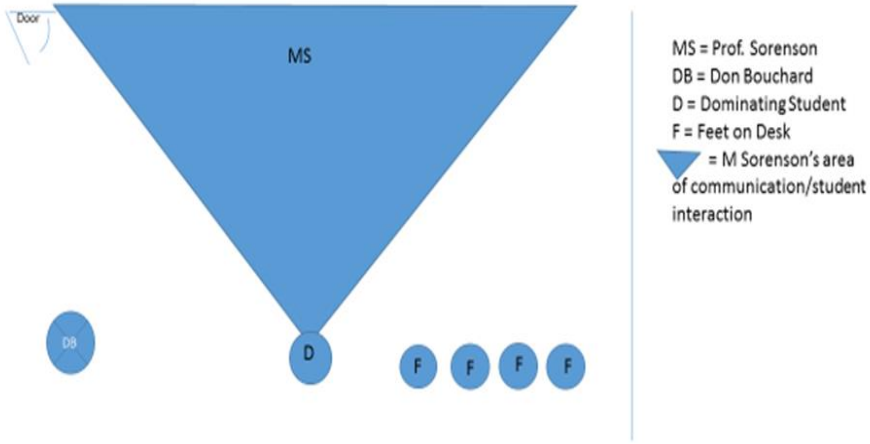

Fig. 1: Mary Sorenson's Class (Area of Communication)

Figure 1 illustrates the areas of influence and participation I observed in Mary Sorenson's class. Over the course of observations Sorenson established a pattern of

physical movement within the rough shape of an inverted triangle. Within that triangle, she sought student responses, and students responded to her teaching with answers and

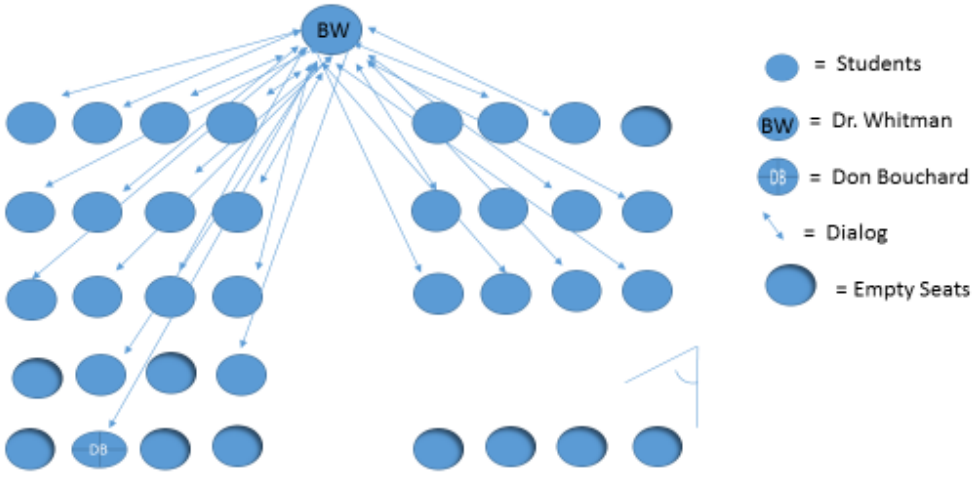

Fig. 2: Bart Whitman's Class (purposeful casting/probing)

questions, while students outside the triangle area were minimally engaged and visibly non-responsive.

Figure 2 illustrates Dr. Whitman's engagement with every student in the class, either directly through questions and probing in class, or through individual conferencing in the stage right front of the classroom on composition review days. His quirky sense of humor and satirical *repartee* was at times helpful and at times destructive in the process of interacting with students. Those who understood and appreciated his sense of humor were able to tease him back, while those who did not understand or appreciate his humor sat quietly as he finished his humorous forays.

Because every teacher has unique personality characteristics, part of learning how to thrive in a new class requires students to "sleuth" out their professors' idiosyncratic behaviors and expectations. If teachers are to differentiate instruction for their students, it makes sense that the reverse is true as well; students must re-position their learning stances and receptivity to fit their instructors' styles and expectations. Learning the culture and academic expectations of higher education, including how one's professors teach, and how to turn in acceptable work in exchange for passing marks, is a time-honored practice (Conley, 2007) that many educators acknowledge as common sense, but which many first year students struggle to accommodate.

Students must learn their professors' personal and unique expectations in order to earn better than mediocre marks and to persist successfully. For instance, if students decipher a professor's intimations that quizzes may be given on certain course content, but that quizzes only appear after a professor mentions the possibility three or four times in a lecture series, they may focus their studies on the triply-emphasized content and relax focus on less often-mentioned content. Similarly, students' having the ability to discern when a professor is serious or joking is an invaluable skill set. So is developing the ability to return corresponding dialogue in ways that demonstrate a reflective sense of humor. In Dr. Whitman's classroom, for example, several students learned to return banter resulting in an enjoyable experience for several members of the class, including the professor. A type of appropriate community affection can be developed through dialogue.

Culturally Relevant and Sustainable Pedagogies

Ideally, every entry-level college writing instructor would have pedagogical backgrounding and extensive pre-teaching praxis in teaching diverse assemblies of students representing a broad mixture of ethnicities, cultures, and levels of college composition readiness. These professors of entry-level courses would see their students as individuals having unique interests, capabilities and needs, rather than as pedagogical commodities waiting to be sorted, graded, and stacked like wood, some to be made into fine furniture and some to fuel the furnace of academia and sent billowing out of the institution lost like smoke. Ideally, professors would seek to "sustain" their students' unique personal cultural identities, including their home languages and personal culturally-based perspectives as they encourage their students to thrive in the academic culture milieu of higher education (Paris, 2012). This recognition and respect for students' languages, literature, and cultural identities becomes supportive, rather than destructive. Kolb (2014) makes the case for "culturally sustaining classrooms":

> Although culturally relevant pedagogy, as originally conceived, includes attention to students' cultural competencies and their understanding of issues of social access and power, supporters of culturally sustaining pedagogy have pushed for a more direct, explicit focus on cultural "maintenance and cultural critique" (Paris, 2012, p. 95). Such a perspective has strong implications for the kinds of literacies and texts that might be included in classrooms – especially in communities with large populations of racial minorities, working class individuals and families, and non-native English speakers. In a culturally sustaining classroom, students who

identify with these groups would likely read texts and engage in literacy practices that challenge traditionally "schooled" literacies. (Kolb, 2014)

Ideally, Kolb's vision for the culturally relevant classroom would provide scaffolding that would lead all students toward literacy competence and access in higher education without destroying their own self-identities. Apparent in this ideal construct is the need for instructors to have the desire for and access to training in the development of supportive classroom environments and practices.

Current practice, at least within the college I studied, is to staff entry-level composition courses with predominately-adjunct faculty and a few full time professors' needing course loads. A nearby state university's practice is similar with the loading of lecture halls with many students and serving students via several teaching assistants (TAs). One state university undergraduate student with whom I discussed class sizes reported being in a freshman class with around 700 students. A dozen TAs graded papers and fielded student inquiries while there was little access to the course instructor of record. Based upon personal observation, these huge class sizes are not new. As a high school senior, I visited a lecture hall at a large state university in 1977 and witnessed a professor on a stage far below a few hundred students and potential students. In his course introduction, he stated that his TAs would grade all papers and that he really didn't need to speak personally with individual students because half the class would drop out of the university by the end of the semester. Encouraging words, indeed.

The point of this digression is to juxtapose past pedagogical practices that commodify entry-level students without regard for culture or individual needs for

differentiated instruction with current empowering practices that encourage and scaffold around those students as they matriculate into higher education.

First Year Composition as Developmental Literacy Courses

The entry from the Cadler College catalog for ENG131 – College Composition reads as follows:

> This course emphasizes the fundamentals of effective writing in the context of the elements of rhetoric: writer, audience, and purpose. Students write narrative, informative, and persuasive compositions and a documented research paper.

With few exceptions, entering freshmen take the initial literacy skills courses including ENG131 College Composition. As an education faculty member with teaching responsibilities in English and Communication Arts content, I teach one to two freshman composition classes each year.

My faculty colleagues and I have many opportunities to discuss the college's goals and intentions for preparing incoming students for their college careers. As humanities literacy and communication arts generalists, we are charged with bringing students to competency levels for an assortment of degree options including business, counseling, ministry, science, education, communication, sports management, and nursing (to name a few). Through the help of composition instructors, students develop the ability to write at academic levels that not all of them meet when they enter their first courses as freshmen.

The disparity in students' literacy competence, fluency, and preparation becomes immediately apparent with the introductory compositions each professor requires. Some

capable students thrive and move easily into sophomore and junior level composition coursework, while others can barely form coherent paragraphs, in spite of passing college entrance exams with required gate-keeping minimal scores. While some departments like nursing and education require their student candidates to have higher minimal ACT or SAT scores, not all do so. The composition instructors bear the responsibility of determining which students need deeper levels of scaffolding and making referrals of those students to the college study lab, which employs student tutors skilled and knowledgeable in content areas but having little pedagogical training.

In college preparatory literacy instruction research, Manuel (2002) found that many entry-level college students observed in over three semesters of composition courses did not have the necessary skills or abilities to process texts critically. Neither were many college students able to evaluate or process texts in interpretive ways that would allow them to determine authenticity or to analyze content critically in articles in *Popular Science* magazines, which typically are written to middle school reading levels (Manuel 2002). Manuel contends:

> Instructors should become more involved in critiquing and probing students' responses to reading materials. Faculty members in higher education commonly presume students understand what they read -- and that citing of "bad" or inapplicable web resources reflects willful laziness and a desire to use the easiest source. Many students may, however, be simply unable to spot problems (biases, authors' lack of credentials, lack of sources, etc.) with information resources. (Manuel, 2002)

Since teaching college composition skills necessarily includes the reading, interpretation, analysis, and appropriate reporting or analyzing and citing of information, composition instructors must know their students' abilities in order to scaffold around them with differentiated instruction. As Manuel (2002) points out, having access to Internet-age tools enabling critical perspectives does not automatically mean that 21st century college students are actually accessing or using them as Tapscott (1998) optimistically declared. Tools are only useful if the owners know how and when to use them effectively.

Certainly, college composition instructors feel pressure to lead their students through 21st Century literacy processing in a time when students have nearly unlimited access to primary, secondary, and tertiary sources of information. The question arises whether one or two semesters' composition skills courses are enough to prepare entering students for the complexities of writing in their higher education degrees.

Not all students make it through freshman composition or their other first semester coursework, and not all of the failure lies with their inability to perform successfully in composition. Some have difficulty disciplining themselves in organizing their time wisely, or they fail to access necessary tutoring or counseling. Freshman composition professors often step into the gaps in their students' understanding of the college system and provide connections with appropriate services on campus. They act as surrogate parents in giving advice or mediating crises by reducing work expectations or adjusting deadlines to accommodate students' busy co-curricular activities. Effectively

teaching incoming freshmen classes goes beyond content area instruction, as Kolb, 2012, indicates.

Critical Literacy

Beyond the objectives of improving incoming students' academic writing skills, some English composition professors see themselves as the first instructors of critical literacy theory. Opportunities to tap into content areas and contemporary trends in literature and philosophy provide "spring board" moments to encourage students to think and write from other than their own perspectives. Often, such opportunities come through professors' selection and introduction of short essays and literary pieces exemplifying critical literacy. Typically, lessons in critical literacy begin with an examination of the "scientific," objectivism of the Formalist perspective that analyzes literary elements such as plot lines and elements, theme analysis, character analysis, or author stated intention. The introduction to "other" perspectives follows and usually includes the Marxist, feminist, psychoanalytic (Freudian), and Reader Response approaches, to name a few.

Some of the professors with whom I work see opportunities for social justice awareness through the development of students' application of critical lenses. Engaging students in class discussions can be both stimulating and discouraging but must be done in order to develop students' abilities to think from others' perspectives in order to produce spaces for "counterhegemonic" dialogue within the multicultural and multiethnic groups of students on campus and in classes (Kynard & Eddy, 2009). I have observed that few incoming freshman students have much experience with critical lenses, but if they do, they have the most exposure to Marxist and/or Feminist theory.

Classroom Observations

Professors Whitman and Sorenson taught in different classrooms. I will describe each of these in the ensuing section.

***Professor Bart Whitman's classroom*.** Whitman taught in a smaller, brightly lit rectangular room featuring rows of tables with a central aisle. At the front of the room was a projector screen and whiteboards with a small lectern at the side of the projector screen. The computer stand connected to the projector stood at front stage left. Because the room was small, the feeling was "tight" as one stood in front of the class. Whitman's students arranged themselves from front to back as assigned by the instructor, within the first four rows of a six row classroom. Seating was controlled by the presence of the hall door that opened into the stage left side of the room just between rows four and five, and effectively "forced" students to make seating choices ahead of the door (see Figure 2). By gender, students were equally interspersed, sitting in pairs or trios. Professor Whitman situated himself either stage center at the front or stage right in order to access the whiteboard. I did not see him use the computer or the projector much during my observations. Lessons centered on students' writing or on printed handouts that Whitman brought to class with him. A few students did follow along on electronic or printed copies of texts supplied by Bart Whitman via the college's educational learning platform, Blackboard©.

***Professor Sorenson's Classroom*.** Sorenson's classroom featured a large, unevenly lit space with two-person table-desks arranged in wide rows. She situated herself within proximity of the computer, which linked to a Smart Board© at the front of the class. Students located themselves from front to back. Sorenson's class self-divided by gender, and Whitman's did not. As I observed the class in session several times, I saw that the most highly engaged students located themselves in the front of the room near Sorenson. An exception was one student who situated himself at the tip of the triangle in the center toward the rear of the room (See Figure 1). In the first row, six females and two males sat. In the second row, five females and one male, and then in row three, two females and two males positioned themselves. Toward the back of the room, three males sat in the stage left in rows three and four. I chose to sit in this fourth row, stage right, in order to see all students and the professor, roughly the same location that I used in Whitman's classroom with the exception that in Sorenson's classroom the exit was in the front stage right allowing the whole class to see anyone entering or leaving.

For a detailed examination of activities and behaviors within the two professors' classrooms, I used Marzano's Observation Protocols (2009, 2011). The eleven protocols with my extensive comments are found in Appendix E.

From all observations and interviews, four themes emerged. In the two following sections they are identified and then discussed. Supporting warrants follow in the final section of this chapter.

Grounded Theory

The analyses lead to the emergence of a grounded theory, Mutually Humble Collaboration. This theory is supported by four subthemes explained in the following section.

Humility

Discrepant cases I identified as being on the margins of success if left to succeed or fail on their own proved themselves likely to succeed by intentionally choosing to humble themselves to seek help, to ask questions, to fail, and to try again. They did not give up. They responded to the offers of their teachers and to other support personnel and infrastructures, but they did not become dependent upon any one source of support. They took responsibility for failures and mistakes, and they moved to correct their work and to improve themselves. When given the opportunity by the modeling of humility and openness by their instructors, they humbled themselves by lowering their defenses in order to collaborate in the learning process.

I assert that intentionally humbling one's personal pride is the first step toward establishing dialogical lines and is an exercise of personal agency that empowers the learning paradigm in shaping positive self-identity, the passion and perseverance of grit (Duckworth, 2016), and productive lines of communication. As it is presented in the theoretical superstructure of Mutually Humble Collaboration, humility is the driving theme for success within the dialogical teaching-learning construct.

Student Identity

Successful students see themselves realistically, acknowledge aggregated labeling placed upon them, and take steps to re-define themselves. They recognize their personal limitations, become advocates for themselves, and work diligently to overcome their liabilities in order to thrive. They do not accept survival as their maximum potential, but rather endure struggling to accomplish goals. They are not ashamed to talk about their limitations or challenges in the process of advocating for themselves. They do not stop with the first rejections that come their way but rather learn from failures, redefine their abilities, and strategize on how to adapt. They see themselves realistically in two places in life; the present with its challenges and the future with its projected ideal self. They look beyond their current identities toward the successful selves they envision. In other words, they emulate Dweck's (2015) growth intelligence mentality.

Grit

Duckworth (2016) combines perseverance with passion to define grit. Students likely to succeed combine their passion to meet goals with their determination to achieve their aspirations. They thrive because of their grittiness to persevere in the face of challenges. They are tenacious and unswerving.

Lines of Communication

Successful students diligently establish lines of communication with the necessary co-participants in their educational endeavors, including teachers, peers, staff, counselors, tutors, etc. These students maintain those lines of communication to the ends of their educational careers and sometimes beyond, providing evidence that the effective student-

teacher relationship is more than perfunctory. In this study, I focused primarily upon the lines of communication between the students and professors, not between students and their peers. Classroom notes and professor and student interviews provided the evidence of established lines of communication through which students and their professors interacted with each other.

Explication of the Grounded Theory and Subthemes with Data Warrants

In this section I provide data warrants supporting the grounded theory.Then I explore the subthemes with additional data warrants. Named students are members of the final four students featured in Chapter 5 case studies. I cite students from the first interviews not selected for Chapter 5 case studies with S-number designations (S1, S2, S3, and so on).

Mutually Humble Collaboration (MHC)

The finding of my grounded theory study is that in the establishment of dialogical learning relationships, there is an entry point in which the communicating parties must lower their defenses and pride in order to embark on dialogical teaching and learning experiences together. Through these collaborative relationships, students and teachers are able to construct lines of dialogical communication, develop positive self-identity, build grit, and develop growth intelligence perceptions. I have named this concept Mutually Humble Collaboration and see it as an attitudinal, dispositional asset encouraging students whose resources are not valued by the institution of higher education to take

courage and to persist and to thrive. MHC is the super-framework under which the themes listed above develop and thrive.

I envision MHC as a drawbridge in which the instructor and the learner lower their two half-sections of highway in order to allow the commerce of ideas to pass back and forth rather than a more traditional teacher-centered model in which information is passed to the learners in a broadcasting or lecture-only relationship. In this model, struggling students and teachers move forward collaboratively, providing feedback and encouragement within the learning process. The effective teacher proceeds based upon the student's progress and by making every effort to bridge gaps that are hindering the learning process. Likewise, the student chooses to lower defenses and to make the necessary efforts to collaborate with the teacher in order to learn successfully. Communication is central, as is the mutual, intentional self-reduction of pride within the teaching and learning relationship. Neither the teacher nor the students relinquish dignity, nor should they. Rather, the sense of self-assurance, efficacy, and agency develop within the safety of mutual respect and dialog.

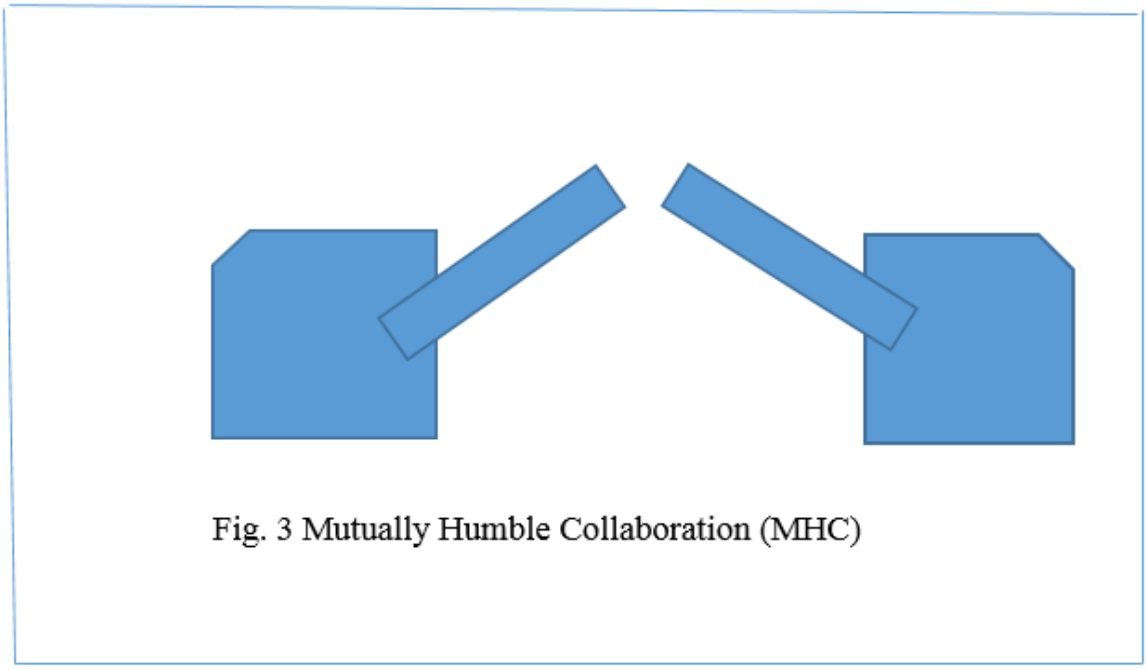

Fig. 3 Mutually Humble Collaboration (MHC)

In this model, one side represents the teacher and one the student. The ideal situation exists when both teachers and students place themselves in the humble position of respecting and receiving what others send in the teaching/learning process. If one side of the bridge remains higher or superior, the transference of ideas and skills may occur, but the stressful leap results in lost information and diminishes desired effectiveness. If either side remains somehow aloof or disdainful, the other recognizes the superior positioning of the other, and the connection falters. The MHC pedagogical model explains the current pedagogical drift away from traditional, one-way teacher-to-student dominant strategies including lecture halls and direct instruction-only as the primary means of instruction. MHC resonates with dialogic teaching practices (Freire, 2009) that recognize and set aside "Big D vs. little d discourse" structures and practices (Gee, 1990, 2000) in order for meaningful pedagogical exchanges to occur. Specifically, I refer to

Gee's (1990, 2000)work on the power dynamics held within discourses that serve to control and suppress dialogic relationships, either unintentionally or intentionally, as an expected outcome of discourse. The dialogic concepts within MHC imply the recognition of the power structures inherent within the teaching/learning paradigm, and the purposeful lowering of defense mechanisms within dialogic relationships in order for collaboration to take effect.

I position MHC at the nexus of Freire's dialogic relationship and as a way to subvert the cyclical rise and fall of power within hegemonic relationships. The bridging effect of MHC offers a neutral ground in which teachers and learners can function productively. Recalling a conversation years ago about "safe classrooms," my colleagues and I reflected that no classroom can ever be totally "safe," but that the teacher's responsibility is to make it "safe enough" for most students to be able to learn. In the spirit of that philosophical discussion, I also suggest that nearly all effective teachers practice MHC, though they may never have verbalized what it is that they are doing in specifically this manner.

MHC operates in several domains including the exchange of ideas and concepts in which the student and the teacher are willing to admit ignorance or incomplete knowledge, to ask questions, and to input ideas into the educational dialogue. From the instructor's "bridge" side, the concept allows for the intentional perspective of seeing the value of learning each student's unique learning traits and taking measures to differentiate instruction methods and techniques. The respecting and valuing of the "Other" in MHC eases the teaching/learning process and opens the pathway to further

educational endeavors. The teacher is present to build the bridge and to align himself or herself with students' abilities to access the content, skills, and dispositions of the instructional agenda. Students and teachers' physical, cognitive, and affective presences must align themselves to build a fully dialogic bridge between the two sides.

Student Identity. Once I had recognized performance and persistence to be qualities of successful engagement perspectives within my data, I interviewed participants for further information. In other words, I sought to understand how students identify themselves within their educational contexts, particularly in ENG131 English Composition. Hall (2011) states,

> In common sense language, identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation. In contrast with the 'naturalism' of this definition, the discursive approach sees identification as a construction, a process never completed – always 'in process' (p. 2).

Lin (2008) suggests that students often partially identify themselves through the labels given them through the results of standardized testing, nationalized aggregation via racial or socioeconomic status, or other means of establishing identity. I conducted interviews with the ENG131 composition students I had observed to determine how they perceived themselves to be progressing in their readiness to perform the literacy tasks of college. I also questioned the participants' conceptualization of their personal sense of how they were changing in their abilities and identities, because, as Hall (2011) states,

> The concept of identity deployed here [within the article] is therefore not an essentialist, but a strategic and positional one….It accepts that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions (pp. 3-4).

What the individuals in this study were able to perceive about themselves and about their relationships with their professors played an important role in the formation of the theme that arose from the study. Successful participants used their self-perceptions to make adjustments, seek assistance, or discipline themselves. In other words, they saw their identities as malleable indicators of where they stood and where they needed to change to reach their goals.

The DCs, to a person, related that their learning connected to the relationships they held with their teachers, both in high school and in college. Satisfied participants praised their professors for their care and competence in instruction and celebrated their personal successes. In part, the relationships they developed relied upon their accurate self-perceptions or identities as learners. The following conversations with several participants reveal their self-assessment of what they felt they needed to learn or develop as students.

Entering their first year, many freshman feel uncertain, wondering if they are prepared to succeed in college, even whether they can write well enough to make it in school. Instructors of first year students are responsible for onboarding or initiating freshmen into the school's academic culture. Composition professors especially feel the

burden of preparing their students to write competently. Hye Nan's self-evaluation gives evidence that professors' sense of duty is correct: "One of the things I really need to learn is grammar. I really struggle with that. Um, I do a lot of run-on sentences, and I have caught myself" (Hye Nan, Interview, January 21, 2015).

One of Hye's classmates, S2, spoke to a common first year student's struggle to self-edit his work:

> Well, definitely, I would say grammar, like learning comma placement and run-on sentences and stuff like that, because, like, I never really, never really like… I would say I learned more in being in this class than I did, say maybe sophomore year because I probably wasn't paying attention as much as I should have because I thought, like, 'Well, as long as my writing is good and colorful, and everybody likes it, then, I shouldn't worry about punctuation.' But [I knew] that's probably not the way to go. Because looking, like, reading some of my revisions on my essays, I can see why, yeah, that doesn't even look right, and I can see where that can mess up the point I'm trying to get across because I have so many errors and run-ons and missing commas and stuff like that…. (S2, Interview, January 22, 2016)

Hye Nan's self-realization came after she failed the composition course in a previous semester. She found herself readjusting her perceptions of her writing abilities and became able to name the writing challenges she faced. Part of that readjusting was re-taking the composition course with Whitman. In this respect she had an advantage over some of her classmates as she knew what to expect in the second iteration of the course.

Tim Barger cited grammar and punctuation as his challenges, and likened the need for accuracy to his personal experiences in writing software coding: "Again, like I said, grammar's always been tough for me. It's one of those things I think I have to keep powering through, and I need to keep on learning how to use it, how to use it more actively" (TB, Interview, March 11, 2016).

One student who was not one of the final four participants reported that while she was confident in her mastery of grammar and basic writing skills, her greatest challenge (fear) was committing plagiarism:

> S4: Um, for some reason, coming into English 131 this past semester, I came in really confident, and when I wrote papers, I felt like I knew what I was doing, which is really an awesome feeling, because I never really felt like that when I was in high school. Umm. But, yeah, my grammar and stuff, I feel that I'm really good at…sometimes, but uh, just, for example in research papers, just knowing that…learning how to research things, and I'm always afraid.
>
> D: This is stuff you think you need to work on?
>
> S4: Um, yeah. Researching. And I'm always afraid when I'm researching that I'd kind of like, plagiarizing, which is my fear. [Nervous laugh]. Um, but, yeah, when I did a research paper, I guess I didn't plagiarize with your class. (Interview, January 27, 2016)

S4's statement, "I guess I didn't plagiarize with your class," was tentative and showed a nervous insecurity even though she had passed the course and was doing well in her second semester work.

While a few incoming students were well prepared to enter the academic challenges, and others knew some of the literacy challenges lying ahead, several participants articulated their need to learn to use basic grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. Several reported learning disabilities and English-as-second-language challenges. S6 traced a life-long challenge with dyslexia, and Tim Barger (S10) related several years of speech therapy. S4 gave credit to a librarian and her older sister for teaching and encouraging her to read:

> I do remember though, always going to the library when I was a little girl, because I didn't really have anyone to hang out with, and I went to the library and I read books. And, I read in the library in there. For some reason, my brother and my sister always became really good friends with the librarians, and I think that she really helped me, and I know that she really cares about us and she still does. And I guess her and my sister, maybe my older sister and my mom, I'm pretty sure that they've always helped me out in how to read. (S4 Interview, January 27, 2016)

S4 described a life similar to the Hispanic students I taught in the Montana Migrant Education program during the summers of 2000 through 2004. I connected her literacy development account with the biography of Tomas Rivera, former president of the University of California – Riverside, who also learned to love reading through the friendly instruction of a librarian in a small Iowa town where his family was working during their migratory cycle (Mora, 1997). A small town librarian scaffolded and nurtured the hungry learner who walked through the doors of the library she tended. The

Rivera story provides insight into the purposes and potentials of intentional educators working as agents of social justice within established educational systems. College composition professors hold powerful positions of literacy education.

Participant S2, an African-American male, related how he saw himself as a student. He positioned himself as a "good writer," so when his essays were returned to him with multiple critical marks, he had to adjust. I asked him what areas he believed he needed to develop in regard to his composition skills. His answer was revealing:

> S2: Well, definitely, I would say grammar, like learning comma placement and run-on sentences and stuff like that, because, like, I never really, never really like… I would say I learned more in being in this class than I did, say maybe sophomore year because I probably wasn't paying attention as much as I should have because I thought, like, "Well, as long as my writing is good and colorful, and everybody likes it, then, I shouldn't worry about punctuation, but knowing that's probably not the way to go. 'Cause looking like, reading some of my revisions on my essays, I can see why, yeah, that doesn't even look right, and I can see where that can mess up the point I'm trying to get across because I have so many errors and run-ons and missing commas and stuff like that….
>
> D: Good. How did you engage your attention and work in this course to succeed? Now, you did succeed in the course. What did you do every day to make sure that you were going to get a good grade in the class?
>
> S2: Mmmm. I would say, that I looked at my flaws, and decided that, yeah, I really wanted to improve in this area because I didn't want to come in thinking I

feel like I'm already a good writer so I'm just going to just breeze through the class, like, uhhh, just sit back and thought about what I needed to work on and really took that into consideration and that helped me to stay focused in the class. (Interview, January 22, 2016)

S2 related that he adjusted his attitude and self-perception to force himself to adapt and improve his writing skills. He took personal ownership in his work and saw it as important to his future goals.

S5 responded to the question of how he compared to his classmates in his writing ability with surprising confidence:

S5: Uh, I think that I was more advanced than others because they would always come and ask me for questions, and they knew that, like, this was a class that I was good at. So, if they needed questions, I would answer them, and some of them would ask me to peer edit their papers, and if I had time, I would do it. So, that's one thing, and I think that some people didn't always do the homework, or didn't understand why they were getting the points off, and they just did it again thinking that they had changed it, and, I've done that, too, but, some…I, I normally know. (Interview, January 25, 2016)

I note that I did not select S5 as a finalist discrepant case based upon my observations of his classroom performance. He was not a student who seemed marginalized or in stress, nor did he relate to the struggle of his classmates who did.

Another student, S9, identified herself as a Third Culture Kid (TCK) (Polluck & Van Reken, 2009): who saw herself to be "world citizen" rather than giving allegiance to

any one country. She spoke of her reluctance and discomfort to engage in class discussions because she felt her worldview was very different from her classmates' perspectives:

> S9: Yah. So, that's a little bit different. I think that just coming from like, culture shock and moving into something, my experiences make it different in reading and writing about things in the way I view….
>
> D: Yeah.
>
> S9: culture and life, especially in America, because it's new for me coming back in this year, so that's very different from other students' view on the world.
>
> D: So…do you want to talk about that a little bit? Compare…. How about details?
>
> S9: Ummm, I don't know. I know when we were reading…. I'm trying to remember what story it was. There was a story we were reading, and I feel like it was about some culture…. Do you remember what I'm talking about?
>
> D: Keep talking. Some… There were three stories, at least that I….
>
> S9: Umm, three stories that were all about culture, and I remember listening to their perspective on it, thinking, 'that's very different,' than like just being somebody who had moved to another culture, I was like, "Oh! You don't understand that, Sweetie!" I'm sorry, but you don't…. I'm sorry. Or it's just like in writing experiences, it's like describing different places, people's (papers) were all within the United States, and I'm just like, "Well, I could just describe Thailand, or I could describe…. But at the same time I feel like I'm a show off and I start to, like, try to limit it, but at the same time, that's my experience, my

> life, and so, it's a little bit different trying to balance that versus kids' talking about like, hunting. Well, I've never lived in a rural area where kids have done that. Like I don't even know, like, how you would go about…. I've always grown up in the city. We lived in a city of like four million people (6 million, 2014), and so, just even that, coming into this area, too, has been really different. The students are used to, like a quieter area, and I'm used to, like, sirens, and people bustling around. (Interview March 2, 2016)

In this section of the interview, S9 felt disoriented by her freshman experience. In spite of successfully completing the first year, she did not return to the fall 2016 semester. Her older brother graduated in the spring of 2017 and managed not only to adapt but also to become a campus leader of several events and student groups. While several complex causes may underlie why one stayed and the other left, individual experiences may explain the differences in retention between siblings.

Grit. Suppose that a student returns day after day to class and that she or he engages and stays motivated to work toward goals of completion. Suppose that she or he determines that giving up is not an option even in the face of peer pressure, past failures, or temporary setbacks. These are indicators of "grit" (Duckworth & Yeager, 2014 & 2015). The opposite, failure to attend class consistently, to turn in work, or to remain engaged in class participation, are evidence of the lack of grit. As Yeager, et al., (2016) affirm, when students access support services, join co-curricular campus organizations, or move onto the campus to live, their integration into the educational institution's cultural system closes the performance gaps between themselves and more advantaged student

populations and strengthens the likelihood of their successful matriculation and graduation. Sometimes, the qualities inherent in grit drive a person to look beyond the perceived odds and to succeed when others more likely to succeed fail or give up.

Hye Nan stands out as a gritty student who endured the struggles of three cultures and three languages to persevere because of her great determination to become a teacher. Born in South Korea, she moved with her parents to Ecuador when she was a baby. Korean was spoken in her home, but the language of school and community in Ecuador was Spanish, so she identified herself as a Latina when she and I first spoke. As an entering freshman, she was fluent in Spanish, and only semi-fluent in Korean, her parents' first language. She expressed concern that she was gradually losing her fluency in Korean due to her immersion in Spanish and her need to learn English to succeed at Cadler. She worked very hard to communicate in English, the language of Cadler College, and the USA, her newly adopted place of residence.

Hye Nan related in an interview:

> HN: Um, because they would only…like they would look at you, like if you had Asian, they would like, "Oh, you're a Chinese, and then, that's offensive to, like, non-Chinese people, and even to Chinese people, that's really offensive…and then, just, people would be really mean, like, guys would, like, like, knock you over, or, like, pull your skirt up…a lot of stuff.
>
> D: A lot of harassment kinds of thing…um…so, you are not Chinese. You appeared to be Asian, right? So, what is your ethnicity? How would you identify yourself?

> HN: I would identify myself as Korean, but at the same time, Ecuadorian, because I was raised my whole life in Ecuador, and I know Spanish better than I know Korean. (Interview, January 21,2016)

When she entered my class, she requested that I put Spanish subtitles on the screen for any video clips I showed. Early on, she connected with the school's study lab and arranged extended times for examinations. She knew her professors and visited them regularly to find extra help when necessary. She emailed and called professors and support staff in order to receive the necessary scaffolding for her success. Her success is evident in the fact that she was chosen to receive the teacher education department's senior honor award for the graduating class of 2017.

Tim Barger looked back on the rewards of his perseverance and drive to succeed reflectively. When Dr. Whitman told him to go for tutoring at the Cadler study lab, he experienced some emotional pain:

> TB: Because going to the Study Lab kind of means, like, to me, it felt like, "I'm too weak. I need to get help," and it is hard at first. It's just like, you don't want to be that student that needs help. You want to be that one that can do it all on their own. Like I said, the first time I went in there I was scared, because like I felt defeated; I felt weak. I mean, they kept saying, "You don't need to be afraid about the study lab. The good people, the ones that get "Bs" who want to get "As" go there." (Interview, March 11, 2016)

Thankfully, Tim was able to reflect positively upon his experience:

> I don't know, I mean, a lot of it was kind of … I did. The problem was that the unpleasant things that I did made me who I am today, which is hard to say that I didn't like 'em. At the time I didn't like it, and now I know I learned so much through it (Interview, March 11, 2016).

He persevered, overcame the embarrassment, and successfully completed the college composition course.

Lines of Communication. This section examines the avenues of communication established between professors with students. Selected data represents the dynamics of availability, intentionality, and perception in communication between professors and students.

Professors. Professors' accessibility and approachability to communicate with their students encourages or discourages the establishment of communication patterns between them. As adjuncts, Whitman and Sorenson were not held to holding office hours each day with their students, but Dr. Whitman did meet regularly in his adjunct office. Professor Sorenson did not keep office hours, due in part to her need to leave campus to resume childcare responsibilities. At the ends of classes, I observed that she left the building at nearly the same time as the students did. I did not observe her using the adjunct office spaces. I did see her speaking with students before class and a couple of times in the classroom after class concerning papers and other assignments.

The instructors in this study communicated their pleasure and displeasure to students' responses in different ways. Professor Whitman used witty sarcasm and appeared to enjoy teasing most (if not all) students in order to solicit responses, while

Professor Sorenson found “safe” students (those who could be counted on to provide answers accurately and respectfully) to respond to prompts and tended to ignore non-participating or passively aggressive students. Whitman approached his classroom in the fashion of an angler casting lures from his position in the center front of the room to every student in the room in an unpredictable pattern. From time to time, he circulated down the aisle and stepped into the rows of tables to work with individual students (Fig. 2). On one occasion, Whitman set up a conference area at the front of the room and met with individual students to discuss their drafts and to offer suggestions for improvement. On other days, he met them in his campus office space for one-on-one discussions about each student’s composition drafts. In these activities, Whitman was establishing a dialogic relationship with his students, speaking, listening, and responding. He balanced critical commentary with complimentary support, and tended to insert humor when he saw an opening.

In a very different manner, Professor Sorenson operated within an invisible, inverted triangle in her room with the front of the classroom serving as the wide baseline. From this base, she forayed into the narrowing center of the room and avoided the sides and rear of the class where several students and I sat. One table on the stage left, directly across from me, hosted four young men who stayed out of most class activities, and who appeared disengaged for much of the time I observed. They talked quietly to each other, and at times two, three, or all four had their feet up on the table with their chairs leaning back on two legs. Sorenson largely ignored them, and they her. I did not see her engage them concerning their body language.

One young man at the tip of the triangle in the middle of the room tended to dominate responses to MS's prompts. Generally, the rest of the class seemed to be okay, or even relieved, in letting him talk (See Fig. 1). When I asked her how effectively she thought she had engaged her students and how well she felt they connected with her, she expressed some frustration and uncertainty:

> D: "Have you had literacy training in teaching multiculturally?"
>
> MS: No. The majority of my experience has been in White America. [The undergraduate college where I taught] was the school where I was the minority, and yet that was the class that responded to me most, that loved me. I taught a remedial summer course. Had refugees from Nepal, from Africa, deaf, Native American, [an] African American man in his sixties.
>
> D: "Why do you think that was?"
>
> MS: Asked myself that question and I don't have an answer. Maybe it is because they are more expressive about their appreciation for the class. My White students maybe do appreciate the class, but they haven't told me." (Interview December 10, 2015)

I saw significant differences between the lines of communication established by Professors Whitman and Sorenson. Whitman's nearly relentless pursuit of dialogue crossed from classroom conferencing and intentionally seeking out all students' response with probing questions to check for understanding to individual conferencing with students about their paper drafts. I observed that he wrote notes on each student's rough drafts to use in his conferencing. I did not see comments written by Sorenson, as she did

not dialogue with them in conference so far as I could see. Sorenson's dialogue was limited to a small sector of her class with limited responses from only a select few within the "triangle" of her influence. Students from Whitman's class readily agreed to interview with me for the study, and Sorenson's did not--another possible indicator of lacking lines of communication.

Students. The term "lines of communication" implies two-way communication avenues, or what Freire termed "dialogical relationships," (2009). Once the professors have opened these avenues, students must choose to take advantage of the opportunities to communicate. As an example of students who reciprocally establish effective lines of communication with their professors, Sony Kabila made the analogous connection between learning to swim and improving his writing skills. He talked about courageously speaking with his teachers to let them know what he didn't know in order to "get to the bottom" of the swimming pool at the shallow end as a starting place and then gradually move into deeper levels:

> SK: I really like my first priority. It is like, I want to improve my writing skills again. I was like, low when I got to 131. I was really low. When I went past 131, I started growing even more. I was like, higher. When I got to English 132, it's like another level higher. It's like you're learning to swim. They're not going to throw you in like, the five foot thing right away when you're a kid. No. You have to learn from the bottom. When you are learning to swim, the water level is like this [showing shallowness with his hands], and then the swimming pool is like this [showing gradation of depth], and you have to start here, and you don't want to

start here [showing shallow to deep]. Like, one day later, and you don't know how to swim, and it is way over here [showing need for shallower learning]. You have to start slowly, slowly, slowly. You have to go to the bottom of it and start learning. Even though you know that you can write, you have to, umm, you have to start simple. You just have to go to your teacher and say, um, "I don't know how to do this," and um, to be honest I feel ashamed to talk about it sometimes, but I'm gonna be honest. I really don't know how to write. I write papers and doing this. Do you mind helping me out? Can I send you my essays and can you look over it and make some comments about how I can make it better?"

D: Sure.

SK: How can I change anything in it? That's what pretty much that I.... I really want to learn how to write a really good paper, and so when somebody looks over it, they are like, "Wow. That's a really good paper with a lot of effort and work into this." And I really want to go beyond the points that I like … I just really want to go beyond "good." I really wish that I could … (SK Interview, February 29, 2016)

Sony exhibited the self-motivation and determination to become a strong writer. He lowered his pride intentionally to seek help from his instructors and his peers, and he continued to do so as needed. The reward ("Wow! That's really a good paper with a lot of effort and work into this") is an indicator of Sony's internal motivation. Not looking for extrinsic rewards, he focused on personal, internal satisfaction.

Finally, I cannot overlook the benefits derived from having at least one teacher

who steps in to advocate, to encourage, and to hold accountable students who face challenges. Chloe Hawkins's combination of ADD/ADHD, and dyslexia could have derailed her educational aspirations, but she had a network of advocates including her parents and her "favorite" special education teacher who committed to helping her beyond the normal expectations put upon most educators. They were relentless in their scaffolding communication and encouragement. By the time she entered my college composition class, she had adopted an ethic of communication and self-advocacy and was a regular visitor to my office where she sought advice about assignments and strategies for finding necessary support. At one point, she and I met with a colleague to work with her diagnosed dyslexic reading challenges. When she was dissatisfied with answers, she returned for clarification. She modeled the basics of Bandura's (1977) self-regulated learning characteristics: identifying personal need through self-observation, assessing the needs, and coming up with actions to meet the needs. Intentional two-way lines of communication become lifelines promoting rescue and safety.

Concluding Thoughts

Relationships within the classrooms revealed the presence of varying levels of collaboration between professors and students. In those instances when students and professors let down defenses, reached out to dialogue, or approached each other in humility, meaningful learning took place, whereas the opposite occurred when professors drew dialogic or physical lines of interaction that included or excluded students. In the same way, students who remained open to their professors and to their classmates seemed to benefit from the professors' instructional techniques, while those who remained aloof

communicated through passive aggressive interactions, vis-à-vis lagging attendance, reluctant verbal responses, or aloofness in body language such as feet on the desks and folded arms. These students fell behind.

Four DC participants, Hye Nan, Chloe Hawkins, Sony Kabila, and Tim Barger provide evidence that they not only understood the concept of mutually humble collaboration, but also they could give examples within their own experiences in the classes I observed. Their stories along with the MHC theory are the content of Chapter 5.

Chapter Five: Cases

Overview

This chapter includes follow-up interviews with four participants I identified as discrepant cases (DCs), because of their participation in MHC in the classes I observed. The lowering of defenses and pride within MHC encouraged grit, and fostered dialogical relationships with instructors. As previous chapters explain, each DC possessed some quality or qualities that put them under the stress of not thriving in their work, but because of their unique characteristics, they succeeded in winning their instructors' support and passing their classes.

In this chapter, I develop the concepts of mutually humble collaboration (MHC) and its connections with grit and the essential professor-student relationships necessary to develop lines of communication. I organize these connections by first identifying grit in

each DC, and then by examining the relationships of the DCs with their professors. Finally, I close each case with evidence of MHC as related in the final interviews.

The chapter concludes with summative remarks and suggestions for further inquiry. I assert that the mutually humble collaboration witnessed in this research fosters passion and perseverance, or grit, and is the source of motivational courage necessary to begin the movement toward students' literacy development via dialogic relationships between them and their professors.

Grit

Grit, as discussed in Chapter 4, is more than self-control or the resistance to giving in to failure (Duckworth, 2016; Duckworth & Gross 2014). Grit centers on the question of each teacher and student participant's experiences in the passionate struggle to thrive and the decisions and actions associated with that tenacity. Grit, often unrelated to the participant's perceived talent or to measured intelligence, brings mid-level talent and intelligence to success, often exceeding the success rates of other individuals deemed more intelligent or talented (Duckworth, 2016). A person's grittiness contributes to success, while a person's higher intelligence or greater talent may discourage perseverance and passion, in part due to a frailness from his/her never having had to struggle to succeed (Perkins-Gough, 2013; Duckworth, 2016). In several instances in the cases that follow, DCs experienced what seemed to be insurmountable failures that for a time caused them to despair. After a brief period of grieving or even panicking, each DC found the internal stamina and determination based upon passion and undying

perseverance to formulate a plan, to humble himself or herself, and to establish lines of communication. Grit is the deepest trait necessary for the journey from failure to success.

Professor – Student Relationships

As discussed in Chapter 4, MHC is dependent upon respectful lines of communication in academic relationships between professors and students. Both parties must understand, appreciate, and trust each other enough to let down their shielded emotions and concerns in order for communication to take place (Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002). Professor-student rapport indicates favorable student performance (Wilson, Ryan, & Pugh, 2010). Several students in this study related that they knew the professors who cared for them, and who did not. Two DCs related that one or the other, teacher or student, must initiate contact to build a bridge of understanding.

I assert that, because of the relational power in the discourse differentials between teachers and students (e.g., Big D vs. little d, Gee, 2000), the teacher most often must initiate the movement toward MHC. In a few instances that I report in these case studies, DCs revealed that they were the communicators who first lowered their personal defenses or pride to initiate relational communication. While the teacher's intentional act of self-humbling serves as a model (Bandura, 1977) offered to the learner in hopes of reciprocation, the learner's stepping forward invites the empathy of the instructor. The development of dialogue leads to mutual decisions to cooperate and collaborate. This relationship involves a mutual respect of the Other's knowledge, skills, and experience and promotes the building of both participants' learning. Individuals on either side of the MHC bridge have agency, or power to engage.

In MHC I see the power of Baxter Magolda's (2004) assertion that the development of "mutual construction of meaning," requires individuals to possess a sense of agency and respect that protects students' motivation to ask questions and to make assertions within the learning relationship. While Baxter Magolda's work focuses upon "self-authorship," MHC emphasizes the intentional collaborative work of self-humbling necessary for teachers and students to enter into effective pedagogical dialogue. The principles are the same; intentionality toward collaborative action is essential.

Mutually Humble Collaboration (MHC)

As presented in Chapter 4, Mutually Humble Collaboration (MHC) occurs when teachers and students agree to lower defenses and to humble themselves in order to learn collaboratively. This also became the key topic of the final four interviews. For the case studies that follow, I asked each student if she or he had seen evidence of MHC in the ENG131 classes they attended and if they had seen it practiced elsewhere. All DCs acknowledged that they could see how MHC worked in their own experience and related personal examples of MHC through personal observations of students and teachers working together. One DC, Tim Barger, explained how he could see MHC applied in his own coaching and teaching experience:

> While coaching the Youth Enrichment League, the thing I noticed a lot was that the kids who were there didn't have the same energy or the same passion for the game, and the thing I noticed immediately was that I couldn't have my pride up there. I wanted my pride to be up there. I wanted my pride to say, "This is who I am and I want you guys to be this good." Without the passion, I had to drop my

> level, and when I dropped my level of pride, they definitely started to listen to me better; they learned more; they were more into the game, and they were more caring about it, which spoke well to me. (TB, Interview, November 17, 2016)

As I have been developing the ideas within MHC, I have shared them with my education classes and professional colleagues. I have had opportunities to implement MHC with classes and friends in the past year. In a particularly heated conversation with a fellow professor in front of our students, I decided to defuse the tension by offering an apology in front of the class. The result was as I hoped, and we were able to continue our discussion on a friendly level afterwards, evidence that my friend had lowered his pride in response to my choice to humble myself. He decided to work together with me to solve the issue at hand. One of my students spoke with me after the episode, saying, "I saw MHC in effect just now." I had to smile and told her I was trying to live this theory out in my own life.

I believe that the principles within MHC are not particularly new or original. Most humans learn from early childhood that humility is a virtue and that arrogance is not. Sacred texts including the Muslim *Quran*, the Hebrew *Torah*, the Christian *Bible*, the Hindu *Bhagavadgita*, the Confucian *Analects*, and the Buddhist *Sutras*, to name a few, instruct humility as a means to wisdom and favor. Literature and drama from *Beowulf*, Sophocles' *Oedipus* trilogy, Aesop's fables, and Miller's *Death of a Salesman* demonstrate the folly of hubris. The concept of humility as a virtue transcends Eastern and Western philosophies and cultures, as does the essential stance that each individual has the agency to enact the stance of humility. Humility is a choice that, when activated,

opens opportunities for change. In the same way that wars end or are prevented through steps of humility, so can learning environments and relationships improve through intentional humility enacted by learners and instructors.

We must remember that vast difference exists between the agentic choice to become humble and the shame of being humiliated. The first demonstrates the power of the individual. The second demonstrates powerlessness. MHC is about the first and nothing about the second. Learners and teachers must have the ability to choose to act within the bounds of humility, or the model will not work.

How does MHC occur within the classroom? The instructor desiring to teach from a mutually humble collaborative stance presents the concept visually and verbally in the first meetings of the semester so that all parties involved in the grand experiment have the opportunity to learn the concept (which is really quite simple) and then encourage students to choose to participate. Incumbent on the instructor is the demonstration of initial humility to serve as an invitation to the students.

MHC operating in the classroom looks like this: the teacher genuinely respects the value of every student in the room, and her students respect her. When she is right about content or other pedagogical stances, she does not gloat or hold that superior knowledge over her students. Likewise, when students present ideas or bring contradictory ideas to the discussion, respect for all members allows for a meeting of minds, similar to the sides of the drawbridge leveling to meet each other in order for the commerce of ideas and opinions to exchange. Always the adjusting to improve understanding continues. Policies in the classroom are respectful of students and teachers. Zero tolerance policies most

likely do not exist, as policy inconsiderate of individual needs is dehumanizing (Cook, 2006).

Does MHC require a great deal more work than more traditional top-down, "banking" models that Freire (2009) describes? At first, perhaps, as both sides, teachers and students, learn to humble themselves. Order arises from respect and a common agenda toward which participants work together. The teacher is responsible for leading in the education and safety of students and held by law (*in loco parentis*) to that standard. Students are responsible to obey commands for their own safety. Also, qualities of grit such as self-control, self-denial, passion and sustained effort exhibited by learners and teachers indicate a likelihood of success in the academic course (Duckworth & Gross, 2014). When students develop momentum, their potential for future success increases. In addition, their motivation to succeed in coming classes and life events should develop. MHC is transferable beyond academic studies. As teachers purposefully adjust their teaching approaches to meet students' needs, their teaching becomes easier over time. I quote my father, a wise man, who used to say, "Rain breeds rain." Even so, success leads to success.

Purpose of the Cases

In order to discuss the concept of mutually humble collaboration (MHC) with the DCs, I sent an invitation for half hour follow up interviews. In the invitation emails, I included a brief description of the MHC concept for them to consider prior to our meeting and invited them to bring their insightful responses to a newly developing theory. The semi-scripted conversations took place in my office, and a couple discussions

went beyond the 30 minutes designated. Each of the four students interviewed suggested that they could see how the model works in their own academic lives and could identify specific points in different classes when they and their instructors were involved in mutually humble collaboration.

***Selection of the Participants*.** The four participants whom I interviewed regarding MHC are featured in Chapter 3, Figure 1, and are named (with pseudonyms) beyond the letter/number designation of their peer participants. I selected the final interviewees for their grit, their energetic commitment to surviving and thriving in difficult academic situations, and their apparent willingness to humble themselves in order to communicate successfully and build functional relationships with their professors and peers.

While at times appearing to have less ability, or background knowledge, or even fewer necessary skills than classmates who earned higher marks, they found effective ways to accommodate and master their circumstances. Similar peers whom I interviewed either did not demonstrate the same perseverance and passion or they left school after the fall semester. Each of the four DCs made multiple contacts with their professors to clarify requirements or to seek instructional assistance. Each one maintained positive attitudes in challenging situations, chose to persevere, and finished the composition courses I observed with acceptable marks.

Using a semi-scripted interview format, I asked each of the four participants to discuss MHC with me. The first prompt asked whether participants had seen mutually humble collaboration, "a two-sided learning construct that explores the relationship between the learner and the teacher," in evidence in the classes they had taken. A follow-

up question targeted the ENG131 composition class each one had taken to see if they could relate specific examples of MHC in those classes involving other students or themselves with their literacy instructors. I closed each interview by asking them for any further insights they might have regarding MHC.

Hye Nan

A teacher education major born in South Korea and raised in Ecuador, Hye Nan attended an international school in Quito before coming to Cadler College in the Midwestern United States. English is her third language, and in early courses, she requested accommodations during video clips to include Spanish subtitles so that she could track with the English dialogue. At times, she found herself struggling to understand her instructors clearly due to their spoken delivery of concepts or their use of satire. In the first interview, she suggested that all professors on campus needed to be aware that students speaking English as a second language do not process witticisms and sarcasm rapidly and that in the time required in deciphering double entendre, they lose important content information.

Grit. Hye Nan struggled in her English classes and failed her first attempt at ENG131 College Composition with Dr. Whitman. Due to scheduling conflicts, she was forced to take his section of the course a second time. She demonstrated grit in accepting her losses and in deciding to persevere through the course with a professor she was convinced did not care for her. Her words reveal not only the mental adjusting she had to do to situate herself to find success, but they also reveal a little of the Christian ethos through which she processed her decision to re-take the course with Whitman:

HN: I just feel like God gave us, uh, God gives us…like, He gave us a second chance…. And, yes, when I did not, like, pass that class, I felt like, resentment towards him, and also, I think that he does not like me as a person. I have always struggled, because, like a lot of people look at my past, and they're like, "O', you're really dumb, and like, they have just been negative and have just seen that when I came to college, like, I got a D in one of my classes. I felt I wasn't worth it, but then this semester, I felt, that when I met him, I was like, "Okay, even though I felt like me and him can't get along, I'm going to try. I prayed a lot that God would give me peace about it, and that He would give me wisdom to talk with him (Dr. Whitman) about it, because he just is a great man, to be honest. Now that I went with him through a whole semester, I just realized that he really cares for the whole students [SIC]. He might not express his feelings or like the way he thinks the same way a lot of teachers, but he still shows and proves that. He constantly is telling us that whatever we do in the class, so that we would be successful people, and he like, really cares about us. And he's not here just because he wants the money, but because he really cares about his students. (HN, Interview, 1-21-2016)

Whether the professor cared as much as Hye suggests or not, her decision to persevere speaks to her determination to make the best out of difficulties. I assert that Dr. Whitman saw Hye's increased efforts and change in behavior in his class and therefore extended extra assistance in order to give her the scaffolding she needed. Teachers notice students who work hard and are serious in their work, and most of the time, they are

willing to expend more personal time with those students who reciprocate care and effort. Additionally, she decided to act on her need for extra instruction and related what steps she took to give herself an academic advantage in the second time through the course:

> D: So how did you engage yourself, since this is a course you had already taken, how did you make yourself stay on track, listen, that sort of thing?
>
> HN: Well, I actually sat up front, which was nice, because if I had sat in the back, I would have been distracted. I always went up to him after class when I had a question to clarify what the requirements were. I constantly did that because that shows him that I really do care, rather than going at the end of the semester and being like, "Oh! I have a D and how do I get it up to a B?"
>
> D: Yeah! So, early and often, and not wait until the end. Yeah.
>
> HN: So every, like, second draft, I would go up to him and, like, "Is there anything else you want me to change, because he can't tell me everything, but when I go, like, on the one-on-one with him, he would be like, "Oh, this…I would like you to change this, because it would make more sense. He did that for almost all my drafts for essays"
>
> D: So he actually spent a lot of one-on-one time with you?
>
> J: Yes. And he was really good at that because he would like…we wouldn't have class for that day, but he would like…we would have slots for that day for one-on-one instead of our class, and he gave us feedback on what we need to improve. (HN, Interview, 1-21-2016)

Hye adjusted her behavior in class by forcing herself to sit near the front so she could hear and see well. She made a point to clarify class expectations, and increased the number of times she conferenced with Whitman to demonstrate her increased effort.

***Professor – Student Relationships*.** Hye describes a shifting of pride between her first and second attempts to complete the course with Dr. Whitman that changed the dynamics of their relationship. She takes ownership in her first failure and decides to make a different effort the second time through the course. Her strategy worked.

> HN: We both showed that we were humble, and I guess that having that, like, being humble, showed us, and it showed me, that I can make progress as a student here. He was able to humble himself down and go, "Okay, I am going to help you." Maybe he didn't have the time, but he took the time to help me become a better writer. (Interview HN, 11-21-2016)

Throughout our interviews, Hye expressed an appreciation of her professors including Dr. Whitman and her education department instructors. Having had to struggle through her K-12 experience, and then again in college, she was able to empathize with students and teachers.

Taking the composition course for the second time, Hye stated that knowing the professor's expectations

> D: Good. Okay. Five! If you were to identify characteristics that make your experience different from other students' experience in this class, what would they be? So, how was your experience different from what you think other students' experience was in that class?

HN: Umm. I feel like I had, like, an advantage in a way because I had, I knew Dr. Whitman before anybody else did in that class, and just knowing how he likes papers written and how he grades was a big experience for me, and then, um, also being an ESL student was a little hard, 'cause most of my friends there were native speakers and sometimes I would compare my papers with somebody else because we had to peer review them…. (HN, Interview, 1-21-2016)

Though she was afraid to take the course a second time with Whitman, Hye felt she had an advantage because she knew his expectations when she first entered the class, unlike her peers. As the semester progressed, she conferenced several times with him to ask for advice concerning her writing, and she began to see improvement:

HN: Not really. I think I really appreciate Dr. Whitman, because he has been like, a big part. He was always willing to help. He would even tell me that he would be willing to come at 8:00 in the morning to talk about my paper. [Italics my emphasis]

D: Okay. writing. Did you ever meet him at 8:00?

HN: I think I would say, like, once or twice?

(HN, Interview, January 21, 2016)

Hye made the effort to ask Dr. Whitman for extra tutoring, and he responded by coming to campus in off hours to work with her. The lines of communication were extended in both directions. In this case, Hye stepped forward and he reciprocated by being "always willing to help." As an adjunct not required to host office hours, Whitman's willingness to meet speaks to the power of dialogue that indicates care.

When she experienced defeat, she may have suffered for a while, but then she contacted classmates and professors she perceived as caring to ask for help. I personally received her call for help in regard to a misunderstanding with a professor in another class. Together we managed to come up with a plan that enabled her to communicate successfully with the art instructor.

> HN: *Then I talked to him about some of my previous experiences and that sometimes I can't accept feedback like that, because I don't take it as a benefit for me just because I have gone through so much in life that are like negative comments for me that it destroys me in a minute. That's why I cried that day, because I was like, "The way you said your feedback, was like, "I suck at life," and I was like, "I don't (suck), because I have gone through this program, and I'm doing good. For you to just tell me this, and expect me to be a perfectionist with my drawings…. I just can't; art is not my major."* [Italics my emphasis] I sort of told him that I really don't have twelve hours to just spend on this drawing. My priority is my education and my career. I am not here to become an artist; I am here to become an educator. (HN, Interview, November 21, 2016)

Perseverance and tenacity are integral components of grit that Hye models. She stated that she had experienced many negative comments in her life growing up, and yet here she was struggling to survive an art class in college. After crying and despairing on the telephone with me, one of her education professors, she settled down and resolved to go speak with the professor. Her grit helped her to face her defeat and fears, and she met with the professor to resolve the crisis she perceived. She finished the course

successfully, and she initiated the process of mutually humble collaboration, our next theme.

***Mutually Humble Collaboration*.** Hye's teacher education department hosts professors and classmates dedicated to encouraging learners. The ethos of protecting and scaffolding that features powerfully in her story embodies a kind of collective MHC. Within the teacher education department, Hye developed friendships with loyal education majors who worked beside her to develop her fluency and agency within the school. She put aside pride, accepted her cohort's fellowship, sought assistance as needed, and thrived. From her entry as a freshman learning English and coming from two very different home cultures (South Korean and Ecuadorian), she rose to become a valuable and esteemed leader in her senior class. She described the development of her agentic self in this way:

> I have experienced this (MHC) in English 131. I guess in my senior year, I felt it the most where Dr. Whitman would, even though I had him for the second time, he would always encourage me to come and see him if I needed help. My freshman year, I was too scared to go see him, and I never went to see him, because I was too scared, and that's probably why I got the grade I did then. My senior year, I'm just like, "I'm going to go to him and maybe he will be able to help me, because I felt like educators like to see that you have interest in their class. So, the way I showed interest in his class was asking for help during our first or second draft that we had to do, and just be like, "How can I make this better?" (HN, Interview, 11-21-2016)

In this instance, Hye took the offer from her professor and received the help she needed. She states that she believed that "educators like to see that you have interest in their class," and that her understanding led to a successful process of communication with him. Her perception and belief led her to act in a way that produced desired effects. When I asked her how she would define humbling herself, Hye's reply was enlightening:

> HN: We both showed that we were both humble, and I guess that having that, like, being humble, showed us, and it showed me, that I can make progress as a student there. He was able to humble himself down, and go, "Okay, like I am going to help you." Maybe he didn't have the time, but he took the time to help me become a better writer.
>
> D: So, I want to dig in a little bit to the humble concept. By humble, can you explain what you mean, or what you think it means?
>
> HN: To me, humble means, for example, with Dr. Whitman…he has a PhD, and I am just a college student. I'm not quite "up there" yet, and he has a higher position, but he brought himself down. He wasn't prideful, or he wasn't like, "I'm better than you because I have a PhD," but he was like, "I'm here to teach you; I'm here to help you become a better writer." To me, he humbled himself in that way. He was showing me that he cared for me as an individual."
>
> (HN, Interview, 11-26-2016)

Hye's experience in facing her fears in re-taking the ENG131 class enabled her in a difficult experience in another class when she took strong criticism from a professor who was disappointed with work that she had turned in. She suffered a major setback for

a short time, but friends encouraged her to continue, with positive results. In our final interview, she related:

> HN: Yes. I experienced this [resilience] with my art class, just because I had a rough week with him [the professor]. It was just, like, the harsh feedback he gave back to me. I wasn't used to harsh feedback, because my education teachers are not like that. You guys know how to work things differently, and at the same time encourage us, and it might be, like, negative feedback, but you guys put it into [statements] like, "This is an area where you can grow," or like, "You're not there yet," so you have the growth mindset. So, with him, I had that feedback from him, and I was like, "Oh, that was super harsh!" And I just had a bad experience with that and I really don't want to go there anymore, and I don't… But to me, it's good to see that he humbled himself and he apologized, too, and ….
>
> D: "Really!?"
>
> HN: Yes. He sent me an email after and he said, "I'm really sorry for the way I said things, and I was really harsh with you, and the way I said things were just not right." But since I was really upset when that email came, I waited for the whole weekend to go by, so that I would cool off, because I hate sending "bomb" emails. I have learned that you cannot send an email if it's longer than four sentences or a paragraph, because you never know what a person's tone of voice, so I decided I'm not going to do this, because if I fire this off while I'm still upset…"
>
> D: So you humbled yourself?

HN: Yup. And I was like, “I really want to talk to you on Thursday before class. Like, give me one hour before class. So he said yes. We had a talk and he emphasized that the way he gave me feedback was because he wants me to experience real life, and I was like, ”I understand that.” Then I talked to him about some of my previous experiences and that sometimes I can’t accept feedback like that, because I don’t take it as a benefit for me just because I have gone through so much in life that are like negative comments for me that it destroys me in a minute. That’s why I cried that day, because I was like, “The way you said your feedback, was like, “I suck at life,” and I was like, “I don’t (suck), because I have gone through this program, and I’m doing good. For you to just tell me this, and expect me to be a perfectionist with my drawing -- I just can’t; art is not my major.” I sort of told him that I really don’t have twelve hours to just spend on this drawing. My priority is my education and my career. I am not here to become an artist; I am here to become an educator.

D: And how did he respond to that?

HN: He was really accepting, and he was like, “Ya, my comments were harsh.” Then he was like, “I want to build a positive environment for you.” [Italics my emphasis] (HN, Interview, 11-21-2016)

MHC is clearly present in this dialogue. Hye Nan experienced temporary despair concerning passing the course based on initial actions from the professor, but through dialogue, he was able to dispel her fears. He demonstrated his care through acknowledging errors he had made, and she was able to give herself time to think and to

prepare a respectful approach to her teacher. The two of them worked through their communication issue and walked away from the course with mutual respect. Hye passed the course with acceptable marks, and with further experience in facing challenges and thriving through discouraging events in her education, which she will pass on to her own students as she goes into the teaching profession. Her decision to persevere gave her valuable insight into student - teacher relationships. Her admirable self-control and ability to wait and respond wisely demonstrates the maturity developing within her.

Hye's education practicum assignment provided excellent opportunities for her to experience the "teacher" side of MHC when she encountered a student who was struggling with mathematics, an area that Hye herself describes as a weakness. Hye's story is enlightening:

> I feel like as educators, it's important that we like, swallow our pride, or swallow whatever we have to be humble with our students, and not only with our students, but people outside, just because if you show a person that you are humble, they are more reciprocal in accepting whatever you tell them.
>
> I know I had one of my students, and this individual really struggled with math. Some of my teachers were telling me I couldn't tell students I struggle with this.
>
> I'm like, "At this practicum I'm going to tell the student that I struggle with math. I'm just going to be honest with them. I told her, and she was like, "Oh, I just struggle with math. I'm so stupid." Then, I said, "Hey, you know what? I'm actually in college right now, and I experience everything you

experience right now: I thought I was dumb, and I thought I couldn't do it, but I have noticed that I have to have a growth mindset. I can do this; I'm just not there yet. The key word that I told her was "You're not there yet, not yet." Then I said, "I'm going to get you through this. We are going to understand this, but just being humble about it, and saying, 'Hey! I struggle and it's fine.' We all struggle. Like, if you struggle with math, it is fine, because you are going to get there eventually. You just need to put more. I do not know if it is effort. You need to put more effort and have a positive attitude to something.

Because, I did not have a positive attitude towards math, but now that I'm a pre-service teacher, I'm like, "No! I'm just going to encourage my students to do that." Allowing your students to know that you are not perfect, and that you make mistakes, and that we sometimes we feel like we fail at life, but we are not actually failing. We are just learning our lesson.

Sometimes it might be the hard way, and sometimes it might be the easiest way. In the end, you will learn. I told her, "I believe in you," and I guess the student was struggling in asking my co-op questions, or me because she was like, "Nobody asks them, so why should I?"

I saw her when she stayed in for recess one day, and I just let her struggle on her own, and then I saw that she wasn't getting anywhere, so I went up to her, and I was like, "Hey, I want you to know that if you need something, or your assignment. You need to complete this. I want you to know that we, (me and my

coop) are here to help you, and to understand different things about your education and your life, or whatever."

It was interesting to see that as soon as I turned around, she raised her hand and said, "I need help." And I told her that was fine! "It's okay you need help." I constantly had to ask my co-op for something. I would say, "Am I doing this right?" I said [to myself], "It's okay to ask for help." (HN, Interview, November 21, 2016)

Hye's ability to humble herself and ask for help seems to be infectious. In her practicum experience, she was able to encourage a student to reach out to receive help. She performed so well within her practicum work that her cooperating teacher requested that she be able to complete her student teaching requirement in her room. Hye Nan exemplified the characteristics of grit, MHC, and the establishment of teacher – student relationships that lead students to success.

Chloe Hawkins

Before she entered college work, Chloe and her mother were told by K-12 educators that, due to her learning disabilities, she was not college capable. Having lost her father to an early death, she and her mother worked together to see that she not only learned to read and write but also entered into college. Battling an IEP designation of dyslexia, she developed strategies to surpass challenges that similar peers might not have done. She learned to self-advocate, to persevere, and to maintain a humble, friendly, and cheerful demeanor that won her instructors and peers' friendship, respect, and admiration. Not an A student, she managed to do C and B work in high school and matriculated into

college against the predictions of educational professionals who discouraged her from trying.

Grit. Chloe's learning battles started in grade school, and in spite of naysayers who offered discouraging predictions about her lack of ability to succeed in college, she is a second semester sophomore intending to graduate with a degree in communication in 2019. The final interview during the Fall 2016 semester revealed that she continued to struggle with courses such as mathematics and writing, and that she continued to find ways to succeed. In her own words:

> CH: Well, I mean, for me, I've always struggled with school, so if I'm struggling, I'm going to let you know I'm struggling. I kind of just check my ego at the door when it comes to school.
>
> D: So, it is the purposeful saying, "I'm not going to be proud in this."
>
> CH: Yeah. I'm not going to be, "I'm so much better than you, but, like, if I'm struggling I'm going to put my barrier down and see if you'll help me. Some of my professors are like, "Okay, whatever. You do it, or you figure it out, but other professors are like, "Hey, Chloe, let me help you."
>
> D: I like that. So you're saying in some ways, by taking the risk of approaching, you're testing to see if the teacher will --
>
> CH: -- will help me. Yeah.
>
> D: -- will help. What happens if the teacher says no, or won't do it?
>
> CH: Well, then I'll go to someone else that will help me, or I'll be, like, "Hey, this professor isn't helping me," like, "Can you help me?" I don't know if this is going

> to be a good example, but for registration, none of my advisors were helpful, so I want to graduate, not next year, but the following year, and I want to know what to take. I met with my advisor, and he wasn't any help, so I was like, "Well, P---[Study Lab Director] can you help me?" And she helped me. She spent an hour with me; we walked through it, and got it done. So, like, for me, when I'm trying to get something done, if the person I want to help me isn't helping, then I am fine getting someone else that will help me. (CH, Interview, November18, 2016)

Chloe has learned to work around obstacles, has become a bricoleur of sorts, piecing together the helps she needs to accomplish her goals. She is resourceful and steadily moving forward toward her goal of graduating. She passionately persists (Duckworth, 2016).

Unique to Chloe's personality is an expression of her concern that she is paying for her education. As a consumer, and knowing she will have bills to pay, she articulates:

> Yeah. I'm not like, well, if people are like, in high school people were like, "Well, I don't…like it doesn't matter, I'm going there for free, so it doesn't matter," but like, I'm paying for my college, and I'm going to try to do as best I can. So, if that means I have to take my pride, and shove it down for me to get an A in a class, then that's what I'm going to have to do. (Interview, CH, 11-18-2016)

Chloe's pragmatic sense of grit drove her to persist and to conquer the obstacles in her way. Her disabilities could have been excuses for her to fail or settle for less than her dreams, but her gritty outlook helped her to step into mutually humble collaboration with educators who saw her potential.

Professor – Student Relationships. Chloe knew the professors and the tutors in the college study lab really well. She readily explained,

I go to the Study Lab where I get help. That -- without that, I don't have -- like I wouldn't have -- I mean, I have a bad grade, but I wouldn't know as much, or I wouldn't feel as confident if she wasn't [SIC] there. Same with Dr. L----. If she wasn't there, it [math] would be hard (CH, Interview, November18, 2016).

In one setback Chloe experienced, she was accused of cheating by her math professor, and she sensed "the bridge" going back up between her professor and herself. Chloe's first reaction was to avoid the professor, but then she thought about it:

> CH: Yeah, and "I don't want anything to do with you, so I'm not going to talk with you," but then I was like, "Well, Chloe, she's there to help you, so like, you need to, like, check your ego at the door, and get your grades up, so …"
>
> D: So how did you do that?
>
> [Chloe raised and lowered her hands to indicate the bridge model I had shared with the interviewees.]
>
> CH: So… I guess there was like, a mediator, if that makes sense? Like, the study lab director was like, "Hi, Chloe, you need to build her trust back up. Meet with her one on one, and let her know, "I promise you that I did not cheat. I promise you that I did not cheat. If you thought that, then that's what you think, but I swear to you that I didn't." And so I just talked to her about it, and she was just…. It probably took a month or three weeks to slowly bring it (the MHC drawbridge) down, and now it's fine. I trust her, and she helps me, and like I said, I feel like, to

> get a good grade in a class, or to show a professor that you care, you need to go and show them that you care. Like, students get an F or Ds and they don't care. "They're like, 'It's their (professors') fault,' and they don't care. It might not be a professor's fault, and actually it's your fault because you're not humble and not taking the initiative to meet with your professors. (Interview, CH, 11-18-2016)

Chloe experienced another setback during the fall 2016 semester that allowed her to choose to humble herself as a means of working through a difficult situation with another professor. Faced with the dilemma either to leave school or to work with the professor, Chloe chose to dialogue with the professor. In this second instance, the professor decided to take the first step towards Chloe to find out what had happened. She maintained that she unintentionally included information from a source without correctly citing it, resulting in a penalty for plagiarism. The professor called her into his office, and she at first was highly offended.

> CH: Like you said about past fear or hurt or, like, stubbornness, you know? I feel like if you, like, if a professor accuses you of something, or that isn't true, and you're like, "Hey, that's really not true. Like, "That's hurtful!" I feel I can give you examples this semester that… like, Prof. M---- accused me of plagiarism, so that hurt a lot, and so, we're still pretty rocky. (CH, Interview, 11-18-2016)

Chloe, hurt and unsure of what to do, defaulted to her past resilience or grit. Then, she humbled herself, went to talk with the professor, and accepted the consequences he offered:

> I have forced myself to have that bridge come down, but I don't want that bridge there. Like, I don't want to do that because that's not me, and for him to say that really hurt my ego, and, like, I'm not one to say that he has really affected me that much this semester, but he has (CH, Interview, November 18, 2016).

In the conversation she had with him, Chloe told the professor that she was not a plagiarist and that she struggled with how to enter citations. As a means of compromise and taking advantage of a teachable moment, her professor offered a middle way by allowing her to revise the paper. Additionally, he required her to attend weekly sessions in the college study lab with an assigned tutor. Chloe explained that she met the requirements, but though she intentionally humbled herself and took the disciplinary requirements, she felt there was no longer a "real" relationship between herself and the professor.

During our conversation, she explained that she planned to return to visit with the professor after the course was finished in order to discuss the way in which he had approached her and how it had affected her sense of ego. Ironically, Chloe's experience reveals a fragile line between her being humiliated by another and her having the agency to choose to humble herself. This episode also shows the tension between grit and MHC in the agency each actor in the relationship had to extend lines of communication or to close them. Chloe did initiate lines of communication with her professors, just as Hye Nan did. Her sense of agentic power is unusual and refreshing to me, as I have not seen students self-advocate very often in 34 years of teaching.

Comparing Chloe's experiences with the two professors reveals strong differences in the ways she perceived her professors' intentions and levels of care and concern for her success. She explained that it took a while for the bridge to level again between herself and her math professor, but that their relationship eventually returned to a healthy status. She explained that she would not have been able to survive math without her professor's help. In the situation with the other professor, she explained that she humbled herself in order to pass the course, but that she felt there was no remaining relationship with the professor who accused her of plagiarizing. In that case, her humbling was an example of Chloe's pragmatic desire not to lose the credits or time in school. She did what she was required to do but did not plan to take further courses from him. Even though she believed he cared for her wellbeing, she felt that he had ignored her personal feelings when he worked with her. "…after that, like, I don't want anything to do with him because, like, he's affected me, and hurt my ego when it was fine before" (Interview, CH, 11-18-2016). The way in which Chloe perceived the second professor's dealing with her was cause for damaged pride and gave her reason to raise her defenses in self-protection. The pragmatics of students' decisions to do what is necessary to pass courses may have implications for students' content retention and future use of course content and objectives, but those are questions for further research.

***Mutually Humble Collaboration*.** Chloe's life experience and her gritty perspective of learning helped her to lower her side of the MHC drawbridge to ask for help or to make contact with resources she needed to succeed. "I've always struggled with school, so if I'm struggling, I'm going to let you know I'm struggling. I kind of just

check my ego at the door when it comes to school" (Interview, CH, 11-18-2016). She explained that she often approached her professors to see if they would offer help or if she needed to ask specifically for assistance. She indicated that her approaches were actually tests to determine which professors would be helpful and which would not, in order to prepare her learning strategies.

Chloe related that working with a peer in reading and revising their work together was a challenge as she struggled with composition, due in a large part to dyslexia, and to the fact that having someone else read her work is embarrassing. She decided to trust a classmate, M--- R----, and the two worked through class as partners.

> CH: Well, anytime that you, like, I guess, meet a new person for the first time. Like, in that class you don't know anybody, and by the end, you at least know one person. I had M--- R--- read some of my papers. That was like a collaboration.
>
> D: Takes some courage to have someone else read your work….
>
> CH: Yeah, and like to have a student read your own work is kind of scary, because they're your peer, and like, if you're a bad writer, or not a very good writer, like I am, it's just kind of hard to have that person know, that, like, "Hey! This person isn't very good at writing!" You know? (Interview, CH, 11-18-2016)

Chloe's story tells us that the willingness to take action, to self-advocate, to be creative in problem-solving, and to expose one's weaknesses in order to succeed is part grit, part relationship, and part willingness to humble oneself in order to establish bridges of mutually humble collaboration with her teachers.

Sony Kabila

Born in Congo, Africa, Sony came to the United States to finish his high school requirements prior to moving to college on the frigid northern plains of North Dakota. Transferring to Cadler College to study business, Sony showed his ability to adapt to new environments and to respond to challenging circumstances with grit. Sony's first language wass French, and he learned English "on the fly" in the U.S. He maintained an open, friendly, and disciplined life in college, and surprised me, his college composition professor, by becoming a strong friend to the only "redneck" (Sony's description) student in the class. The two would laugh about various hunting and fishing adventures and seemed to work well as composition partners. Sony's abilities to adapt and to mediate relationships lend themselves well to the MHC model, and he quickly understood and helped me to develop concepts within the theory.

Grit. As we discussed his younger years in Congo, Sony explained that schooling there is very different from the United States' educational systems. He related how he experienced corporal punishment from teachers several times, including whippings and kneeling on gravel or hard salt as punishments for disrespect. He explained that dialogue is not really a part of the Congolese educational philosophy and that students are to remain silent while teachers speak and to speak only when called upon. He said that his family was different, that his father never laid a punishing hand on his children. From Sony's perspective, these experiences had made him the man that he had become. He said he would raise his own children the way his father had raised him. "I want them to learn, like, the hard way. I don't want to put my hand on them any day, but I just want what's best" (SK, Interview, December 13, 2016).

Sony related success to hard work, an essential quality of grit:

> SK: Like, the first time I walked into English 131, I was just a scared freshman, like every other freshman, you know? I walked in, and was like, "The teacher might be tough, and I might not pass this course, because I had the fear that English was not my first language. I was really scared about that. So, I came in, and I got to meet you, and I was like, "Oh, he's actually nice after all," I was saying that to my friend R--- in the back of the class. [laughing] Then I got to work super hard and gave it my all, and I did whatever I had to do to get a good grade in the class. Then I did get a good grade, and I was like, I don't think it's that hard at all. I think it's not the course that's hard, or the teacher that's making it hard. It's just you that's making it hard. You have to, like--
>
> D: You the student, you mean?
>
> SK: Yeah. We make too many excuses, to be honest, us students. We make a lot of excuses. I think we just don't try hard enough. (SK, Interview, 12-13-2017)

Sony placed emphasis on his hard work, and attributed it to his success. Likewise, he saw the lack of grit to contribute to his classmate's failure:

> SK: I know I had a buddy named C--- B----. He was in the same class as us…um, I asked him if he was gonna drop it by, like, midterm, cause, I don't think he was getting a good grade in the class. So, I asked him, and he was like, "Man, that class is too hard." I was like, "I think if you go get some help from the teacher, not a student, because if you give yourself -- if you try to pay attention in class, and *you try to work hard enough, you can do it, because if I can do it, you can do*

it." [Italics my emphasis] I've been here how many years? Like, three years. This is only my third year, and I speak English. You do it better than me. You've been doing it since birth, and I haven't, you know? (SK, Interview, 12-13-2016)

Sony related that he had experienced much harder times in his home country, yet still he seemed thankful for the hardships:

> Because, we are already scared by the fact that you are a teacher. That's what scares us, because we have known teachers, and they have been tough on us. We are just scared about that, but what I tell my friends here is that the first time I was in North Dakota, one of my friends was like, "Okay, how was the Congo?" And I was like, "It was good." Then one day we were watching a video of the Congo and a kid was getting beat with a stick, and, um, he [my friend] was like, "Man! That's horrible! I would have sued my parents, or my teacher if he did that to me." I'm like, "Actually, I grew up that way." He's like, "Are you serious?" I'm like, "I'm serious. I did grow up that way, because if I didn't grow up that way, it wouldn't have made me the man that I am today. I would be totally different. (SK, Interview, 12-13-2016)

In reflection, Sony viewed the beatings he received in a school in Congo as "what made me the man I am today," a sign of his resilience and the development of grittiness that helped him to start life again in the United States, learn English, and enter an American college to earn a business degree. Passion and perseverance are evident in Sony's approach to his life at Cadler College. In addition to the challenges of studying while learning English, he stated that he has had to deal with racism. He visited a cousin

in a Southern state and learned that racism was a problem there, "and I got to college, and I've seen people that are like that," he said, though he hadn't been personally victimized.

> You will just hear stories that are…you will hear stories that people are like this, that people are like that…don't like people of different color and you'll be like, 'Oh. Well, too bad, I'm already here.' [laughing] Well, I can't change anything about that! (SK, Interview, December 13, 2017).

Certainly, Sony's sense of humor is a part of his resilience and grit. He remained unruffled among many challenges.

Professor – Student Relationships. Sony's parents sent him to the United States for higher education, first to a school in eastern North Dakota, where he was the only black student in his class, and where he worked on developing fluency in English.

> The first time I landed, I was the only black person in my school. Yeah, I would say I was the only black person, because there were two kids that were mixed. Then, you know, like, people can really feel your presence around. The first interaction I had, like, people just stopped. It's like traffic just stopped, and people looked at me, and were like, "Oh! We got a new kid in school!" (Interview, SK, 12-13-2016)

Sony's experience in Fargo was that people were curious about his past and his culture, but that they were accepting of his presence. He stated that he had a similar experience at Cadler College, but that he had heard rumors of racist comments.

Sony's easy-going exterior and sense of humor allowed him to brush implications of racism aside, and to make friends easily. These friendships were a deep indicator of his

resilience or grit. He had a strong French accent, making his spoken English difficult to understand at times, but he patiently re-explained for listeners who needed repeating. His intention was to do well in school, and he was determined to persist in a state of equanimity that won him favor.

He was respectful and hardworking yet seemed to know when to stop to spend time with a variety of friends on campus, including a couple of students who enjoyed four wheel drive trucks and hunting waterfowl. When I told him I was surprised that he had struck up a friendship with one of these young men, he laughed.

> SK: He is very red-neck and I know one thing. R--- doesn't always "like" people who are different color a whole lot, but one thing he told me…. We were just sitting one day in his car, talking, and he's like, "You know, it's just different, the way you are." And I'm like, "What do you mean?" and he's just like, "You just carry yourself differently that most black people I've met." And I'm like, "Ricky, I don't know what to say about that." He was like, "It's like, I like you, but the other ones [blacks?], it's questionable." (Interview, SK, 12-13-2016)

Sony's personality and his determination to thrive drove him to make unlikely friends, to win the favor of instructors, and to persist in his work, even to the point of re-taking courses in which he failed to make suitable marks. He survived and thrived because he did not give up.

I asked him if he had seen evidence of MHC in his classes at Cadler. His response was encouraging:

SK: Um, to be honest, yes, I've experienced it coming from the teacher and coming from the students, too. Sometimes it happens that the student thinks too highly of himself, that he doesn't want to humble himself and be at the same level as the teacher, because I know a lot of teachers here are humble. Even in English 131, in order for us to understand, is that the teacher has to create the kind of bonding with the students for him to understand the same way the teacher is trying to explain some things. You know, of the lesson. I have experienced it a lot, and it's been great so far, like, in helping, like shaping my learning at Crown. (SK, 12-13-2016)

I asked for other examples, and he responded with an observation from a sociology class, and then moved back to the composition class:

SK: Umm, it happened in sociology class, my first semester, my freshman year. It happened. I've seen it in English 131. We'd have a lesson, and then there'd be a subject that would just pop up out of the lesson, you know, and you attacked that subject like if we were at the same level of thinking because you wanted that mutual collaboration, that special bond where we all understand each other, because we all need to meet at a point. If we don't meet at that point, it's impossible to understand that. [Italics my emphasis] You know, it's between, "The teacher is higher," or when the teacher is higher, the students don't understand, but when the student is higher, it's the same thing, because it just gets complicated from there on between the teacher and the student. (SK, 12-13-2016)

As a student, Sony stated that MHC was visibly evident to him. Though I had not communicated the MHC concept to his sociology professor, he recognized the principles being carried out in the class in a previous semester. Sony had even considered the implications of intentionally living out MHC as a student:

> SK: There's been a lot of misunderstanding, I think. I think it's really easy, to adjust, you know? It's really easy to adjust to this culture and what's happening, you know?
>
> […]
>
> SK: Yeah. We make too many excuses, to be honest, us students. We make a lot of excuses. I think we just don't try hard enough. If you really want to try, if you don't understand the lesson, the teacher is always there willing to help you, because he doesn't approach you as if he's your superior. He approaches you as your friend, as a person you can get resources from. He approaches you as a mentor, you know? Just like Jesus approached people as a friend. Sometimes they would call Him Master, and he was like, "Why do you call me Master? I'm just your friend." (SK, Interview, December 13, 2017)

Sony was speaking from a Cadler ethos that human beings were made in the image of the Creator (Imago Dei), and therefore equal in value or nature. His perspective encourages MHC to occur.

***Mutually Humble Collaboration*.** Sony recognized MHC in several classes, including ENG131. He explained that sometimes students think too highly of themselves and don't want to humble themselves to be at the same level of the teacher, and that

MHC was up to both students and teachers. He compared his home culture to the American culture by saying,

> *If you really want to try, if you don't understand the lesson, the teacher is always there willing to help you, because he doesn't approach you as if he's your superior. He approaches you as your friend, as a person you can get resources from. He approaches you as a mentor, you know?* [emphasis added]. Just like Jesus approached people as a friend…. In this culture, people will understand better when you are all at the same level of like, understanding. No one can be above each other, you know? (SK, Interview, December 13, 2016)

Sony went on to explain his educational experience in Africa:

> SK: Um, I've been in an institution like that multiple times because where I came from in Africa, we barely have mutual collaboration, you know? It's because the teacher thinks way too highly of himself, and has a lot of pride, and it's always the student that is just, not humble at all and has way too much pride, and it gets tough to understand stuff like that, you know? The teacher will just talk, and you will think that you understand. He will talk at a different level than what you are. You are at a lower level, but he teaches you like you are at a higher level. That doesn't work, like that.
>
> D: Makes it difficult to understand.
>
> SK: Yeah. It's a lot difficult to understand. You have to go through it every step by steps. He wasn't taking small steps like us; he was taking big steps, you know? And, we needed to get to his level to understand what he was saying, and I

> guarantee you that a lot of us didn't understand. I've experienced non-mutual collaboration and mutual collaboration, and I can tell you my experience of that because it just got worse and worse where there was no mutual collaboration. (Interview, SK, 12-13-2016)

In his explanation of his educational experiences in Congo, Sony lays out the oppositional foil for pedagogical concepts such as Vygotsky's ZPD and scaffolding (1978), and Freire's (2009) dialogic pedagogy, and presents the antithesis of the concept of mutually humble collaboration. Sony's early educational experience typified what Freire termed "banking" education (2009). At times, showing what a thing is not is instructive in demonstrating what it is. Sony's recollection does exactly this.

Tim Barger

A bio-science major planning to become a laboratory technician/researcher, Tim Barger struggled in his K-12 years due to speech difficulties that affected his relationships with teachers and peers. In spite of his K-12 experiences, he was able to take advantage of high school education opportunities at a nearby community technical college and developed a great respect for an instructor who allowed his students to choose and create projects and to conduct individualized research to accomplish their goals. Tim and a friend wrote and developed software, and Tim transferred his understanding of the demand of exact code writing in software to the need for precision in literacy, particularly written language. A strong self-advocate, he was able to meet Dr. Whitman's wit and sarcastic sense of humor in a friendly way that earned Dr. Whitman's respect and provided evidence of their MHC desire to achieve the goals of the course.

Grit. Tim Barger carried the stigma of having a speech impediment in elementary school and was assigned to Title I classes for reading and mathematics instruction. He stated that his reading scores were below average, as were his family members' and that he was one of the older students in the elementary Title I course. He reflected on how he dealt with being sent to Title I classes:

> TB: I don't know, I mean, a lot of it was kind of -- I did. The problem was that the unpleasant things that I did made me who I am today, which is hard to say that I didn't like 'em. At the time I didn't like it, and now I know I learned so much through it. Yes.
>
> D: That's a sign of maturation. That's good.
>
> TB: It's learning to learn from your weaknesses, and everyone has it, it doesn't matter who you are. (Interview, TB, 3-11-2016)

He succeeded in overcoming the speech challenges and was able to take advantage of Minnesota's Post-secondary Education Opportunity (PSEO) program to attend a technical college where he enrolled in a nanoscience course. That class intrigued him enough to start his love of reading science journals and helped to build his reading fluency. He regretted having taken the easier route through grade school Accelerated Reader instruction, a path that he said slowed his literacy development. However, once he fell in love with science, his reading fluency improved greatly.

For Tim, grit appeared as he overcame difficulties due to IEPs and pull out class work in grade school and as he continued to face challengesin college composition. Grammar remained a challenge, but he took it as part of the requirements of reaching his

goals of becoming a biological science researcher. In part, he connected his need for grammatical accuracy with his understanding of coding for computer software programming, a hobby he and a friend took up in high school.

> TB: So, a lot of coding is the very tiny mistakes you make, whether it's a single letter you put in that completely messed it up, or just completely missed doing a line that you or your friend messed up on. And in writing, I guess it's kind of like that, where you can mess up one line and the meaning is completely gone, so I guess it does affect reading and writing in one way. (Interview, TB, 3-11-2016)

Dweck (2015) speaks of the advantages in viewing intelligent capabilities as flexible and improvable, rather than being static or unchangeable. Barger came from a pragmatic viewpoint that forced him to learn grammar and composition because he saw them to be essential tools that would help him in his desired career. He considered his options and accepted his need to change in order to meet his goals. In struggling, he persevered due to his sense of goals and his passionate vision of where he wanted to be, working in a laboratory.

Professor – Student Relationships. Tim's relationship with Dr. Whitman was unique in that the two developed a give and take exchange of satirical barbs that developed over the weeks I observed the class in action. That sarcastic banter at times felt to me as though it was becoming personally offensive to one or the other of the two. However, the banter never did erupt into anything but a friendly exchange, as evidenced by their daily end-of-class farewells. Dr. Whitman would wish him a good day, and Tim would return in kind. I note that this is the same class section in which Hye Nan

explained to me that she had great difficulties with Dr. Whitman's use of satire, which for her, an ELL, other culture student, made interpretation of what was going on in class extremely difficult at times:

> HN: As an ESL student…using sarcasm is not a good thing [she hesitated in telling this.] At least in my view. I am not sure about other ESL students, but I felt sometimes when my professor used sarcasm…that I would go back and try to think what he said instead of focusing on the topic. I would just relate back to try to figure out what that sarcasm means. Then just hearing other people's responses got me distracted. So I think that using sarcasm is okay, but just to, like, a minimum, and not doing it constantly because it distracts us because we are not thinking only in English, but in our other languages that we know. (Interview HN, 1-21-2016)

Where Tim Barger enjoyed the banter and the sarcasm, Hye Nan, knowing some humor was intended, still struggled to keep up with Dr. Whitman's communication, and she found that she expended energy needlessly as she tried to make sense of the banter. Dr. Whitman was, for the most part, oblivious of the different ways his humor landed on his students. Communication is never perfect, but the juxtaposition of Tim Barger's and Hye Nan's responses to sarcasm in the classroom provides insight for dialogically motivated teachers to consider. Thankfully, both Nan and Barger were resilient and humble, so no long lasting damage seemed to occur.

***Mutually Humble Collaboration*.** Of the four "discrepant cases" I selected, Tim Barger came to the final interview with a typed response to MHC, which he read aloud to me. I transcribed his speech verbatim:

> I have a statement. The kind of thing I thought about is, that when you have power it's easier to lower your pride, than when you don't have power at all…. I kind of saw this in Whitman's class, I believe, I think it's a class that it (MHC) meant the most to me. We didn't have a lot of power, and definitely, in the first four weeks of his class, he really had a lot of pride. Um, he really wanted to teach us; he really wanted to be that big teacher, and that kind of came out later.
>
> The next point that spoke to me the most came from my refereeing life. I've been a referee for the past ten years, and for the past years I've been trained by AMG, Advanced Mentoring Group, where we are trained from state referees and higher. One thing they tell us is that you have to keep a "high hat" to keep control of the game. You have to be that "big pride"; you have to have that power of the game to know what you are doing. If you don't have that, you can completely lose control of the game. *It's kind of a different thought when you go to chess coaching, which I'll talk about in a little bit, but as I learn more and more and more about ref-ing, there's practicing, playing games, going through failures and successes, one thing that worked for me, and one of the biggest things, I believe, is going to the players and talking to them as if they were my teammates* [Italics my emphasis]. When a dangerous play happens, or a close miss

at the net happens, I kind of cool them so they don't get angered, they have outrage at another player, and they don't injure them.

I am a soccer ref. It's something I definitely like doing, 'cause you can see the anger in their faces. I see them as if they were my players. Umm, this is kind of tough because they fear you a lot in the game. They fear that when you go up to them that you're going to card them or something like that, but, I try to just cool them down, say, "Hey, that was a nice shot," or "You were really close. Try again."

Another thing that really helped me with this point is being a chess coach. Again, I have a lot of pride in chess. I was once a national chess player; I have a high level of pride in my abilities. It's kind of one of the things a lot of my younger kids know about me is that I know what I'm doing, and I know how to teach them and all that. For the past eight years I have been a chess coach. One thing I have learned is, even though I am playing with beginners, I am still learning things from them when I'm with them every day, so it's not like, 'Oh, they don't know what they're talking about.' Sometimes they have better understanding that some of us. As a coach, I love playing against beginners. You know, I don't like smashing them to the ground, because it makes them not want to come back. For me, I love helping them set up their board better. Getting their pieces out and learning how to get out into position. I guess with the older kids who are a little bit more cocky, I definitely try to be a little bit tougher on them,

but with the younger kids, I definitely like to be more of a friend to them, so that I ask them, “Why did you make that move,” or “Why don’t you make that move?”

I want to talk about my students now. *As I said before, I believe it’s harder to notice when a teacher lowers their pride* [emphasis added]. For me, personally, it could be my observation, and my distracted mind, which I believe I have a very distracted mind at times. Whether that’s between papers and other things, that’s just very hard for me sometimes to keep my mind (attention), but as a teacher, I feel like a lot of times, have it easier with my pride, especially as you ask. So one of my big examples is my new job I have here at college, which is youth and recreation. I took this job last year during the winter on a job fair that was held. When I saw the chessboard that was at the table, I submitted my application and was hired almost instantly. During my interview, they hired me almost before I was finished telling them about my chess story.

I think one of the biggest things I had an issue with is, when I was coaching for H----- V----, the kids I had were national players. They were state champions; they were district champions. They were high intensity to be there**,** so, I could have my pride up there, and they would be with me the entire time.

While coaching the Y--- E--- L---, the thing I noticed a lot was that the kids who were there didn’t have the same energy or the same passion for the game, **a**nd the thing I noticed immediately was that I couldn’t have my pride up there. I wanted my pride to be up there. I wanted my pride to say, “This is who I am and I want you guys to be this good.” *Without the passion, I had to drop my*

level, and when I dropped my level of pride, they definitely started to listen to me better; they learned more; they were more into the game, and they were more caring about it, which spoke well to me. [emphasis added]

For the youth formation league, definitely one thing I don't like is they have these things called "chess dollars." When the kids do good [SIC], you give them "chess dollars," but I believe this is a wrong type of motivation for them. This motivation makes them more of a lazy person, where if they're not getting dollars, they don't really want to do anything. (TB, Personal Statement during Interview, November17, 2016)

Clearly, Tim had thought the implications of MHC through and had found many contact points in his own experience that resonated with the theory's basic tenets: deliberate and intentional self-humbling in an endeavor to collaborate with learners to accomplish feats of learning that would be difficult or impossible to accomplish alone. He identified the need to lower his own pride as a means to adapting and connecting at his students' levels.

An advantage Tim possessed in his understanding of MHC is that he was experiencing learning from the vantage points of being a student and a teacher in several settings. He had experienced the humbling effect of having been designated with a learning disability and had developed the grit and resilience to make accommodations for that designation in order to achieve his own goals. He expressed his having to process the balance of necessary pride of position as a referee and the necessity of adjusting his pride as a chess coach and mentor. That he recognized the benefit of opening himself to

learning from his students demonstrated a healthy combination of pride and humility and a definite sense of when to raise and to lower his pride in the teaching/learning process.

Tim's antipathy toward external motivation through rewards for desired behaviors indicates his pragmatic understanding of the purpose of effective learning. Without using the term "self-regulation," (Bandura, 1977), he expressed the strong opinion that learning meaningfully is an intrinsic and worthy reward that motivates him to set goals and to persevere. He demonstrated a growth intelligence mindset (Dweck, 2015) and the passionate perseverance of grit (Duckworth, 2016).

Another insight Tim expressed is the necessity of having enough time for teachers and students to adjust. He believed that Whitman and some of his students took some time to come to effective levels of collaboration, but that they eventually did.

> D: Did you ever lower it? [pride]
>
> TB: Near the end, I more, kind of lowered it. More when I realized, 'I don't know everything, that I actually have to listen to him because he knows what he's talking about compared to me.' I think when you're a freshman, you have such a high head. You think, 'I know everything. I'm smarter than the teacher." But then if I'll get to it, you realize, "I really don't know as much as I think." I think a lot of freshmen have that mindset where 'I'm too smart for here.' And then they take those first exams and they get annihilated. (TB, Interview, November 17, 2016)

Barger compared Whitman with another professor who did not humble himself to connect with his students. "Like, Professor Q----. I think he's a great teacher, but has a very hard time dropping his pride. He is very prideful; he believes everything that he

says, and if you ever disagree with him, he tries to throw it into you anyway" (TB Interview, November 17, 2016). Where Whitman made successful attempts to form a meeting of minds with Tim, Professor Q--- did not, at least in Tim's perspective.

Tim applied to take a course in cancer research with a Cadler professor, but did not have the prerequisite chemistry courses. The professor accepted his appeal to take the course and provided scaffolding to help him pass it. Tim described her as caring very much for her students, and demanding a great deal from every student. In spite of his lacking prerequisite coursework, he believed he was going to do well:

It's a very tough class, but Dr. Z--- is very helpful. It's definitely helping me become better as a scientist to learn that, kind of like Whitman, I can't go at this level (hands up showing elevation), I have to go to that peak. I think Dr. Z--- also has a peak higher, and that she has a hard time dropping that peak, but she knows we can meet that peak. It's not a peak that you can't make. " (TB, Interview, November 17, 2016).

Tim explained that Dr. Z--- extended herself to her students in a humbly collaborative manner first, by announcing and keeping an "open door policy," in which students were encouraged to drop in any time to ask questions or to discuss class content; second, by asking the class if they had specific questions regarding assigned readings at the end of every class session; third, by exhibiting professionality in her teaching through holding high but achievable standards; and, fourth, by inviting a dialogic relationship with her class, rather than maintaining a strictly lecture/note-taking class style. An important insight Tim expressed was his belief that the teacher must initiate mutually

humble collaboration by demonstrating his/her care for students, and the willingness to meet them at their levels of understanding.

> D: This humble collaboration of lowering defenses and reducing pride has to occur. Do you agree or disagree with that?
>
> TB: I agree with it. I believe that the teachers must lower their pride first, and once they drop it, students take more time to realize that they can drop theirs [emphasis added].

Not only does Tim accept the concept of MHC, but he also identifies the starting point for the dialogic relationship to be with the teacher who usually holds the initial power to open dialogue. Implicit in Tim's understanding of MHC is the instructor's wisdom and willingness to wait for students to accept the offering to equal lines of communication. Teachers and students have the power to accept or reject such offers as both have agency, but the relationships begin with an invitation from the instructor.

Conclusion

Students within this study have struggled to earn places of significance within their schools, and have managed through grit and passion to persist, even though they performed at middle-of-the-class levels and a few of their student-peers of stronger ability or intelligence failed. They experienced success, in part, because either they or their professors extended invitations to dialogue. In accepting dialogue, they lowered their defenses in a positive form of humbling. Through mutually humble collaboration, they found ways to thrive.

I situate MHC at the entry points of two sociocultural theoretical operations: the Zone of Proximal Development and scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978) and at the entry point into the dialogic relationship to end the oppressor/oppressed cycle described by Freire (2009). Freire states, "Political action on the side of the oppressed must be pedagogical action in the authentic sense of the word, and, therefore, action *with* the oppressed" (p. 66) [italics in original]. Mutually Humble Collaboration provides the opening to a conversation, to dialogue in conditions safe enough for both sides to communicate.

Further Investigation and Future Directions

As I come to the end of this dissertation, questions for future study emerge. Having established that MHC is a phenomenon observed by my participants and colleagues, I recognize the need for further development of the conditions that encourage or discourage it from occurring. I am curious about the implications and adaptations MHC may afford with further study and conversations with colleagues and students. Within the college where I teach, I have had considerable support and encouragement and invitations to present my theory to administration, faculty, and staff. I have engaged in several discussions of how to implement MHC within specific classrooms and athletic organizations on campus. Recognizing that MHC is gaining traction within my small circle, I need to develop the language necessary to make it accessible in a variety of academic environments.

Along with encouragement from colleagues, I have sensed some quiet cynicism, mainly from professors who hold a more traditional top down, "banking" philosophy of education. Administration is "on board" with the MHC concepts presented, perhaps from

student retention and fiscal perspectives or because they realize that seeing all students performing and succeeding is in everyone's best interest. While causes of the fall to spring and year-to-year "melt" in student enrollment in relation to ethnicity/color does not correlate entirely to literacy/composition courses, an investigation into literacy proficiency as it relates to retention along sociocultural lines might be enlightening, especially with respect to the ways colleges orient entry-level courses. If those courses are designed to weed out students below certain performance/competence levels, are there ways for MHC-minded educators to extend literacy empowering opportunities for students who fail to meet the standards?

Additionally, I am interested in developing methods of beginning MHC within courses taught across the curriculum offered at Cadler College, not just literacy courses. Starting from Freire's perspective, MHC would require that I humble myself in opening the door to dialogue within my own circle of professional colleagues. Realizing that agentic, volitional action is required, rather than forced participation, I wait to see how this theory will be received.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: Student Consent Form to Participate in Research Study Student Consent Form

Investigating Diverse Literacy Experience in Private Higher Education
My name is Don Bouchard, and I am researching ENG131 English Composition students' diverse literacy instruction experience. Because you have been identified as a student taking ENG131 during the Fall 2015 semester, I am inviting you to take part in this study.

Background Information
The study will examine your unique learning characteristics in relation to your literacy skill levels and growth in a college composition course. Specific research questions for this study are:

1. How are first-year students impacted in the process of taking the course ENG131 College Composition in terms of their literacy stances and performance and overall academic performance?
2. What are uniquely cultural explanations for the students' literacy engagement and performance?
3. How does professor/student interaction affect the literacy instruction process?
4. What are the perceptions of students in the class regarding their overall experience and performance?
5. What are the perceptions of faculty members teaching and working with the subpopulation as to their experiences and performance?

Procedures
As a participant in the study, you will

1. Be asked to complete a survey about your literacy history, and about your current experiences at this college in ENG131
2. Be observed within the context of the course activities
3. Participate in follow-up interviews for clarification purposes

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study
The study has minimal risks: the possibility of invasion of privacy is minimal, but procedures to protect your privacy will be established. Your name will be coded so your name does not appear directly with any information gathered or published. Your decision to participate in this study is voluntary. Your grades will not be affected by participation or nonparticipation in this study. If at any time during the study you decide to become a non-participant, you may freely step out.
No specific personal benefits accompany your participation in the study.

Confidentiality
Records of this study will be kept private. The resulting write-up of this research will not include information that will identify individual participants. Research records and recordings will be kept securely, and only researchers will have access to those records. Study data will be encrypted according to current University of Minnesota policy for protection of confidentiality. All recordings will be used for data analysis and erased after the completion of the research project.

Feel free to ask me any questions you may have about this study, before, during, and after the study is completed. Your signature indicates that you have read and understood this document, and that you are willing to participate in this study. If you do not wish to participate in this study, please return this document to me unsigned.

Again, your participation in this study is voluntary, and your signature does not require you to complete the study if you choose to opt out at a later date.

Contacts and Questions
I, Don Bouchard, am Principal Investigator, and I am conducting this research to fulfill requirements in the Curriculum & Instruction Ph.D. in Literacy at the University of Minnesota - TC. I will be happy to discuss the project and answer any questions. You may contact me via University of Minnesota email at bouc0057@umn.edu, or via telephone at 952-446-4224 (office).

The Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI) overseeing this study is Dr. David O'Brien. You may ask any questions you have. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact Dr. O'Brien at dobrien@umn.edu, or call 612-625-5337.

If you have questions or concerns regarding this study and you would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware Street Southeast, Minneapolis, MN 55455; 612-625-1650.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent
I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study. I consent to the audio/video recordings described above.

Signature of Participant _____Date:
Participant email address
Signature of Person Explaining the Study _____ Date:

APPENDIX B: Instructor Consent Form to Participate in Research Study

Investigating Diverse Literacy Experience in Private Higher Education

You are being invited to participate in a research study of diverse literacy experience in private higher education college composition classes. You have been selected as a possible participant because you currently teach a section of ENG131 English Composition within the college. I ask that you read through this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to this study.

Background Information
I, Don Bouchard, another ENG131 English Composition instructor at Crown College, as part of the requirements necessary to complete a PhD in Curriculum & Instruction: Literacy at the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities, am conducting this study under the oversight of University of Minnesota CEHD PhD Committee members: Dr. David O'Brien, Dr. Lori Helman, Dr. Bob Poch, and Dr. Deborah Dillon.

As Principal Investigator, I will be happy to discuss the project and answer any questions. You may contact me via University of Minnesota email at bouc0057@umn.edu, or via telephone at 952-446-4224 (office), or at 952-807-6315 (cell).

I am researching ENG131 English Composition students' literacy education experience. The study will examine students' unique characteristics in relation to their literacy skill levels and growth in a college composition course. This study examines ways first-year students are impacted in the process of taking the course ENG131 College Composition in terms of their literacy stances and performance and overall academic performance through their unique cultural and experiential backgrounds. The study will observe professor/student interactions in the literacy instruction process, and follow-up interviews related to students' and instructors' perceptions of the class experience will round out the study.

Procedures
Professor-participants in the study will

1. Be asked to complete a survey about their literacy history, and about their current experiences at this college in ENG131
2. Be observed within the context of the course activities
3. Participate in follow-up interviews for clarification purposes

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study
The study has minimal risks: the possibility of invasion of privacy is minimal, but procedures to protect your privacy will be established. Your name will be coded so your name does not appear directly with any information gathered or published. No immediate benefits to participants are anticipated.

The decision to participate in this study is voluntary. If at any time during the study a participant decides to become a non-participant, s/he may freely step out. Participants' personal identities will be protected, and their identities will remain anonymous.

Feel free to ask me any questions you may have about this study, before, during, and after the study is completed. Your signature indicates that you have read and understood this document, and that you are willing to participate in this study. If you do not wish to participate in this study, please return this document to me unsigned.

Again, your participation in this study is voluntary, and your signature does not require you to complete the study if you choose to opt out at a later date.

Your signature below indicates you are willing to participate in the study.

Signature of Participant

Signature of Person Explaining the Study

Date

APPENDIX C: Student Interview Protocols

Student Interview Protocols: Introductory Questions	
1. Please explain your academic history in terms of where and when you attended school grades K-12	
2. Please recall your earliest experiences with learning to read and write. What did you read? Who taught you? What are some pleasant experiences you had? Unpleasant?	
3. In this course, ENG131, English Composition, what areas of college writing did you have confidence? What did you think you need to learn?	
4. How did you engage your attention and work in this course to succeed?	
5. If you were to identify characteristics that make your experience different from other students' experience in this class, what would they be?	
6. How might a professor of ENG131 better help you to succeed in ENG131?	
7. What was your first priority or goal in this literacy course, ENG131? What do you wish to accomplish (beyond passing the course)?	

Appendix D: Interview Prompts for Professors

This is a semi-scripted interview. Follow-up probing questions follow the conversation naturally.

Question 1: Please explain your preparation to teach this course.

Question 2: Please relate your personal experiences with learning to read and write.

Question 3: What areas do you have confidence in teaching? In what areas do you need better preparation?

Question 4: How do you engage students' attention and work in this course to enable them to succeed?

Question 5: How did you identify and incorporate differentiate literacy instruction needs among the diverse students you teach?

Question 6: How might an ENG131 student better prepare to be in your class?

Question 7: What is your first priority/goal in teaching ENG131?

APPENDIX E: Marzano's Classroom Observation Protocols

Marzano's Observation Protocols Comparing Whitman's and Sorenson's Classes

Marzano (2009, 2011) created observational protocols useful to administration and educators in observing and analyzing classroom dynamics related to "routine events that might be observed in every lesson and classroom (2011, Appendix C). Using analytic deduction, I applied the 2009 protocols in observing the two professors' classes in order to define the learning environments in which I observed. What follows is a reiteration of the protocols with commentaries on each of the two professors and their students followed by brief analysis.

Protocol 1: Where are participants sitting in the room in relationship to each other – to the professor – to the windows?

The two classrooms lend themselves to different seating arrangements related to lighting, space, exit placement, and location of technology such as Smart Boards, projectors, and computer consoles. The location of the computer consoles and visual aids controlled instructors' positioning in the classroom, and at times Mary Sorenson seemed tethered to the computer keyboard and mouse, especially when the remote control she used did not work with a particular software program. Bart Whitman seldom used the computer, preferring rather to hand out printed copies of work, or to have students write their own work on paper or their personal laptops or tablets. He did not use a textbook while I was in the classroom, and students' work was visibly present at all times.

The students did arrange themselves by gender more noticeably in Sorenson's room, with females sitting predominately toward the front, and males sitting in the back or on the sides. Professor Whitman's students were mostly White, with at least two students of Asian and two of Hispanic appearance. One of the students, Hye Nan, (a student who represented Korean and Ecuadorian ethnicity) was taking Whitman's section of college composition for the second time to reach her department's minimum grade requirements. Included on the roster in Bart Whitman's class was an older White female student (S5), who had transferred from a nearby four-year school. I note that Bart Whitman took special care to make sure she was included within the class culture whenever possible. In Mary Sorenson's class, students was predominately White with two Black students, one of whom was a PSEO student, and excluded from this study due to minimum age requirements.

In both classes, students had established regular seating patterns, and sat in their usual seats each time class met. In Whitman's class, students sat toward the front of the class, ahead of the exit, which opened into the room on stage left between rows four and five, leaving rows five and six unoccupied each time I observed. In Sorenson's class, students entered at the front of the room, stage right, which meant that once everyone was in, no one could leave without the entire class knowing it. I only saw one or two people leave during class time.

Shaded windows in Whitman's classroom ran down the stage right side of the room, while tinted and shaded windows in Mary Sorenson's classroom ran all along stage right and across the back of the classroom. Students did not seem to observe or utilize the windows in either room. HVAC in both rooms meant there was a steady hum that made discussions between students across the room difficult to hear. Students sat away from the HVAC unit in Whitman's classroom, and the size of the class in Sorenson's classroom allowed students to sit toward the center of the space, away from the vents, if they chose to do so.

Whitman tended to move intentionally around his classroom, returning intentionally to within ten feet or so of his lectern, which he did not often use, possibly due to the smallness or tight feeling of the classroom. I had the feeling that I was watching an angler moving and casting into the pond from a large platform or rock. From time to time, he did venture to students' seated positions in the table rows to answer questions or to check on individuals' work. Nearly all students seemed respectfully and quietly engaged in the activities of the class, though some did quietly text or check social media from time to time. Whitman's students sat upright, for the most part, and looked toward him while he spoke. Very little side chatter occurred that I could see from my vantage point.

Professor Sorenson moved in a limited fashion around her classroom, but stayed in the front one third of the room, avoiding having to deal with the male students in the fourth row, stage left. Their behavior indicated a lack of interest in the class, and a generally passive-aggressive appearance: slouched in chairs, arms folded, and feet and legs up on desks, and a nearly constantly running dialogue unrelated to the class activities (See Figure 1). In our interview, she alluded to her sense of having lost connection with that group of students.

Physical arrangement and location of students in relation to the instructor affect and/or are related to student engagement and performance in the classroom (Benedict, & Hoag, 2004; Lim, O'Halloran, & Podlasov, 2012; Parker, Hoopes, & Eggett, 2011; Wall, 1993; Zomorodian, Parva, Tavana, Hemyari, Pakshir, Javari, Sahraian, 2012). The depth and strength of learning bridge-building or mutually humble collaboration (MHC) depends upon the interactions between the instructor and the students. When noticeable exceptions or interruptions arise, the professor needs to circulate into the "hot spots," to communicate verbally or nonverbally with individual students in order to instill the sense that s/he is "withit" (Kounin 1970), aware and willing to engage whenever necessary.

In the case of Bart Whitman, this happened consistently, though his perceptions and students' perceptions were not always congruous. Students behaved in an expected manner, Dr. Whitman maintained control of his classroom, and more importantly, students remained engaged. Whitman's modus operandi was to use continual running commentary or even engagement with all students to keep them on topic and focused on the lesson at hand. He "worked" and tugged at his audience, pulling one student or another into his comments and eliciting responses. He was respectful of the quieter ones, but did speak with them as well, moving up and down the aisle briefly during students'

in-class work times. In every class session I observed, he walked the middle of the room, stopping at individual tables, and even moving to work with students between table rows.

Professor Sorenson developed a pattern of zones in which she moved or avoided interaction with students. Only once did I see her enter the fourth row to speak with a student, though she often moved in the front third and center of the classroom. When I asked her whether she had different levels of engagement and communication with students, she responded, "Yeah, that group in the row by A--- more than the students on the edge. The middle talked to me more than on the edge" (Interview, 12-10-2015). She said that the group of young men at the back of the room who showed open disengagement with the class had been changing…, that "at first, they were engaged, but then something changed them, and they were not as engaged as they used to be" (Interview, Dec. 10, 2015).

I suspect that a combination of management factors within the classroom contributed to the slow disengagement. A lack of constant contact with the professor, introduction of class activities more oriented toward students in the front of the class, consistent allowance of one or two dominant students to monopolize the classroom dialogue, and the use of external motivation incentives such as candy on a nearly daily basis actually served as disincentives. A couple of students who spoke to me in the hallway before or after classes suggested that, while they liked the professor, they felt sometimes as though Professor Sorenson treated her students "like high schoolers." All or none of these contributing factors may have played a part in the apparent disengagement of the "fringe" students.

Protocol 2: What is the Professor doing to encourage engagement of all students?

Both Whitman and Sorenson exhibited a sense of humor uniquely their own in every session I observed. Whitman's humor was eccentric, satirical, sarcastic, and sometimes downright wacky, while Sorenson's sense of humor was only lightly sarcastic, and heavily "hot topic," Sci-Fi, and current events related. Bart Whitman enjoyed bantering with his students and anyone who happened to enter his space. He seemed at times to speak without carefully processing possible interpretations of what he said, something he confided in me:

I'm eccentric, and I use my eccentricities that are benign and engaging so that my sense of humor, if I see students who are not paying attention, or their attention is drifting, I will bring that (humor) to bear. You need to include in that (my notes), that I make fun of myself first, and primarily before anything else, and before anyone else. (BW Interview, Jan. 4, 2016).

I pushed Dr. Whitman a little on the sometimes riskiness of his humorous barrages, and he responded:

Disclosure here…. Part of what I am doing is to relieve ennui…trying to keep mentally alert and adroit. That's one of the things I am trying to do. I love my students. They are like my own children. I love them. When I talk about ennui, I don't mean to disparage them. They are at the level that they are, and I think more than one of us educators suffer from, 'Well, why aren't you (students) Harvard quality?' And so, I really

want to avoid that, and I think this is one of the ways that, on the face of it doesn't seem like that, but it does end up avoiding that by making them complicit in a mutual learning experience. I am in some ways no better a writer than they are and they hear that from the very first day with me. (Interview, Jan. 4, 2016).

Bart Whitman's concept of bringing his students with him into a "mutual learning experience" speaks to his intentionality. His humorous advances were attempts to gain trust or to lighten students' defenses enough to ease them into sharing the struggle of learning what good writing might be. In other conversations we have had, he referred to his own writing struggles and victories as something he wanted to share with the fellow writers who are his students. Indeed, Palmer (1998) refers to this very concept of creating a "community of truth" in which students and teachers combine and "focus on a great thing, a classroom in which the best features of teacher-and student-centered education are merged and transcended by putting not teacher, not student, but subject at the center of our attention" (p.116). How often this ideal is reached, or whether it actually was reached in Dr. Whitman's situation is not for me to say, but I recognize the intentionality in the rationale he provided for his approach to his students.

Professor Sorenson encouraged engagement by incorporating background music, by using pop culture videos, by using conversation (with students toward the front and center of the classroom) about movies and vacation plans, etc. Those students with whom she spoke responded with relaxed conversation and laughter. Again, the fringe students on the sides and toward the back were rarely involved in the conversation. In an interview, MS revealed that she had always enjoyed reading and writing from childhood up, and that "I think that pleasant experience and the ease that I had makes it difficult to teach my students, because I don't understand how they don't get it" (Interview 12-10-2015). I did note that at times Sorenson used light sarcasm that may or may not have reflected this frustration. Unlike Whitman, Sorenson's humorous quips were at times cryptic, and nearly indiscernible in meaning. I sat and wondered if many students even caught her intentions in these instances.

In the case of Bart Whitman, this bantering humor occurred constantly, though his perceptions and students' perceptions were not always congruous. Hye Nan, for example, stated that she, an international student, born in Korea, and raised in Ecuador, knowing two languages well, and on the way to becoming fluent in English, had a very difficult time with Bart Whitman's commentary, especially when it included sarcasm or satire. At times, she would become "stuck" trying to determine the meaning of some joke, meanwhile losing the gist of the overall lesson's point. Again, I return to Palmer (1998), who states, "Good teaching always takes place at the crossroads of the personal and the public, and if I want to teach well, I must learn to stand where these opposites intersect" (p.63). That intersection is a dangerous place to stand, and, while I think I understand Sorenson's choice to move within "safe" zones as she taught, zones that included and excluded her contact with students, I also understand Whitman's risky and sometimes offensive actions and words as he tried to be a little "edgy" in his connections with his students. The fine lines of teacher/student connections become tight ropes for daring teachers to tread. Not risking the tight ropes fails to explore and develop possible

connections, and daring to risk sometimes involves embarrassing or damaging interchanges requiring repair.

Protocol 3: What is the general response of the students collectively?

I conducted observations using Marzano's Protocols of Observation (2009) during the week prior to Thanksgiving Vacation, and students were predictably restless. Attendance was down a little in Bart Whitman's class, and noticeably so in Mary Sorenson's class. I began my summary of scratch notes for Professor Sorenson's class observations (11-25-2015) with the comment that, "The ones (students) who are present clearly like Professor Sorenson and are liked by her." In a way, that single day's observation gave me greater insight into students' collective response to her teaching than the other visits combined. The greatest absenteeism took place in the fringe areas, with the complete absence of the young men at the back of the room, a phenomenon that I interpreted to be a lack of students' engagement and commitment. I suspect that the additional impetus of skipping class the day before vacation provided the extra incentive necessary for students who placed low value in the class.

On the way to class the day I used Marzano's protocols, one of Sorenson's female students told me that Professor Sorenson was very different from any of her other professors, and I took that to be a compliment. Students worked in the class without the appearance of stress or tension, even to the point that at times they seemed to lack motivation to engage, unless Sorenson had them participating in a classroom activity. Once involved in activities such as pair and share discussions, or competitive review exercises, the majority did become involved. Overall, students were generally respectful, but quiet in the room unless directly asked to speak.

In French & Raven's (1959) power frameworks, Mary Sorenson and Bart Whitman (and most teachers) would hold "legitimate power," because their positions as instructors imply that students respond as expected and comply in learning. In other words, the obligation in the teaching/learning relationship lies on two planes: the teacher's obligation to teach meets with the students' obligation to learn. Because the relationship of students to teachers, especially college professors, is temporary, the bonds of power do not last long, nor are they usually very strong. Whitman seemed to have a little more strength in this aspect than did Sorenson, in part because Whitman, a PhD in English, and a published author, also carried "expert" power in his presentation and relationship with his students, something that Sorenson did not. Her connections with her students via popular music and movie culture placed her more on the students' personal levels than on the level of an expert in the room, and they saw her more as an ally than as a power figure. The dynamics of power within the class relationships changed even while I observed both classes, with Whitman's increasing, and Sorenson's decreasing.

An interesting event occurred in Whitman's class that exemplifies this shifting of power. Hye Nan reported this event to me voluntarily, outside the plan of this study, and I verified it had occurred with a third party. At one point, a student or two led a small rebellion against Dr. Whitman, and he responded in a manner that showed his agitation with the situation by letting the class out a few minutes early. Hye Nan, taking the course

for the second time to raise her class grade (a core course in her degree track that needed to be passed with a C+ or higher), took it upon herself to make an appointment with Dr. Whitman to apologize on behalf of her classmates. I learned that she followed this action by working behind the scenes to bring her classmates in line. This event happened before I began to observe the class, and I was interested to see that the class was operating smoothly, with mutual respect shown between the instructor and the students. Interpreting what happened through French & Raven, 1956, I'd say that Hye Nan's conception of the combination of legitimate and expert power helped her to overlook the past stresses she personally had experienced with Dr. Whitman in order to risk acting as a respectful intermediary. I realize, too, that cultural upbringing played a part in what occurred. The bonding within Whitman's classes was much stronger than in Sorenson's class, where students and Professor Sorenson seemed disconnected and uncommitted to each other.

Bart Whitman's students seemed to respect him, though only a few in the class were voluntarily vocal without prodding. In retrospect, I think his unpredictable sense of humor was just offsetting enough to discourage students from stepping too far out of the normative expectation that "good" students sit quietly and wait for the instructor to give the prompts. That sense of humor, based often upon exotic or archaic literature or philosophy, or upon some imaginary premise, was a factor dealt with by everyone, even me, the observer, who happened to be in the room. At one point, and much to his and the students' amusement, he accused me of stealing a leg from his family's Thanksgiving turkey dinner. Additionally, Dr. Whitman was recognizably the "expert" in the room (French & Raven, 1959), and students may have been reluctant to push too hard against his sense of authority.

Protocol 4: How does the professor interact with students in relation to the content presented?

The two professors are similar here. Both know their content areas well, and both gave good examples in explicating the various literacy concepts. Sorenson's delivery was informative and authoritative, interlaced with humorous quips and activities relating the content skills taught through popular culture. For instance, she provided multiple popular science fiction examples to emphasize points; she demonstrated constant knowledge of current pop music hits, and she was conversant with current movie titles. She used technology multiple times in every class I observed, and when the technology failed, she took it in stride, waiting the problems out, or moving on to other activities. Students respectfully raised their hands with questions, and participated when asked to do so.

Whitman, on the other hand, brought paper copies of class texts or showed articles on the class projection system for students to read. He used samples of students' writing throughout his lessons, and students seemed to pay a great deal of attention as they presented their work. Students read their work aloud, or he would do so, highlighting work that was excellent or discussing work that needed improvement. He managed to convince the class that this practice was acceptable because he shared examples of his own work and his own struggles with the class. Several times, I heard

him say to the class and to me in private conversations that their struggles were his struggles as a writer. He seemed to include them collegially in his own writers' world. Students related to me in private conversation that he set up regular private writing conferences with them, something he was not required to do as an adjunct.

Finally, I observed Dr. Whitman constantly reading students' faces and body language to determine whether what he was teaching was making sense to them. More than once, he stopped speaking to find out what was troubling a student so he could clarify or ask probing questions to reveal answers (Withitness vis-a-vis Kounin, 1970). Of the two, Whitman was more aware of students' engagement, and though he did not use "games" or video clips to engage and maintain students' attention, he did so through purposely casting questions and comments throughout the classroom.

Intentional "Withitness" aimed at connecting with students and showing the professor's caring attitude strengthens pedagogical relationships and encourages students to engage with their lessons and with their professors. Whitman's students, though at times reluctant were in the presence of an irresistible force in the form of their professor. Sorenson's more passive classroom persona did not connect deeply with the students in her realm, and engagement occurred at minimal levels, even in the "good" group located within the "triangle" at front of the room.

Protocol 5: How is the work of assigned tasks divided out?

Professor Sorenson used a cooperative learning format in placing students in pairs or trios for many projects, sometimes two or three per class period. She would first explain the task, and then use various means of assigning pairs or groups, including birthdays, alphabetical order, division into opinion groups, etc. During timed tasks, she monitored progress, and when she determined that most of the groups were done, she would rein them back in and move to the next steps. Transitions worked well, and she modeled cooperative learning in these episodes. Students responded well to the group work, with the exception of the students located in the rear of the room, who took opportunity to wisecrack at times.

Dr. Whitman assigned work to individual students to complete in and out of class. Any group work I saw performed required students to have completed some out of class assignment outside the room, and then to work in class together to edit or to discuss their individual work, with the exception of a "write-around," in which he provided a controversial prompt: "All sports on campus must be funded equally, from football to ping pong." The mixture of students included a few athletes and non-athletes, so the conversation was lively. Dr. Whitman asked the class to write in support of the thesis, and to pass their papers to other writers at two-minute intervals. The outcome was predictably hilarious for the students, with one desperate athlete trying to reverse the premise. That assignment produced essays with predictably discordant and poorly phrased assertions and warrants, which he said the students would use as revision resources for the following class session (Observation Nov. 18, 2015).

Sorenson and Whitman used similar methods for engaging students in content and skills instruction, with the exception that Whitman's plan extended to future class

sessions intended to troubleshoot and revise the initial products from the lesson I observed, while Sorenson's lesson seemed to be packaged for the class session only. She and Whitman verbally expressed the relationship between the skills being taught with students' writing assignments.

Protocol 6: Are goals/expectations explained in a way that participants seem to understand them?

Both instructors performed well in this area, providing clear expectations and answering any questions students posed. Professor Sorenson used visual aids via Blackboard and PowerPoint tools, while Dr. Whitman stated assignments, asked for feedback, and gently clarified any uncertainties. He was careful to suggest future applications of the concepts he was teaching. For instance, he introduced a concept he identified as "The First/Last Rule" (FLR) for sussing out general meanings and themes of reading assignments. He told students that all college reading is about gaining quick understanding of main themes and significances of assigned readings, and that they probably would not be able to read every single word of every assignment in every college class. To succeed, he told them, they needed to learn and practice the FLR, which is to read the first and last sentences of paragraphs, the first and last paragraphs of chapters, and the first and last chapters of books to determine essential themes and ideas that they would be seeking in their reading assignments.

Students were visibly disbelieving at the audacity of the idea, and then warmed up to it in class discussion following a modeled reading of Alex Tabarrok's "The Meat Market," (*Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 8, 2010). Students demonstrated that they understood the "first/last" rule in the ensuing discussion. Significant to this topic is that I had a student (Tim Barger) tell me in passing during the following spring 2016 semester that he was using the FLR in his other classes, and that he had cut his reading time dramatically and was understanding what he read better than before. Pragmatically, students reported applying Whitman's instruction long after the class was finished.

Protocol 7: What steps/actions does the professor take to connect content and expectations to students' lives in order to establish a working/learning relationship?

Mary Sorenson is a younger professor from a middle income White family background, and she understands her students' personalities and cultural-generational likes and dislikes for the most part. She is old enough, though, that she is cuing them with popular culture that is sometimes a little young or outdated for them to connect fully. For example, one activity the class took part in was identifying various Disney cartoon characters and applying a grammatical concept to something about them. Another day, November 19, 2015, she played a YouTube clip containing "The Eye of the Tiger" song from the *Rocky* movies, which I immediately knew, but which most of the students did not know. Her expressions were also rather esoteric: "I was a sneaky Hobbit on that one!" in response to a verbal quiz question that tricked several students (Nov. 17, 2015). Though funny, her humor was a little "off" for her students to understand.

Whitman constantly used exemplars from his students' work. He was careful not to embarrass anyone, selecting only what he considered interesting and apropos. The students responded well to this practice. He constantly moved around the room, pushing, encouraging, and probing with redirection questions. At one point, he looked at a student and then said, "Depth! Depth!" to encourage him to think and communicate more deeply (Nov. 20, 2015). The student did not comment or react to this urging, except to continue his writing.

While Whitman's methods and activities tended to be pragmatic, connecting concepts to students' actual assigned work, Sorenson's activities connected with actual assigned writing work conceptually, with little actual pragmatic application. Because students might feel pressure to actually apply concepts that might affect their grades and skills, Whitman's approach seems more effective of the two.

Protocol 8: What is the evidence that students are learning and engaging in the class?

Students in Whitman's section came to class with work done prior to the meeting, due in part to the necessity of having material to work with during the peer review sessions. With only a couple of minor exceptions (mainly S5), every group worked for the entire time allotted.

During class, students' body language in their chairs indicated they were on topic and following what Whitman was saying. He probed for feedback, and no one was entirely off the mark when called upon to respond to a prompt. A couple of males and females raised their hands with questions or comments when he checked for understanding over particular details. Most students had pens and paper notebooks for notetaking. One student in particular hand wrote paper notes only, with no evidence that he carried a computer. Other students used laptops or tablets and brought printed papers with assignments.

Similarly, most students in Sorenson's class responded to her teaching respectfully. Students turned assignments in online, (unlike Whitman's class), and she seemed satisfied that they were meeting deadlines. A couple of students spoke with her about deadline difficulties, and she accommodated their requests.

With the exception of one male, only females voluntarily asked questions or self-selected to volunteer for activities in Sorenson's class. A couple of women at the front of the room asked questions or commented often during the sessions I observed. For the most part, males were quietly attentive. I did see several students taking notes from time to time, especially with grammar and punctuation topics. No females were disrespectful, but a few males manifested what I took to be passive-aggressive non-compliance postures.

Levels of engagement were distinctively different in the two classes, due in part to the way the professors approached the classrooms as spaces for learning. Sorenson spoke from the front and stayed within close proximity to the technology that allowed her to project notes and other media-dependent content on the projection screen, while Whitman used only a little projected material and the whiteboards in the room. He moved into the students' personal areas and was the dominant catalyst in the room in causing students to

engage. No one was allowed to "disappear" during class sessions, not even me, the observer. While Sorenson left many quiet students in the room unprompted, so long as they were quiet, Whiteman did the opposite, poking and prodding nearly every student from time to time.

Protocol 9: Is there evidence of the professor's intentional attempt to connect with all participants?

Without reservation, Dr. Whitman intentionally attempted to connect with his students. He was indiscriminate in teasing or speaking with all students as they entered the class each morning. His impromptu greetings were both warm and funny most of the time, unless he knew of some particularly troublesome event a student might be going through. He made a point of knowing something personal about each student: a hobby, a career path, something going on in his/her life, etc. He knew his students by name, and used their names in eliciting responses, either by using first names, or by addressing them by "Miss," "Mrs.," or "Mr." and their surnames. He moved around the room to every table, and entered the personal "bubbles" of accessible students. He teased nearly everyone, which served to maintain students' attentiveness throughout the class times. His checking for understanding was less oriented to out-waiting students for answers, and more toward repeating concepts he believed students needed to know. He was not afraid to put pressure on individual students, and he did not allow one or two students to dominate responses to his probes.

Professor Sorenson moved through the room, but on a limited path that avoided the back section of students for the most part. She looked for feedback and probed for understanding. One strength I noted was her ability to outwait reluctant responders during questioning. She played the "I'll give you another hint" strategy often to elicit correct responses, but she was careful not to embarrass any single student. At one point, she asked a "toggle" question to which only two possible responses were possible, with only one answer being correct. A female student answered incorrectly, and Sorenson turned to the class and asked, "Does anyone else have a different idea?" The whole class laughed, but the student who answered incorrectly did not appear to be offended. Sorenson's gentleness was evident, but it sometimes took on the appearance of timidity or shyness, something students were able to leverage to avoid having to answer or participate.

Professor Sorenson's great lack in the area of connecting with all students lay with her inability to connect meaningfully with the fringe students, mainly male, who sat in the back and on the stage right and left sides of the room. The coolness between the instructor and students became almost immediately apparent in the first observation, and it continued throughout the semester. Dr. Whitman's willingness to attempt connecting with every student made a few uncomfortable or embarrassed, but he pushed the limits to bring them into the group conversations.

Protocol 10: What rules are present and how are they made apparent?

Both Sorenson and Whitman expected their students to arrive on time and to be on task immediately, and the majority of students complied with this basic expectation.

Sorenson focused heavily on respect for students, though I did not always see reciprocation. She stayed away from anger or satire in her responses to students, with the exception of a few rather cryptic soft-voiced statements, which I heard, but which the students did not seem to pick up. In our after class conversations, she might express frustration with how a session went, but she did not complain or scold her students. At one point, she moved to the back of the room and "Shhh-ed" one of the passive-aggressive students who had been quietly mocking something she had said, but that was the only incident I witnessed. Otherwise, I did not see her enforce any kind of classroom rules of behavior during or outside of class time.

Another implicit expectation that both Sorenson and Whitman demonstrated was that students would use aspects of the skills and concepts taught within the course. Travis Barger said that he purposely incorporated specific skills or concepts into his paper, and that Whitman rewarded him and others for doing so, which also reinforced their perception of Whitman's expertise in the content areas. From a pragmatist perspective, students' buy-in related to usefulness makes sense.

Finally, an explicit rule in Whitman's class was that students would use the revision critique guides he gave them in self- and peer-editing compositions. He pursued the editing process by moving from one pair to another, modeling with them how to identify issues in order to make corrections or improvements (Bandura, 1977, 1997). Though he spoke quietly with each group, the entire class could hear as he moved around the room. In an in-class conference with students, he met with individual students to discuss rough drafts of essays with them. He was careful to select only a few major issues within each student's paper and to answer any questions they might have. The work ethos of the class enforced the unspoken rule that each student needed to bring work prepared ahead of time.

That some class expectations must be explicitly stated or posted seems apparent. Consistent enforcement of expectations regarding behaviors and work within the first several weeks of class instills positive habits and patterns that students internalize and become an almost invisible part of daily classroom operations. As I observed Sorenson's and Whitman's classes in operation, I did not see what was actually going on until I had time to think about underlying tensions and processes. Because I did not see the first three weeks' sessions in either professor's classrooms, I can only report what I saw in the mid and late sessions I observed. Further study of the first weeks of class would provide valuable insights in this area.

Protocol 11: Is there evidence of stress or conflict within the observation setting? If so, what is the source?

Sorenson's students did not seem to be too stressed, with the exception of one or two students who were very reluctant to answer questions in class. Only rarely did they participate, and when they did so, Sorenson would gently prompt and re-prompt to elicit responses. The tension was apparent in Professor Sorenson, in part, I am confident, because I was in the room, scratching out notes in the corner. Where Whitman included me by making comments about or to me, or even at times asking me questions, Sorenson

treated me as though I were invisible, something I tried to be as the classes progressed. In retrospect, my presence in the room changed her behavior, not her students' behavior.

One other source of tension in Sorenson came from the young men sitting at the back of the classroom, stage left, who demonstrated passive aggressive resistance in their body language and general lack of engagement. Sorenson seemed unable to speak with them about their behavior, and in a later interview, seemed puzzled as to their increasing apathy and disrespect.

During a follow up interview, Sorenson related that one of the students had turned in plagiarized work, and that her attitude seemed to have become defensive in her class. Similar to the student in Whitman's class in the following paragraph, the dynamics of tension had been changed by the events and actions taking place outside the classroom between the professor and student.

In Dr. Whitman's class, I only once saw evidence of stress during a student conference. A Hmong student met in the front of the classroom in the writing conference described earlier. Her body language was quite rigid, and she offered only nods in acknowledgment of his suggestions. She seemed uncomfortable, perhaps because the conference was in the open room, or perhaps because she disagreed with his assertions. Whitman seemed oblivious of her discomfort, but when I asked him later, he said she had complained earlier about one of his written comments on a previous paper. In this instance, she stoically took her paper and returned to her seat at the end of the three-minute session.

The only other cause of stress in Whitman's class centered on his sense of humor, which at times seemed to be borderline sarcasm. He had a quick wit and a sharp tongue, which he controlled pretty well. At times, though, his tone caused students to double take. When this sharpness appeared in his joking, a sense of unease settled on the classroom. Only S10 had the confidence or where-withal to spar with Whitman's humor, and from time to time the interplay became entertaining. Hye Nan, an EL student, had difficulty processing the satirical comments through Korean/Spanish into English, which she reported to be off-putting in her learning process. Also important, I witnessed only good-natured jibing. Students seemed to take his comments in stride and remained respectful while I was in the room. He seemed to be at ease in the class and to be enjoying teaching.

Tension in the rooms seemed to have polarizing effects upon the nature of the classes I observed. Negative tension that crippled or hindered learning came from professors' lack of awareness or inability to confront and deal with the sources of tension. Positive tension kept students and professors on the alert, improved participation and engagement, and enlivened classroom dialogue. The skillful balancing of tension within the classes requires a brave and intentional willingness to confront and name the causes of tension, and the assertiveness and tenacity to see productive practices put into place. By this, I mean that some tension is necessary, but too much tension is at cross-purposes with pedagogical intentionality. Professors and students must allow themselves to become vulnerable in the discussion of the tensions within the classroom.

APPENDIX F: A Student Literacy Diversity Survey

Literacy Diversity Survey (Student)

Course: ENG131 College Composition
Section:
Fall 2015

For each item identified below, circle the number to the right that best fits your judgment of its quality. Use the rating scale to select the quality number.

To make comments, use the back of this paper next in corresponding lines to this survey.

Literacy Instruction Survey: ENG131 Students	Scale				
	Low	Moderate			High
I am confident in my literacy skills to succeed in ENG131 College Composition.					
I believe that my home language and past literacy skills practice will affect my performance in ENG131.					
When students perform well in the literacy work of reading and writing in ENG131, their professors, in part, are responsible for their success.					
When students struggle with the literacy work of reading and writing for ENG131, their professors, in part, are responsible.					
My instructor has been trained and is prepared to teach to the diverse literacy needs of all students in ENG131.					
Professors have a strong responsibility to know their students' literacy preparation and background with regard to the instruction they give in ENG131.					
I have adequate support within this school to meet my differentiated literacy instruction needs related to ENG131 College Composition.					
I possess a sense of accomplishment in meeting the literacy requirements (reading and writing academically) in ENG131.					
I am aware that I may have unique literacy instruction needs based on my home language, ethnicity, or culture.					
I am committed to developing my literacy skills to be able to thrive in higher education courses required in my degree track.					

I am an effective and competent student in ENG131 College Composition.					
I am capable of succeeding in meeting the literacy requirements for a four-year degree in higher education.					

Written responses to Survey Prompts go on the back of this sheet. Please align the responses to the survey question prompts. Thank you.

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Survey Questions – Students

This survey is part one of a three-part literacy research project being conducted by Professor D Bouchard. Participation is voluntary with the understanding that information supplied will be used to examine literacy instruction and learning practices from student and professor perspectives. Participation is voluntary, with potential for future invitation to participate in interviews concerning literacy instruction, academic history, literacy goals, etc.
Bottom of Form

APPENDIX G: Instructor Survey

Literacy Diversity Survey (Instructor)

Course: ENG131 College Composition
Section:
Fall 2015

For each item identified below, circle the number to the right that best fits your judgment of its quality. Use the rating scale to select the quality number.

To make comments, use the back of this paper next in corresponding lines to this survey.

Literacy Instruction Survey: ENG131 Professors	Scale				
	Low	Moderate			High
I am confident in teaching ENG131 College Composition to all students.					
I notice differences in the way non-White students compared to White students perform in the literacy requirements for ENG131.					
When students perform well in the literacy work of reading and writing in ENG131, I am in part responsible for their success.					
When students struggle with the literacy work of reading and writing for ENG131, I am in part responsible.					
I have been trained and am prepared to teach to the diverse literacy needs I find in my students.					
I have a strong responsibility to know my students' literacy preparation and background with regard to the instruction I give in ENG131.					
I have adequate support within the academy to meet differentiated literacy instruction needs of my ENG131 students.					
I possess a sense of accomplishment in working with the individual needs of all students in ENG131.					
I notice unique literacy instruction needs in individuals who fall within groups based on language, ethnicity, or culture.					
I believe students in this course are committed to developing their literacy skills to be able to thrive in their higher education careers.					
I am an effective ENG131 Instructor.					

My students are capable of succeeding in the literacy requirements for a four-year degree in higher education.					

Written responses to Survey Prompts go on the back of this sheet. Please align the responses to the survey question prompts. Thank you.

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Survey Questions – Instructors

This survey is part one of a three-part literacy research project being conducted by Professor D Bouchard. Participation is voluntary with the understanding that information supplied will be used to examine literacy instruction and learning practices from student and professor perspectives. Participation is voluntary, with potential for future invitation to participate in interviews concerning literacy instruction, academic history, literacy goals, etc.

Bottom of Form

Appendix H: Final Interviews (Chapter 5)

(Interviews are conversational, with time limits set at approximately 30 minutes.)

Question 1: Mutually humble collaboration is a two-sided learning construct that explores the relationship between the learner and the teacher. Can you see instances in your own experience in ENG131 College Composition or in other course work? Where you were a student. Can you see places where there would have been mutually humble collaboration between you and the teacher, or the teacher with you or the teacher with other students and the teacher?

Question 2: Have you seen evidence of Mutually Humble Collaboration in which teachers and students lower their defenses or pride in order to work together in the teaching/learning process?

Question 3: Can you recall any examples of seeing the concepts of Mutually Humble Collaboration that involved students interacting with students, or students interacting with professors?

Question 4: Do you have other insights about Mutually Humble Collaboration?