

What We Talk about When We Talk about Probation:
Normative Success Discourse in an Academic Probation Classroom

A Dissertation

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I could hear my heart beating. I could hear everyone's heart. I could hear the human noise we sat there making, not one of us moving, not even when the room went dark.

from "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love" by Raymond Carver

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Dedication

For Oliver – in your three years, you have taught me what over two dozen years of schooling could not: Failure is not an end. It is a reason to keep trying. I love you for this and so, so much more. – Mama

Abstract

Inspired by the author's work teaching students in academic difficulty, the dissertation sought to fill a gap in the academic probation literature dominated by descriptive and intervention-based research by giving voice to a silenced and understudied student population. The research centered the voices and experiences of academic probation students by exploring how they talked about success, failure, and 'doing school' in the context of classroom conversations by both repeating and resisting normative, institutionalized narratives of success and failure. The institutionalized narrative was rooted in neoliberalism and the counternarrative, or resistive narrative, was rooted in critical pedagogy. The study employed classroom discourse analysis methodology using a Bakhtinian sociolinguistic lens to understand the ways that students responded to curriculum prompts and the instructor's discourse. The findings suggested that students navigated the neoliberal rhetorical norms of higher education by repeating institutional language while simultaneously resisting, both individually and collectively, normative definitions of success/failure. Students emphasized the importance of relationships and on-campus connections, habits, mental health, and self-care to their sense of self and academic well-being as they navigated the complex experience of being on academic probation. The implications for the study included encouraging teachers to consider the importance of critical pedagogy moments in their classroom work, the need for researchers to examine academic probation student experiences from a balanced, assets-based lens, and

the applicability of a Bakhtinian lens to making sense of the complex higher education policy landscape in a postmodern age.

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Chapter One

The study of students in academic difficulty and on academic probation is an understudied area in the larger body of literature on student access and persistence in higher education. Often, researchers place much emphasis on getting students into institutions and providing them with access to higher education (for recent examples of this, see Goode, 2010; Kim, Kim, DesJardins, & McCall, 2015; Lundy-Wagner et al., 2014; Munoz, Harrington, & Curs, 2014; Wathington, Pretlow, & Barnett, 2016). An increasing number of researchers, faculty members, and student affairs professionals draw attention to the importance of student persistence as a process—driven by preparation, engagement, motivation, and effective intervention—that continues throughout a student’s college experience (Hirsch, 2001; Tinto, 2015). Much difficulty lies in intervening with struggling students; the reasons they struggle can often be complex and layered, and the approaches to helping them are equally as complex (Hirsch, 2001; Tinto, 2015). The current scope of research in the area is dominated by descriptive, quantitative studies of probationary student characteristics and measured effectiveness of different types of interventions (e.g., advising and course-based) on academic probation student persistence and attrition outcomes. A few researchers interrogate the dominant positivist narrative of generalizable student characteristics and predictors of at-risk status in the college student persistence literature, arguing that contextual understandings and individual student narratives are essential to complicate the notions of failure, success, and motivation often associated with the process of getting on and off academic probation.

The focus in my work is on students who struggle with the ‘traditional’ narrative of higher education (work hard, receive good grades, have a better life). Namely, I seek to study the population of students who are designated as struggling or in “academic difficulty” (Hirsch, 2001, p. 9), especially those on academic probation. Much is known about this population, descriptively, and in terms of predictors of likelihood towards academic success or failure. Less is written about students’ experiences with being labeled as ‘struggling’ or on academic probation. The term ‘struggling’ is applied across educational contexts in K-12 and higher education and can refer to underprepared, remedial, or developmental education students (Bettinger & Long, 2009); students who struggle with content knowledge, with or without learning disabilities (Lynch & Star, 2014); and students who are “variously labeled as ... ‘reluctant,’ ‘at risk,’ ‘disadvantaged,’ ‘alienated,’ ‘resistant,’ [or] ‘educationally deprived’” (Johannessen, 2004, p. 638). There are many problematic aspects of labeling students in this manner, but better terms do not yet seem to exist in the literature.

The designation ‘on academic probation,’ on the other hand, is more definitive, referring specifically to a student whose grade point average (GPA) has fallen below an institutionally-established minimum GPA (Lindo, Sanders, & Oreopoulos, 2008). The probation period refers to a time during which a student’s designation of being on academic probation is supposed to serve “as a wake-up call” to engage in better academic behavior and abide by an institution’s minimum academic standards (Lindo et al., 2008, p. 3). Thus, a struggling student may also be a student on academic probation, but, as I am using them here, the terms are not interchangeable.

According to a 2011 report, college dropout rates in the U.S. top those of comparable countries worldwide, with as little as 56% of four-year students graduating in six years (Symonds, Schwartz, & Ferguson, 2011). Within this numerical reality, the population of students on academic probation at a given institution is more challenging to track. Still, their predicament is part of a larger narrative that dominates the myth of education in the United States, and, indeed, the American Dream: Even for those who have started from nothing, hard work hard pays off. The possibility of achieving one's dreams are endless. In education, the myth takes on a decidedly meritocratic form; it is undoubtedly familiar to anyone schooled in U.S. institutions:

Go to school and work hard. Get good grades.

Getting good grades takes hard work and intelligence.

Good grades will help you get to college.

College will be hard work, but it is worth it because going to college is the ticket to a better life.

Hard work pays off.

In college, you will find what you want to do with the rest of your life.

Your path will be clear.

In my own story as a student and educator, this narrative ingrained itself in my experiences to such an extent that it has only been recently, with critical reflection, that I have genuinely grasped its impact on me. As much as I can say that I had an 'alternative' education (I was brought up in Waldorf Schools where grades were not assigned until high school), I still bought into the intelligence/hard work/good grades narrative that dominates most students' experience of high school, transition to college, and

undergraduate years. I equated good grades with hard work and intelligence and saw a high GPA as a measure of my self-worth. I still do. It is hard to stifle the sense of pride I have in being valedictorian of my high school class and in my undergraduate GPA, which put me in the top 10 of my graduating class and allowed me access to a nomination for Phi Beta Kappa. As a doctoral student, I tried to separate myself from the grades. Still, to me, the student, an A represents hard work (as in, clawing my way through three semesters of statistics) and a manifestation of my intelligence.

I was not a struggling student. My schooling prepared me well for college. I also went to a small liberal arts college that offered much support to students in the form of tenured professors focused on undergraduate teaching, small class sizes, a tight-knit campus community, and high quality academic and student services. I do believe that I had some anxiety around my grades, but I never struggled to the point of receiving poor grades. My relationship to the idea of hard work, intelligence, and good grades revolved around a sense of self-worth, and, especially when I was younger, I based my sense of success or failure on the grades I received. I saw receiving Bs or Cs as a failure of my character, my intelligence, and my effort. I cannot say what the effect of receiving a failing grade would have been (or would be); I have never received one. I recognize the immense privilege that I benefited from growing up. I have an abundance of social capital that prepared me to do well in college. I am sure that part of what eventually drew me to a career in education was that I felt at home in educational environments, especially institutions of higher education.

I did not start out wanting to have a career as a teacher or being guided by a strong desire to work in human service or to help struggling students. I wanted to write.

When I graduated from Beloit College, I had a lot of no plans about where to go next, so I looked to graduate school as an opportunity to expand my creative opportunities and prolong the inevitable transition from the ‘schooling’ world into the ‘working’ world that, for me, happened at a time when the economy did not open its arms to creative professionals. When I was accepted into the Master of Fine Arts in Fiction Writing program at the University of New Mexico, I saw the teaching assistantship they offered me as more of a means to the end of not paying for school and having more time to write than as an opportunity to learn to teach and develop a career as a teacher. I did not yet see the vital role that teaching would come to play in my professional development and my identity as a scholar and writer.

When I first started teaching at 23, I struggled to conceptualize the notion that the neoliberal narrative of intelligence, hard work, and good grades would or could not go the way it did for me. After all, I was one semester away from living this very reality as an undergraduate student myself. I did not have much sympathy for the various excuses that students gave to me. I thought that having high standards for my students was the best form of support that I could give them because people had always had high standards for me, and I managed to live up to them. When I met my now-spouse, he told me that he had failed the same English Composition course I taught (at the same university!) two times before he passed it and finally managed to finish his bachelor’s degree. I consider him to be intelligent and hard-working. He is passionate, a gifted and hilarious writer, and he pursues creative endeavors with an unending source of motivation. I believe that this is the first time that the narrative I had clung to for so long broke down – having intelligence plus working hard does not always equal good grades.

At the same time, it was hard not to judge his failures; in my opinion, it took more active effort to fail the course than it did to pass. Nevertheless, students failed, some spectacularly. It was easy to blame the quality of the institution, the lack of preparedness of the students, the curriculum, and the lack of training that teaching assistants had. The longer I taught, and the more critical awareness I gained, though, the more I had to wonder what I was doing that could contribute to students failing my classes. It was an uncomfortable consideration because it upset my view of myself, the role of college and good grades in success, and the role I saw for myself as a teacher. I set myself on a long path to confronting this uncomfortable positionality (myself, a perpetually successful student, teaching an often disadvantaged, though often very hardworking student population).

After completing my MFA, I went on to work in student services at a for-profit institution and, later, as an adjunct faculty member at an urban community college in Albuquerque, New Mexico. My definition of success for my students was becoming increasingly flexible and tailored to individual student circumstances. For some students, coming to class was a success. I had students who needed the accommodation of being able to turn in handwritten assignments or no assignments at all. For some students, what mattered most to them was respect and time and space to share their opinions. I could not superimpose my privileged, private school, upper-middle-class, White, Midwestern liberal arts experience onto the experiences of my students. I could no longer rely on our shared vision of the purpose of obtaining a college degree as a starting place for creating common goals in the classroom. I began using student narratives as a mechanism for encouraging students to take ownership of and speak about their experiences with

schooling. I asked students, “why are you here? What brought you here? Where do you want to go?” I emphasized the point that the road to higher education is paved with obstacles, sacrifices, negotiation, hard work, and moments of joy. I drew on the work of other authors whose experiences reflected my students’ experiences so that my voice was not the only voice of authority in the classroom. At the same time, I shared my experiences as a student and, in an ongoing sense, as a struggling academic professional. As I was grading my last set of portfolios from my last course before I left New Mexico to come to Minnesota for my second round of grad school, I found this note tucked in with one student’s rough drafts and revised essays:

Felicia,

I wanted to thank you for making my first year of college English interesting, challenging, fun, new, and refreshing. You are an amazing professor, and I have learned so much from being in your sections.

At still such a young age, it’s inspiring as well as motivational to see you have accomplished so much. It really sort of pushed me.

You are going to do great things, I can definitely tell! I wish you the best of luck on your move, as well as furthering your education, and a big congrats on getting into your graduate program!

Best wishes,

Ezra H. Alcazarⁱ

I am not saying that I am a successful teacher all of the time (I still have so much to learn) or that I got hundreds of notes like this (this was the only one). I carry this around with me because it reminds me that getting an education is going on a literal

journey. It reminds me that one student valued sharing his story with me and me sharing my story with him.

I open my dissertation with this narrative because it explains how I have come to work with the students I teach and, even more fundamentally, how I have come to study issues around student learning, assessment, and instructional quality in higher education. I was a teacher and a writer long before I took on the identity of educational researcher. As an adjunct faculty member at minority-serving and major research institutions, I struggled to meet the needs of my struggling students with the limited resources afforded to me. I first approached this problem intending to gain greater understanding. For me, understanding and relating to someone's situation helps me to talk better and listen to them, which I have found goes a long way towards fostering a welcoming classroom environment. As often happens with me, understanding led to a desire to enact change in my practice, my approach, and my understanding of struggling students. I have long-since abandoned my attitude of little sympathy, high standards, and a rote expectation that hard work leads to good grades. I am more apt to approach every student's situation as unique, and I often find myself conflicted about grading each student on his or her trajectory versus the constraints of time and resources that I dedicate to each class. More than anything, I have become interested in involving each student in his or her educational journey – education is a torch to be handed off from teacher to student, from mentor to mentee. In this journey, there is a level of responsibility that we – and the institutions at which we teach – have to provide an environment that engages and includes students, fosters their sense of curiosity, and supports their learning and development across disciplines. It is one thing to describe the population and make-up of

students attending an institution. It is another entirely to give voice to students' individual experiences and make concrete the often unspoken highs and lows of getting a college education. I have come to place a great deal of value on the journey of education and in both higher education's narrative of merit and hard work and counternarrative of individual experience and storytelling. Somewhere, at the intersection of these narratives, many students and educators find their identities, and institutions find their purpose.

Competing Purposes of Higher Education

Though the purpose of higher education has been much-debated throughout the history of the United States (Bess & Dee, 2008; Birnbaum, 1991; Kerr, 2001; Thelin, 2011), two relevant, yet conflicting purposes emerge here: the private role of higher education in creating a better life for those who participate in it and the public role of higher education in serving the democratic and economic development needs of the nation (Lazerson, 1998). For those who hold sacred the ivy-covered walls and ivory towers of the American higher education institution, the balance of public, communal educational values with the private self-betterment narrative of the American dream, an almost poetic sense of higher education's role in American society emerged:

People sometimes refer to higher education as the higher learning, but colleges and universities are much more than knowledge factories; they are testaments to man's perennial struggle to make a better world for himself, his children, and his children's children. This, indeed, is their sovereign purpose. They are great fortifications against ignorance and irrationality; but they are more than places of the higher learning—they are centers and symbols of man's higher yearning.
(Cowley, 1955, p. 31)

Within these classical purposes (which Cowley (1955) called “higher learning [and] higher yearning” (p. 31)), two contemporary interwoven narratives have arisen: the economic, neoliberal narrative of hard work and merit in education (Apple, 2001) and the critical counternarrative of the pedagogy of insurrection (McLaren, 2015). This study lies at the intersection of the narrative and its counternarrative: though receiving a higher education comes with the promise of personal intellectual, professional, and lifestyle gains, this journey does not often take its desired form for all students who undertake it.

The Neoliberal Narrative

The dominant neoliberal narrative that Apple, (2001, 2006) has argued represents an alliance between economic neoliberalism and political neoconservatism has so pervaded our national consciousness that the forces of “the consumer” and “the market” have come to dictate rhetorical norms in education (Apple, 2001, p. 20). Underlying the consumer-market relationship that defines educational transactions is a strong emphasis on the idea of a meritocracy, or “the belief that institutions should be governed by people chosen on the basis of merit, perhaps as defined by education and ability, rather than other factors, such as wealth or social class” (Liu, 2011, p. 385). For both Apple (2001) and Giroux (2007), at the heart of an emphasis on neoliberalism in education is the idea of the student or academic as entrepreneur – enterprising individuals most concerned with “self-promoting market agendas and narrow definitions of self-interest, caught on the [corporate] treadmill” (Giroux, 2007, p. 2). Liu (2011) suggested that meritocracy “as a form of governance has seemingly yielded to a structure [that breeds] a greater sense of entitlement among those who believe they have earned whatever rewards they come to possess” (p. 386). Among students, this mindset breeds a sense of entitlement to

personally benefit from an education as well as the sense that education is something to be earned.

It is hard to view the neoliberal narrative without criticizing it; however, the ideals of neoliberalism and neoconservatism are remaking the educational system in real-time, and represent a very concrete reality for the students in the system (Apple, 2001; Giroux, 2007). In neoliberal/neoconservative narrative, school policies emphasize a move towards “privatization and marketization ... and reconstructing a people’s character based largely on individual entrepreneurial values” (Apple, 2006, p. 23). In the individual citizen, this identity construction resembles “[someone] who is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur ... manipulate[ed] by the state ...[to] make a ‘continual enterprise of [him or her]self’ (Olssen, 1996 in Apple, 2001, pp. 60-61). In this construction, the state and the consumer place all faith in the power of the market to regulate quality (Apple, 2001). Coupled with neoconservatism’s tendency towards increased national oversight, regulation, and standardized testing, it does not surprise that the ‘neo’ education looks more like a private, consumer-driven, market-regulated force that de-emphasizes the public good of education, the role of teachers in shaping the direction of student learning, and the idea that institutions must vary instruction based on students’ backgrounds and context (Apple, 2001).

One of the results of a neoliberal reform of education is that White, upper-middle-class students and parents are privileged by the system and have been shown to benefit more greatly from increased choice, and the privatization and marketization of educational institutions. Apple (2001) offered an example of this:

In marketized plans, more affluent parents often have more flexible hours and can visit multiple schools. They have cars—often more than one—and can *afford* driving their children across town to attend a “better” school. They can as well provide the hidden cultural resources such as camps and after-school programs (dance, music, computer classes, etc.) that give their children an “ease,” a “style,” that seems “natural” and acts as a set of cultural resources. Their previous stock of social and cultural capital—who they know, their “comfort” in social encounters with educational officials—is an unseen but powerful storehouse of resources. (p. 73)

The resources passed from affluent parents to their children pervade the educational experience and provide a leg up in achieving the neoliberal ideal of the entrepreneurial student (Apple, 2001). What is not explained by neoliberalism is where these resources come from, if not from the parent. Actors in the marketized system place blame on parents and children for failing to acclimate to the system rather than on the system for failing to accommodate its under-privileged participants (Apple, 2001). Though the neoliberal vision of education is a meritocracy, in which individuals are judged on their enterprising natures, and hard work is rewarded with personal gain, it is also a reality in which the state subtly remakes individuals in its idealized image (Apple, 2001). The mores and hidden curriculum that allow individuals to access the benefits of the system are lost to segments of the population who have never had access to it at all (Apple, 2001). Though there is a sort of ‘justice for all’ aim behind neoliberal educational reforms (Apple, 2001), it manifests as a ‘justice for some’ reality.

Apple (2001) argued that this narrative colors education across Western countries – in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary contexts – and has been on the rise for decades. Giroux (2007) furthered the lens in higher education, examining the corporatization and marketization of the higher education institution as it remakes itself in the neoliberal ideal. In this view, academics are increasingly “academic entrepreneurs” and “the traditional ... imperative to ‘publish or perish’ is now supplanted with the neoliberal mantra ‘privatize or perish’ as everyone in the university is transformed into an entrepreneur, customer, or client, and every relationship is ultimately judged in bottom-line, cost-effective terms” (Giroux, 2007, p. 104). For all higher education stakeholders, the private benefits of obtaining higher education (job training, increased quality of life, and career satisfaction) are emphasized over the public good of institutions as havens of free speech and gatekeepers of the values of good citizenry and democracy (Giroux, 2007).

These shifts have effects both on students in and on the profession of the academy (Giroux, 2007). For students, there is an increased emphasis on the idea of education bought and consumed. “The message to students is clear: Customer satisfaction is offered as a surrogate for learning” (Giroux, 2007, p. 106). There is a decreased emphasis on classroom-based learning, in favor of more efficient, streamlined, technology-based learning processes (Giroux, 2007). For faculty and researchers, increasing ties to corporate interests limit the freedom with which to conduct research and disseminate information (Giroux, 2007). And, the effects on the work of academics is marked:

Increasingly, academics find themselves pressured to teach more service-oriented and market-based courses. The processes of vocationalization—fueled by

corporate values that mimic “flexibility,” “competition,” or “lean production,” and rationalized through the application of accounting principles—threaten to gut many academic departments and programs that cannot translate their subject matter into commercial gains. (Giroux, 2007, p. 124)

As higher education institutions further mold themselves in the corporate image, Giroux (2007) argued that much of the public good gleaned from and public purpose of higher education is lost, sacrificed at the altar of private gain and market sensitivity.

Furthermore, Liu (2011) cautioned against blindly extolling the virtues of meritocratic views of higher education so that it “is not simplified into mere ‘defensive necessity and that true commitment to equality of educational opportunity remains paramount” (p. 394). It is this question of equality, access, and the enduring role of education as an empowerment tool that forms the tenets of the critical counternarrative to the rise of the ‘neo’ narrative as the normative, institutionalized rhetoric in education.

The Critical Counternarrative

McLaren (2015) defined critical pedagogy as the
Locat[ing of] the production of critical knowledges leading to praxis in its social, spatial, and geopolitical contexts, and [the] reveal[ing of] the workings of the production process and how it operates intertextually alongside and upon other discourses, but [doing so] with a particular project in mind – an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-racist, anti-sexist, and pro-democratic and emancipatory struggle. (p. 27)

The goals of critical pedagogy and critical praxis are widespread, “demand[ing] that we address the reality of the spiritual dimension of our struggle to build a better world for

ourselves and for generations to follow” (McLaren, 2015, p. 42). In contrast to the neoliberal narrative, which emphasizes the individual’s relationship with the free-regulatory power of the market, the critical counternarrative looks at the inclusive and emancipatory prospects of theory and practice of education (McLaren, 2015). Critical pedagogy emphasizes the importance of “true communities,” the thing “missing in most classrooms in public schools [and] university seminar rooms” (McLaren, 2015, p. 44). McLaren (2015) further emphasized that “only communities of trust, solidarity, and cooperation striving for moral rectitude can combat ... injustice” (p. 44). As a theory, practice, and a counternarrative in education, critical pedagogy offers a view that sometimes reacts to the neoliberal narrative, sometimes shadows it, and sometimes speaks loudly against it.

Critical pedagogy “is askew to traditional academia and [does] not represent the ivory tower” (McLaren, 2015, p. 136). It reacts in direct opposition to “the current crisis of neoliberal globalization ... [that] is ... repatterning the subjective world ... constantly breaking down cultures of oppositional political solidarity by trying to create a post-ideological universe of human experiences and selfhood” (McLaren, 2015, p. 138). It differentiates between schooling and education, where education is

that which intrudes upon our instincts and instruments of mind and augments them; it pushes us along the arcs of the stars where our thoughts can give rise to new vistas of being and becoming and to new solidarities with our fellow humans and non-humans alike. (McLaren, 2015, p. 139)

McLaren (2015) called to “invite students [and educators] to understand everyday life from the perspective of those who are the most powerless in our society so that society

can be transformed in the interests of a more humane and just existence for all” (p. 141). Such a call may seem revolutionary, or common sense, depending on the perspective. With a subject like college student learning and development, a critical pedagogy lens brings into focus the experiences of students who struggle with traditionally accepted definitions of success and gives voice to students whose experience is not described by the neoliberal narrative that pervades the higher education journey.

Critical Pedagogy Work in Practice

In a constructivist, qualitative study exploring successful students’ definitions of their success, Yazedijan, Toews, Sevin, & Purswell (2008) found that students often defined success by external measures such as grades and grade point averages, as well as “social integration” and “a sense of being able to navigate the college environment on their own” (p. 145-146). These findings did not differ significantly from other studies examining a similar subject (Yazedijan et al., 2008), and, interestingly, the narrative constructed by students reflected the dominant narrative of entrepreneurial educational ideals emphasized by neoliberalism (Apple, 2001; Giroux, 2007). Yazedijan et al.'s (2008) most exciting findings revolved around the notion that college somehow represents a transition time for students in which they take on more adult tasks and accept more personal responsibility. Despite having a clear sense of this expected pathway that occurs as part of college education, many students reported feeling underprepared or unready for the rigors of college-level work and expectations (Yazedijan et al., 2008). The study’s findings suggested that students may be schooled in rhetoric of success in college without being completely prepared to live it out (Yazedijan et al., 2008).

In a counternarrative to the ‘traditional’ narrative of the success of students in Yazedijian et al.'s (2008) work, Arcand and Le Blanc (2012) profiled the narrative experiences of one male student on academic probation at a Canadian university using a social constructive lens. When recalling his experience entering the university, Mark “felt like he was not welcome and did not belong He was disconnected from his university as an institution and he did not feel compelled to attend his classes” (Arcand & Le Blanc, 2012, pp. 221–222). In Mark’s own words, being on academic probation was “a breeding ground for insecurity” (Arcand & Le Blanc, 2012, p. 223). Though Mark had more positive experiences with classes where he developed relationships with the professors and felt a degree of autonomy in completing the work, these experiences were few and far between (Arcand & Le Blanc, 2012). It was not until Mark found—with the support of an academic learning coach—a desire to reengage himself with his education that he turned his studies around and more successfully navigated the experience and expectations of the university (Arcand & Le Blanc, 2012).

Mark’s narrative illustrates a common theme among my anecdotal experiences working with students on academic probation. Many students enter college with the expectation that their educational experience will go according to the dominant, normative narrative. When they find that it does not, they withdraw from university life (by disengaging, blaming the system, ceasing to attend classes, focusing their priorities on something other than school, or dropping out). Often, students receive little help from the institution, and they do not get a chance to verbally and emotionally process the experience of being designated as an academic probation student. In the Academic Probation Intervention Course [APIC] I taught and later featured in this study, students

were often confounded by an opening question I posed in the first week of class, “how did you react when you first got the letter saying you were on academic probation?” Many of them had to dig deep to bring those emotions to the surface. Some revealed how demoralizing and degrading it felt. Some brushed the experience off at the time only to go back and examine their feelings later; it was not until they found the personal hook that reengaged them with their education that they began to take more ownership of their behaviors and experiences.

In speaking about the contrasts between capitalist and critical points of view, McLaren (2015), said, “Capitalism has made us feel alone together and homesick at home. ... We want to engage in acts of self-creation, you have forced us to act in self-preservation because you compel us into acts of self-alienation for our survival” (p. 395). To be a struggling student in the neoliberal university is to find oneself at the intersection of the neoliberal narrative and the critical counternarrative. The boundaries between these capitalist and socialist spaces are often confusing and blurry for students who have been schooled in one ideological rhetoric and come to college only to be confronted by the neo and the critical simultaneously. Many are not prepared to navigate these waters. McLaren’s (2015) critical pedagogical perspective supports me in saying that educators must serve as navigators, they must provide a lens for focusing on what matters in this complex, intertwined tapestry of ideologies. They must step aside from their lecturns and empower the silenced to speak. As an overarching lens, postmodernism admirably serves these aims.

Postmodernism’s Sense of Incredulity and Unity

I fear that I am stopping my readers in their tracks by throwing in ‘postmodernism’ as a theoretical term. “Oh, I’m not very familiar with that lens,” I have heard my mentors say.

“Doesn’t postmodernism advocate for chaos and a collapse of all truth and meaning?” “How does that represent a useful paradigm for framing social science research?”

I was first drawn to postmodernism in an aesthetic sense, as a creative writer. Postmodern writing has a self-referential tendency to critique and comment on its form. It is often humorously winking across the fourth wall at the reader. The postmodern context in which I situate my work is not advocating for a collapse of all meaning. Instead, it advocates for a healthy sense of skepticism, intending to deconstruct hegemonic narratives that pervade society, all while seeking an underlying unity in a reality that is full of meanings and truths that are multiple and continuously evolving.

My postmodern framework situates struggling students in higher education at the intersection of the dominant neoliberal success narrative and the critical counternarrative. A postmodern lens allows for both narratives (the way they are manifested culturally as well as the way they are expressed uniquely for each student) to exist as truth while forwarding an agenda of interrupting, negotiating with, deconstructing, or transforming the dominant narrative. My work builds on Lyotard's (1984) notion of postmodern incredulity and the work of Peters and Lankshear (1996) on the counternarrative. Peters and Langshear (1996) defined postmodern counternarratives as those “which counter not merely the *grand* narratives but also (or instead) the ‘*official*’ and ‘*hegemonic*’ narratives of everyday life: those legitimating stories propagated for a specific political purpose to

manipulate public consciousness by heralding a national set of common cultural ideals” (p. 2). The counternarratives are “little stories of those individuals and groups whose knowledges and histories have been marginalized, excluded, subjugated, or forgotten in the telling of official narratives” (Peters & Langshear, 1996, p. 2). For struggling students, their academic identity exists in negotiation between the dominant success narrative perpetuated by the university’s official messaging, by faculty members, other students, and family members, and an alternative narrative that reframes their experiences according to new standards and a different definition of success. For this reason, I offer postmodernism as a framework in which to situate the experiences of these students.

Postmodern Knowledge

Postmodernism is a broader social discourse that borrows heavily from the critical tenets of poststructuralism, including “the indeterminacy of language, ... the decentering and fragmentation of the concept of self, ... a recognition of the tight, unbreakable power/ knowledge nexus, ... and the decline of dependence upon rationalism” (Bloland, 1995, p. 526). Best and Kellner (1997) named postmodernism as an “emerging ... paradigm organized around a family of concepts [and] shared methodological assumptions that ... subvert boundaries of all kinds” (p. 19). Lyotard (1984) challenged the modern definitions of knowledge, which exist in opposition to the increasingly postmodern reality of late twentieth and early twenty-first-century society. Institutions (including higher education institutions) seek legitimation based on performativity – or the efficiency and quality of their output (a student, an idea, or a product) (Lyotard, 1984). As institutions seek legitimation, they must use incredulity and doubt to negotiate

the boundaries between paradigmatic truths and the fluid understandings of knowledge that define the “postmodern...condition” (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiii).

For Lyotard (1984), definitions of knowledge that “partition ... [the] ... positivist ... [and the] critical” are a “type of oppositional thinking that is out of step with the most vital modes of postmodern knowledge” (p. 14). In opposition to such divided ways of knowing, Lyotard (1984) argued for an understanding of postmodern science as “producing not the known, but the unknown ... [and defining] its own evolution as discontinuous, catastrophic, nonrectifiable, and paradoxical” (p. 60). Postmodernism thus offers an incredulity towards the fixed, modernist understanding of legitimate science (Lyotard, 1984). It recognizes a reality in which competing definitions of truth and knowledge exist but advocates for an understanding that is characterized by incredulity towards fixed definitions, moving instead towards truth-seeking as a constant interrogation and reworking of conventional ways of knowing (Lyotard, 1984).

Best and Kellner (1991) offered an interpretation of Lyotard’s (1984) postmodern perspective as “knowledge ... produced ... by dissent, by putting into question existing paradigms, by inventing new ones, rather than assenting to the universal truth or agreeing to a consensus” (p. 166). For Best and Kellner (1991), it was incredulity towards and rejection of universal truths that defined Lyotard’s (1984) brand of postmodernism: “Lyotard champions dissensus over consensus, diversity and dissent over conformity and consensus, and heterogeneity and the incommensurable over homogeneity and universality” (p. 166). Such a lens applies to a study of higher education institutions, and particularly my focus on students on academic probation because it also relies heavily on modernist assumptions and struggles to adapt to the postmodern age (Bloland, 1995).

Unifying the work of postmodern theorists, Best and Kellner (1991) said, “almost all postmodern theories ... explode the boundaries between the various established academic disciplines – such as philosophy, social theory, economics, literature – and produce a new kind of supradisciplinary discourse” (p. 256). In this sense, postmodernism becomes a new social critique, one that crosses boundaries and uses a lens of skepticism to unify disparate and competing points of view (Best & Kellner, 1991).

Postmodernism and Research

In thinking of postmodern ideals as a framework that supports research, it is necessary to turn to the work of scholars who attempt to reconcile the chaotic and abstract postmodern understanding of reality with the rigors of social science research. Best and Kellner (1991) questioned postmodernism’s outright rejection of modernism, instead “reconstruct[ing] [a] critical social theory,” which retains the most useful aspects of both modernist and postmodernist thought (p. 256-257). With such a blending of modernism and postmodernism, Best and Kellner (1991) moved towards a “multidimensional and multiperspectival theory [that] looks at society from a multiplicity of vantage points, conceptualizing specific phenomena” from a variety of disciplinary points of view (p. 266-267). Such an ideology allows for competing points of view both to coexist and inform the field from their highest points of strength.

Tierney (1996) characterized postmodern research by its sense of doubt and highlighted this importance in terms of considerations that researchers should make:

If postmodernism has created an ideology of doubt, it also stands to reason that our research endeavors need to reflect that doubt. ... As objectivity/subjectivity are issues of concern in the collection of data, they are also issues in the

presentation of data. And as we have reinterpreted the meaning of objectivity in the collection and analysis of data, we must also reinterpret such meanings for our texts (para. 38).

For Tierney (1996), interrogation of contradictions becomes as much a practice as a philosophy in postmodern research.

Postmodernism and Higher Education

Bloland (2005) made recommendations about how to approach the complicated endeavor that is knowledge production in a postmodern world, including to “institutionalize dissensus within the university; [and] recognize and take advantage of the plurality of departments, canons, and styles of ideas and debate as the basis for creating and developing the now unimagined new skills and ideas needed to cope with the postmodern world” (p. 147). In this view of postmodern universities, a diversity of ideas and competing viewpoints are to be celebrated rather than feared (Bloland, 2005). A higher education institution, rather than being a behemoth rooted in inflexible ways, becomes a flexible space where competing ideas can coexist and even complement each other, paving the way for a new world. From Bloland’s (2005) perspective, a postmodern lens promotes a vocabulary of change and new meaning-making in higher education.

The postmodern inclination to reject boundaries and interrogate differences in ways of knowing serves as a useful sieve through which to filter the competing ideologies associated with the neoliberal success narrative and critical pedagogy counternarrative. For Bloland (2005), the postmodern sense of incredulity is essential to navigating uncertain times in higher education, “for it invites a posture of skepticism toward modernist assumptions, generating incentives to interrogate the master narratives on

which modernism rests” (p. 124). Some students struggle at the intersection of being urged to work hard for personal gain and the distinct systemic realities of limited access to resources and human capital (Apple, 2001). The postmodern vocabulary of skepticism provides a philosophical grounding to support further research into how students interrogate the narratives they experience as they move through their educational journey.

Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces in Language and Society

In the years since beginning my dissertation, I have sought out ways to operationalize postmodern thinking and find mechanisms that enabled postmodern skepticism; in other words, I sought methodologies that offered a research blueprint for actively dismantled hegemonic power structures so that I could move from the theoretical to the concrete. Through my exposure to classroom discourse analysis, I found a useful theoretical lens in Bakhtin (1981) that has shaped much of my work that follows, in terms of conceptualizing the way I have approached supporting students in academic distress as well as in designing and implementing a classroom discourse analysis research project. Because Bakhtin’s (1981) serves as theory, methodology, and method, I have layered explanation and application of it throughout my manuscript.

A literary critic and theorist, Bakhtin (1981) used the emergence of the novel as a recognized artistic genre to highlight the linguistic tension that existed between the traditionally recognized, unifying structures of poetic artistry that had had the same definitions since Aristotle’s *Poetics* and the emerging genres of writing in the twentieth century that spiraled away from traditional forms and rejected unifying definitions of artistic form. Bakhtin (1981) extended this tension between unifying and disunifying discourse to language and society. Monologic discourse, or that whose meaning remains

single and constant across contexts, is at the basis of centripetal “forces that serve to unify and centralize the verbal-ideological world” (p. 270), which spiral towards institutional norms. The opposing force of this linguistic tension is dialogic rhetoric, or that whose meaning is layered or stratified and dependent on context and on who is speaking or re-voicing ideas, centripetal forces that spiral away from institutional norms (Bakhtin, 1981). Bakhtin (1981) referred to the tendency of language to be diverse, stratified, and contextual as “heteroglossia” (p. 270). In Bakhtin’s (1981) view, language becomes increasingly heteroglossic, the longer it is used and the more kinds of people who use it, so that the unifying forces of monologic discourse fight against the disunification of language, its increasing diversity, and variation. This spiraling towards and away from unification and centralization was, in Bakhtin’s (1981) view at the center of understanding the meaning of written and spoken discourse – the tension between centripetal and centrifugal forces exists in all utterances:

Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The processes of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance; the utterance not only answers the requirements of its own language as an individualized embodiment of a speech act, but it answers the requirements of heteroglossia as well; it is in fact an active participant in such speech diversity. And this active participation of every utterance in living heteroglossia determines the linguistic profile and style of the utterance to no less a degree than its inclusion in any normative-centralizing system of a unitary language. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272)

For our purposes in educational research, we may view the centripetal, unifying forces of language as institutional norms, the language of authority, the language of the school, administrative leadership. As well, it is the language that ultimately underlies curriculum and instructor discourse as well, as these entities are also representatives of the institution, although they may act individually in ways that counter institutional norms. We may equate centripetal forces with the neoliberal educational rhetoric that was introduced earlier in this chapter. Centrifugal, disunifying, stratifying forces of language, on the other hand, represent the increasing diversity of voices, intersecting identities, and languages in educational spaces, the influence that various cultures and subcultures exert on educational institutions and the ways that heteroglossic language breaks down, interferes with, and resists monologic language. We may equate centrifugal forces with critical pedagogy, or a collaborative resistance of normative (and, perhaps, neoliberal), institutional rhetoric.

Throughout this research project, the interplay and tension between normative, institutional rhetoric and neoliberalism with disunifying, heteroglossic language and principles of critical pedagogy has arisen as a greater question around communicating with students, introducing the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ ways to ‘do school,’ emphasizing individual achievements and personalization of the educational journey as well as moments of collective resistance. From a postmodern perspective, Bakhtin (1981) operationalizes the tension between hegemonic power structures and linguistic diversity as a concrete occurrence in every spoken utterance, in every story that students share, in the case of my study. In other words, students are always interacting with monologia in the context of heteroglossia; they revoice institutional norms and resist them, as they talk

in class. I position this research around student and teacher narratives and what happens for students on academic probation in the classroom. The classroom is a dynamic and changeable space – the dialogue that occurs there is hard to capture and often remembered through a colored lens. In my work, I have sought to capture it, and understand ways in which the discourse of the curriculum, the instructor, and other students affect how individuals revoice and resist normative ways of talking about success/failure and normative understandings of ‘doing school.’ There is, of course, no black-and-white explanation or direct relationship to be found. Still, I will try, through the lens of Bakhtin (1981) and the ideology of critical postmodernism, to make meaning of students’ classroom talk in this context.

Chapter Two

In examining the relevant research on students on academic probation, I found a dearth of studies that explicitly questioned the normative definitions of success that have come to populate the higher education rhetoric, influenced so heavily by neoliberal values (Apple, 2001; Giroux, 2007). Through an exhaustive search of the top journals of higher education, the journals of college student development, and beyondⁱⁱ, I found little beyond a body of research that is descriptive and outcomes-based – and less substantial than I would like, given the pervasive concern around issues related to student persistence and attrition (e.g., Hu & Wolniak, 2013; Leppel, 2002; Tierney & Venegas, 2009). Though many of these studies call for work that is more contextual and critical, few researchers have taken up the call, and what little exists does not move much towards disrupting or transforming the internalized beliefs and practices around normative academic success strategies and neoliberal definitions of merit, especially in conversation with some of the critical work that empowers students of color in higher education and employs a transformative approach to democratizing the classroom.

Background and Significance

Increasingly, the focus on student access research in higher education has shifted to include conversations around issues of persistence throughout college and on interventions that improve student attrition outcomes. This focus includes a still understudied sub-population of college students, those in academic difficulty and on academic probation (Arcand & Le Blanc, 2012; Lindo et al., 2008; Tinto, 2015). The research in this area relies heavily on a larger body of literature on postsecondary student access and persistence; so often, students in academic difficulty get lost in a broader

research and practitioner-based conversation around access and persistence (Arcand & Le Blanc, 2012).

The study of students in academic difficulty and on academic probation is an understudied area in the larger body of literature on student access and persistence in higher education. The current scope of research in the area is dominated by descriptive, quantitative studies of probationary student characteristics and measured effectiveness of different types of interventions (e.g., advising and course-based) on probationary student persistence and attrition outcomes. A few researchers interrogate the dominant positivist narrative of generalizable student characteristics and predictors of at-risk status in the college student persistence literature, arguing that contextual understandings and individual student narratives are important to complicate the notions of failure, success, and motivation often associated with the process of getting on and off of academic probation.

Definitions of academic probation vary across different institutional contexts, but usually involve a punitive change in status when a student's cumulative grade point average falls below a designated benchmark (Arcand & Le Blanc, 2012; Isaak, Graves, & Mayers, 2007; Lindo et al., 2008). Though procedures differ across institutional contexts, a traditional model of academic probation relies heavily on student-initiated efforts to improve academic standing within a passive institutional framework (James & Graham, 2010; Lindo et al., 2008). Often, students on academic probation receive notification of their status via a passive intervention such as a letter or email, which may include contact information for academic support services on campus (Isaak et al., 2007). Probation status is usually tied to grade point average, and, if a student's GPA does not improve

after a set number of academic terms, the student is suspended from the university and must petition to return (James & Graham, 2010; Lindo et al., 2008).

Though the predictors of academic difficulty are complex and varied, the population of students in academic difficulty has been shown to share some characteristics in common, including lower levels of engagement, motivation, and academic self-confidence (Isaak et al., 2007; Lindo et al., 2008; Tinto, 2015). As well, some evidence has suggested that first-generation students, students in developmental or remedial education programs, students who work and attend college simultaneously, and students with weaker social and familial networks are at greater risk for academic difficulty (Arcand & Le Blanc, 2012; Isaak et al., 2007; James & Graham, 2010; Lindo et al., 2008).

Much of the research in the area of academic difficulty and academic probation has been descriptive, with an emphasis on positivistic, quantitative methodologies (e.g., Isaak et al., 2007; James & Graham, 2010; Lindo et al., 2008). Isaak et al. (2007), James and Graham (2010), and Lindo et al. (2008) studied factors that influence students cited as impacting their academic difficulty or probation status and sought descriptive conclusions about predictors and characteristics of students on academic probation. In a study typical of many in the literature (in terms of both design and findings), Isaak et al. (2007) compared the responses of probation-status (treatment group) and 'normal'-status students (control group) on an "academic, motivational, and emotional" problems checklist, to understand the skill-based and motivational factors that may influence risk for probationary status (p. 175). Additionally, the researchers administered a study habits survey and reading assessment to their treatment group, who received a multi-faceted

probationary student intervention in the form of supplemental instruction, advising, and coaching (Isaak et al., 2007). The study found that, although the treatment and control group identified many academic and motivational problems in common, probation-status students reported more skill and motivation-related concerns than students in the control group (Isaak et al., 2007). Probationary students' responses to the study habits survey correlated to some self-identified areas of difficulty from the checklist, including time management and procrastination. Still, the analysis also revealed discrepancies between the self-administered checklist and the study habits assessment, which may suggest that probationary students have difficulty self-assessing their own areas of difficulty (Isaak et al., 2007).

Lindo et al. (2008) studied the motivating effects of academic probation as a type of negative reward at a large, Canadian university. Their findings suggested that student responses to probationary status notification varied widely, with some students choosing to drop out rather than attempt to meet the standards set out by the institution's probation contract. In contrast, other students were motivated to and did perform better as a result of their academic probation status (Lindo et al., 2008). Overall, students who had higher academic abilities were more susceptible to motivational issues and were more likely to drop out as a result of academic probation than were students with lower academic abilities (Lindo et al., 2008). Lindo et al.'s (2008) findings suggest that the relationships between ability, motivation, and persistence are complex and do not always follow expected directions (e.g., high ability equals high success, and hard work equals high reward).

Answering the Call for Contextual and Qualitative Research

By interrogating the generalizations prevalent across the descriptive, quantitative studies common in the study of academic probation, some researchers have problematized the procedural, punitive definitions of probation and complicated the clear path to college success as a result of hard work (Arcand & Le Blanc, 2012; Tinto, 2015). Contrary to the descriptive, quantitative research commonly associated with studying students on academic probation, a small number of researchers seek to problematize the generalization of probation by focusing on the lived experiences of specific students experiencing probation in specific contexts (Arcand & Le Blanc, 2012). Arcand and Le Blanc (2012) documented the experiences of a single male student using a life-story narrative methodology. Though Arcand and Le Blanc's (2012) study subject shared some characteristics in common with those identified by Isaak et al. (2007), James and Graham (2010), and Lindo, et al. (2008), he was also shown to possess a level of self-reflection deemed unique by the researchers as well as a complicated relationship with his educational journey. The qualitative approach and the life-story narrative format allowed the researchers to center a single student's unique experience with academic probation in a conversation that is often dominated by generalized trends and depersonalized characteristics (Arcand & Le Blanc, 2012).

Tinto (2015) further problematized the idea that students who work hard will be successful by emphasizing the role that perception plays in a student's potential for success and persistence. Though many have emphasized the importance of self-efficacy and sense of belonging on students' levels of motivation and potential for success (e.g., Hsieh, Sullivan, & Guerra, 2007; Kamphoff, Hutson, Amundsen, & Atwood, 2006; Vuong, Brown-Welty, & Tracz, 2010; Winkler & Sriram, 2015; Yazedijan et al., 2008;

York, Gibson, & Rankin, 2015), Tinto's (2015) proposed model has merit for consideration because of its emphasis on a student-centered view of persistence that places the onus on the institution to create an environment that is conducive to student success rather than on the student to somehow conform to the institutional context. Tinto (2015) advocated for institutions to understand "student perceptions, not simply their behavioral manifestation, and their impact upon student decisions to stay or leave is a prerequisite for the development of a more comprehensive strategy to further enhance the persistence and completion of all ... students" (p. 11). Such a model applies to a complex experience such as academic probation because it highlights the perceptual nature of belonging and its role in motivation (Tinto, 2015). The quantitative research examined here supports this supposition, as it highlights the many discrepancies in probationary student characteristics and perceived versus assessed abilities, levels of motivation, and ability to conform to institutional expectations (Isaak et al., 2007; James & Graham, 2010; Lindo et al., 2008).

The literature concludes that students on academic probation are characterized by lower abilities to self-assess areas of difficulty, more issues combating low motivation, and a variety of other factors that have commonly been shown to denote increased risk, including first-generation students, students who work, and students with weak support networks (Arcand & Le Blanc, 2012; Isaak et al., 2007; James & Graham, 2010; Lindo et al., 2008; Tinto, 2015). The population of students in academic difficulty and on academic probation is understudied, and much of the complexity of the academic probation experience goes unstated in the research (Arcand & Le Blanc, 2012; Tinto, 2015).

The Effectiveness of Interventions for Students on Academic Probation

Much of the recent research that focuses on the population of students on academic probation revolves around studying the effectiveness of various intervention models that go beyond the traditional, passive approach that emphasizes student initiation and institutional indifference. I will discuss previous study of reformed or invasive interventions that shift emphasis to more institutionally-initiated approaches that emphasize more personal contact with students. For organizational purposes, I have grouped these intervention models into two categories, invasive advising and course-based interventions, and will review the literature for each.

Invasive Advising Approaches

One common site of intervention reform in the academic probation literature is the relationship between students in academic difficulty and academic advisors, with an emphasis on intrusive advising practices that engage students in more direct, personal contact at multiple points throughout a student's academic journey. Vander Schee (2007) measured the impact of insight-oriented intrusive advising on probation students' term GPAs, operating under the hypothesis that increased levels of individualized interaction with an academic advisor would improve student grade and attrition outcomes. The study found a significant improvement in GPA between the group of students who underwent 3 to 8 skill-oriented academic advising sessions versus the control group who did not respond to the call to attend and therefore did not undergo any advising sessions (Vander Schee, 2007).

In a similar study, "high intervention" academic advising practices were compared with little or no student contact with academic advisors in impacting student

GPA and attrition outcomes (Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001, p. 41). The researchers ran three versions of a trial. In the first, high-involvement student participants were required to participate in multiple modes of instruction and were contacted via phone to remind them of the offered activities (Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001). Students in the first group, which consisted of the most directed academic skill and improvement instruction and activity involvement, had the most significant gains over students in the “low involvement” group and the second and third trials of the “high involvement” group, which consisted of less required activities (Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001, p. 41). Kirk-Kuwaye and Nishida’s (2001) findings suggested that intrusive and high levels of advisor involvement can have the most significant impact on probationary students’ outcomes, including improvements in GPA and continued enrollment.

Using data that focused specifically on students with learning disabilities on academic probation, Abelman and Molina (2002) conducted post-hoc analyses to compare short and long-term “yields” of the effect of low and high intrusive advising practices on student outcomes (p. 69). The study’s findings suggested that, over the long term, students at the highest levels of risk in terms of academic probation and learning disability statuses, were marginally significantly more responsive to intrusive advising practices (Abelman & Molina, 2002). In other words, students who were at the most significant risk for attrition and academic difficulty had the greatest benefit from participating in directed, intrusive advising practices (Abelman & Molina, 2002).

The findings from studies of invasive advising practices, which may include actively calling students, meeting with them in person, and requiring them to participate in directed, reflective academic skill development activities, suggest that students in

academic distress are responsive to interventions that involve a more active institutional level of involvement in their probation journey (Abelman & Molina, 2002; Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001; Vander Schee, 2007). As such, many universities are moving towards employing more professional academic advisors and taking a more hands-on approach to intervening with probationary students (James & Graham, 2010; Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001; Vander Schee, 2007).

Course-Based Interventions

A second common form of intervention for academic probation students is the course-based approach, which is centered on directed instruction in college success strategies and academic skills. Several studies have shown that these types of interventions can have benefits specifically for students on academic probation (e.g., Humphrey, 2006; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Mellor, Brooks, Gray, & Jordan, 2015; Renzulli, 2015). Humphrey (2006) discussed the structure and assessment of a course-based intervention at Virginia Tech called Project Success, focusing mainly on the accountability mechanism that an academic support course provides for students on academic probation. In a longitudinal analysis of both students' GPA and attrition outcomes, comparing a treatment group of students who participated in Project Success and a control group of students who did not, the study found significant improvements in retention and GPA after participating in the Project Success coursework (Humphrey, 2006). The researcher also used student input to reflect on the impact of as well as improve the program (Humphrey, 2006).

Like Humphrey's (2006) work, McGrath and Burd (2012) studied the performance, retention, and graduation outcomes of first-year college students on

academic probation who participated in a mandatory success course. The program's curriculum was modeled on developmentally appropriate models from student engagement theory as well as focusing on the development of academic skills and attitudes (McGrath & Burd, 2012). The study yielded significant outcomes that supported its three hypotheses regarding participants' reinstatement to normal academic status, retention beyond the first year at higher rates than non-participants, and graduation within four to five years (McGrath & Burd, 2012).

Through a multi-method, comparative case study, Renzulli (2015) used a combination of interviews, observations, and a learning and study skills acquisition survey to qualitatively assess the impact of a learning success course on probation student outcomes and explore the engagement of students with their learning process before and after the course. Though students' responses varied and each participant experienced different changes as a result of the course, on the whole, students' GPAs improved, and they commented on changes in academic behaviors, including spending more time studying and practicing more active learning and note-taking techniques (Renzulli, 2015). Renzulli's (2015) qualitative approach added depth to the literature dominated by comparative quasi-experimental intervention assessment designs. It gave voice to students' engagement with and change as a result of participating in a college success course.

The studies examined here found comparatively similar results; that is, students on academic probation who participate in an academic skills course and reflect on their probation journey have higher grade, persistence, and graduation outcomes than students who do not (Humphrey, 2006; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Renzulli, 2015). From the

literature examined, course-based interventions are a useful model with which to intervene on behalf of probationary students. The instructional elements, as well as the sense of community that comes with being in a course, can have a significant impact on students' success in improving their grades and graduating (Humphrey, 2006).

Though many of the studies called for qualitative, critical work that contextualizes the experiences of individual students on academic probation, none of the scholars overtly acknowledge that they continue to reify the dominant, neoliberal success narrative by studying the effects of course interventions on student success and examining best practices for 'dealing' with students on academic probation. I find this lack of overt attention to work that questions, disrupts, or transforms the dominant success narrative with the population of students on academic probation to be unsurprising.

As an instructor, I used to teach the intervention course for students on academic probation, referred to in this study as the Academic Probation Intervention Course [APIC]. Students found their way to this course through a variety of means, from being referred by an advisor or academic skills coach to being contractually required to take the course as part of a plan developed to manage students' return to study after academic suspension. The course was small, with no more than fifteen students per section. Three sections were offered per semester, taught by graduate student instructors in a counseling-influenced academic support program. The course curriculum was site-specific, developed over years of instructors and counselors collaborating on teaching and refining the curriculum. Because a counseling-focused academic support program housed the course, the curriculum encouraged students to look reflectively at their experiences through an alternately holistic, developmental, and forgiving lens. Students were

encouraged to set goals and track the patterns of successes and challenges throughout the semester. They reflected on and shared their experiences with each other and the instructor through a weekly seminar and small group discussion sections.

Although many of the students I taught set goals that emphasized intrinsic motivation, many also set goals that specified a GPA they wanted to earn at the end of the semester. Part of this was a practical consideration – the University required students to earn a 2.0 or above to get off academic probation. Many students I worked with did not set a goal of earning a 2.0; they aspired to earn a higher GPA. They compared their academic performance in college to their performance in high school. They compared their academic performance to their peers. They defined success by a normative standard of success dictated to them by their educational environment.

In tracking their progress towards their goals, they set tasks that they either accomplished or failed to accomplish throughout the week. In class, the curriculum and our conversations emphasized the importance of recognizing patterns of success and failure and making choices that set the conditions for a more successful outcome, like studying at times when the student is more likely to be awake and alert, or setting realistic and specific goals for each hour devoted to studying with breaks in between mentally strenuous tasks. During a normal weekly conversation, students reported how they planned to forecast the upcoming week's priorities. "I have an upcoming midterm," one might have said. "I know I need to spend more time studying, and I need to start, like, two weeks ahead of time." In reflecting on this task a week later, the student might have had challenges with sticking to the committed study schedule. "I'm not studying as

much as I would like,” the student might have said. “I need to study more. I need to use better study aids.”

Often, the student’s first solution to their perceived deficiency was embedded within the “I need to work harder, work more, bring myself up to the normative level of success, as defined by the high performing peers I see around me, by my own past higher performance, by the level of performance the institution tells me it expects of me” narrative. Through much self-probing and reflection, some students came to view their progress in different terms or on a different path than the normative, neoliberal success narrative that pervades the discourse of the institution. However, it was a difficult transition for many students; in fact, some did not get there. They continued to define their success by an externally-defined measure of success throughout the course.

Neoliberal Success and Satisfaction Rhetoric in Higher Education

Though not much is written at the intersection of the neoliberal success narrative and higher education, some of the work on resisting neoliberal rhetoric offers a useful perspective to examine the role that this narrative plays in marginalized students’ experiences in higher education. Characterized earlier as an ideology that relies on corporate metaphors for success and satisfaction and emphasizes the private good of higher education, neoliberal assumptions underlie nearly all facets of higher education, from systems and institutional identities to the means of measuring instructional and institutional quality as well as narratives that are told to students and that students tell themselves.

In a critical discourse analysis study examining U.S. Department of Education speeches, Suspitsyna (2012) analyzed the dynamics of power and language by tracking

the most prevalent themes in speeches between 2005 and 2007, during the years in which the Spellings Commission was published and the Higher Education Act re-ratified.

Suspitsyna (2012) found that many themes conveyed by the U.S. Department of Education were centered around neoliberal values, including the moral obligation of students to make self-deterministic decisions to consume higher education:

“‘Responsibilized’ subjects do not simply exercise their individual freedom by continuously making consumer-style choices; they are morally obligated to do so for the sake of their own welfare and the welfare of their families” (Suspitsyna, 2012, p. 61).

Apple (2001) agreed, stating that “markets ... are said to be both natural and neutral, and governed by effort and merit” (p. 69). Through these analyses, a neoliberal view of the market of education emerges as both something that students are morally obligated to consume and something that is objectively governed by hard work and earned merit.

Shahjahan (2014) argued that “in [Higher Education], neoliberalism is a primary actor in the colonization of our ways of being, namely, what seems thinkable and practicable in the neoliberal context structures and limits our lives and social relations as educators and administrators” (p. 222). In this way, students and faculty are limited in their thinking by the neoliberal narratives imposed on their realities. In a study of the factors that influenced students’ choices of teacher ratings on evaluation forms, Titus (2008) found that students primarily ranked faculty based on how much they enjoyed the class, and on the likeability and perceived level of caring that the faculty member possessed. Other measures, such as the perceived credibility of the teacher and fair grading procedures, dominated the students’ reasoning for choosing ranking levels (Titus, 2008). This work revealed a sort of mutual understanding in both teachers and students

about the unreliability of evaluation forms as a measure of quality, but an unwillingness in both teachers and students to ‘rock the boat’ and upset the unspoken understanding about the evaluation system (Titus, 2008).

Titus (2008) closed with the comment that

The intellectual work of faculty is being replaced by a new obligation to be service providers to consumers. ... The accountability agenda that followed this devaluing of faculty dissolved the traditional academic processes that granted faculty the responsibility (and academic freedom) to determine curriculum, decide on pedagogical methods, and assess student performance. (p. 413-414)

In a context where society tells students they have a moral obligation to consume higher education, and the twin pillars of hard work and merit govern the market, it does not come as a surprise that education is measured as a commodity to be designated as quality or not quality by the measure of student satisfaction, or the measure of the earning potential of a student post-graduation. In this sense, education is not a journey but a destination. Its worth is predetermined and designated as a private gain. Apple (2001) bemoaned the increasing prevalence of a belief that “private is good and public is bad. ... The ‘private’ is the sphere of smooth-running and efficient organizations, of autonomy and individual choice. The ‘public’ is out of control, messy, heterogeneous” (p. 206). As educational consumers, “‘we’ must protect ‘our’ individual choice” (Apple, 2001, p. 206). In this narrative, success lies in the hands of those who work hard and preserve their individual choice. Being designated as on academic probation represents a loss of choice – students on probation are in a holding pattern. At the same time, they redeem

themselves in terms of achieving the institutionally designated level of success needed to continue to participate in and reap the gains from the system.

Critical Pedagogy as Philosophy and Practice

Peter McLaren, in an interview with Sebastjan Leban (2015), stated that his primary aim in promoting the practice of critical pedagogy was to “concentra[te] mainly ... on ideology critique, de-naturalizing what is assumed to be unchangeable, de-reifying human agency, and de-objectifying the commodity of contemporary capitalism” (p. 226). In McLaren’s view, the engine of critical pedagogy is driven by an international coalition of “radical educators, student groups, philosophers, counterculturalists, contrarians, culture brokers, and pedagogical tastemakers” whose “message” he has sought to consolidate “into a larger, transnational drumbeat that will help to entrain an activist movement towards a post capitalist alternative” (p. 227). At its core, critical pedagogy seeks to disrupt the status quo, transform the normal, and revolutionize the practice of education for the broader purposes of doing the same to society (McLaren, 2015). For me, considering these aims, questions arise about why and how to enact such an agenda in higher education classrooms. Moreover, how does critical pedagogy acknowledge, disrupt, and ultimately transform the neoliberal narrative that contemporary higher education institutions embody so strongly?

Giroux (2007) identified the vital role of the “culture of questioning as the most fundamental pedagogical consequence of how we educate young people” in disrupting and transforming the narrative of success and competition that the neoliberal agenda embodies (p. 202). Critical pedagogy advocates for a return to the democratic value and public good of a robust higher education system in educating the next generation of

engaged citizens (Giroux, 2007). In some ways, critical pedagogy is a pedagogy of balance, and a means to navigate the competing public and private goods of the educational system and shift higher education back towards its democratic, publicly engaged focus (Giroux, 2007). In other ways, critical pedagogy is a tool of the revolution, a fringe movement that seeks to move to the heart of the institution, countering and deconstructing the grand narratives of neoliberalism and corporate culture as it advances from the outside in (McLaren, 2015).

The question arises of whether or not critical pedagogy's strength lies in its philosophical view of the role of critical education, or if its practical applications support a case for it as a transformational practice in college classrooms. Giroux (2006) argued that critical pedagogy's role in "educating students to become critical agents actively questioning and negotiating the relationship between theory and practice, critical analysis and common sense, and learning and social change" represents a genuine threat to neoliberal rhetoric as a higher education mainstay (p. 32). As an educational practice,

critical pedagogy opens up a space where students should be able to come to terms with their own power as critical agents, ... where [the] "multiplicity and complexity of history" as a narrative [is something] to enter into critical dialogue with rather than accept unquestioningly. (Said, 2001, in Giroux, 2006, p. 32)

Likewise, critical pedagogy preserves the autonomy and authority of teachers, undergirded by academic freedom, to teach in a way that honors the rituals, traditions, and strands of knowledge that weave through a liberal, democratic education (Giroux, 2006). For those who espouse it as a philosophy and practice, critical pedagogy is a mindset, a call to action, and a classroom space that offers teachers and students the

freedom to engage with, question, disrupt, and transform the structures and grand narratives that shore up society.

While critical pedagogy's strength lies in acting as a framework to break down authority structures and to create generations of engaged citizens ready both to question and participate in democratic processes critically, it also has garnered some criticism. Apple (2001) noted that critical pedagogy could be "disconnected from the gritty materialities of daily economic, political, and educational/cultural struggles [and romanticizes] the cultural at the expense of the equally powerful traditions of analysis based in political economy and the state" (p. 99). Additionally, critical pedagogy "place[s] so much emphasis on the 'post' that it forgets the structural realities that set limits on real people in real institutions in everyday life" (Apple, 2001, p. 99). In this sense, much of the criticism of postmodernism as a research philosophy mirrors the criticism of critical pedagogy as both a philosophy and practice: Is it too rhetorical and not practical enough? Does it devalue the role of pragmatic approaches to doing what works in the classroom? Does it disregard reality in favor of an idealized future world? Though compelling as an overarching counternarrative to the neoliberal educational rhetoric and success narratives full of corporate metaphors and measures of self-worth, critical pedagogy also presents educators with an intriguing opportunity to study the effects of such a practice in different classroom contexts. Thus emerges a substantial body of literature studying the application of critical pedagogy in a variety of contexts, from work that empowers diverse students and raises awareness of inequality to work that employs critical frameworks in disciplines and teaching practices (Apsel, 2011; Braa & Callero, 2006; Brunsmas, Brown, & Placier, 2012; Colwill & Boyd, 2008; Forbes &

Kaufman, 2007; Gorzelsky, 2009; Gubkin, 2015; Henderson & Murdock, 2011; Jones & Calafell, 2012; Kaufmann, 2010; Madden, 2015; McArthur, 2010; Ochoa & Pershing, 2011; Pendakur & Furr, 2016; Petchauer, 2011; Rodriguez, Boahene, Gonzales-Howell, & Anesi, 2012; Rouhani, 2012; Schroeter, 2013; Smith & Jeffery, 2013). I will highlight some representative studies here.

Within the theme of work that seeks to empower diverse students and raise awareness of inequalities via critical pedagogy, Madden (2015) qualitatively explored the role of “intergroup dialogue” in promoting increased class consciousness in undergraduate students at a private university (p. 573). Rooted in Freire’s (1970) critical pedagogy, “intergroup dialogue ... create[s] space for continuous semester-long contact with individuals across social class groups” to increase participants’ levels of “consciousness” (Madden, 2015, p. 575). Madden (2015) used content analysis of participants’ journal entries made during the semester-long learning experience to examine “visible themes that surfaced in reading the students’ journals” (p. 577). Madden’s (2015) analysis revealed students’ awareness of complex intersections of class and identity, oppression, and power, both individually and in classrooms and institutional spaces. Through “positively measure[ing]” students’ change in awareness during participation in a dialogue-based classroom context, Madden (2015) found that, at least for a small group of students, critical pedagogical practices could have a lasting impact on students’ awareness as a result of participating in learning experiences (p. 584).

Rodriguez et al. (2012) used their own lived experience narratives to interrogate their role as feminists and professors of color teaching critical, liberatory pedagogy in predominantly white, undergraduate classrooms with the aims of increasing students’

levels of consciousness and negotiating the complex boundaries between their identities and those of their students in the process. Through a series of narratives, the authors negotiated their positionalities and raised recommendations to have continuously high standards, push back against assumptions, to be humble, resilient, reflective, and to highlight one's "own subjectivity as well as [one's] students'" (Rodriguez et al., 2012, p. 105). In some of the narratives, the authors noticed students' raised consciousness, but also mentioned that standing ground in the face of a white majority and underlying whiteness assumptions was challenging and caused each to re-examine their practice and policies (Rodriguez et al., 2012). The authors made institutional recommendations as well, such as increased recruitment and retention of female faculty and graduate students of color in academia, increased training for faculty of color in regards to teaching in predominantly white classrooms, and the importance for female faculty of color to continue to raise their voices and be heard within the academic system (Rodriguez et al., 2012). Rodriguez et al.'s (2012) study illustrated both the role of critical pedagogy practices in raising students' consciousness and also the challenges and importance of inhabiting a stance of resistance for faculty of color in predominantly white classrooms.

A common theme across these studies is that, for white students cited in the both pieces of research, having a faculty member who openly expressed views and encouraged a culture of questioning or raised self-awareness caused a level of discomfort for the students as they confronted their biases, reflected on their positionality, and moved to a new level of awareness (Madden, 2015; Rodriguez et al., 2012). In terms of practice, the use of critical pedagogical ideals and approaches requires a level of awareness and reflection in the instructor as well as appropriate incorporation of disciplinary

assumptions and teaching standards. Practitioners and students alike needed to be aware of the challenges and discomforts that come with facing assumptions and subverting the dominant hierarchy or narrative of the institution and society.

A second theme in the critical pedagogy literature revolves around work that examines the deliberate and careful incorporation of critical pedagogy practices into different classroom and teaching contexts. In a study examining the use of critical pedagogy in a sociology classroom, Braa and Callero (2006) used critical pedagogy to form a “praxis” that enabled “students to apply sociological knowledge to the transformation of society” (p. 360). Through a lengthy description of the sequence of courses that empower students to move from theory to critically aware practice, Braa and Callero (2006) found that students who completed the course sequence responded positively to their increased awareness and practice, as well as their involvement with community organizations. Additionally, the program’s involvement in the community had positive impacts on the quality of the relationship between the academic department and community organizations with which the students became involved (Braa & Callero, 2006). Despite structural challenges that arose as a result of sending students through a three-sequence course curriculum and implementing robust internship and practicum-based learning experiences for students, Braa and Callero (2006) declared the program to be a success in bringing sociological knowledges into practice for community advocacy and social justice. This declaration seemed to be at least somewhat supported by the student evaluations referenced briefly (Braa & Callero, 2006).

In a study involving the use of critical pedagogy teaching practices, Colwill and Boyd (2008) relayed the strengths and challenges of collaborative teaching as a feminist

practice in the context of a difficult experience that arose around racial tensions in a classroom. Through a reflective recounting of a classroom event that precipitated unexpected resistance from a group of students, Colwill and Boyd (2008) highlighted the role of team-teaching in “defamiliariz[ing] the pedagogical experience by ... challenging not only what we teach, but how we teach, who we are in the classroom, and how we understand the relationship of that persona to our other lives in the academy and beyond” (p. 225-226). For Colwill and Boyd (2008), it almost seemed as if the most significant level of consciousness-raising (which is, at least, one of the primary goals of a curriculum or practice steeped in critical pedagogy) happened to them as instructors, and that it was their students who prompted the consciousness-raising.

Though I struggle with the notion that I practice critical pedagogy as an instructor, I have often become aware of my level of consciousness around issues of equity raising at the behest of or because of interaction with my students. In teaching the APIC, I struggled at times to see that the self-awareness that I sought to imbue in my students lead to anything except a heightened emphasis for them on the importance of grades. I often felt as though they were telling me what they thought I wanted to hear: *I am not working hard enough. I will work harder. I will study more. I will be more disciplined. I will succeed this time.* I wanted to tell them, “This is not what I want to hear!” What I wanted to hear is really beside the point of the whole experience. Perhaps I should have told tell them that this was not what I wanted to hear.

There were other times in my classroom when something happened, and it seemed that the students, collectively, saw the light of a different story for themselves. For instance, in the APIC, in a teaching moment I have described as transcendent (which

is not a word I would choose to use in many situations), I experienced the first instance of what I have come to call a ‘critical pedagogy moment,’ something that I have explored in great depth through my findings, analysis, and discussion.

In this instance, it was a typical APIC seminar, and I had asked the students to share one or two reactions they had to Neil Pasricha’s TED Talk, “The 3 A’s of Awesome.” In “The 3 A’s,” Pasricha recounted a series of unfortunate, heartbreaking events he experienced over a short amount of time. To process his grief, Pasricha started blogging about small, awesome things he noticed in his life. As a result, he made some realizations about attitude and authenticity that carried him through the dark times and propelled him forward. I prompted students to watch the talk and respond to the ways they saw the video’s themes reflected in their life. In the past, when showing this media to students in the APIC, the responses were unenthusiastic: “I didn’t relate to this.” “It was corny.” “Well, I guess my attitude can affect things sometimes.”

The students this particular semester took it upon themselves to go around the room one at a time and share something awesome in their life. One student shared that she is proud that she, authentically, is who she is, a Harley-riding, crochet-fanatic, proud mother to a 3-year-old son. Another shared that an awesome moment is when he is at a concert, and the band starts playing the very song he has wished they would play: The moment when the first chords strike, and he recognizes it is the song he has wanted to hear. Another student looked down at his hands and said (I am, of course, paraphrasing), “I have been thinking about how my attitude affects me recently. It’s easy to get down, on myself, on how hard everything is, but I’ve been thinking about how that is the easy

thing to do. If I try to reframe how I think about things, as he did in the video, then my attitude really does change. I see a change.”

We were all silent at the end of this collective moment (that still tops my list of collective classroom moments), and I struggled with what to say. I was almost in tears – I was pregnant, and things that tug at your heartstrings make you cry when you are pregnant. I said, “Thank you. Thank you. Thank you all for sharing your thoughts with me.” It just seemed like, for once, the clouds opened, and the sun peered down on fourteen beleaguered students on academic probation who were trying very hard and working very persistently towards living their internalized version of the neoliberal success narrative.

I often ask myself if we, as teachers, are reifying or disrupting the very narratives that we convey to our students by merely asking the questions or not asking the questions in the classroom. If they were not there to be asked the question, if they were not made to reflect on their answer, would they have asked the question regardless? It is in this magical classroom space that learning occurs both as it is prompted and spontaneously. I wished I could have recorded that class session and seen what the data would reveal to me later. It is moments like these that have prompted me to ask the question, after Raymond Carver, what do we talk about when we talk about probation? I go on the premise that sometimes students will inhabit the narrative that has schooled them for their entire lives, and sometimes they will inhabit a different, counternarrative inspired by a moment when they realize their critical agency. I know that I have tread on both sides of this path, and often the border between the narratives seems blurred. Am I beating the drum of insurrection, or am I settling into the dialogue of complacency? Are any of these

messages getting through to my students? Am I listening to them enough? Or, is it ultimately more them than me, as they are continually reinventing their narrative for themselves?

Chapter Three

In conceptualizing the research questions that guided my study and in designing the study to answer those questions, I sought to capture something that is generally ineffable: The things that students and teachers say in the on-ground classroom are there and gone, recorded only through the lens of memory. It seemed logical to use classroom conversations as the basis for analyzing how students revoice and resist normative or institutional narratives of success and failure, doing school the ‘right way’ as well as understanding thematic relationships and connections to the rhetorical direction of curriculum prompts and instructor and student discourse. I found the focus, as well as the site, for my research through teaching the class, but I entered the classroom as a researcher and observer. I was not teaching the Academic Probation Intervention Course (APIC) at the time I conducted my research project. I have since moved on from teaching in the academic support program, and I feel that this distance from the subject matter had given me perspective I lacked when I was in the classroom and supporting the students every week.

Research Aims and Questions

As students negotiate the realities of being labeled as ‘on academic probation,’ they enter a void where they are no longer favored members of the neoliberal meritocracy. They did not fulfill the ‘natural order’ of working hard and capitalizing on their merit to earn an education. They are in a proving ground, on probation, waiting to get back on the track to success. Yet, they still have internalized and aspire to the success narrative. They still experience both the benefits and challenges of being a part of the fabric of a higher education institution. As a teacher and scholar, I have become

interested in how this complex predicament is expressed in and out of the classroom, in the lived experiences of students on probation, as well as in the ways that they narrate their own experiences and negotiate their identities. My dissertation emphasizes the importance of what happens for students on academic probation in the classroom, particularly how students position themselves concerning the institutionalized narrative of success and failure. The research asks and seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How does the rhetorical direction of the curriculum and the instructor's discourse influence the rhetorical direction of students' in-class discourse?
2. The reason is because there is a lot of theoretical work behind the idea of indexicality that begged more explanation than I gave in the dissertation. I used instead the word revoice to indicate where students repeated or aligned with the rhetorical direction of the curriculum and referenced or referred to to indicate other resources they drew on in their narrative responses.

In the research questions, and in the study, the terminology of 'rhetorical direction' refers to the Bakhtinian (1981) directions of centripetal and centrifugal linguistic forces. Centripetal language moves in the direction of institutionalization and standardization. Centrifugal language moves in the direction of diversity, multiplicity, and de-standardization. When I refer in the study to rhetorical direction, these are the directions I mean. When the rhetorical direction moved towards institutionalization and standardization, I equated this to neoliberalism and looked for commonalities between the centripetal linguistic moves that students made and the language of neoliberalism in higher education. When the rhetorical direction moved towards diversity, multiplicity, and de-standardization, I equated this to critical pedagogy principles and looked for

commonalities between the centrifugal linguistic moves that students made and the language of critical pedagogy.

The choice of terminology of “revoice” and “resist” in the study was deliberate, to indicate students’ linguistic moves towards aligning with either the centripetal or centrifugal rhetorical direction of the curriculum and instructor’s discourse. To revoice, in this instance, is to repeat (and thus align with) the idea in the curriculum, instructor’s set-up of the curricular prompt, or another student’s response. When a student resisted the normative structure of doing school that was frequently dealt with, both in the curriculum and in class discussion, they did this in a variety of ways that were discussed throughout the findings and analysis presented in Chapter Four.

Methodology

Analytical Framework

My study’s analysis of the rhetorical direction of academic probation students’ in-class discourse in relation to the rhetorical direction of curriculum prompts and instructor discourse was rooted in a Bakhtinian theoretical framework. In Bakhtin’s (1981) view, opposing forces of unity and disunity are in a constant push and pull with each other. The grand societal narratives of merit and the value of higher education represent normative force that ties together the privileged and underprivileged in a unified definition of success and failure (Lyotard, 1984). At the same time, the opposing forces of alternative and divergent counternarratives spiral away from the normative discourse to create a parallel or opposing story about what it means to ‘do school’ and be a student (McLaren, 2015).

Within this broader analytical framework emphasizing the push and pull of unifying and disunifying forces of the language of institutional norms, I located the rhetorical direction of course outcomes in the Academic Probation Intervention Course (APIC) syllabus and identified corresponding curriculum prompts that seemed to possess the highest potential for tension between centripetal and centrifugal forces as the basis for selecting the classroom conversations for linguistic analysis (Barwell, 2014).

Setting of Study

The study was situated at a large, urban, land-grant research university in the Upper Midwest, Midwestern University (MU). The research site at MU was an academic probation intervention course taught in an academic skills support and development program housed under MU's student counseling center. The semester-long academic probation course (the APIC) was taught by a professional university staff member, the support program coordinator, to approximately 15 students. The course consisted of a weekly seminar where the whole class met with the instructor to discuss topics and completed activities related to academic success, organization and planning, study skills, and self-awareness. Additionally, students met weekly with a small discussion group (3-6 students in size), where they monitored weekly successes and challenges, shared more personal narratives around their experiences, and received support and mentorship from the instructor. I observed and recorded the classroom conversations of two of the three small discussion groups in one section of the APIC during the second half of the 2018 spring semester.

Sample

The study's sample came from two discussion groups in same section of an academic probation intervention course. Enrollment in the course was voluntary, and the course attracted students across MU's colleges and schools as well as across gender and demographic identities. Students commonly enrolled in the course via academic advisor or counselor referrals. One of the groups, referred to in the study as the Monday Group, had six participants. The other group, referred to in the study as the Wednesday Group, had five participants. The participants in each group were undergraduate university students who were either on academic probation, returning from academic suspension, or self-identified as in academic distress. Study participants are identified here by self-selected pseudonyms to preserve anonymity per the requirements of the Institutional Review Board. Students had their own reasons for choosing the pseudonyms they did – some of the pseudonyms seemed to offer insight into the student's identity and demography, some seemed to mask the student's identity and demography (i.e., some of the pseudonyms had obvious gender or racial connotations; others were chosen to hide visible or known identity characteristics of the students based on what they shared in class).

In this study, and for the purposes of analysis here, I did not make assumptions about a student's identity based on the pseudonym they chose. I tried not to let my assumptions about students' identities influence the context of the ways that students responded to the curriculum. Inclusion of study participants' demography was limited to what the student shared during classroom conversation. If a student shared aspects of their identity in classroom conversation, I used that information in interpreting a student's response, especially if the student repeated or referenced the information multiple times

throughout the study period. For this reason, there are identity characteristics known about some students and not others. This is because some students chose to share identifying information in responding to the curriculum, and others did not. I chose to limit the information in this way because my research questions focused on the ways that students responded to curricular prompts in class.

Timeline

The study was conducted from March to May 2018 with weekly observations in two small discussion groups during the second half of the semester after gaining Institutional Review Board approval to begin the study. At the beginning of the observation period, I entered the classroom and, working with the students and academic support program coordinator who taught the course, gained consent from two of the discussion groups to sit in on classroom sessions and record classroom proceedings. Throughout the study period, I recorded weekly classroom sessions in each small group to capture classroom culture and evolving patterns of student discourse and understanding during small group discussions. I transcribed and analyzed data from classroom and interview sessions, triangulating preliminary interpretations with corroborating instances mentioned in other sections of the data and through follow up interviews with the course instructor and students.

Methods

The methods for the study were twofold: classroom observations and document review. I observed weekly small group classroom sessions and took field notes taken via a predetermined framework adapted from Lewis and Scharber's (2012) Activity System Observation Protocol [ASOP] (Appendix A). I recorded classroom sessions using video

and audio formats. The audio recordings served as the primary transcription source, and the video recordings served to capture nonverbal cues such as posture, hand gestures, and facial expressions. Following the completion of the observation period, I transcribed the classroom sessions in their entirety for analytical purposes.

An additional method I employed in the study was a review of documents relevant to the Spring 2018 course, including the course textbooks, an internally-published course-pack, supplemental handouts, videos, and electronic media. Course outcomes and curriculum prompts helped create the selection criteria used to identify sections of the transcribed data on which to focus my analysis.

Analytical Strategies

To identify the direction of students' responses to the curriculum prompts, I diagrammed each of the students' responses in a storytelling event/narrated event diagram after Wortham's (2001) methodological recommendations for analyzing interactional positioning in conversational discourse, which involves drawing visual relationships between the storytelling event and the narrated event referenced in the discourse. For Wortham (2001), the "storytelling event" represented "the interactional context within which the speaker utters something" (p. 19), or the present conversational context in which the students are speaking. In the study, this was the conversation students carried on in response to and in interaction with the week's topic and curriculum prompt. For Wortham (2001), the "narrated event" represented the "event described by the utterance ... a past interaction" (p. 19). The importance of distinguishing between the storytelling event and the narrative event is vital in understanding the speakers' present relationship or self-positioning to other past texts, events, utterances (Wortham, 2001).

This was important, Wortham (2001) argued via Bakhtin, because “participants and analysts can understand neither the narrated content represented by an utterance nor the interactional positioning accomplished by that utterance without taking into account various aspects of the storytelling event in which the utterance occurs” (p. 20).

To understand how students situated themselves in relation to the narrative presented in the curriculum and the interactional significance of how they situated themselves (both what they chose to talk about and why they chose to talk about it) and to increase the subtlety of my analysis, I added another box to the students’ response diagrams that identified people, places, events, and objects that students referenced in their responses. This allowed for space in the analysis to show the subtle ways that students resisted the dominant narrative, drew on alternate definitions of being a ‘good student,’ or accessed other support resources than those referenced in the curriculum or instructor discourse. Student responses were presented in the order they occurred (unless otherwise noted). Student-instructor and student-student interactions presented were limited to those that occurred in the context of an individual student’s response to the curriculum prompt because those exchanges contained discourse that best answered the research questions posed in the study.

Study Debrief Narrative

In outlining the process by which I planned, conducted, transcribed, and analyzed my research, I found it helpful to use a personal narrative to break the process into stages and reflect on my mindset and approach in each stage. Doing this helped me draw brackets around what I did and did not include in the study. It highlighted for me the magic of capturing the uncapturable moments of classroom conversation and lessons

learned from the process of conducting, transcribing, and analyzing classroom discourse research. Before undertaking the study, I had a sense that once a class period was finished, it was gone, along with all the things said. Sure, there was memory and the inconsistent artifacts of in-class activities (notes, writings, and lecture slides). Still, I went for a long time as a teacher leaving the classroom experience thinking of how to change it for next time, not thinking of how I could learn from the event itself, I was to be able to return to the conversation verbatim in the future. This section was more about recording what I have learned about conducting classroom discourse research, what it offers and where it falls short, and how I maximized the data for learning and analytical purposes because this project has been as much about the process as it has the result.

Stage One: Designing the Project

In designing a classroom discourse project, the researcher faces many unknowns and must account for many possibilities by covering as many bases in collecting data as is possible, given the limitations of time, space, money, and participant consent. Having an instructor on board to let you come into their class for an extended period necessitates a pre-established relationship or a good deal of trust-building and open communication. I was lucky to have a pre-established relationship with JP, the APIC instructor, both as a school colleague and in her role coordinating the program that housed the APIC and other college success courses. In designing the project, I decided to cover as many bases as I could – I video and audio recorded all observed classroom sessions as well as used a framework to take notes and make observations about the classroom activity systems that might prove relevant later. I also sought other data sources to triangulate the statements that students made in the context of class discussion – the most obvious of these were the

curriculum prompts that the students interacted with, and I had access to all of these (a course packet and two textbooks, as well as supplemental materials) ahead of time. It was advantageous to be a former instructor of the course because I was familiar with the structure and content and was able to hit the ground running in the middle of the semester when I finally received Institutional Review Board approval to enter the classroom and begin the study. I planned to recruit some students for voluntary interviews after observing them in the classroom. I amended my original IRB application to include a small compensation for those students who chose to participate in an interview. I also planned to interview the instructor to triangulate my interpretations of things that she said, things the students said, and to gain clarification on the pedagogical choices she made.

Stage Two: Gathering the Data

With all these elements in place, I entered the classroom at Week Eight of the semester and, after completing a short introductory pitch, I was able to gain consent from all students in the two discussion groups recommended by the instructor for inclusion in the study. I observed and recorded both groups weekly from the middle to the end of the semester. Each class session, I completed a copy of the observation protocol and made other pertinent notes about respondent speaking order, notable words or phrases, connections between this week's topic and others, and areas I might be interested in paying attention to in the future.

In the interim of being in the classroom each week, I uploaded the video and audio recording files to a secure storage system recommended by the MU IRB, which proved to be very frustrating. The large size of the video files and the slow upload speed

to the site made it very difficult to transfer the files. I eventually discovered that if I did it over the on-campus wireless network, it worked better, but I regretted not finding this out ahead of time. I used my cell phone as a video recording device. Between the transfer from cell phone to computer and computer to secure storage system, I wasted time I could have been using organizing, listening to, and analyzing the recordings. The advantage of casting a wide net with a classroom discourse study is that you end up with a vast quantity of raw data and a variety of approaches available to you when you begin analyzing the data. The disadvantage is that you have a vast quantity of raw data and secondary data sources to sift through. I did not gain much insight into how I wanted to proceed or what I wanted to focus on when I was in the middle of gathering the data.

The most precious commodity in doing any research project is time – in a classroom discourse study, time is incredibly precious. A lot of it is expended, both in gathering data and in transcribing and analyzing it. The investment of time that I made in spending each week in two classrooms was small in comparison to some of the research studies that I used as exemplars, who spent a term or year in the classroom recording classroom data and interviewing subjects. However, the deeply personal nature of students' conversations created an intimate portrait of their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, as well as providing a rich pool of raw data to draw from as I moved forward.

Stage Three: Transcribing the Data

It took me four months to transcribe all the classroom conversations from this study. I did it myself, and I mention this here not to pat myself on the back (although, good effort, Felicia), but because I feel that, for especially the emerging scholar,

transcribing one's own data is an incredibly important step to understanding and analyzing the data more efficiently. I transcribed each recording verbatim and used code names (self-selected by the participants) to identify the students and the instructor. I recorded some nonverbal communication, like laughs, sighs, loud bumps, or someone pounding on the table. I focused mostly on what people said. It is difficult and time-consuming to transcribe unstructured conversations with six or more speakers. I have transcribed focus group data before, and this was much, much harder. It did get easier with time and practice, though, and ultimately, I am grateful I chose to go this route because I was able to move across groups and through the weeks much more quickly given that I was so familiar with the class. I knew the voices of each participant and can recall the weekly progression of each of their stories because I transcribed everything. I have not used all of the data I transcribed; much of it is still in its raw form, waiting for further projects to claim it. I saved myself much time later (and a lot of money in the process) by transcribing it myself.

I also think that transcribing the data has drawn my awareness to the way that I talk in my classes. Having the opportunity to play back those moments I had previously discarded as transient and gone after the class hour has taught me a lot about the weight of words and the longevity of how we say things in other people's minds. The thing that is an off-hand comment to me may be the year-making or year-breaking comment to a student. In the study, moments of insight and moments of weakness are recorded and given equal space to exist.

Stage Four: Narrowing the Data

In the weeks following completion of transcription, I had to decide how I would narrow the data and what I would do to answer my research questions. As previously discussed, I modeled my analysis approach after Wortham (1999) and Barwell (2014); both of these methodologists looked at areas of the highest tension between the centrifugal and centripetal forces in the material and looked at participants' positioning of their identities in relationship to texts or narratives that they referred to in classroom conversations. After some guidance from the methodological expert on my dissertation committee, I decided to use the curriculum as the starting point for selecting segments of classroom discourse for sociolinguistic analysis. I started looking at learning outcomes and tied these to curriculum prompts referenced in the transcripts, checking my interpretation of the ties to the learning outcomes with the APIC instructor, JP, in two interviews at the end of the semester and later in the following academic year. I identified three curriculum prompts that focused my attention towards student engagement, doing school and practicing academic skills according to a prescribed formula or resisting a normative way to do school and practice academic skills and incorporating a whole-person, balanced, self-care-oriented approach to college skill development in the context of an academic probation intervention course. When the curriculum prompts were selected, I identified corresponding conversations in each of the two discussion groups in the study and selected these as the segments that I would prioritize for analysis. I further broke the sections into respondent turns, each consisting of a response to the curriculum prompt and possibly conversational exchanges with the instructor and other students in the class. I also identified for analysis the instructor set-ups for each of the prompts and included these in the analytical process.

Stage Five: Interpreting the Data

Presented in Chapter Four, this stage of the analysis process involved diagramming each respondent's turn in relation to two narrated events, the text and people, places, and objects/events in the respondent's narrative. I modeled this approach after Wortham (2001), who used a visual diagram to explore relationships between participants' narratives and objects and ideas in their narrated events, or the things that they talked about in their in-class responses. The diagrams are interpreted elsewhere, but using linguistic analysis in this way enabled me to bring some themes to light that I believe are helpful in both interpreting the significance of my study, but also in pointing to implications for practice, research, and policy and directions for future research. By the time I was finished with this stage, I was able to see the uncapturable moments in the classroom brought into concrete visibility on the page, diagrammed, interpreted, recorded. I have so much more information and raw data to process than that which is represented here – one of the biggest challenges with this type of work is to narrow down and put brackets on the scope of analysis.

Limitations

This study contains excerpts of a much larger data pool. It thus is limited to the scope of a few moments of student responses within a large dataset of conversational text from a half a semester of classroom talk. In total, the data comprised about 16 hours of audio and video recording, over 100 transcript pages, and over 100 pages of supporting documents, two textbooks, and curricular material. Though necessity forced me to draw brackets around the material I included in this study, those brackets were guided first by the research questions and second by the limits I imposed that focused on each student's

response to the curriculum and only student-student and student-instructor interactions that occurred within each student's turn responding to the curriculum prompt. Material that was not included in the study informed interpretations was used to triangulate patterns of meaning in students' in-class narratives.

From a study design perspective, the findings were limited in that they come from one class, with one instructor, at one institution. From an information perspective, the findings were limited to what students shared in class, what identities students disclosed in the context of group discussion, and are colored by my interpretations as a researcher. Substantiation of interpretations was achieved through a combination of follow up interviews and substantiation from patterns in students' responses over time (Gee, 2014; Wortham, 2001). More explanation of this decision, as well as notable times that students shared identifying information are discussed in depth throughout Chapter Four, where I present the findings and analysis.

The significance of my work ultimately lies in giving voice to a mostly silent and silenced student population that is understudied in the higher education literature. Nevertheless, institutions struggle with how to retain diverse and underserved student populations and seek to make changes to institutional policy that promote student engagement and persistence. Highlighting the discourse that speaks to the experiences of marginalized students in institutionalized spaces (like classrooms) can provide a mechanism for understanding and assessing the needs of students in academic distress and could begin to pave a road to change and reform.

Chapter Four

The Academic Probation Intervention Course (APIC) was structured sequentially with weekly topics that filtered into the seminar (full-class) activities, the small group ice breaker discussions, and the main topic or activity in the small group sessions. Each week, the small group time followed a similar format with an opening icebreaker activity that consisted of a question or prompt that was usually lighter in tone than the primary activity or discussion. The icebreaker activity usually lasted for the first ten to fifteen minutes of the hour-long class. Next, the instructor moved the students into a main activity and discussion that consisted of watching a video and discussing it, filling out or responding to a previously filled out prompt in the course textbook or packet, and a discussion that followed. The main activity and discussion usually lasted for approximately 20 to 30 minutes. Finally, the instructor prompted students to report on their weekly progress towards their academic goals by discussing highlights and lowlights from their commitment monitors, a weekly task monitoring list that was part of the student's required weekly work in the class.

Academic Probation Intervention Course Outcomes

In exploring how to identify where the curriculum seemed designed to prompt students to respond directly to or interact implicitly or explicitly with normative understandings of success, failure, and persistence, the APIC learning objectives seemed an obvious jumping-off point (Appendix B). Of the eight learning objectives, four of them seemed designed to prompt reflection, activities, learning, and conversation that adhered to institutional norms (highlighted in bold) and three seemed to encourage a self-developed or personalized approach that might prompt students to resist normative

understandings of success and failure (highlighted in italics). Alternatively, the italicized learning objectives seemed to leave more space for students to apply concepts in a way that worked best for them (the assumption being that there is not a predetermined ‘right’ way to do school in these contexts, and the self is the driving factor in determining a definition, plan, or path forward).

Language referencing concepts such as “determine,” “increase mastery,” and “more effective” as well as the presence of words referencing institutional and higher education culture, predetermined skills, behaviors, or attitudes that promote success, and a pre-supposed sense of what is interfering with academic progress (determined by institutional measures) suggested space in the curriculum where students would engage in learning opportunities that directed them to a particular outcome or predetermined path forward. In my experience teaching the course, such instances were designed to prompt students to think and to speak in a specified direction. Language referencing concepts such as “develop,” “increase,” and “design,” as well as the presence of words referencing self-determination, individualized definitions, personalization, and self-awareness pointed to space in the curriculum for learning opportunities that promoted students’ focus on things that worked best for them that may or may not conform to normative understandings of ‘the right way’ to do school.

I used thematic reasoning gleaned from my experiences teaching the course and designing the curriculum along with input from the course instructor to identify sections in the curriculum that aligned with the course objectives and had the potential for a high degree of tension between the centripetal and centrifugal linguistic forces I was interested in examining (Bakhtin, 1981). The first curricular prompt was selected as having a strong

potential for linguistic tension because of its closed-ended way of presenting what being a successful student looked like. The second prompt was selected because it, too, presented a closed-ended list of critical issues for success in school but presented an interesting set-up of having students fill in the blank with their own words directly within the text. The third prompt was selected because it seemed to have an inherent linguistic tension between its closed-ended, neoliberal form and open-ended take on the content matter of self-care. After selecting the curriculum prompts for analysis, I selected the corresponding classroom conversations based on their revoicing or resisting the curriculum and topics related to those the students were prompted to discuss. Within the selected transcripts, I used discourse analysis to identify what cues and linguistic resources participants (both instructor and students) used in their interactional positioning in relation to the narrative suggested by the curriculum (spiraling towards or away from institutional norms). The goal was to understand how the curriculum's narrative spiraled, where participants' conversation spiraled in response, and how participants signaled their position.

Prompt One: The Right Way to Study

In the first week, I recorded and observed the classroom, which fell during the middle of the semester, the class topic was preparing for and taking exams and managing test anxiety. The instructor supplemented the material in the curriculum packet in the small discussion groups with a video, "9 best scientific study tips" (2015), included as Appendix C. The video presented nine recommendations for studying effectively, which included, "study in short, regular chunks, have a specific study goal, set up specific times to study, use flashcards, study by teaching, have a sacred study spot, practice, don't listen

to music, and eliminate distractions” (“9 best scientific study tips,” 2015). The video had a clear direction in its narrative, spiraling towards institutional norms, with words suggesting a right and wrong way to study. The normative narrative of the dichotomy of the right and wrong way to study was reinforced in the video by references to scientific findings and consistent messaging in words such as “effective,” “smarter,” pointing to the desired outcome of effective studying (perfect grades) (“9 best scientific study tips,” 2015). The wrong way to study was presented in contrast to the right way as something “ineffective,” “detrimental,” and linked to the lowest grades, scores, and undesirable outcomes (“9 best scientific study tips,” 2015). The video was succinct and quick-paced. It presented the content in a little over two minutes, with a male narrator, a jaunty, upbeat instrumental musical track, and an animated summary of the points made. The video leaves little time to be refuted, due to the fast pace, hard to refute or resist because of the quick pace, the succinct message, and the promise of a path to studying that is more effective, easier, and results in the desired outcome, given that the viewer conforms to the narrative presented therein.

Analytical Strategies and Diagram Format

To identify the direction of students’ responses to the curriculum prompt, I diagrammed each students’ responses in a storytelling event/narrated event diagram after Wortham’s (2001) methodological recommendations for analyzing interactional positioning in conversational discourse, which involves drawing visual relationships between the storytelling event and the narrated event referenced in the discourse. For Wortham (2001), the “storytelling event” represented “the interactional context within which the speaker utters something” (p. 19), or the present conversational context in

which the students are speaking. In the case of the study, this was the conversation students carried on after watching the video. For Wortham (2001), the “narrated event” represented the “event described by the utterance ... a past interaction” (p. 19).

Distinguishing between the storytelling event and the narrative event is essential in understanding the speakers’ present relationship or self-positioning to other past texts, events, utterances (Wortham, 2001). Thus, to understand both how students situated themselves in relation to the narrative presented in the curriculum and the interactional significance of how they situated themselves (both what they chose to talk about and why they chose to talk about it), it was useful to diagram the storytelling and narrated events of the students’ responses to the video.

The narrated event of the video remained the same throughout both groups’ conversations – it was a direct reference point for both discussion groups, having just watched it and having been prompted by the instructor to respond to it. The storytelling event changed based on the student responding to the event. In the storytelling event, students revoiced the video (represented by a line between quotes and ideas) and incorporated them into a response about how or why the strategies were useful. Students also referenced other resources – people, places, objects, and events/actions – which is depicted in a second narrated event in each diagram.

Instructor Set-Up

Because a point of interest in the study was how the instructor’s set-up, or the instructor’s interactional positioning in relation to the curriculum prompt, I will highlight, as relevant, the instructor, JP’s relationship to the narrated event of the video as well. In JP’s set-up of the video (both before and after the class watched it), JP positioned herself

in alignment with the video by using words that referenced the video's quality and importance. In doing so, JP positioned herself and the video in an authoritative role of presenting useful, quality information that aligns with other useful, quality information that has been presented in the course.

Before the video

Monday Group

JP:

1. But this is one of my favorite videos that I show, uh, students in these classes.

Wednesday Group

JP:

1. But, um, I think it's a really great video.

In reinforcing before the video is presented that she thinks the video is a “favorite” and “really great,” JP signaled to students that they should pay attention to what the video says. It is interesting to note that the JP's formality and tone differs between the two set-ups – in the Monday Group set-up, JP used a more forceful superlative (“one of my favorite”) versus in the Wednesday Group set-up, JP said “really great,” which is less formal in tone and also more suggestive of a conversational and less formal relationship between the group members (which emerged throughout observing the two discussion groups).

After the video

Monday Group

JP:

1. All right. So, I like that because I think it's straightforward and also kind of highlights some of the things we've already been talking about this semester, so...
2. I guess, in a way, too, uh, kind of, uh, reintroduce some of those concepts we've been talking about.

Wednesday Group

JP:

1. All right.
2. I like that video because I think it just kind of, like, simply lays, you know, some ideas out.

After showing the video, JP reinforced the quality of the video by referencing specific aspects of it that were good. In the Monday Group set-up, JP positioned the video as being aligned with other topics covered in the class. JP praised the video for being “straightforward” in the Monday Group set-up and “simply laying some ideas out” in the Wednesday Group set-up.

Monday Group

JP:

1. So what are just some general thoughts on the video?
2. What that helpful?
3. Are there things that you’re already doing that they’ve mentioned or something that folks are interested in trying?

Wednesday Group

JP:

1. So, what were some things that were interesting to you as we were watching in that?
2. What sounds like, either, maybe you’re already doing it and you’re like, yeah, I’m already doing that!
3. Or something that you want to give a try?

JP also directed conversation’s tone by aligning with the tone and content of the video in the way that she poses the discussion prompt intended to guide the conversation in response to the video. By using words like “helpful,” “interesting,” and asking students to respond in the affirmative to whether they are already are or want to start employing practices mentioned in the video, JP directed the conversation towards the institutional norms with which the video was aligned.

Monday Group Student Responses

Response One: STEVEN

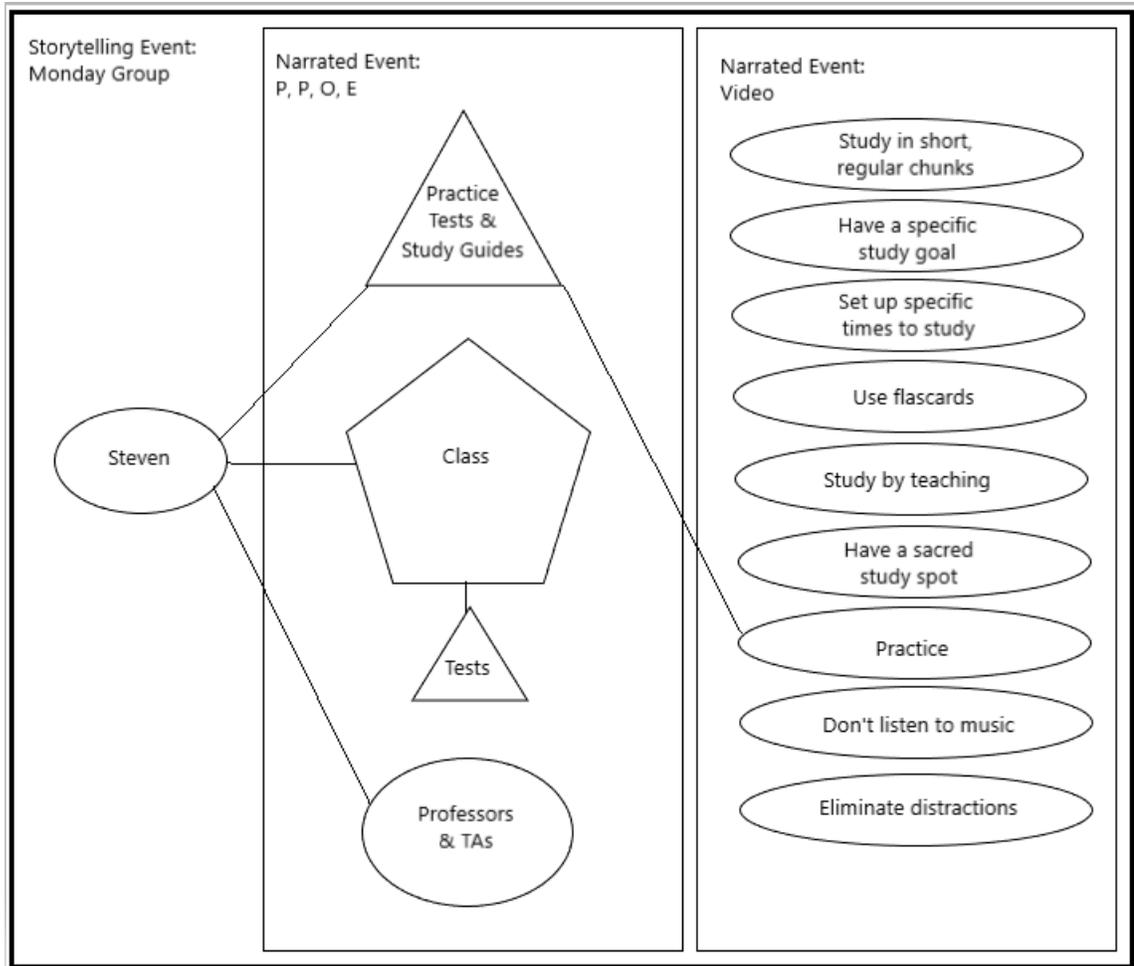


Figure 1: Steven's Response Diagram

STEVEN:

1. Like, uh, sample--or not sample--practice tests?
2. Whenever I was given a practice test, they're great, because they kind of help me focus in on, okay, this is what I need to know, um, these are the important things I need to take away.
3. Um, other things are important, however, for the sake of being an exam, this is what we're focusing on.
4. Um, and whenever I was given, like, a practice exam, I always do 'em, and it's nice to see where you're at, kind of like, to gauge where you're at, especially in a class where it's...
5. Like, one of my classes, it's test, test, test, that's it.
6. There's no feedback on anything.
7. It's you show up, you get a test, great.
8. Um, but I like getting feedback because I like seeing where I am at.
9. I mean, it is shitty as seeing an equation saying... facing the fact of, 'well, I suck at this,' you're able to, kind of, refocus in on that.
10. Um, so yeah, I like study guides, practice tests, those are really nice.
11. I appreciate them whenever professors or TAs give 'em out.

12. Which is surprisingly not the case for most classes I've seen.

Steven reproduced the language from the video exactly, in sentences 1 and 2, selecting “practice tests” as an effective strategy that he has used and signaling that he aligned himself with the video’s designated right way to study in this instance. The narrative that Steven related illustrated his positioning of himself in alignment with the rhetorical direction of the video (sentences 5-12). The identity Steven presented in the narrative that of a capable student - he is aligned with the right way to study (using opportunities to practice and review materials before the test) according to the video. “Like, one of my classes, it’s test, test, test, that’s it” (Sentence 5). “There’s no feedback on anything” (sentence 6). “I like getting feedback because I like seeing where I am at” (sentence 8). Steven revoiced the video’s strategy of using practice tests and implicitly referenced the idea presented in the video of the way a capable student looks. The narrative in sentences 5-12 bolsters Steven’s identity as a student who chooses the ‘right way’ to study by taking advantage of practice tests, even though they are not always available (sentence 11-12).

Response Two: JACK

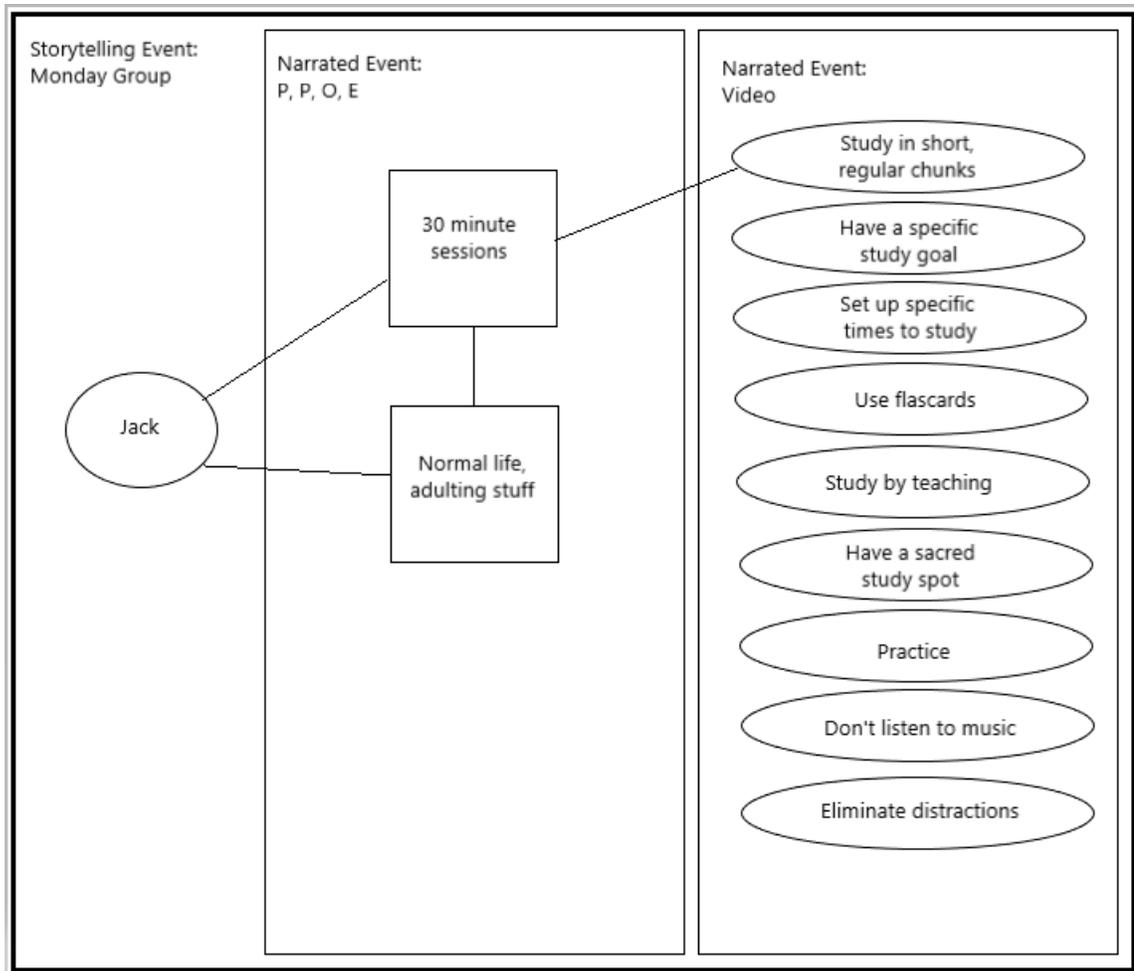


Figure 2: Jack's Response Diagram

JACK:

1. 30-minute sessions is good.
2. Because a lot of times, with everything I've got going on, that's all I can do at any one time.
3. Or, in order to kind of keep everything in my life in balance, like, I can do-I can study for 30 minutes and then I can go and do, like, life maintenance for 15 and then come back and hit it again.
4. I mean, it's still kind of like a block of study time, but it's that sort of giving me permission to be, like, okay, all right, I absolutely have to do the dishes or walk the dog or cook myself some food or, you know, fold my laundry, you know, whatever.
5. Um, normal life, adulting stuff that, unfortunately, doesn't do itself, which, you'd think in 2018, we would have figured that out?
6. But no... [unintelligible] definitely need a robot around the house.

Jack directly referenced the video in sentence 1: "30 -minute sessions is good,"

referring to the recommended strategy of breaking study sessions into 30-minute chunks

more frequently throughout the week rather than studying for more extended periods less frequently. The narrative in sentences 2-6 expands on Jack's reasoning for identifying this as a helpful strategy. In a pattern established across Jack's narratives in class, the student's reasoning for choosing an answer was firmly based on personal experiences drawn from the student's non-traditional status. The result of this is that, while Jack references the video, suggesting an alignment with the so-called 'right way' to study, Jack also reinforces a personal reasoning for doing so: "I mean, it's still I mean, it's still kind of like a block of study time, but it's that sort of giving me permission to be, like, okay, all right, I absolutely have to do the dishes or walk the dog or cook myself some food or, you know, fold my laundry, you know, whatever" (sentence 4). Though Jack aligns with the video's rhetorical 'right way' to study, interwoven within this narrative is Jack's positionality as a nontraditional student with such duties as cooking, doing laundry, and walking the dog, which must fit into the new identity Jack has taken on as a returning student. In this and other examples, Jack walks an interesting line in his narratives between aligning with the normative 'right way' to do school and building his identity as a nontraditional student into the 'right way' to do school.

Response Three: SARAH

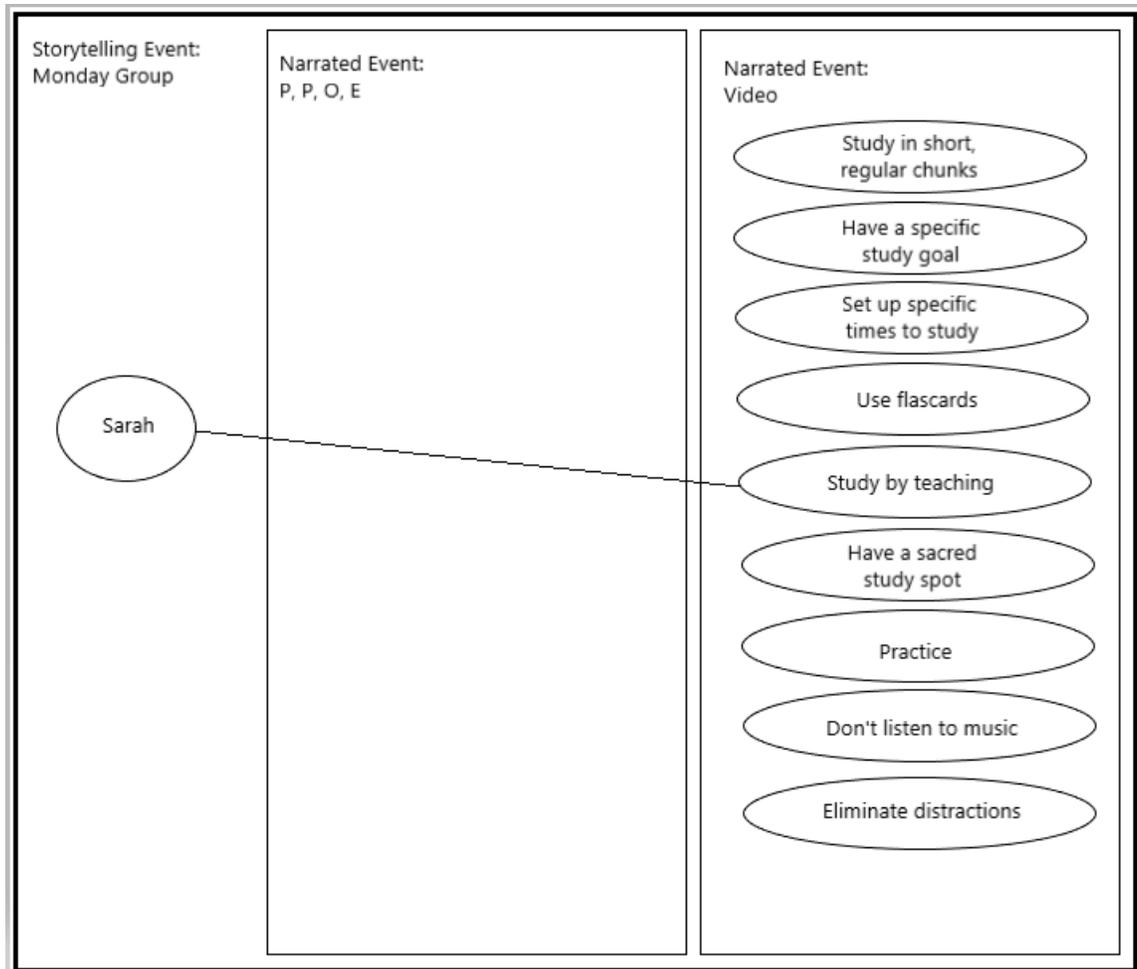


Figure 3: Sarah's Response Diagram

SARAH:

1. Oh, I was just, like, yeah, I didn't know, like, the teaching thing.
2. Like, studying with a purpose of trying to, like, teach somebody.
3. Like, scientific, that's cool.
4. Yeah.

Sarah revoiced the strategy suggested by the video to “study by teaching”: “Like, studying with a purpose of trying to, like, teach somebody” (sentence 2). Though Sarah’s response revoiced the video’s success strategies and identifies the scientific nature of the video’s recommendations as “cool” (sentence 3), Sarah did not elaborate on her answer with a narrative or much explanation. Her response indicated that she is following the

directions established in the Instructor's introduction without putting deep thought into her answer.

Wednesday Group Student Responses

Response One: TOM

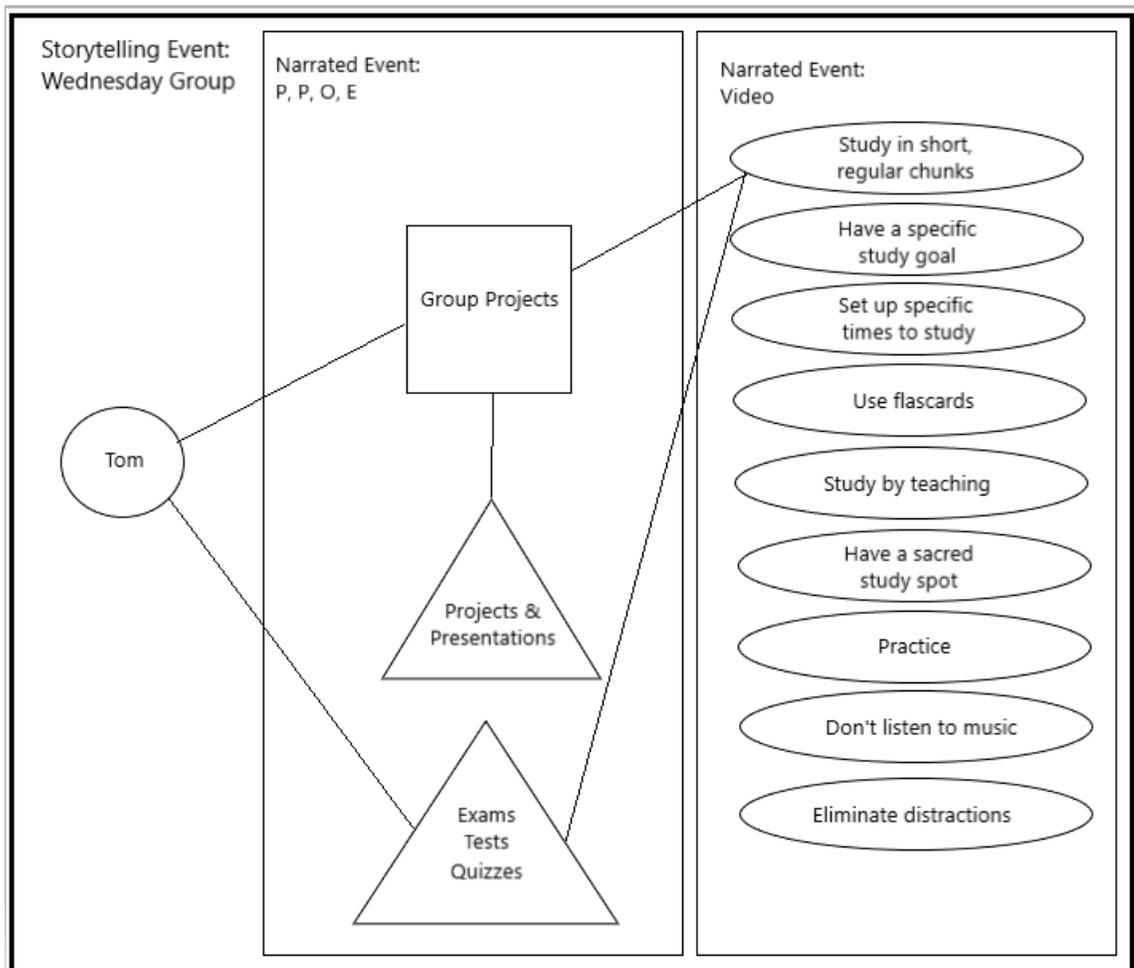


Figure 4: Tom's Response Diagram

TOM:

1. This I need to do more, like, study in chunks instead of cramming it all in the last minute.
2. Um, I feel like I'm kind of doing that already for some of my group projects because I have a lot of, like, projects and presentations.
3. Um, but, like, for exams or tests or quizzes, um, I tend to not do that, so I need to start doing that for those too. I feel like that would probably help me a lot.
4. Because, I, yeah, I noticed that it does- it's- you can kind of memorize it, but as fast as you remember or try to remember, you're gonna forget it as fast also.

5. But if you've done it over time, so it kind of builds up, it really sticks with you for a long period of time.

Tom identified the strategy, “study in short, regular chunks” as one that he wanted to focus on more. In his response, Tom positioned himself as someone who has been “cramming it all in the last minute” (sentence 1), but in transition towards the ‘ideal strategy’ of short, regular study times already because of the many “group projects ... and presentations” that Tom has (sentence 2). The positioning of himself as a student in the transition towards the ‘ideal,’ ‘right way’ to study is a role that Tom often embodied throughout the class conversation. In this case, he deferred to the strategies suggested in the video and confirmed that studying that way was better, in contrast to cramming and memorizing things in the last minute: “If you’ve done it over the time, so it kind of builds up, it really sticks with you for a long time” (sentence 5).

Response Two: KANYE

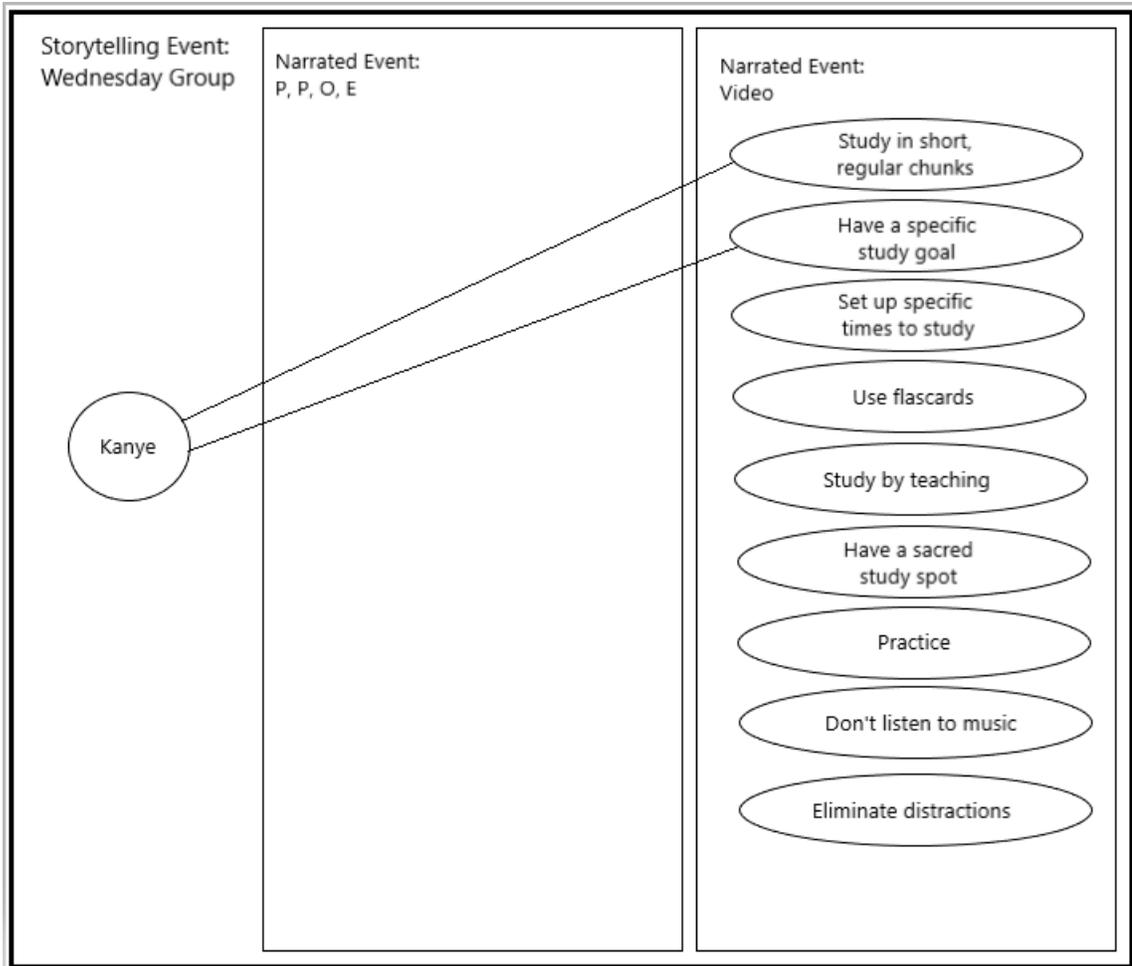


Figure 5: Kanye's Response Diagram

KANYE:

1. Yeah, I also think, like, having, um, a goal before I sit down to study is, like, a very good thing.
2. And, like, I feel like it makes you more excited and not feel like so much to do.
3. And when I set goals for myself before, like, studying, and I wanna like, perfect this concept or something, as soon as I'm done with that it's, like, yeah, I did it.
4. And sometimes, I even, like, try and not nothing to do afterwards.
5. Yeah, I feel like that's a good thing.

JP:

6. Good.
7. So is your goal within a certain time period then?
8. How do you set that up for yourself?

KANYE:

9. Um, what I try to do is, like, study in chunks.
10. I try. (laughs).

11. But, yeah, every time, it's, like, I'm gonna study like three times a day or, like, the first hour of the [units?] I'm gonna be studying for the day, set that down by classes or topics and try studying every kind of thing.
12. Sometimes it doesn't work, because I feel like I still am in the frame of what I was studying before, so I, like, carry that into the other study hours.
13. And-

JP:

14. Mmm.
15. Yeah, it's sometimes hard to transition.
16. Mm-hm.

In the exchange between Kanye and JP, Kanye first revoiced the strategy of having a specific goal for each study session: "Having, um, a goal before I sit down to study is, like, a very good thing" (sentence 1), reasoning that "I feel it makes you feel more excited and not feel like so much to do" (sentence 2). Kanye positioned himself as aligned with the ideal student identity in this sense and provided a narrative as evidence of the effectiveness of the strategy. In Kanye's current framing of the issue, he wanted to set a goal and, once the goal was accomplished, he would be done with work: "And when I set goals for myself before, like, studying, and I wanna like, perfect this concept or something, as soon as I'm done with that it's, like, yeah, I did it" (sentence 3) and "I feel like that's a good thing" (sentence 5).

JP asked a question to further the conversation, "So your goal is within a certain timeframe then? How do you set yourself up for that?" (sentences 8-9). In response, Kanye revoiced an additional strategy: "Um, what I try to do is, like, study in chunks. I try" (sentence 9-10). Kanye was not as strongly aligned to this strategy, as he explained in sentences 11-12, voicing difficulty with making a transition between subjects while studying for defined shorter segments of time: "Sometimes it doesn't work, because I feel like I still am in the frame of what I was studying before, so I, like, carry that into the

other study hours” (sentence 12). JP affirmed Kanye’s response, saying, “Yeah, it’s sometimes hard to transition” (sentence 14).

Response Three: GEORGE

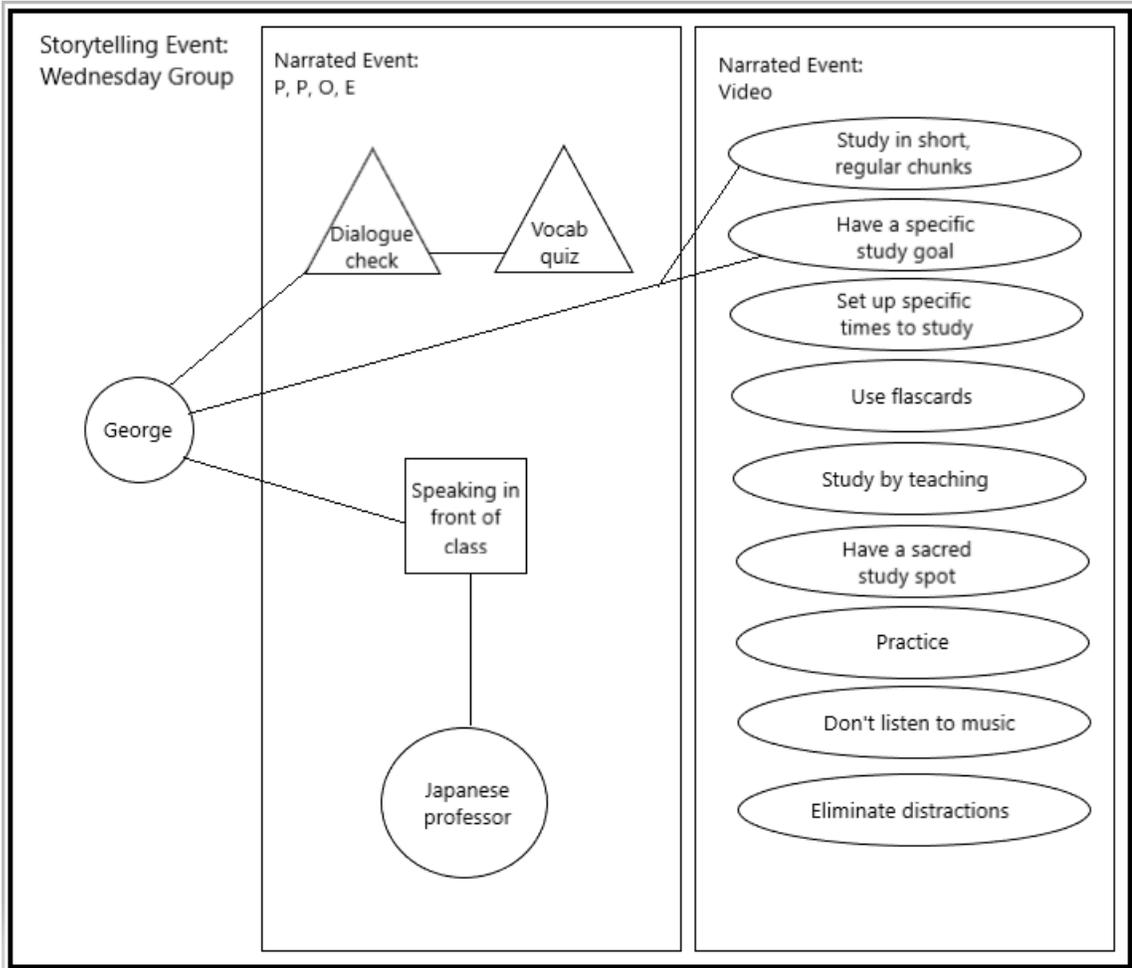


Figure 6: George's Response Diagram

GEORGE:

1. I, um, I actually did kind of the combination of having a goal and, like, having-doing it in chunks today.
2. I had, um, a dialogue check, and I had a vocab quiz, and I hadn't really prepped for either of them.
3. It's not just that I really didn't want to.
4. So, I did each in like fifteen-minute chunks.
5. Okay, fifteen minutes, just vocab and it doesn't matter how far you get into, like, studying it, you just have to do it for fifteen minutes.
6. And then, like, take a little break, then switch over to the dialogue.
7. And back and forth.
8. And I feel like I did very well on that.

9. I was- On the vocab quiz, there was one thing that I hesitated on and, um, but like I got half of it right, I just forgot two letters from it.
10. Um, and then I did really well with the dialogue check too.
11. And also she started- she noticed I have really bad, like, anxiety about speaking in front of the class, so she had me do it afterwards.
12. I'm just like, "thank you."

In their response, George revoiced two of the strategies from the video and provided a narrative example of using them both in conjunction with each other to study for a dialogue check and vocabulary quiz in their Japanese class. In the pattern of George's responses in class, George tended to share much more personal information and draw on anecdotal evidence from their life. George, for instance, revealed that they were undergoing a gender identity transition and specified the use of they/them pronouns. George set a goal of studying each subject for a timed chunk of fifteen minutes and switched back and forth in this manner. George related this narrative of successfully employing the technique because of the outcome that they performed better on both assessments: "I feel like I did really well on that" (sentence 8) and "I did really well on the dialogue check too" (sentence 10). Though George added in a side note about having anxiety speaking in class and getting an accommodation from the instructor to do the dialogue check after class (sentence 11-12), the overall effect of George's response was to position themselves with the normative direction of the narrative in the video, both by revoicing the strategies and by referring to the desired outcome of getting better grades or performing better on a test.

Response Four: TINYLO

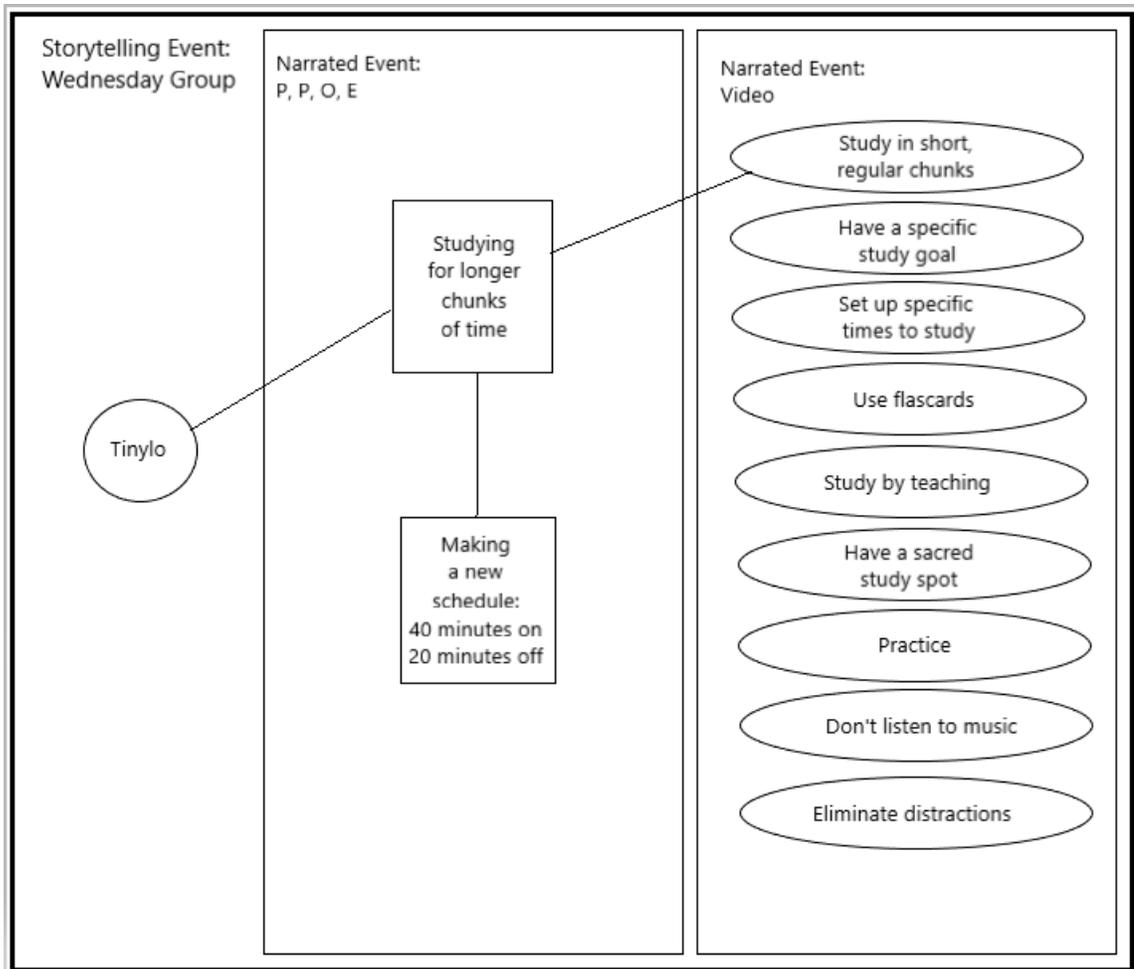


Figure 7: Tinylo's Response Diagram

TINYLO:

1. Um, I guess, um, when I was looking at the video, I was like, looking at that chunking study and, like, I was thinking, like, I think they were referring to as a weekly basis, like every day thirty minutes?
2. But I was trying to incorporate that into, like, a large kind of, like, you know, in a way cramming but not cramming.
3. Because usually when I try to study for large blocks of time, it usually goes well for like, two-three hours, and I take, like, some small breaks, so like five-ten minutes, but once you hit, like, that one point, five-ten minutes just keep on going on.
4. I think that if you make a whole schedule out and you study for forty minutes and take a twenty-minute break, and another forty minutes, I guess it's still incorporating in your mind that chunking process but you're also transitioning to something, like, smoother, like, doing something fun, I guess could be a reward too.
5. And then you get your mind off it, and you go back again, be refreshed into it.
6. So, I think I'm going to try that.

JP:

7. Okay.

TINYLO:

8. Forty minutes on, twenty minutes off.

JP:

9. Let us know how it goes.

Tinylo directly revoiced the strategy of studying in chunks in his response. He voiced difficulty with the transition between subjects and blocks of time when studying for many hours at a time during the day, sharing a narrative example of past ways in which his old, ‘ineffective’ study strategy: “When I usually try to study for large blocks of time, it usually goes well for, like, two-three hours, and I take, like, some small breaks, so like five-ten minutes, but once you hit, like, that one point, five-ten minutes just keeps going on” (sentence 3). By framing it in terms of a strategy he would like to try out that he thought would work well for him, Tinylo positioned himself as someone on the journey towards ‘ideal student’ status: “I think if you make a whole schedule out and you study for forty minutes and take a twenty-minute break, and another forty minutes, I guess it’s still incorporating in your mind that chunking process but you’re also transitioning to something, like, smoother, doing something fun, I guess could be a reward too. And then you get your mind off it, and you go back again, be refreshed into it” (sentences 4-5). JP affirmed the idea by encouraging Tinylo to share his progress with the class at a later time: “Let us know how it goes” (sentence 9).

Prompt Two: I Give Myself the Best Chance to Learn When I...

On the whole, one of the course texts, *Turning Point*, offered students on academic probation a “tool that gives [them] a chance to put failure in perspective and take charge of the future” by “help[ing] [them] (1) determine what obstacles are

interfering with their learning, (2) devise a plan to overcome them, and (3) gain the self-confidence and self-determination they need to succeed in college” (Weinsheimer, 1993, p. viii). In the APIC, the text was used often as a reflective tool given the nature of each chapter’s fill-in-the-blank style of self-reflection where students could personalize the prompt to their context and situation. In Week 11 of the course, JP prompted students to complete the reading and activities in *Turning Point*, Chapter 10: “Giving Yourself a Chance to Learn,” which offered a reflection space to consider the factors that give an individual the best chance to learn based on considerations of scheduling, knowing what is important from each course, allowing for best use of study and class time and how to personalize approaches to learning (Weinsheimer, 1993, pp. 78–79). The course instructor asked students to respond by sharing their answers to or thoughts on the final prompt, “In summary, I give myself the best chance to learn when I...” (Weinsheimer, 1993, p. 99). Answers to questions in *Turning Point* chapters were sometimes shared in class during the study, or referred to indirectly by students or the instructor. However, this instance in Week 11 was the most notable from a perspective of reproducing and resisting normative understandings of success, failure, and ‘doing school the right way.’ The activity connected to several of the learning objectives in the course, most notably, identifying and increasing knowledge about factors that impact an individual’s academic success, developing and carrying out a personalized academic improvement plan, and increasing mastery of academic skills.

Overall, *Turning Point* walked an interesting line of presenting a non-normative view of the academic probation (failure) experience by trying to get students to normalize for themselves the experience of failure and move on from it. It was a non-normative text

in the sense that it did what very few other academic success texts did and confronted the situation of failure and transition directly and addressed it. In the nitty-gritty of academic success strategies, however, *Turning Point* presented a normative view of ‘doing school’ the ‘right way.’ Chapter 10 followed this pattern, because it presented a series of conditions under which students are likely to succeed, phrased as questions that comprised the “critical issues of college learning” (Weisheimer, 1993, p. 78):

1. How do I put together a course schedule that helps me do my best?
2. How do I know what is important to learn in each of my courses?
3. How much study time should I allow?
4. How can I make the most of my personal learning style?
5. How can I best use class time for learning?
6. How should I organize my daily studying? (Weisheimer, 1993, pp. 78-79)

By identifying a set number of issues that are deemed essential to college learning, the text assumed a normative rhetorical direction, especially in Chapter 10. Some room for personalization was left by phrasing the critical issues as questions, however, which means that the text does not take as hardline of a normative rhetorical stance as the scientific study tips video.

However, this individualized approach to doing school school did little to deviate from a neoliberal approach to education in which the notion of probation is rooted. The high level of emphasis on individual responsibility did little to address systematic change from the institutional perspective. The text reinforced the notion that it is the individual who needs to change, not the institution, and emphasized the individual, private gain of doing well in school over the communal, public good of educating the population. The tools presented are perhaps intended to counter the normative way that students approach school, and the text positions itself as offering insider tips and tricks of the trade that help

demystify the behemoth of higher education to those who lack the skills necessary to navigate the culture of higher education by themselves, which is a neoliberal idea.

The text is dated and does not account for the advent of technology and online learning. In my classes, students often complained about its scenarios being outdated or not applicable to their experience, identity, or situation. At the same time, few texts do what *Turning Point* does (directly addressing and providing reflection space around the experience of being on academic probation), and parts of it remain an integral part of the academic probation course curriculum, despite recent and drastic revisions (JP, personal communication, March 7, 2019ⁱⁱⁱ). The text functions as a ‘probation journal’ throughout the class, but the responses are not often read aloud or directly discussed. In that sense, it remains useful in the curriculum (JP, personal communication, March 7, 2019).

Analytical Strategies and Diagram Format

In approaching analysis with the curriculum prompt from *Turning Point*, I identified six “critical issues of college learning,” phrased as questions in the text and distilled them down to six reference points in the narrated event referred to in the class discussion, including course schedule, important learning in each course, study time, using class time, learning style, and organization of study time. These strategies presented a normative view of how to ‘do school’ the ‘right way,’ and the set of six reference points remained fixed across both discussion groups because the narrated event did not change in each student’s response.

The diagrams in this section of the study include the narrated event of the reference points from the text, the narrated event contained in the students’ or instructor’s response to the text, a narrative or personalization of the answer to the fill-in-the-blank

question, “I give myself the best chance to learn when I...,” the people, places, objects, and events/actions that students referenced in addition to the course text in the narrated event, and the storytelling event, each student’s and the instructor’s conversation about the text in class. Lines delineate linkages between the storytelling event and the two narrated events.

Instructor Set-Up

Monday Group

JP:

1. So, what we’re going to talk about today is, we’re gonna talk about *Turning Point*, Chapter 10 since we didn’t get to talk about it in class.
2. And I really like *Turning Point* Chapter 10 because I think that this chapter is kind of a culmination of all the things we’ve been talking about already this semester and is kind of around, like, you know, how am I doing all of these things I’m talking about?
3. Um, and organizing things, and using my class time wisely, how am I creating a schedule for myself that is going to set me up for my highest level of success, and so I felt like- I also think that this chapter is really nice at this time of year because registration, I know, opens on Thursday this week for classes for next semester.
4. So I think that this is an opportunity to also think about what’s gonna set me up for success next semester?
5. Um, so I know we usually talk about these in groups but just take a moment and kinda look through kind of what you- what did you write, um, and then on page 99, it’s like, ‘in summary, I give myself the best chance to learn when I...’
6. So kind of focusing in on that summary point and where do you see yourself with kinda thinking about how you’re organizing your class time, how you’re organizing, um, your in-class learning, out-of-class learning, what are your organization systems, um, kinda that focused versus diffused learning that we’ve talked about, um, yeah.
7. So take a moment and then kinda- if we could just go around and share, um, general thoughts on doing some of the reflection or if the summary part of ‘I give myself the best chance to learn when I...’

In the Monday Group, JP spoke at some length about the *Turning Point*, Chapter 10 text, reinforcing its role as an important source of information in the class, aligned with other relevant topics covered before, and placed appropriately in the semester, as students

were discussing registration and thinking about how to organize their schedules for the next term. In her set-up for the discussion for the Monday Group, JP aligned herself with the text by saying, “I really like *Turning Point* Chapter 10 because I think that this chapter is kind of a culmination of the things we’ve been talking about already this semester” (sentence 2). JP directly referenced the text by summarizing all of the six critical issues in sentence 3, revoicing a ‘right way’ to do school taught in the class and reinforced in the text. JP then prompted students to reflect on or summarize their learning choices by finishing the sentence, “I give myself the best chance to learn when I...” (sentence 7).

Wednesday Group

JP:

1. So, what I really like about, um, Chapter 10 of *Turning Point* and we’ll kinda transition into that, is that I feel like this chapter is a good chapter to kind of think about all the things we’ve talked about all semester.
2. You know, it’s kind of like what is it from all the things that we’ve talked about that will give you the opportunity to be as successful as you can, moving forward, right?
3. And I think there are some really nice pieces in here.
4. We’re getting really close to registration, too, so I kind of like the comment around the bal- like, how do you create a schedule that works for you, how can you be realistic around study time, um, you know, giving myself time to process and understand things, and then, what I really love, that final question that you all had to reflect on, was like, in summary, I give myself the best chance to learn when I..., right?
5. And so, I think this is just, as we kind of come into... we only have a couple sessions left together, like, we have three more weeks of our classes, and then I sadly have to say goodbye to you all, which, like, always really bums me out, but it’s fine, you know.
6. We live, and we learn.
7. It means you all are onto bigger and better things.
8. But, take a few minutes and kinda just look through, you know, what did you reflect on in this chapter?
9. What was helpful for you as you kind of think about all the things we’ve talked about this semester?

10. And then, in a couple minutes, I want us to just kinda go around and share, like, what is it that you do that gives you the best chance to learn?

For the Wednesday Group, JP initiated the discussion with a similar prompt, although there were a few key differences. JP emphasized the idea of moving forward, saying, “what is it from all the things we’ve talked about that will give you the opportunity to be as successful as you can moving forward?” (sentence 2), which shifted emphasis to looking towards the future. As well, JP only revoiced two of the critical issues of college learning, course schedule and study time, instead of summarizing all six of them (sentence 4). Finally, in the Wednesday Group, JP talked about being sad that the class was coming to an end: “We have three more weeks of our classes, and then I sadly have to say goodbye to you all, which, like, always really bums me out, but it’s fine, you know. We live, and we learn. It means you all are onto bigger and better things” (sentences 5-7). In this last section, JP positioned herself as much more informally and intimately connected to the Wednesday Group, per a pattern established across much of the observed discussion periods. The tone JP took in the Wednesday Group was often less formal, and the instructor brought personal narrative examples into her responses much more.

Monday Group Student Responses

Response One: JACK

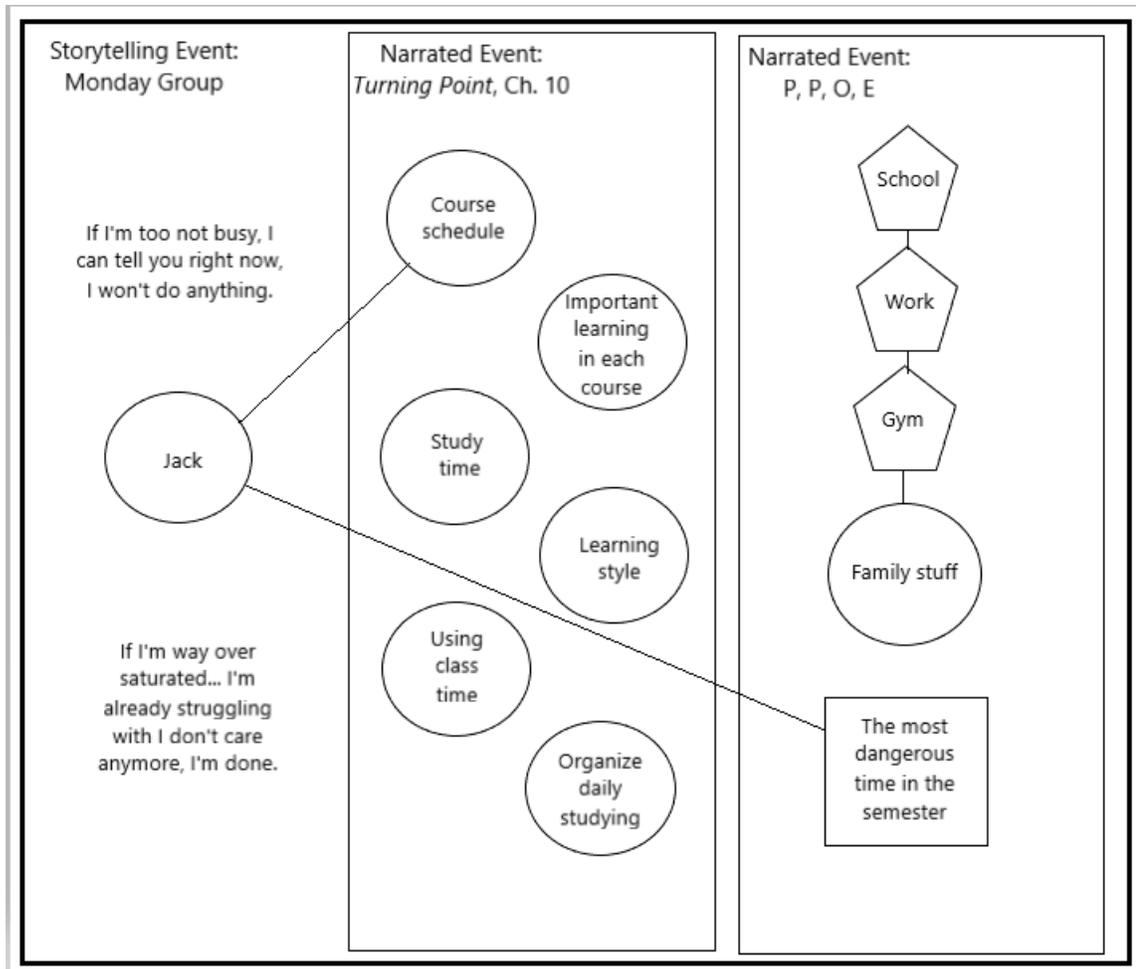


Figure 8: Jack's Response Diagram

JACK:

1. And I give myself the best chance to learn when I've got that sort of- like, I can't be too not busy, 'cause if I'm too not busy, I can tell you right now I won't do anything.
2. If I'm way oversaturated, and I'm in this constant- like I am this semester, I'm in this constant state of always feeling like I'm behind on something, whether it's school, whether it's work, whether it's gym, whether it's family stuff, and I'm constantly having to keep up, by the end of the sem- by the end of the week, by the end of the semester, like, I'm already having to struggle with the listen, I don't even care anymore, I'm done, I can't keep this up, and I'm like, this is the most dangerous time in the semester for that, like, I've got to get through this.

Jack answered by saying that he does best when he has a balance between activity and downtime, referring to the critical issue of having a balanced course schedule in the text. Jack did not position himself as being a master of this technique; however, due to

current struggles with “always feeling like I’m behind on something, ... [and struggling with thoughts of] I don’t even care anymore, I’m done, I can’t keep this up” (sentence 2). In his response, Jack seemed to view success as just “get[ting] through this” (sentence 2). For Jack, there was a critical difference between the idealized learning situation in which he does best (where everything is balanced) and the current learning situation where everything is a struggle. Though Jack revoiced the course text, the root of his response came from a personal narrative about how things were going at that point in the semester. Per a pattern in Jack’s responses, personal narratives that emphasized Jack’s role as a nontraditional student were a staple of his anecdotal evidence in class. Jack’s identity seemed important to him as he often used identifying characteristics to bolster his responses in class. The rhetorical direction of Jack’s response mirrored the text in that they agreed upon the ‘right way’ and ‘wrong way’ to go about managing critical issues of college learning. Jack’s response was notable in that it followed a noticeable pattern in building up Jack’s identity as a nontraditional student.

Response Two: STEVEN

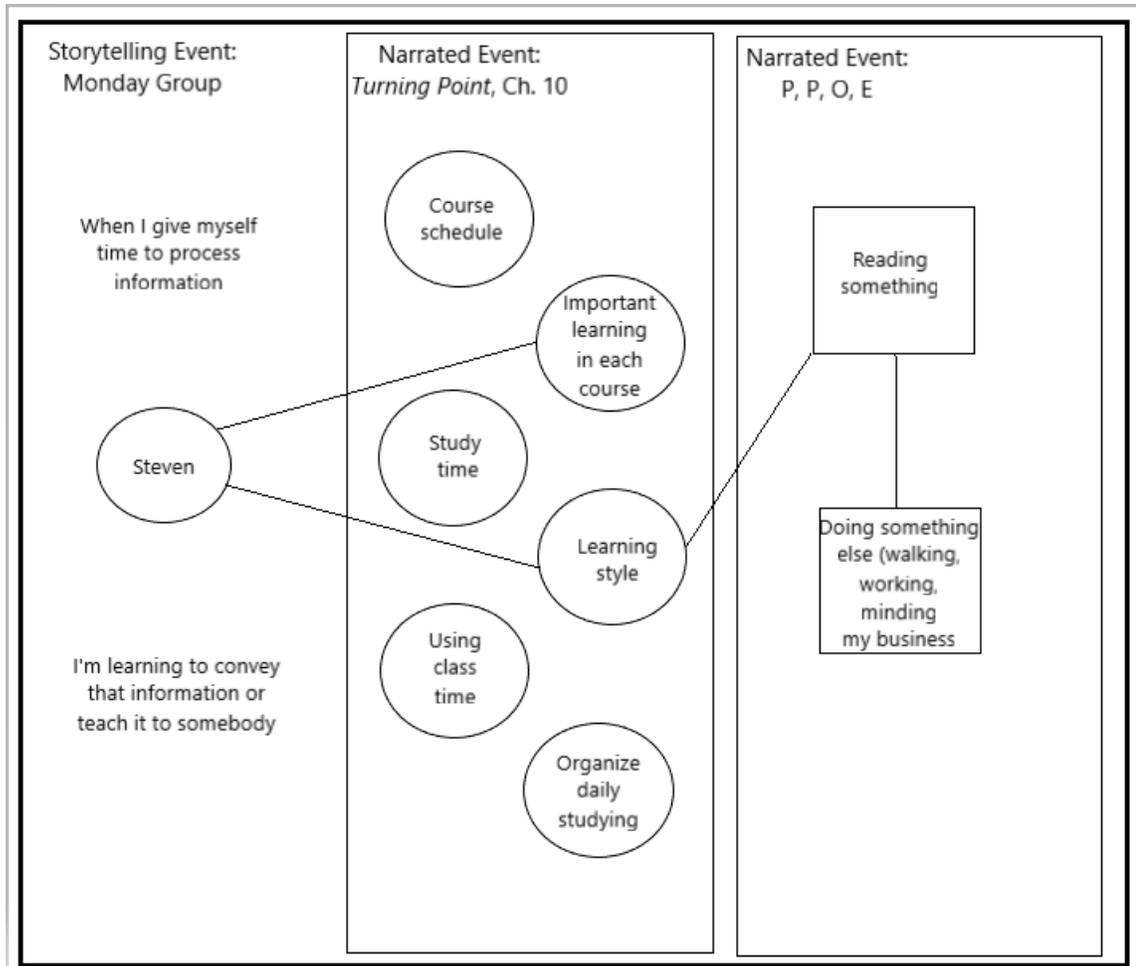


Figure 9: Steven's Response Diagram

Steven:

1. But I, I think for me, the phrase that came to mind [unintelligible] -is when I give myself time to process information.
2. So, like, I'll read something, look over something, or something sticks with me through class, and I won't kinda dwell on it, but I'll just like keep it in the back of my head, so like, I'll be doing something else, or I'll be walking, or I'll be at work, just minding my own business, and 'oh shit.'
3. Something clicks.
4. Okay.
5. I get it.
6. It's good.
7. And if I frame it in my mind where I'm not necessarily learning to take a test, learning to write a paper, but I'm learning to convey that information or like teach it to somebody, that helps me a lot, so much, just because if I can verbalize it, if I can speak it, um, I could translate that to, like, tests.

Steven responded that he gives himself the best chance to learn when “I give myself time to process information” (sentence 1). Steven revoiced the critical issues of college learning of identifying important learning in courses, using the narrative in sentence 2 as an example, saying that his most important learning occurs when he gives time to “keep [information] in the back of [his] head” and “something clicks” (sentences 2 and 3). Steven also indirectly referenced the critical issue of learning style, saying that “If I frame it in my mind where ... I’m learning to convey that information or, like, teach it to somebody, that helps me a lot” (sentence 7). By providing examples that referenced the text and narratives of ways in which these critical issues work for Steven, he positioned himself in this response as aligned with the direction of the curriculum – that is, he is a student for whom these are also critical issues of college learning, and they have helped him find an effective way to personalize his learning process.

Response Three: JD

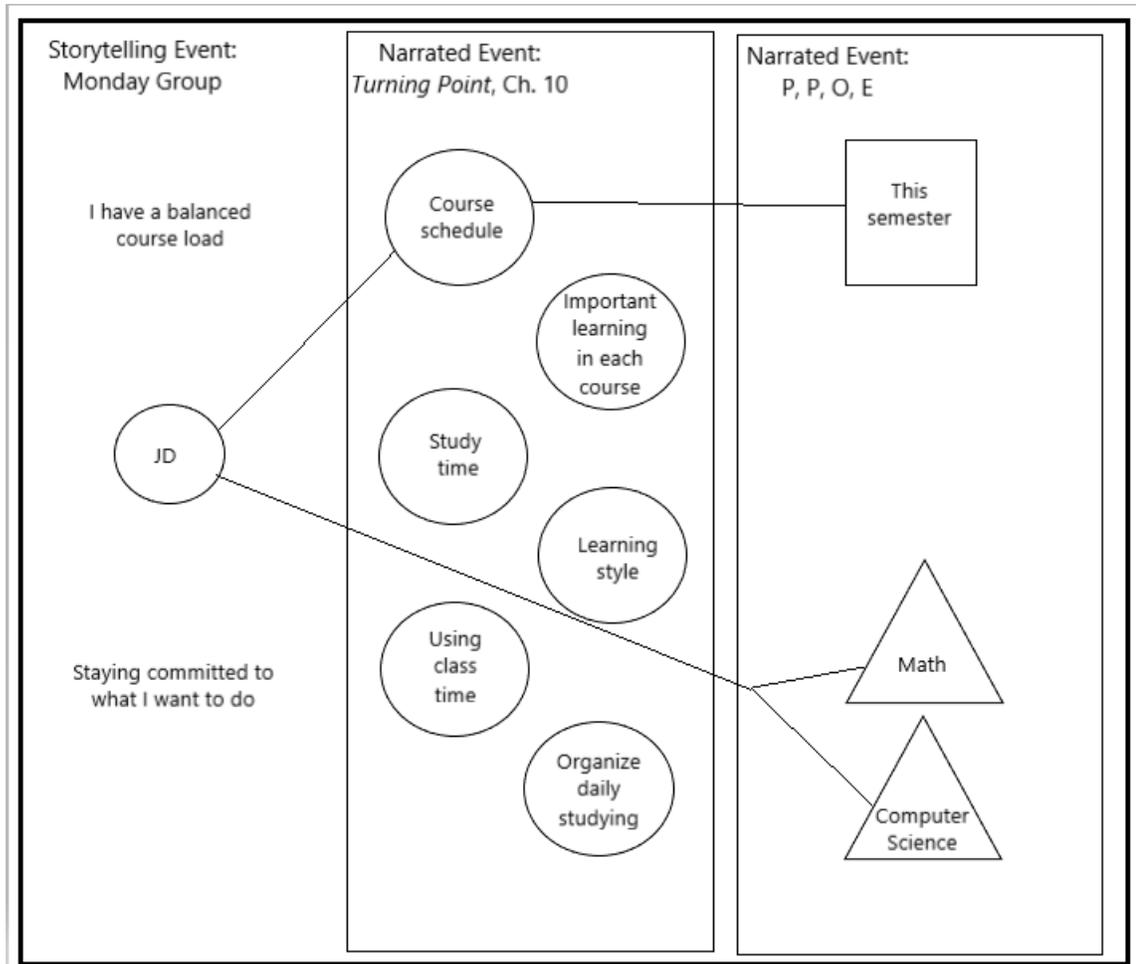


Figure 10: JD's Response Diagram

JD:

1. Um, I'll go.
2. So, I give myself the best chance to learn when I have, like, a balanced course load.
3. Um, this semester, I don't have that much to work for, so I feel lazy sometimes when I don't have that.
4. Um, but I don't wanna take that too far as well, that's why I want to have, like balanced course- um, course load.
5. And the other's staying committed to, uh, what I wanna do.
6. Sometimes I say, oh, maybe I should've studied computer science, maybe I should've done math, you know, not sticking to my decision kind of, effects, um, my performance in my classes.
7. That's one thing that I need to clear and stay.
8. Being decisive.

JD provided two answers to the discussion question. The first was "I give myself the best chance to learn when I have, like, a balanced course load" (sentence 2), which

revoiced *Turning Point*'s critical issue of the course schedule. JD expanded on her answer, saying that "this semester, I don't have that much to work for, so I feel lazy sometimes" (sentence 3), but that it is important not to go too far in the other direction of being too busy and overbooked. *Turning Point* emphasized this sense of balance: "Regardless of what method you use to choose your courses, you need to remember that balance is key. Only you can decide what combination of courses is right for you. When you take the time to put together a good course plan for the term, you give yourself a chance to succeed with your learning" (Weinsheimer, 1993, p. 80). JD referencing of the text aligns herself with the type of student who has learned to choose a balanced schedule; in JD's case, it is through the experience of having had a slow semester and feeling demotivated by the lack of engagement and work.

JD chose to add a second answer to the discussion question that did not revoice the text's six critical issues of college learning. JD said, "The other thing's staying committed to, uh, what I wanna do" (sentence 5). JD expanded on the idea, saying, "Sometimes I say, oh, maybe I should've studied computer science, maybe I should've done math, you know, not sticking to my decision kind of, effects, um, my performance in my classes" (sentence 6). The opening in the curriculum to fill in the blanks gave JD space to personalize her answer to the question and choose an area not discussed in the text to describe the situation that gives JD the best opportunity to learn.

Response Four: SARAH

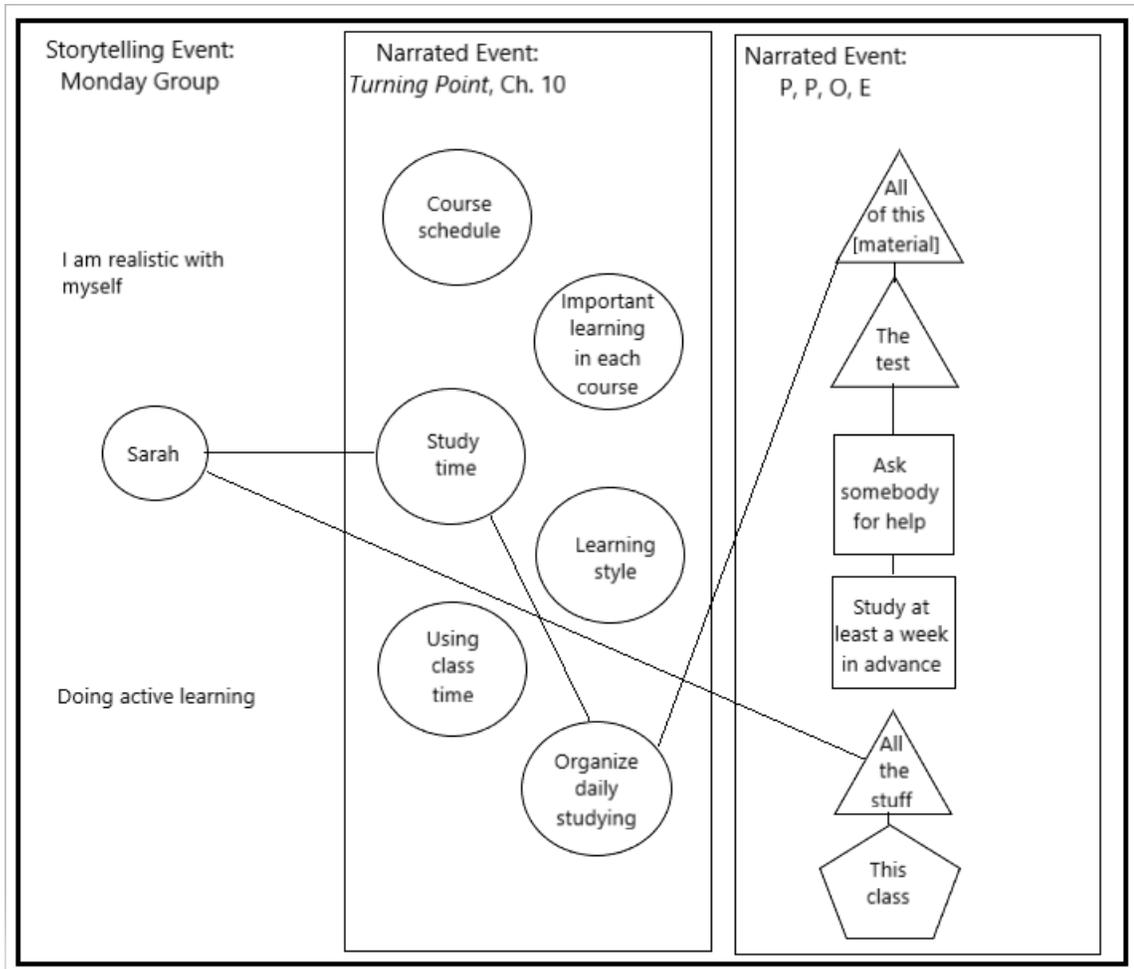


Figure 11: Sarah's Response Diagram

SARAH:

1. Um, I think in the most concise way possible, um, I- wait, what was it, sorry?

SYLVIA:

1. In summary, I give myself the best chance for learning when I...

JP:

2. [laughing]

SARAH:

3. Am realistic with myself.

JP:

4. Mm.

SARAH:

5. I think sometimes I'm like, yeah, I can learn all of this in like one hour, like before the test.

6. Like, it's not that hard, and then I actually like look at it, and I'm like okay, just kidding, like, I don't know how to do any of this, by myself.
7. And then it's too late to ask somebody for help.
8. So, I think giving myself at least a week in advance to study for all my exams [laughing]

JP:

9. [Laughing]

SARAH:

10. Um, and then doing active learning, like the stuff we talked about before in this class, um, is when I learn best.
11. Yeah.

JP:

12. Mm.
13. Thank you for sharing.

In Sarah's response, she first stated that she gives herself the best opportunity to learn when she is "realistic with [her]self" (sentence 3). Sarah went on to explain that, "I think ... I can learn all of this in, like, one hour, like before the test. ... And then it's too late to ask anybody for help. So, I think giving myself at least a week in advance to study" (sentences 5, 7-8). Sarah's answer revoiced the text in the critical issue area of organizing daily studying. Like other respondents, Sarah positioned herself along the spectrum of working towards being the ideal student who considers all six of the critical issues by discussing past experiences that were learning opportunities, and how she has changed behaviors applying what she has learned.

Sarah also referenced "doing active learning, like the stuff we've talked about before in this class" (sentence 10) as when she does her best learning. Though the text did not directly mention active learning techniques, by aligning her best learning practices with past topics in the class, Sarah positioned herself as a student who practices the effective strategies recommended by the class and thus moves in the same rhetorical

direction as the ways to learn effectively presented in the textbook, the course, and referred to by the instructor in her set-up.

Response Five: SYLVIA

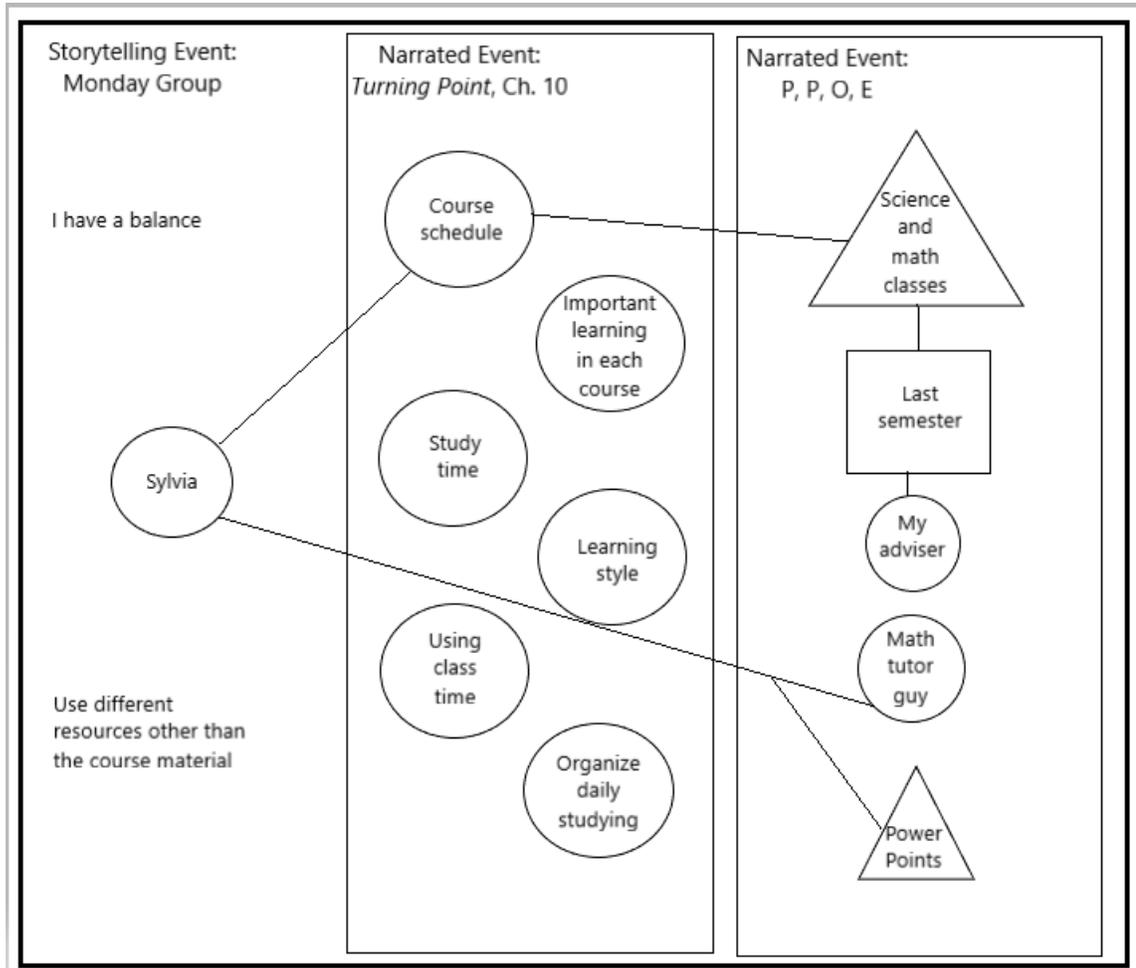


Figure 12: Sylvia's Response Diagram

SYLVIA:

1. One way I give myself the best chance to learn is when I have, like a balance, like, course- I don't know, like in the beginning of the semester when I applied for- when I registered for classes, like when I have the kind of balance because my major is kind of science-based.
2. So, in the past I've had a habit of kind of registering for all science classes and math classes, and I did good, but right now is, you know, things just get so complex and difficult, and I thought I could do that last semester, and I was, like, oops. [laughs]
3. You know, and my adviser, you know, that's where she kind of came in and told me, you know, I understand that you did this before, but you've gotta just add that the classes are getting more difficult and, you know. [laughs]

4. So, it took a while for me to realize that because I just wanted to kind of get done with all the science classes and graduate quicker, but you know, kind of- I gotta come to, you know, just one [unintelligible – talking about balancing science and math classes with other classes] and kind of being sick of some other maths classes and that’s what I did this semester, and it’s actually working. [unintelligible]
5. And one way is, one other way is using different resources other than the course material, especially organic chem, um, or math.
6. I used the math tutor guy on YouTube, and he’s just really clear and kind of makes it fun, ‘cause if I rely on the PowerPoints and if it’s something that I didn’t understand in class, and then I go back to it, I’m like, [sigh].
7. But when I look at it, like, you know, a different person presenting it that makes more sense, that’s something that I discovered works for me [unintelligible]

Sylvia provided an answer to the fill-in-the-blank question that initially revoiced the critical issue of the course schedule and balancing between math and science classes, which are in Sylvia’s major, and other types of classes. Sylvia’s identification with this strategy came from not registering for a balanced course load in past semesters. “In the past, I’ve had a habit of kind of registering for all science classes and math classes,” Sylvia related, “and I did good, but right now is, you know, things just get so complex and difficult, and I thought I could do that last semester, and I was, like, oops” (sentence 2), implying that this strategy did not pay off as courses got increasingly difficult and the workload got harder to balance. In her narrative, Sylvia identified additional information that reinforced *Turning Point*, which came from her academic adviser, who suggested that Sylvia register for a more balanced class load: “My adviser, you know, that’s where she kind of came in and told me, you know, I understand that you did this before, but you’ve gotta just add that the classes are getting more difficult and, you know” (sentence 4).

Sylvia provided an additional answer to the fill-in-the-blank question that did not revoice the six critical issues of college learning – using resources outside of those

offered in class to help understand the material: “And one way is, one other way is using different resources other than the course material, especially organic chem, um, or math” (sentence 5). In the second part of her response, Sylvia resisted the normative direction of the curriculum, going out of the scope of the six critical issues, by stating that she supplements the resources given in class with web resources: “I used the math tutor guy on YouTube and he’s just really clear and kind of makes it fun, ‘cause if I rely on the PowerPoints and if it’s something that I didn’t understand in class, and then I go back to it, I’m like, [sigh]. But when I look at it, like, you know, a different person presenting it that makes more sense, that’s something that I discovered works for me” (sentence 6-7). In this part of the response as well, Sylvia presented a contrast between a previous experience of not looking outside the textbook to understand the material and her current experience of finding supplementary material that has a more accessible style and helps her understand better. The second part of Sylvia’s response subtly resisted the rhetorical direction of the curriculum because Sylvia presented herself as adept at locating the resources that work for her outside of those offered in the classroom.

Wednesday Group Student Responses

Response One: QUINN

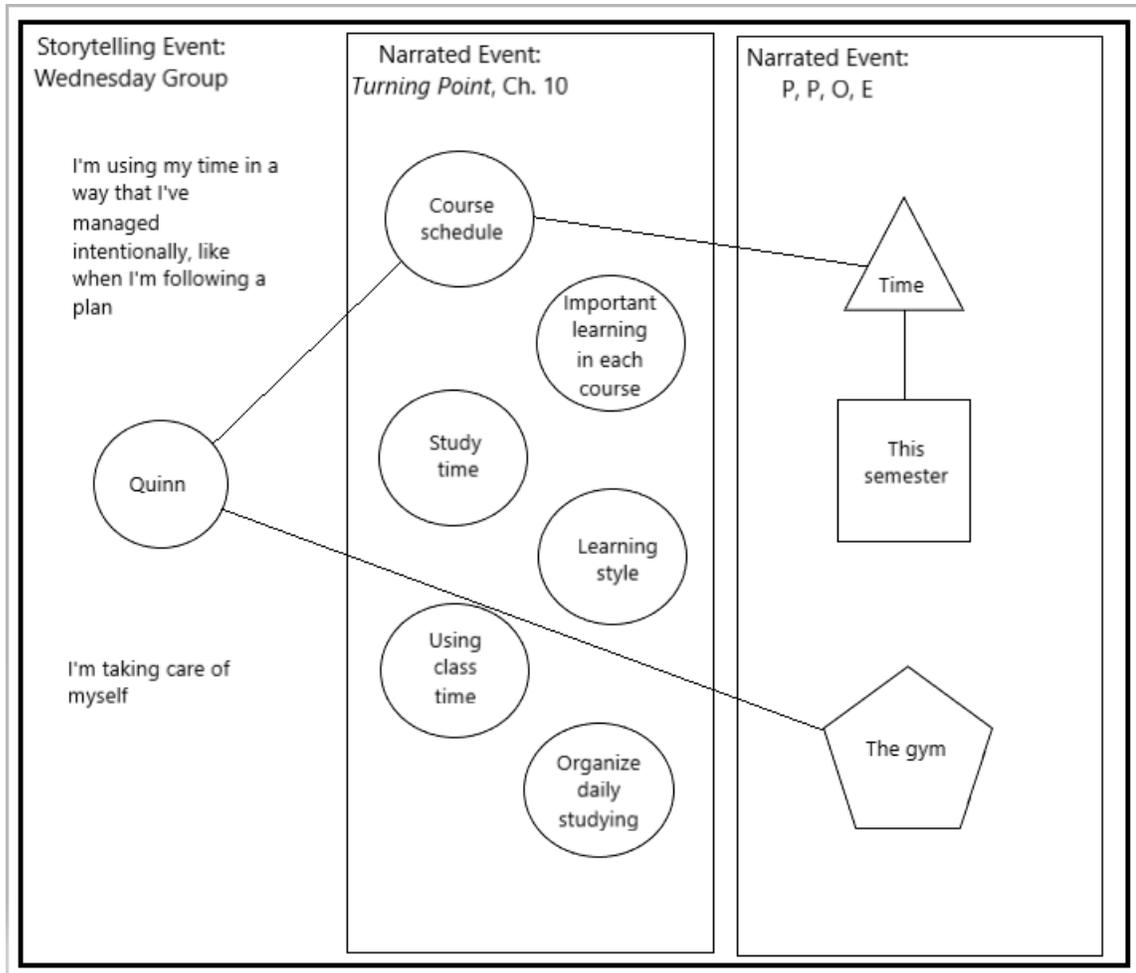


Figure 13: Quinn's Response Diagram

Quinn:

1. Yeah, um, well I guess, like, it was helpful to think about, like, the um, like balanced plan or not because I'm only taking half-time credits this semester so I have, like a lot more free time, which means I have just like more time to manage.

JP:

2. Mm-hm

Quinn:

3. Which is kind of more difficult than, like, when you have- when you're busier.
4. Um, so like it was important for me to think about that, to think about, like how I can manage the time that I do have because I have time to do all my assignments.
5. And then, I give myself the best chance to learn when I'm using my time, like, in a way that I've, like, managed, like, intentionally, um, like when I'm following a plan.
6. Um, and also, like, when I'm taking care of myself, like, going to the gym and, like, doing things like that as well.

In her response, Quinn echoed a theme heard across both groups, which was that she learned best with “a balanced plan” because having “more time to manage” (sentence 1) is “kind of more difficult than, like, when you have,- when you’re busier” (sentence 3). Quinn’s response revoiced the *Turning Point* curriculum by referencing both course schedule, in terms of how many credits to register for (half- versus full-time) and how to organize daily studying: “So, like, it was important for me to think about that, to think about, like, how I can manage the time I do have because I have time to do all my assignments” (sentence 4). The two critical issues of course schedule and organizing daily studying came together in Quinn’s response to the fill-in-the-blank question: “I give myself the best chance to learn when I’m using my time, like, in a way that I’ve, like managed, like, intentionally, um, like when I’m following a plan” (sentence 5). Quinn presented herself as in alignment with the direction of the text, in this response.

Quinn also added an answer to the fill-in-the-blank question that was not mentioned in *Turning Point*, indicating that physical self-care plays a significant role in her ability to do her best in school: “Um, and also, like, when I’m taking care of myself, like, going to the gym and, like, doing things like that as well” (sentence 6). Quinn positioned herself as an authority on identifying what contributes to her best learning, taking the opportunity to personalize her answer beyond the six critical issues referenced in *Turning Point*.

Response Two: GEORGE

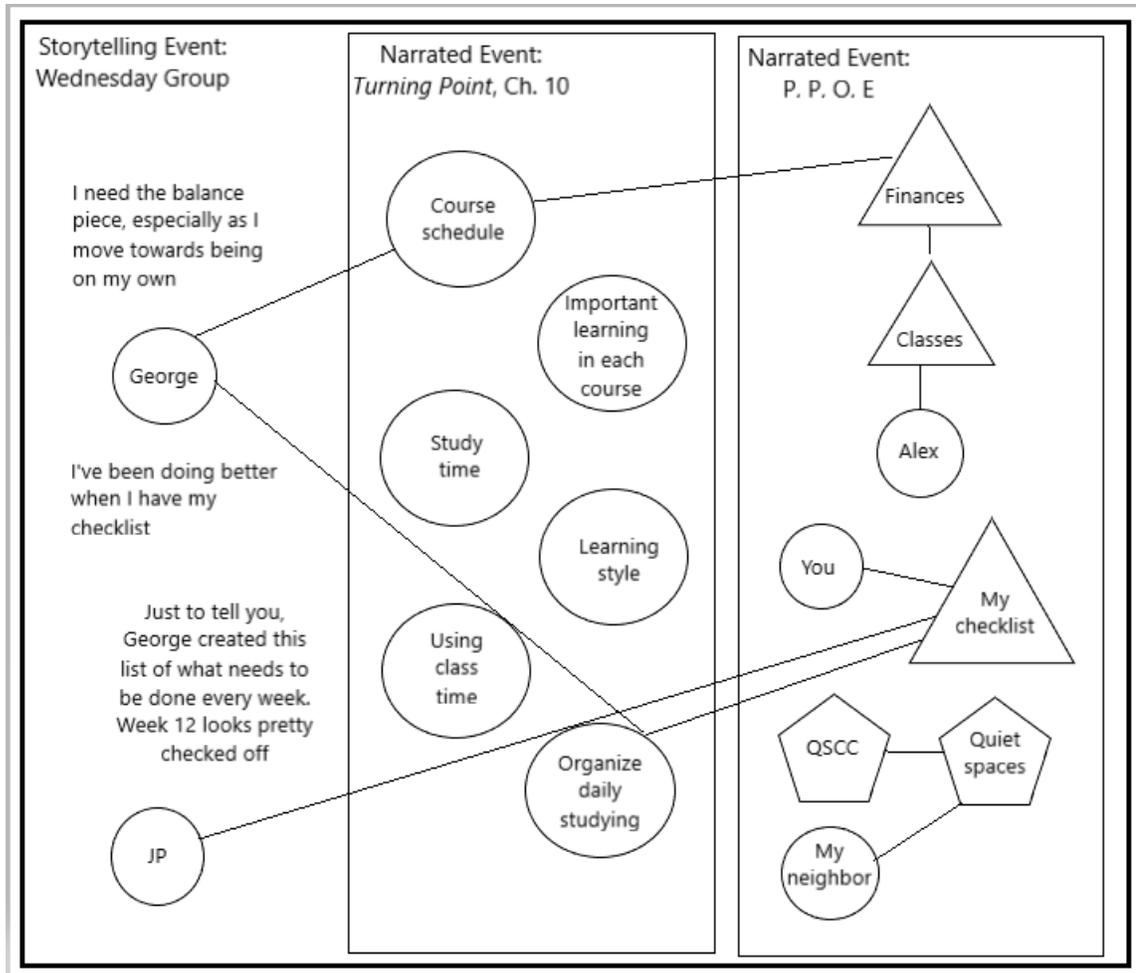


Figure 14: George's Response Diagram

GEORGE:

1. I think I've- this is kind of confirming what I've been suspecting for a while, is that I need the balance piece, especially as I move towards, like, being on my own entirely, being entirely financially independent, and hopefully, like, taking over more time with Alex^{iv}.
2. I need to, like, balance this out better.
3. Especially now that I don't have that fellowship to, like, balance out the finances.
4. I don't think I should be taking as many classes as I've been taking.
5. Um, 'cause I was more intense with catching up this week, and I spent almost every waking hour over the last few days, like, either going from place to place or working on stuff for school.
6. And it's a lot.
7. And it's actually kind of trying to take over time with Alex
8. I need to be better, more balanced.
9. And then I also, like, I think you said this to me, about, um, like how I've been doing better when I have my checklist, and, um, that's literally the only way I've been, like, I was able to, like, get caught up as fast as I was is that I had that- I had this [hits something, notebook or table].

10. I, like, knew my limits and what works well for me, so, like, I was- I haven't spent as much time over at the, um, QSCC lately, and that's been kind of hurting my socializing a lot, but, um, I kind of balance that out with time with my neighbor who I- [unintelligible]
11. I've spent a lot of time downstairs in the quiet spaces, and I got caught up.
12. So I'm on top of it, I just need to make sure I balance out next semester well.

JP:

13. Mm-hm, mm-hm.
14. Yeah, it's cool to see all your- so, just to tell you, George created this list of, like, every week of what needs to be done, so...
15. Week 12 looks pretty checked off at this point.

GEORGE:

16. Yeah!

JP:

17. [laughs] that's great.

GEORGE:

18. [unintelligible] the bulk of my assignments are due Monday, and I did not- it took me until literally, I made this to realize that.

In the exchange between George and JP, George revoiced the critical issue of having a balanced schedule but resisted the rhetorical direction that *Turning Point* encouraged students to go in with their answers. George stated that they had been thinking about the issue of balance recently – “this is kind of confirming what I've been suspecting for a while, is that I need the balance piece, especially as I move towards, like, being on my own entirely, being entirely financially independent, and hopefully, like, taking over more time with Alex. I need to, like, balance this out better” (sentence 1-2). George referred to balance in a broader context than it was presented in *Turning Point* by bringing in personal elements of balancing finances, time with family, and self-care.

A second, related aspect of George's response and the exchange with JP discussed George's organizational strategy, which revoiced the critical issue of organizing daily studying. George's binder, which came up frequently in the discussion, was revoiced by

JP as an example of an effective organizational practice: “So, just to tell you, George created this list of, like, every week of what needs to be done, so... Week 12 looks pretty checked off at this point” (sentences 14-15). JP affirmed George’s identity as an effective student by using their organizational strategy as an exemplar while aligning the narrative George had relayed with the direction of the *Turning Point* text.

Response Three: KANYE

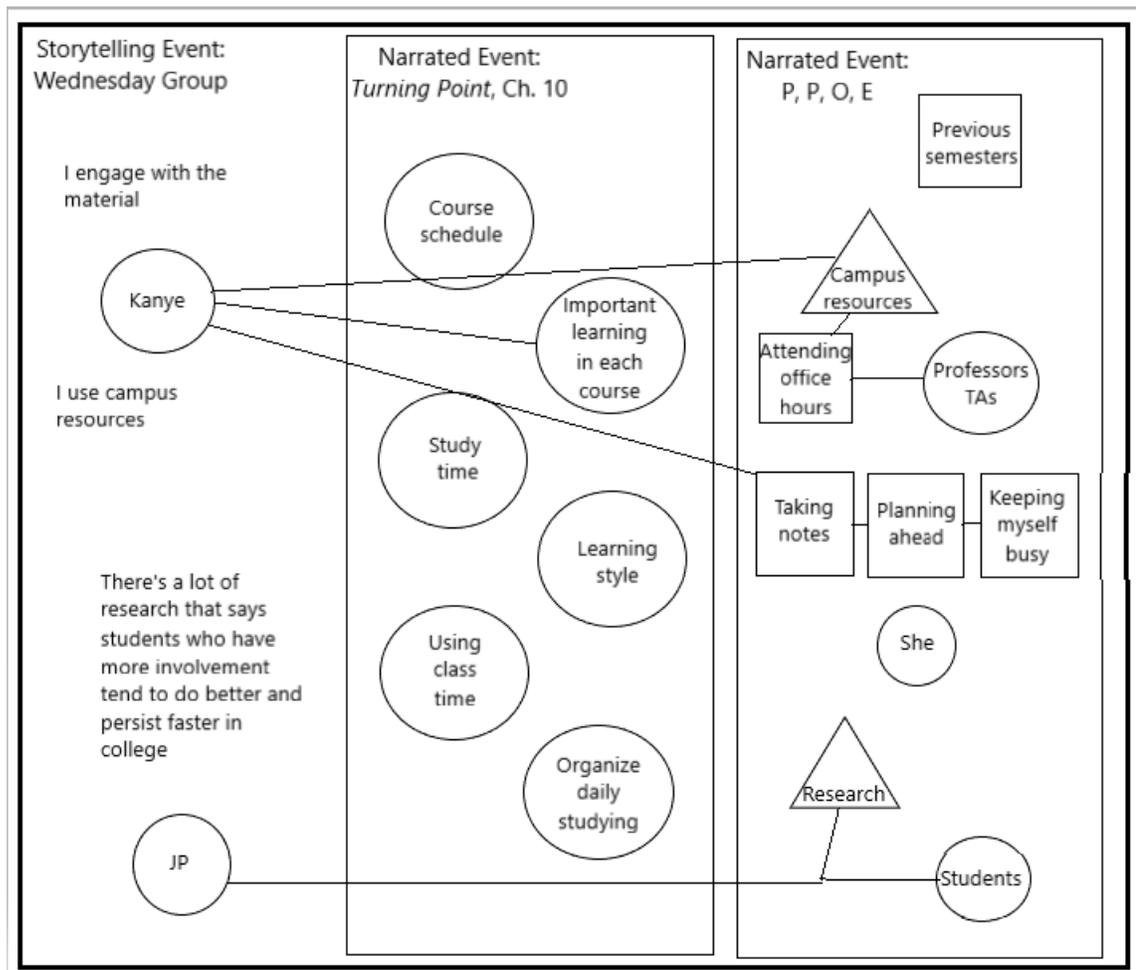


Figure 15: Kanye's Response Diagram

KANYE:

1. Um, I guess I give myself the best chance to learn when I engage with the material and, like, everything.
2. Um, because it's like, compared to the previous semesters, the difference is, like, I am using the resources on campus now, like, I am attending office hours, I'm talking to the professors and TAs.

3. Um, I'm really, like, taking notes and, like, keeping track of what's being taught in the class.
4. And, um, just, like, engaged with the coursework, and like, seeing what's coming, planning ahead a lot, and keeping myself busy.

JP:

5. Mm-hm.

KANYE:

6. Like she said, it's harder to, like, manage time when you have a lot of free time, so...

JP:

7. Mm.
8. Mm-hm.

KANYE:

9. I think being busy helps, you know?

JP:

10. Mm-hm.
11. Yeah, there's a lot of research actually out there that says college students who are more, like, who have kind of more involvement or jobs or all these things and your schedule is really, really full, actually tend to do better and persist faster in college because when you have that free time, you're like, I need to get this done in my free time, versus, you know, the opposite where it's like, you have all the right?
12. And we've talked about that all semester, but, yeah, I think that that's great to hear and sometimes it involves getting a job that makes you get up-
13. Yeah

KANYE:

14. for a 5 am shift, but... [laughs] yeah.

JP:

15. Mm-hm.

In his response, Kanye revoiced a number of the critical issues in *Turning Point*, as well as classmates' responses, including course schedule, study time, and organizing daily studying, stating that all of these are critical components to giving himself the best opportunity to learn. Interspersed with revoicing *Turning Point*, Kanye referenced strategies not listed in the course text, including engaging with the material and using

campus resources. These ideas came up in the class discussion, and Kanye could have been voicing previous answers of his classmates in his response.

In the exchange, JP affirmed Kanye's response by sharing an anecdote about research documenting that students' success is higher when they are more engaged and "busy" in college: "Yeah, there's a lot of research actually out there that says college students who are more, like, who have kind of more involvement or jobs or all these things and your schedule is really, really full, actually tend to do better and persist faster in college because when you have that free time, you're like, I need to get this done in my free time, versus, you know, the opposite where it's like, you have all the- right?" (sentence 11).

Response Four: TOM

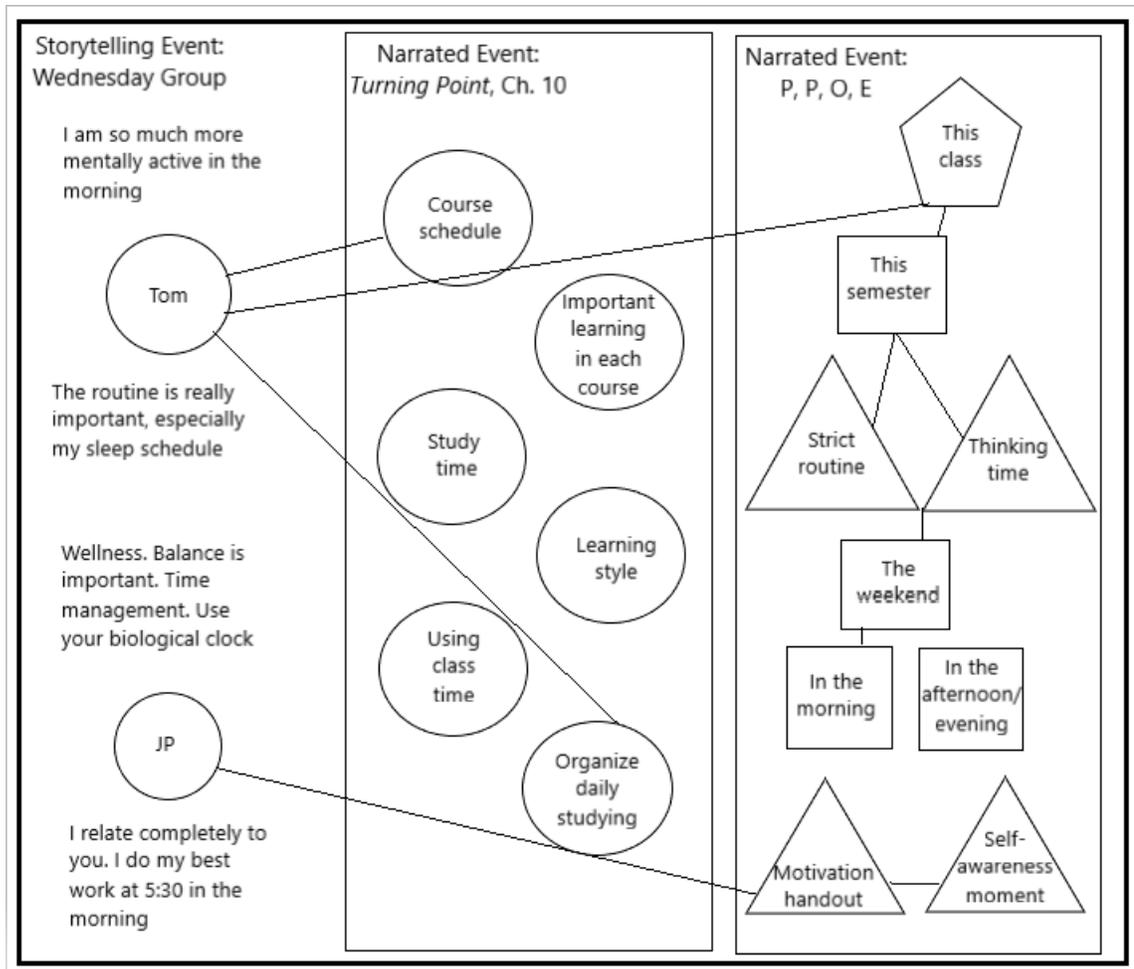


Figure 16: Tom's Response Diagram

TOM:

1. Yeah, I can also summarize a few things.
2. Um, it was more like a reflection on this exercise and so reinforcing some of the strategies that we have been talking about throughout the class.
3. Um, ones that were on the top of my head that I wrote down were making sure, like, have a strict routine and thinking time, you know, especially on weekends.
4. Um, and just kind of following that.
5. I realized that as this semester went on, like, I am so much more active mentally, um, like in the morning, where I feel like I can do pretty much anything, like, I think it's all so fresh, but, like, as the day goes on, even though I have more time and the classes are done, but actually, I can't really do nothing, and I feel like if I can get stuff done early in the morning, you know, then I can relax in the evening and stuff.
6. Because I know that, like, especially after class, especially if I get home at like seven-ish, and, it's just that all the time till bedtime, like I don't know where it goes, with like, maybe I'm too tired and don't feel like reading anything at home.
7. I'm trying to do as much stuff in the morning before actually classes start.
8. Um, another thing, yeah, for me, like, yeah, the routine is, like, really important.

9. Especially my sleeping schedule.
10. Um, I need to, like, have a really strict schedule; otherwise, I know I cannot function properly the next day if I'm, like, sleep-deprived, and that's happened before, like, with- worse.
11. It's just, like, better to, like stay at home than to actually come because then you're so anxious throughout the day, so, like, for me, it's like, yeah, sleep and diet, those are two things I have to kind of keep track of in order to do this, so.
12. Yeah, those are the things I can remember talking about.

In his response, Tom revoiced the critical issues of study time and organizing daily studying to identify elements of what gives him the best opportunity to learn. Tom discussed the idea of understanding timing by relating a narrative of how he learned that he is more mentally active earlier in the day: "I realized that as this semester went on, like, I am so much more active mentally, um, like in the morning, where I feel like I can do pretty much anything, like, I think it's all so fresh, but, like, as the day goes on, even though I have more time and the classes are done, but actually I can't really do nothing, and I feel like if I can get stuff done early in the morning, you know, then I can relax in the evening and stuff" (sentence 5). This idea was supported by *Turning Point*, prompting, "When during the day do I learn best? ... Regardless of when it is that your energy soars, you want to use that time for learning" (Weinsheimer, 1993, p. 92).

Tom also revoiced other classmates' responses in his own, stating that keeping a strict sleep schedule and diet are critical components in creating his best opportunity to learn. Though these themes were not among the six critical issues for learning that *Turning Point* identified, the students created a supplementary inventory of success strategies that involved self-care and personal life balance.

JP:

13. Mm.
14. Okay.
15. Mm.
16. So I'm hearing some wellness things, balance is important,

TOM:

17. Right

JP:

18. Time management.

19. You know, Tom, what you just shared too, it made me think about that motivation handout that we had a couple weeks ago, and I talked about, use your biological clock.

TOM:

20. Oh right.

JP:

21. Right, like, do the most challenging things when you're most alert.

TOM:

22. Right.

JP:

23. And so, but, it's a really great self-awareness moment of, like, wow, I really can't do anything when I get home.

TOM:

24. Yeah.

JP:

25. Um, I know that's not always the case, like sometimes you have to do things when you get home.

TOM:

26. Right.

JP:

27. But, but that's maybe not your preferred time

TOM:

28. I, like, realized, like I, like, would not do it even though, like, I have an assignment due at midnight.

29. I will tell myself, okay, I have, like, my last class is at 4 pm, from 4 to 12, I have that many hours I could get it done.

30. But actually, when it hits 4 pm, and especially when the sun goes down, like I'm a completely different person than, like, my motivation in the morning is, like, completely different, night and day compared, so...

31. Like, even in the morning, just, like, everything is going so fast, I feel like those few hours I can get in between classes, or just before this day starts, I can get so much more done during that time.

32. And I'm- I think I'm more of [unintelligible], like fresh.

JP:

33. Mm-hm.

34. I relate completely to you.

35. I do my best work at, like, 5:30 in the morning, so yeah.

TOM:

36. Oh really?

JP:

37. I, like, get up and have my coffee and...

TOM:

38. Right.

JP:

39. Mm-hm.

40. Yeah.

In the exchange that occurred after Tom's turn ended, JP started to sum up the class's responses and do the rhetorical work of closing out the conversation. Tom responded to JP as though it was still his turn and drew JP back into a conversation about time use that was focused on commonalities between JP and Tom's experiences and preferences, which caused JP to reference a past conversation about using one's biological clock to plan study times. The conversation was indicative of JP's flexibility and inclusive approach to leading group discussions, which I observed throughout the study period and had knowledge of from my previous interactions with JP and the interviews I conducted with her following completion of the class observations. JP affirmed Tom's realization about his stated preference for getting tasks done before he goes home: "It's a really great self-awareness moment" (sentence 23). The role of JP in confirming Tom's assertions that he knows his preferences and can make clear, reasonable decisions is important to

Tom's development of his identity as a successful student. JP affirmed Tom's preferences by stating that her own were very similar: "I relate completely to you. I do my best work at, like, 5:30 in the morning, so yeah" (sentences 33-34).

Prompt Three: Self-Care Assessment

Towards the end of the semester, during Week 13, the small groups focused on a self-care assessment activity that the instructor passed out at the beginning of the period. The self-care worksheet, adapted from Saakvitne, Pearlman, and TSI/CAAP (1996) identified five areas of self-care, including physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, and relationship, as well as overall balance (Appendix D). JP gave students approximately ten minutes to complete the assessment during class. The self-care worksheet's rhetoric spiraled in two directions – its form was decidedly normative and neoliberal, but the content was open-ended and presented more objectively. The competition between closed-ended form and open-ended content resulted in an ideologically neutral document – its normative and closed-ended form that established a scale where a participant could score high or low or 'right' and 'wrong' was counter-balanced by its open-ended approach to assessing self-care practices. The worksheet reminded participants that it was intended to be "suggestive" rather than "exhaustive" (line 1), and certain areas of self-care were not prioritized over the others – there was no value assigned to any particular kind of self-care. Rather, self-care was presented as a balanced practice that could consist of many different 'right' ways. It encouraged personalization by asking participants to "feel free to add areas of self-care that are relevant for you" (lines 1-2).

Analytical Strategies and Diagram Format

The conversation diagrams in this section contained the storytelling event, which was the conversation between students and the instructor about the self-care assessment. In the storytelling event, I selected dialogue excerpts that illustrated the rhetorical direction of different sections of each student's narrative and coded them by color to indicate alignment with the assessment (green = identifying a self-care area with a high score; orange = identifying a self-care area with a low score) or reframing/resisting the assessment in some way (yellow). There are narrated events referred to in the storytelling event identified in the diagrams – the first narrated event to appear is the self-care assessment, identified by the six areas of self-care that were broken further down into response items on the paper form. The second narrated event refers to people, places, objects, and events/actions that students referred to in their narrative. For a few of the diagrams, as space allowed or as was relevant, I included a second or third speaker in the storytelling event (either the instructor or another student) and coded their dialogue selection(s) per the green, orange, and yellow code described above. Students' responses are presented in the order they occurred by group (Monday and Wednesday), and all responses are included.

Instructor Set-Up

In setting up the exercise, JP provided instructions for completing the self-care assessment and summarized the scoring instructions from the description provided on the assessment. Her Monday and Wednesday Group set-ups were very similar in tone and content:

Monday Group:

JP:

1. And so, this is a, um, this is a self-care assessment for you to do.
2. And just to kind of think about, kind of, what are you currently doing?

3. And this has been adapted from a much longer self-care, um, assessment.
4. And so, give yourself a three if you do it well, a zero if, you know, three to zero-three is, I do this really well or frequently, to zero, I never do this, or question mark would be, this never occurred to me.
5. So take the next couple of minutes and assess yourself.

While students were completing the assessment in the Monday Group, JP interjected to reinforce the open-ended tone of the assessment's content to reassure the students that there was not a right or wrong answer to the response items and that there were many ways to interpret the idea of effective self-care.

JP:

1. I know that not all of these will probably, um, also, they don't- you know, it's not one size fits all, so some of these might not [clears throat] relate to you.
2. That's okay, too.

Then, when students had completed the assessment, JP re-initialized the discussion prompt, providing students with some questions to consider.

JP:

1. What I'd like you all to do is just take a moment and, you know, re-look through your list. Are there any areas that you feel like you have mostly 2s or 3s.
2. Maybe that's an area that you're really strong in your self-care.
3. Um, maybe- then also, kind of pay attention.
4. Is there an area where maybe you've- have a lot of question marks or 0s or 1s?
5. Is that an area you'd want to increase your focus on?
6. Or, is it kind of like, maybe that's not as important to you, and that's okay too.
7. But... What I also like about this list, too, is I think it just gives some different ideas for things that we can do to promote a lot of self-care.
8. So, what were some thoughts for folks?
9. What's maybe an area that you feel like you're pretty strong in, or something that you always have to do, um, to kind of help you feel that balance?
10. And then, is there something here that you're like, ooh, I need to do more of that.
11. Maybe a small ask of yourself to, you know, incorporate that a little bit more in your life.
12. Or just general thoughts, going through this.

JP revoiced the normative scale of the assessment by prompting students to identify areas of strength as associated with scores of mostly twos and threes (the high end of the assessment's scoring scale). At the same time, JP sought to revoice the idea reinforced in

the open-ended presentation of the content of the assessment: “What I also like about this list too, is I think it just gives some different ideas for things we can do to promote a lot of self-care” (sentence 7). JP seemed to take an ideologically neutral stance that aligned with the assessment (normative in form, open-ended in content).

Wednesday Group

JP:

1. Okay. Yeah.
2. Well, great.
3. I'll send more information out, um, about that.
4. But I think that this is all, um, great information and as you're thinking about the upcoming, you know, weeks, continue to just, you know, you can show up to class, right?
5. That's gonna help you continue to stay on track with all you need to do.
6. Um, and another thing that's going to help you keep on track, right, and I've talked about this a little bit is, uh, uh, doing some self-care.
7. And so, I know that some of you are pretty keen on different practices, but sometimes I think we often think of self-care as, maybe, like, um, working out, eating good, sleeping, right?
8. It becomes kind of this general thing, and what I really like about this assessment that I'm gonna share with you all is, um, it kinda breaks it down into different things that maybe we don't think of as self-care, and so maybe we do them already, and then we're, like, oh.
9. It might affirm some of the things we're already doing.
10. Um, I also recognize that some of the things on here might not apply to you, but, um, you know, just to kind of have an overarching, um, list.
11. So what you're gonna do is just read through this, and you're gonna rate yourself, so 3 means that you do it well or you do it frequently, 0, I never do this.
12. Question mark would be, like, this never occurred to me as a self-care practice, or I never thought about doing this.
13. So just take a few moments and work your way through this document and kinda note, um, and they're obviously in different categories, but... then we'll circle back when you're all done.

In the Wednesday Group, JP's introduction of the assessment before students took it in class revoiced her Monday group introduction. She revoiced the idea of thinking of self-care beyond the typical physical practices of eating well, getting enough exercise, and practicing effective sleep hygiene. JP also added the aside she had interjected in the Monday Group to her introduction for the Wednesday Group – “Um, I also recognize that

some of the things on here might not to apply to you, but um, you know, just to kind of have an overarching, um, list” (sentence 10). JP revoiced the directions from the assessment to inform the students how to score themselves.

JP:

1. Okay, good.
2. Well, just take a moment and, um, what I want you all to do is just kinda do a little survey through the, um, the document.
3. Like, are there certain kinda, you know, ‘cause they’re all broken down by themes, right?
4. Kind of, this physical self-care, relationship self-care, psychological, emotional, spiritual, um, kinda that balance piece.
5. So, is there one area that you feel that you see a lot of 2s and 3s in there?
6. Um, if there’s an area that there’s 0s and, you know, 1s and question marks, that doesn’t mean that you have to focus in on that area, but is it something that piques your curiosity?
7. That, maybe you’re like, ah, yeah, I want to devote more time to that area.
8. So, let’s just chat a little bit about what are some things that you see that you do already really well, and is there anything that you want to- from this list that was helping you think about something to- to incorporate more into your life?

After the students in the Wednesday Group had completed the assessment, JP reiterated a very similar version of her discussion prompt that initiated the class conversation.

In this section, it is worth additionally noting that JP seemed to be very deliberate in her conversational choices throughout each of the two group meetings. From my previous interactions with JP, I know that the topic of self-care is one that is very important to her. She created a pattern in responding to students, thanking them for their participation in a highly personal conversation. This did not come off to me as a throwaway pleasantries, nor a dismissive statement, but rather a deliberate and inclusive gesture that was intended to show students respect and place value on the vulnerability that students showed by sharing their responses to the self-care assessment. These analytical conclusions are supported by my extensive knowledge of JP both personally and professionally – I

observed her patterns of organizing conversations in the discussion groups and asked her for clarification about her teaching and conversational decisions in the interviews I conducted with her. As well, JP and I shared an office, and I mentored her in her teaching when she first joined the academic support program. As instructors of the APIC, we met weekly to discuss our teaching choices and discuss how to include students in conversation and ways to structure the weekly discussions. These issues were at the front of consideration for all the people who taught the course, myself and JP included. I have noted where JP affirmed students' responses here because I believe that it contributed to the nature of the conversation in this section and is significant to my interpretation of students' responses.

Monday Group Student Responses

Response One: STEVEN

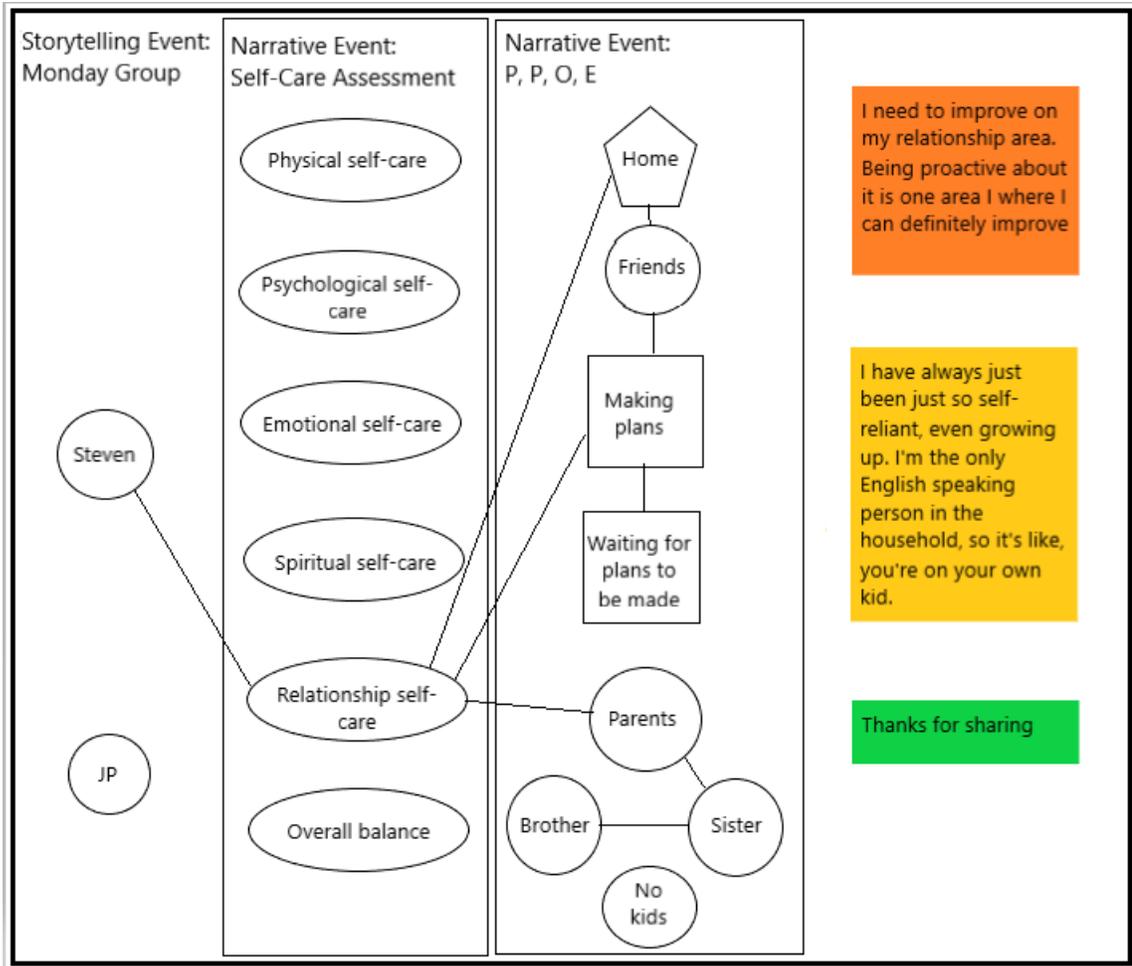


Figure 17: Steven's Response Diagram

STEVEN:

1. I just need to read, um- actually [unintelligible, throat being cleared].
2. One of the areas I need to improve on is probably my relationship area.
3. Uh, now that I'm back home, I kind of should see my friends again.
4. Um, like, actually going out of my way, making plans, instead of waiting for plans to be made.

JP:

5. Mm.

STEVEN:

6. So, like, being proactive about it, is one area where I can definitely, um, improve on, because back in the day, back when, I used to be the one who always made the plans for the whole group, and we'd all get together around these plans, and I guess, one day I was like you know, someone else should try to make these plans, and I guess no one else really wanted to.

7. Not that we dislike each other or anything, but, um, especially with my friends, but all the more so with my parents and my little brother and sister, because I don't get to see them too often.
8. Um, I don't have any kids, so... But, uh, I think interpersonal relationships is one area where I can improve on. Because I have always been just so self-reliant, like my whole life, even growing up.
9. I take care of my parents with a lot of things, but, like, at the end of the day, like, I'm the only English speaking person in the household, so, it's like, you're on your own kid.
10. Um, yeah.
11. So now I have the opportunity for that since I'm back home, I want to be able to try to improve on that.

JP:

12. Mm.
13. Thanks for sharing, yeah.

Having returned home from time abroad in the Armed Forces, Steven discussed the differences between the 'then' and 'now' of his life numerous times in the class and touched again on the topic concerning self-care. These two eras in his life had strong ties to his identity development in his in-class narratives. In his response, Steven identified the area of self-care he sought most to improve on based on his score, which was the Relationship Self-Care category. "So, like, being proactive about it, is one area where I can definitely, um, improve on," Steven stated (sentence 6). In the 'then' era, Steven portrayed himself as "the one who always made the plans for the whole group, and we'd all get together around these plans" (sentence 6). When Steven decided that he wanted to relinquish that responsibility, his friend group grew apart: "I guess, one day I was like you know, someone else should try to make these plans, and I guess no one else really wanted to" (sentence 6). In his narrative, Steven built an identity as a person who has always taken care of himself: "I have always been just so self-reliant, like my whole life, even growing up" (sentence 9), citing being the "only English speaking person in the household" (sentence 9) as the root cause. In the 'now' era, Steven stated that he wants to

improve on his relationship area by reaching out to his friends and family – “now I have the opportunity for that since I’m back home, I want to be able to try to improve on that” (sentence 11).

In his response, Steven initially aligned with the normative direction of the self-care assessment in identifying an area with a low score, revoicing the assessment with the word “improve”: “One of the areas I need to improve on is probably my relationship area” (sentence 1), which is depicted in orange on the diagram. Then, Steven reversed his previous alignment with a normative reading of the assessment (e.g., there is a ‘right’ (high) and ‘wrong’ (low) way to score) by reframing his initial response. Steven complicated his low relationship self-care score with a narrative that built and justified his lifelong “self-reliance” because of being the “only English speaking person in the household” growing up (sentence 9). “I take care of my parents with a lot of things, but, like, at the end of the day ... it’s like, you’re on your own kid” (sentence 9). Additionally, despite initially identifying a low score on the Relationship Self-Care category, Steven referenced a number of important people and places to his relationship support network, including his parents, brother, sister, friends, and home.

JP affirmed Steven’s answer by interjecting a verbal cue, “Mm” (sentences 5 and 10), indicating that she was listening to the response and thanking Steven for participating, “Thanks for sharing, yeah” (sentence 13) when he was done speaking. In doing so, JP inherently provided Steven space to reframe his response to the assessment, by yielding the floor to Steven and by interjecting no value judgments or words that referenced a right or wrong way to practice self-care.

Response Two: SYLVIA

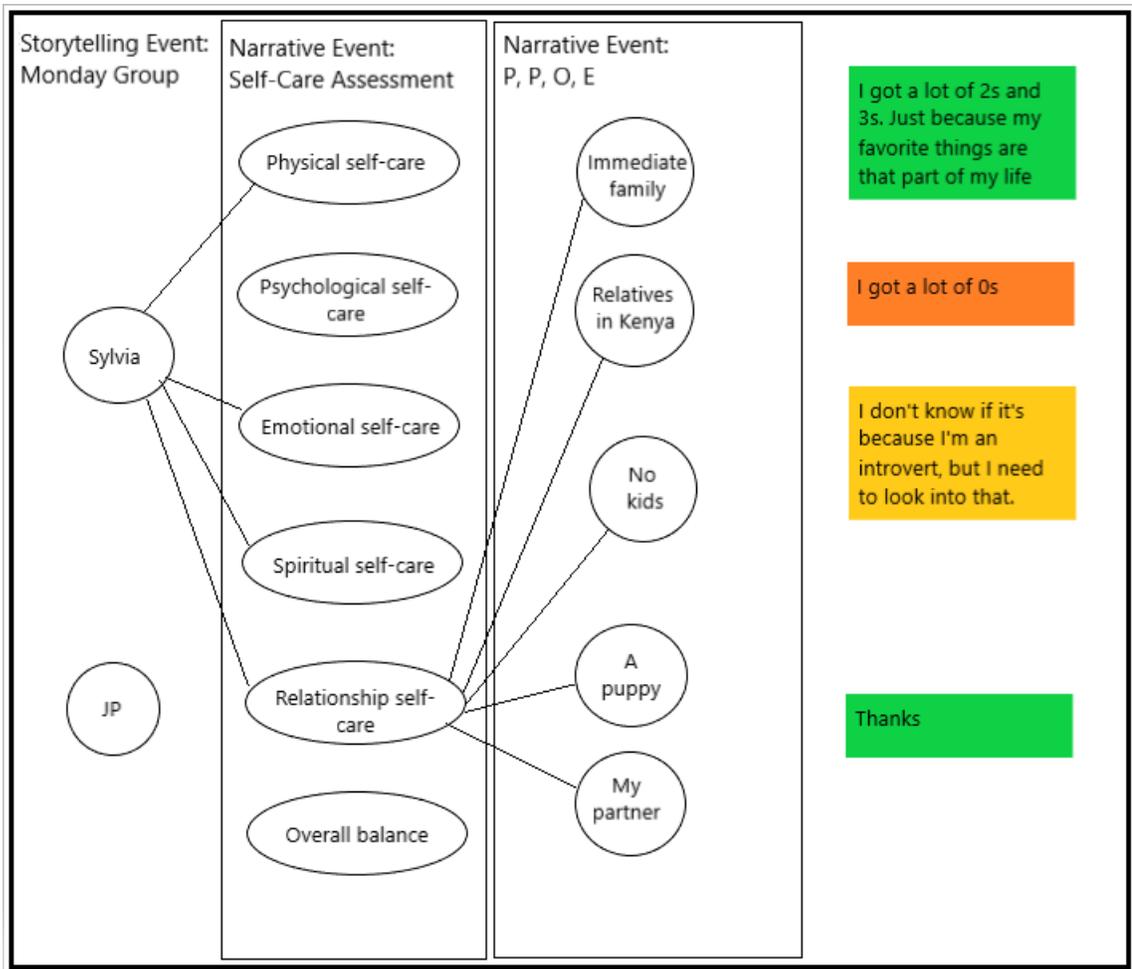


Figure 18: Sylvia's Response Diagram

SYLVIA:

1. Um, I got a lot of 2s and 3s in physical self-care. Um, emotional self-care and spiritual self-care.
2. Just because my favorite things, like, are that part of my life.
3. Um, I had a lot of 0s in relationship care.
4. I don't know if it's because, um, I'm an introvert, and- but I need to look into that.
5. I mean, I'm very close with my family, like, my immediate family.
6. All my relatives are back in Kenya, so [laughs]

JP:

7. Mm-hm.

SYLVIA:

8. Yeah, I'm- they were not involved in my life or my sibling's life when we were living back there, so we don't really have a lot of calls back and forth.

JP:

9. Mm-hm.

SYLVIA:

10. Mm, um, have no kids.
11. Have a little puppy. [laughs] [unintelligible].
12. And my partner and that's about it.

JP:

13. Thanks.

In her response, Sylvia identified high scores in the categories of Physical Self-Care, Emotional Self-Care, and Spiritual Self-Care and a low score in the category of Relationship Self-Care. Sylvia's highest-scoring categories and her alignment with the normative direction of the assessment are depicted in green on the diagram. Sylvia reasoned that she scored highest in those areas "Just because my favorite things, like, are that part of my life" (sentence 1). Sylvia did not reference any resources in her life that she drew on to support her physical, emotional, and spiritual self-care, perhaps signaling that this area of her self-care is an enduring practice that does not need explanation or justification in the context of class discussion.

Next in her response, Sylvia indicated that she "had a lot of 0s in relationship care" (sentence 3), which aligned with the assessment's normative scoring system. Sylvia went on to reframe this answer, though, positioning herself as "an introvert" with close relationships with her partner and immediate family (sentence 4). Sylvia went on to say that many of her relatives live in Kenya, and they "were not involved in my life or my sibling's life when we were living back there, so we don't really have a lot of calls back and forth" (sentence 8), which explained the lack of an extended familial support structure in her life. She further resisted the assessment's scoring system by referring to the relationship support structures in her life, including immediate family, a partner, and a pet, a "little puppy" (sentence 11).

JP affirmed Sylvia’s response with interjected verbal cues, “Mm,” indicating that she was listening (sentences 7 and 9), and by thanking Sylvia for participating (sentence 13). JP’s affirmative tone, which was supportive but free from value judgments, provided Sylvia space to align with and reframe/resist the assessment throughout her response, moving through both alignment and resistance as she discussed high and low scoring categories.

Response Three: JD

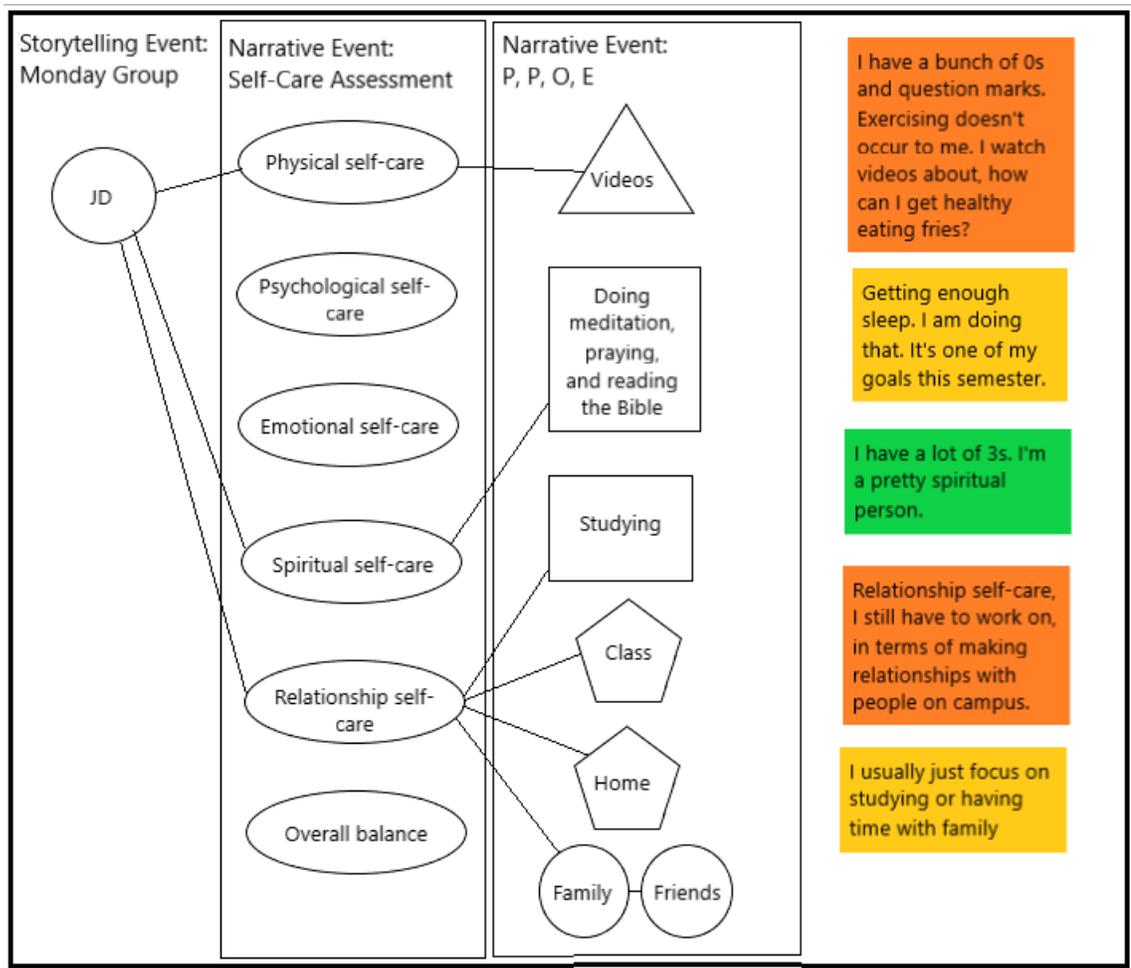


Figure 19: JD's Response Diagram

JD:

1. Um, so, on my physical self-care, I have a bunch of 0s.
2. I put a question mark, I guess, exercising doesn't occur to me.
3. I guess that's something that would help me, like, to stay healthy.

4. Eat healthy, even, um, I just eat if I'm full; that's it. [laughs]
5. I don't like this, don't think about it.
6. I watch videos, about, you know, how can I get healthy eating fries? [laughing]

[general laughs]

JD:

1. Um, maybe that's something I can work on.
2. Um, maybe if I stay committed and find something that will motivate me to do it, I might actually, um, do it, and it's something that I actually need to think about.
3. Um, getting enough sleep.
4. I am doing that.
5. That's one of my goals this semester, and I'm getting, uh, enough sleep, so that's good.
6. And I have lots of threes on spiritual self-care.
7. I, um, I believe I'm a pretty spiritual person.
8. Uh, doing meditation and praying and reading the Bible every day helps me to be who I am in life, so that's one that I keep, um, doing.
9. And relationship self-care, well, some of it, uh, I still have to work on, in terms of making relationships with people on campus.
10. I usually just focus on studying, go to class, go home, that's it.
11. Or, um, have some time with the family but not actual friends.
12. I don't have- I don't even plan to have time for that.
13. So, um, maybe I need to work on that some.
14. So this gives me, um- this is a good reflection on where I am at.

JP:

15. Good.

In her response, JD revoiced the assessment in terms of both her highest and lowest scoring self-care categories. First in the response, JD stated, "Um, so, on my physical self-care, I have a bunch of 0s" (sentence 1), identifying a low score on the assessment's normative scoring scale. She walked the class through her answers to the Physical Self-Care category with a self-deprecating tone that elicited a laugh from the class when JD referred to 'self-help' videos on YouTube "about, you know, how can I get healthy eating fries" (sentence 6). JD exaggerated her low score as perhaps a defense mechanism, though she did seem to align with the normative direction of the assessment in saying that perhaps she could reexamine her approach to physical self-care, stating that "maybe if I

stay committed and find something that will motivate me to do it, I might actually, um, do it, and it's something that I actually need to think about" (sentence 2). JD did reframe her response about physical self-care with regards to the response item about sleep, saying that "Um, getting enough sleep. I am doing that. That's one of my goals this semester, and I'm getting, uh, enough sleep, so that's good" (lines 3-5). This reframing signals resistance to JD's initial across-the-board assessment of her low score in the Physical Self-Care category.

Next in her response, JD identified a high score on the Spiritual Self-Care category, as well as referring to other resources she draws on to bolster this area of her life, including "Uh, doing meditation and praying and reading the Bible every day helps me to be who I am in life, so that's one that I keep, um, doing" (sentence 8). In this stage of her response, JD aligned with the assessment's normative direction in its scoring scale, affirming that "I, um, I believe I'm a pretty spiritual person" (sentence 7). It seemed that JD most directly aligned with the scoring scale when affirming a high score, as with the Spiritual Self-Care category.

Finally, JD revoiced the Relationship Self-Care category, stating that "And relationship self-care, well, some of it, uh, I still have to work on, in terms of making relationships with people on campus" (sentence 9). After this initial assessment, JD reframed her response by saying, "I usually just focus on studying, go to class, go home, that's it. Or, um, have some time with the family but not actual friends. I don't have- I don't even plan to have time for that" (sentences 10-12). JD's reframed response suggests a defense of her choices and resistance to the normative scoring scale and the suggestion that there is something inherently wrong with a small relationship circle when school is

the big priority in JD's life. JD referenced support resources, including her family and home, that she draws on in practicing relationship self-care. JD ended on a balanced note, recognizing the self-reflection that the assessment offered, while not invalidating her experiences and point of view: "So this gives me, um- this is a good reflection on where I am at" (sentence 14).

The instructor, JP, followed up JD's response with a speech event that served a few purposes, namely to re-initiate the conversation protocol established at the beginning of the exercise, to clarify the discussion prompt and the purpose of the activity, and to affirm JD's statements in response to the assessment.

JP:

1. Yeah, and I think, like JD said, I mean, you know, some of these things, and I know, you know, everyone's kind of said it, oh, maybe I could focus on this.
2. Like, yeah, I think it's just good reflection, right?
3. Just because you gave yourself zeros on something doesn't mean you have to do that, but maybe it just helps you think about, yeah, do I need to form plans with folks?
4. Or, you know, do I need to maybe reach out to some people?
5. But, you all are busy too, so it's okay if maybe that's not your main focus.
6. But then strengthening where you already have focus, too, is important.

JP revoiced JD's and the other students' responses – "like JD said, ... and everyone's kind of said it" (sentence 1), by saying, "Oh, maybe, I could focus on this (sentence 1), seeing the assessment as "just good reflection" (sentence 2). JP aligned with the more open-ended content of the assessment, stating that "just because you gave yourself zeros on something doesn't mean that you have to do that" (sentence 3). By reinforcing the open-ended, non-judgmental tone of the assessment's content and by revoicing the students' responses, JP affirmed the students' autonomy in choosing whether or not to put stock in a high or low score on the assessment's scale and in choosing whether or not to prioritize making life changes that would change the score on the assessment.

Response Four: JACK

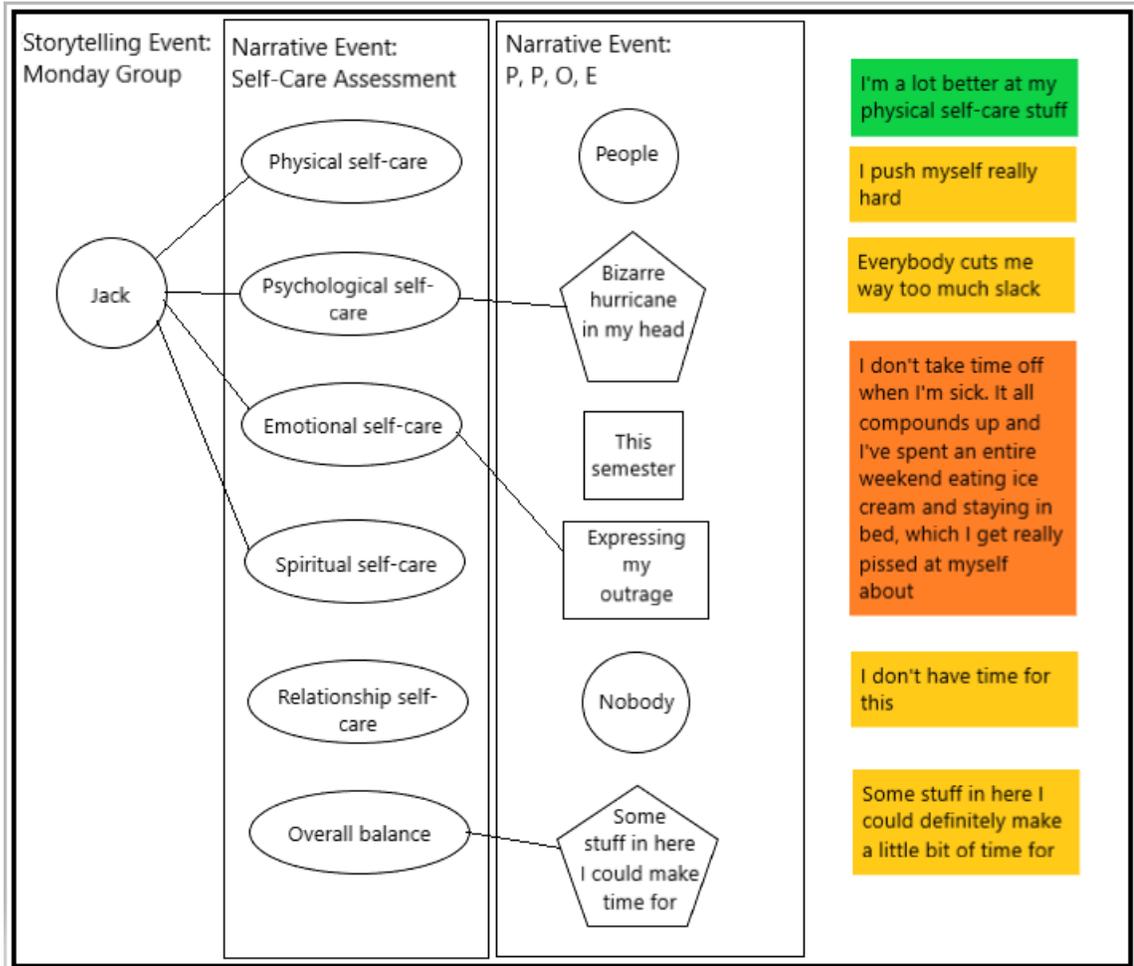


Figure 20: Jack's Response Diagram

JACK:

1. Um, uh, I'm a lot better at my physical self-care stuff than I am on my kind of the other- there's a lot of it that I'm like, that I don't even- that's just not something that I think about.
2. Um, I, I push myself really hard.
3. I kind of always have.
4. I don't cut myself much slack about anything, ever.
5. Um, and it- like, my default is when people are like, "oh, it's okay, cut yourself some slack." I'm like, "everybody cuts me way too much slack."
6. You know, if I keep doing this like that's, it's like the expression of mediocrity to me, which I absolutely will not have.
7. Um, but there's, you know, of course, there's a double edge to that sword also.
8. Like, I don't take time off when I'm sick, I don't take time off when I'm hurt.
9. I don't, I don't, I don't. Um, and then it all compounds up, and pretty soon, I've spent an entire weekend, and all I do is eat ice cream and stay in bed all day.
10. Um, which, that I just get really pissed at myself about.

11. Which it's this really bizarre hurricane in my head that we don't need to go too far into.

In his response, Jack first revoiced the assessment in the Physical Self-Care category, aligning himself with the normative direction of the scoring scale, agreeing with the validity of the one category, while rejecting the validity of the other categories: "Um, uh, I'm a lot better at my physical self-care stuff than I am on my kind of the other- there's a lot of it that I'm like, that I don't even- that's just not something that I think about" (sentence 1). To expand on this point, and perhaps illustrate that psychological self-care has not taken a front seat in his academic life lately, Jack related a narrative that reinforced himself as the type of person who pushes himself hard, despite the willingness of people around to give him some grace: "I don't cut myself much slack about anything, ever. Um, and it- like, my default is when people are like, 'Oh, it's okay, cut yourself some slack.' I'm like, 'everybody cuts me way too much slack.'" (sentences 5-6). Jack established a high standard for himself, revoicing and rhetorically distancing himself from neoliberal notions of mediocrity: "You know, if I keep doing this like that's, it's like the expression of mediocrity to me, which I absolutely will not have" (sentence 6).

Upon continuing his response, Jack reframed the initial assessment that his high standards for himself were a good thing because the consequence of pushing himself turned out to be a burnout scenario: "Um, but there's, you know, of course, there's a double edge to that sword also. Like, I don't take time off when I'm sick, I don't take time off when I'm hurt. I don't, I don't, I don't. Um, and then it all compounds up, and pretty soon, I've spent an entire weekend, and all I do is eat ice cream and stay in bed all day. Um, which, that I just get really pissed at myself about" (sentences 7-10). Jack's response seemed rooted in the stressful situation of the end of the semester; Jack had

articulated the previous week that he was “overwhelmed” and unable to conceive of making changes to his study strategies or change which resources he drew on to balance his schedule.

JP:

12. Hm

JACK:

13. Um, but again, and it’s tough to really base the- like, my life as a whole on this semester, um, but it’s you know, and there’s a lot of stuff in here that I just don’t, like, you know, I think the one that made me actually laugh is express my outrage in social actions.
14. It’s like, what?
15. Get o- okay.
16. I’m just- I don’t have time for that crap.
17. I’m gonna get up, I’m gonna go to work, I’m gonna do the things that I have to do. If other people wanna rail against the galaxy, more power to ‘em.
18. Like, it- have at it.
19. Please unsubscribe me from your mailing list. I don’t have time for this.

JP:

20. Mm-hm.

JACK:

21. Um, but there’s stuff in here that I definitely- I think the concept of me singing is hilar- like, horrifically hilarious, like, nobody needs to even consider that.
22. Um, but there’s some stuff in here I could definitely, like, make a little bit of time for.

JP:

23. Mm-hm.
24. Thank you.

In the second part of his response, Jack seemed to resist the idea that his score was an accurate portrayal of his overall self-care habits. “It’s tough to really base the- like, my life as a whole, on this semester,” he said (sentence 13), referencing a feeling that he brought up frequently in the last weeks of the semester, that this semester was different because it was his first back at school, and it was currently very stressful. He proceeded to address his skepticism for the other categories of self-care, revoicing response items

from the Emotional Self-Care and Spiritual Self-Care categories and re-voicing them in a mocking tone. From Emotional Self-Care, “There’s a lot of stuff in here that I just don’t, like, you know, I think the one that made me actually laugh is express my outrage in social actions. It’s like, what? ... I don’t have time for that crap” (sentences 13-14, 15). From Spiritual Self-Care, “I think the concept of me singing is horrifically hilarious, like, nobody needs to even consider that” (sentence 21). Perhaps out of feeling guilty about making fun of the assessment in front of the class, Jack ended by saying, “Um, but there’s some stuff in here I could definitely, like, make a little bit of time for” (sentence 22), which seemed to be playing lip service to the class discussion and part concession to the idea that Jack could be enacting more self-care practices than he initially voiced. JP affirmed Jack’s response with verbal ‘I’m listening’ cues such as “Mm-hm” and thanked Jack for participating, following the pattern she had established of thanking each student for responding.

Response Five: SARAH

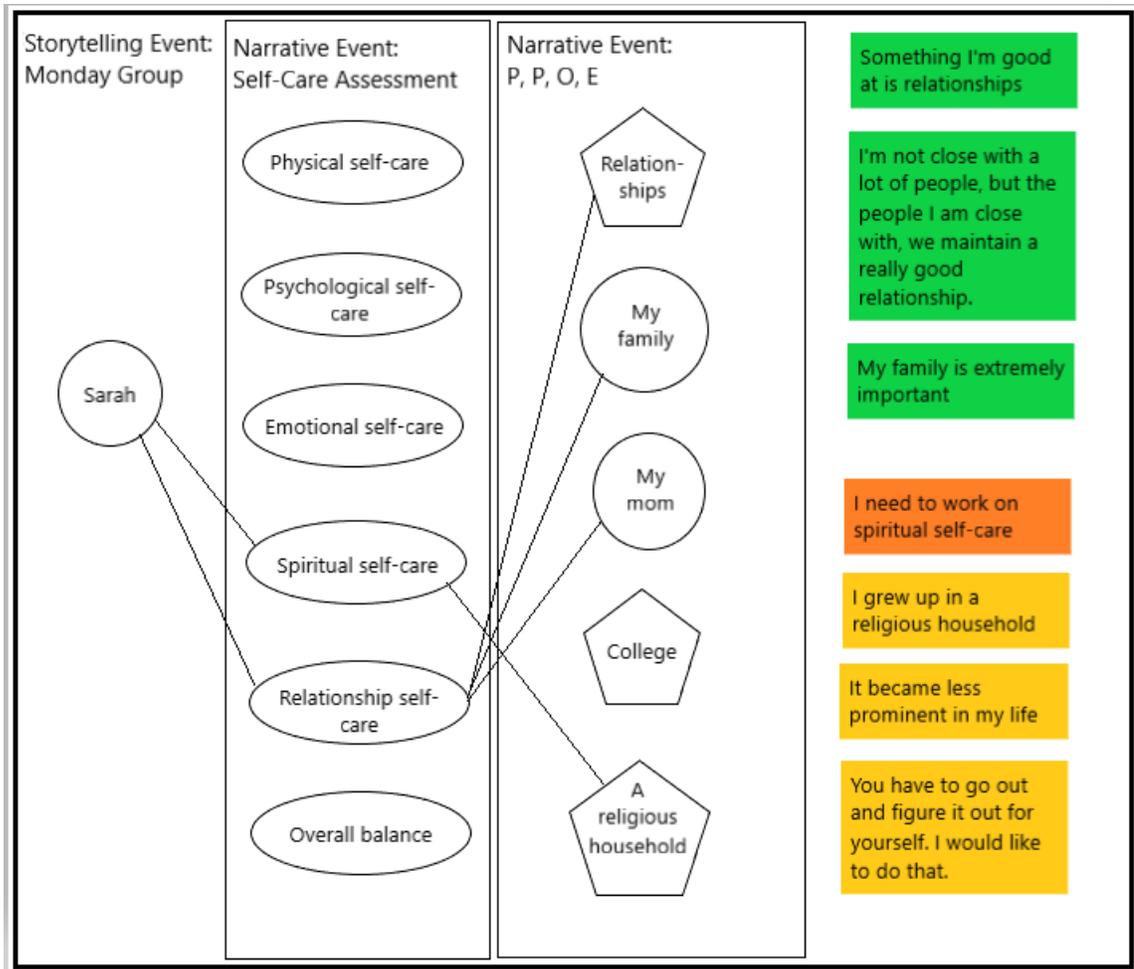


Figure 21: Sarah's Response Diagram

SARAH:

1. Um, I think something that I'm good at is relationships.
2. Um, I'm not close with, like, a lot of people, but the people who I am close with, we maintain like a really, like, good relationship.
3. And my family as well is also extremely important to me.
4. And I, like, call my mom every night.
5. It's funny because, like, I didn't talk to my parents before I left for college, and then I left for college, and I'm like, hi mom, I just bought yogurt at Walgreens.
6. Like, I have nothing to tell her, but, like, I just want to hear her voice.

JP:

7. [laugh] Yeah.

In Sarah's response, she grouped her self-care scores into two categories that she discussed, Relationship Self-Care and Spiritual Self-Care. Sarah revoiced Relationship Self-Care by aligning with the assessment's scoring scale and affirming relationships as

an area of self-care that she has a strong practice with – “Um, I think something I’m good at is relationships. . . . The people who I am close with, we maintain, like, a really, like, good relationship.” (sentences 1-2). Sarah referenced a number of relationship support resources, including her parents, especially her mom, and calling her family on the phone every day.

SARAH:

8. So, like, that’s what I do.
9. Um, something that I need to work on is spiritual self-care.
10. I did grow up in, like, a religious household, but, like, as I got older, like, it’s kinda like, become a less and less, like, prominent thing in my life, and I absolutely- like other things that I have really hadn’t time to think about it.
11. Um, and I think that it’s something that someone can’t, like, tell you to believe.
12. You have to, like, go out and figure it out for yourself.
13. So I feel like I would like to learn how to do that.
14. Or I would like to do that, you know?

In the second part of Sarah’s response, she revoiced the category of Spiritual Self-Care, indicating that this was a category that needed work, according to the assessment’s scoring scale. “Um, something I need to work on is spiritual self-care” (sentence 8).

Sarah referenced her experience growing up in a religious household, but “like, as I got older, like, it’s kinda like, become a less and less, like, prominent thing in my life, and I absolutely- like, other things that I have really hadn’t time to think about it” (sentence 10). Sarah reframed her low score as an opportunity for self-discovery, saying, “Um, and I think that it’s something that someone can’t, like, tell you to believe. You have to, like, go out and figure it out for yourself. So I feel like I would like to learn how to do that” (sentences 11-13). Though Sarah identified the need to improve her spiritual self-care, it took a lower priority to other things in her life, due to a lack of time and an increased emphasis on other areas of self-care, like her relationship with her family.

JP:

15. Mm-hm.
16. Okay.
17. That's so... my mom and I are the sa-
18. Like, I don't know.

SARAH:

19. Like, I have nothing to tell her, I'm like, oh, I, like, slipped today, like, this morning.
20. And my mom started screaming at me, like, I told you not to.
21. And I'm like, well, sorry.
22. It's not like I did it on purpose, like...

JP:

23. That's so funny.
24. Yeah, I guess- a piece of advice would be, if you have parents, just, you know, be in touch with them, because the reason I started it was I had a lot of friends lose their parents, like, in, um, our early twenties, like from cancer and some other health stuff, when their parents were in, like their early fifties or late forties.
25. And so, I think, um, that's what really pr- not, like, to bring it down with sadness, but I think- I did hear that you have- because like, for me, I think that's like, I want to make sure I talk to my parents as much as possible and learn about them as much as possible because, like, I have friends who aren't able to do that.
26. So, it's just- and my mom will call me, like, this is on TV right now, bye.
27. You know, so I get you with, like, I just bought a yogurt, yeah. [laughs]

JP affirmed Sarah's response with 'I'm listening' verbal cues and revoiced Sarah's relationship with her mother to relate to JP's own relationship with her mother: "So it's just- and my mom will call me, like, this is on TV right now, bye. You know, so I get you with, like, I just bought a yogurt, yeah [laughs]" (sentences 26-27). JP stepped into the conversation to offer advice about staying in contact with parents, revoicing other students' responses about how meaningful their relationships with their families and other relationship-based support systems were. By doing so, JP affirmed that she had been listening both to Sarah and other students and signaling that she agreed that relationship self-care and familial support systems are essential for students to cultivate.

Response Six: EVELYN

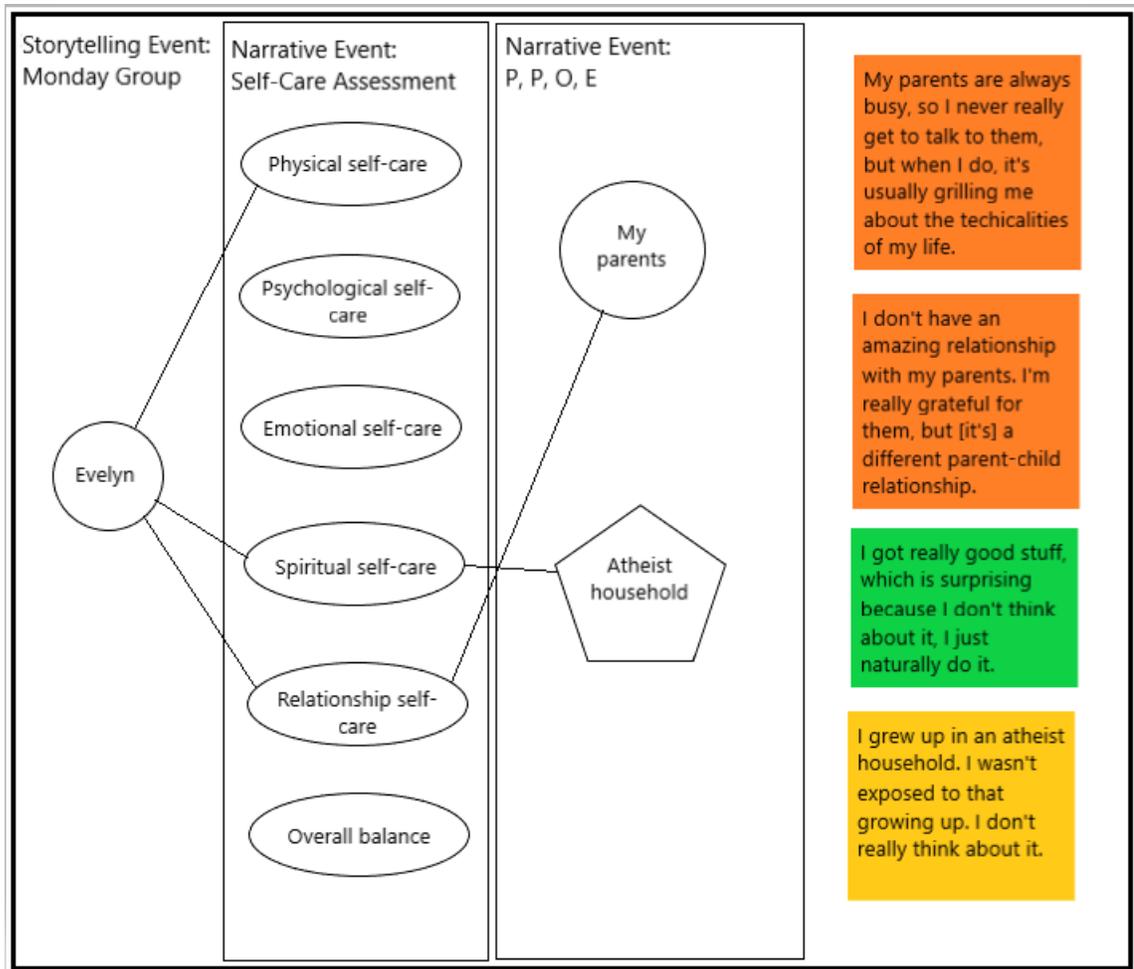


Figure 22: Evelyn's Response Diagram

EVELYN:

1. Um, my parents are always busy, so I never really get to talk to them.
2. Um, but when I do, it's usually just, like, kind of grilling me about, like, the technicalities of my life, really, so I don't know, like, I- I don't have an amazing relationship with my parents.
3. Like, I'm really grateful for them, but they just think that, like, they have a different parent-child relationship, so, I guess mine is just like that.
4. But, um, I got really good stuff on my physical self-care, which is surprising because I don't actually think about any of that stuff, but I just naturally do it, so that's nice to know, something I don't have to worry about.
5. Um, and I grew up in a very atheist household, so, like, my spiritual, like self-care, is very low, because I don't really- I wasn't- like, I wasn't exposed to that growing up.
6. So, and I don't really think about it.

JP:

7. Mm-hm

EVELYN:

8. So...

In her response, Evelyn revoiced three self-care categories from the assessment, focusing first on Relationships, which she framed in terms of having a low score and a challenging relationship with her parents: “Um, my parents are always busy so I never really get to talk to them. Um, but when I do, it’s usually just, like, kind of grilling me about, like, the technicalities of my life, really, so I don’t know, like, I- I don’t have an amazing relationship with my parents” (sentences 1-2). Evelyn did not reference other relationship-based resources in her response, choosing instead to move on to discuss other self-care categories. The second self-care category Evelyn revoiced was Physical, on which she “got really good stuff” (sentence 4). “I don’t actually think about any of that stuff, but I just naturally do it, so that’s nice to know, something I don’t have to worry about” (sentence 4). Evelyn did not reference any additional resources for physical self-care in this class, but in other instances, she mentioned participating in yoga classes and discussed her sleep schedule, making physical self-care a topic that she often shared in the class. The final self-care category that Evelyn revoiced was Spiritual: “Um, and I grew up in a very atheist household, so, like, my spiritual, like self-care, is very low, because I don’t really- I wasn’t- like, I wasn’t exposed to that growing up. So, and I don’t really think about it” (sentences 14-15). This response reframed the low score for Evelyn, but it also seemed to revoice Sarah’s previous response, explaining why spirituality did not play a significant role in Evelyn’s life.

JP:

1. Yeah, so some things- some themes I’m hearing are around, like, some people are doing good things with, like, physical, maybe you want to build relationship a little bit more, or spirituality is strong for some of you, maybe not for others, and that’s okay, but I think, what I like about this is, like, I don’t know, at least for

me, I feel like messaging around self-care is, like, working out, eating healthy, getting sleep, and we don't think about some of those things more broadly, or it's great to hear some of you are, like, ooh, this is in my practice already, so, you know, just something to kind of keep in mind as we enter the final weeks because if there's a time in the semester that you shouldn't let go of your self-care, it's probably right now, right?

2. So, that we're continuing to- when we think of our end of semester planner, do you have little times for that built-in?
3. Um, if you don't, maybe you just put little blocks or little reminders in your phone, um, to just do a little self-care each day.
4. And really, it can be, like, five minutes, you know?
5. It doesn't have to be long.
6. It can be an hour. Could be longer but doesn't have to be.

To sum up the conversation, JP revoiced the themes that students had brought up in sharing their assessment results: "Some people are doing good things with, like physical, maybe you want to build a relationship a little bit more, or spirituality is strong for some of you, maybe not for others, and that's okay, I think" (sentence 1). JP reinforced the purpose of the activity, in her mind, as broadening the way that people think about self-care beyond the "working out, eating healthy, getting sleep" activities (sentence 1) commonly associated with physical self-care.

Wednesday Group Student Responses

Response One: QUINN

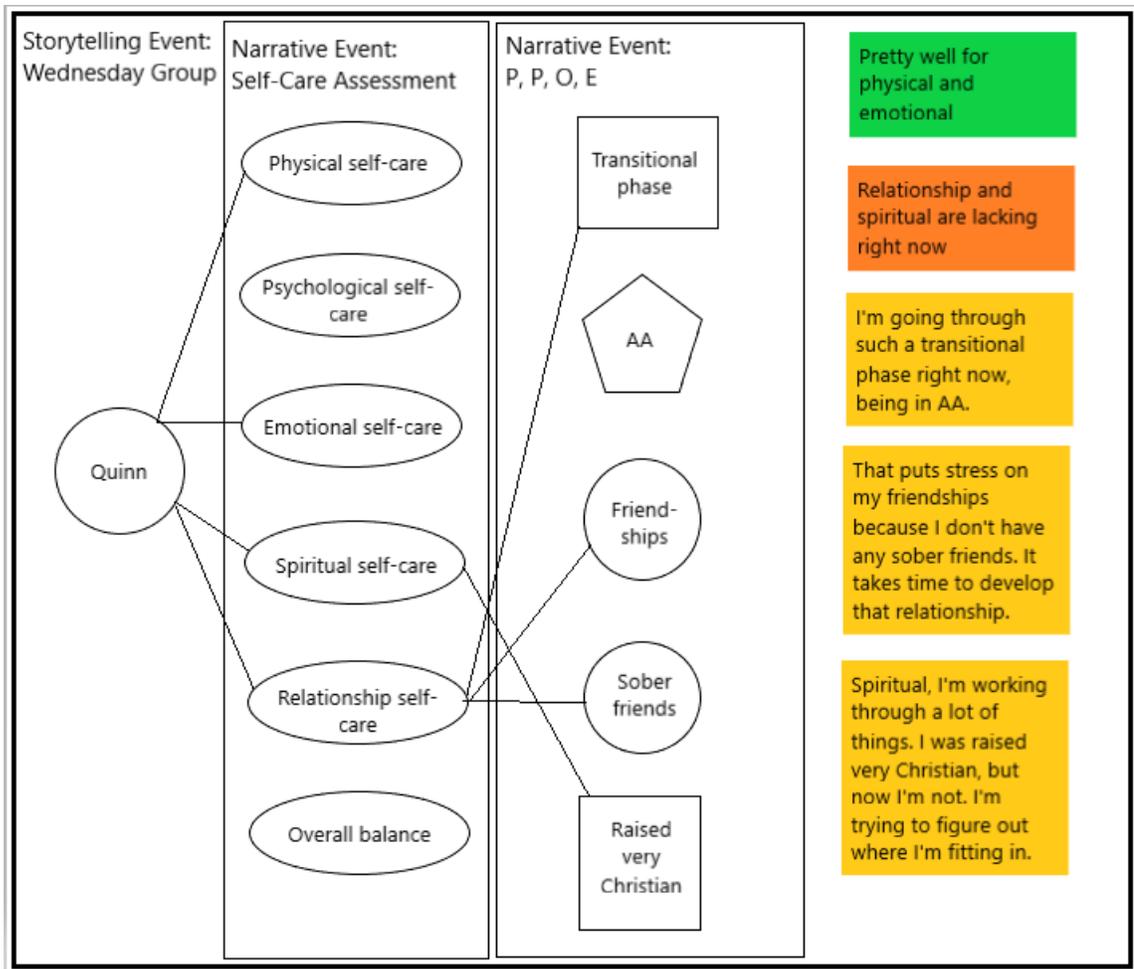


Figure 23: Quinn's Response Diagram

QUINN:

1. Well, I think for me, like, I noticed that the first page really [unintelligible] okay, pretty, well for physical and emotional, um, but it seems like my, like, relationship and spiritual is kind of lacking right now.
2. Which makes sense, because I'm going through such a transitional phase right now, like, being in AA and, like, it's like, that puts stress on my friendships, because, I don't have, like, any sober friends.
3. And so it's like, even if I can, like, meet people in AA and, like, start hanging out with people or, it's like, it still takes time to get to a point where you're close with people, you know?
4. And so, even though, like, in AA, it's, I mean, you're talking about very personal things that, it, like, still takes time to develop that relationship.
5. So, I have noticed, I think, that my relationship, like, area has definitely been, like, a point of stress rather than, like, like self-care, I guess.
6. Um, and then, yeah, spiritual has just been sort of like a- like I'm just try- like I'm working through, like, a lot of things.
7. 'Cause I was raised very Christian, but now I'm not, but like, I'm star- trying to, like, figure out where I'm, like, fitting in and stuff.

8. So...

JP:

9. Mm-hm.

10. Great.

11. Thanks for sharing, yeah.

In the Wednesday Group, Quinn initiated the class's responses to the assessment by revoicing the categories of Physical and Emotional Self-Care as higher scoring, while the categories of Spiritual and Relationship Self-Care were "kind of lacking right now" (sentence 1). Quinn referenced her experience being in AA as an explanation for why her Relationship Self-Care score was low: "Which makes sense, because I'm going through such a transitional phase right now, like, being in AA and, like, it's like, that puts stress on my friendships, because, I don't have, like, any sober friends" (sentence 2). The friendships that Quinn previously relied on for support have been stressed by her being in AA, but she has not been with that group long enough to form new sober friendships. The result of this has been, Quinn said, that "my relationship, like, area has definitely been, like, a point of stress rather than, like, like self-care, I guess" (sentence 5). Quinn reframed her low score in terms of being in a transitional phase and going through a significant change that affected her relationships.

The second low-scoring area that Quinn identified was Spiritual Self-Care. Quinn echoed a theme that came up in the Monday Group of being raised in a religion but moving away from it as a young adult: "Um, and then, yeah, spiritual has just been sort of like a- like I'm just try- like I'm working through, like, a lot of things. 'Cause I was raised very Christian, but now I'm not, but like, I'm star- trying to, like, figure out where I'm, like, fitting in and stuff" (sentences 6-7). Quinn reframed this low score as well in terms of a transitional phase, shedding one identity in the process of building another. A

common theme for Quinn throughout the course was talking about balance and self-care. JP followed Quinn’s response up with an affirmative “Mm-hm” (line 9) and thanked Quinn for participating in the discussion without placing judgment on what Quinn had said.

Response Two: GEORGE

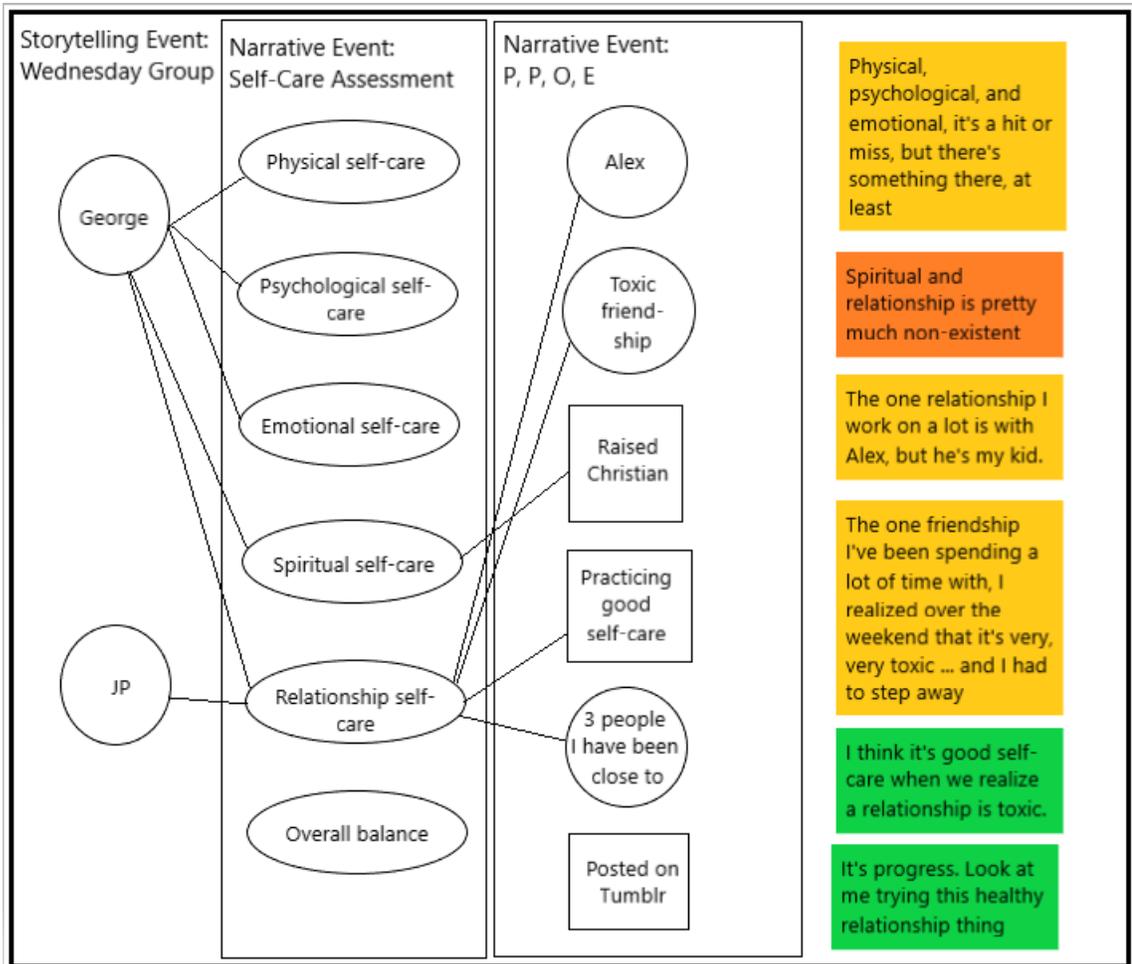


Figure 24: George's Response Diagram

GEORGE:

1. I'm in a very similar boat.
2. Like, um, my physical, psychological, and emotional, they're, like, it's a hit or miss, but there's something there, at least.
3. And then, like, my spiritual and relationship is pretty much non-existent.
4. The one, like, relationship that I actively have that I work on a lot, is with Alex, and that's because he's my kid.

In their response, George revoiced Quinn’s response, “I’m in a very similar boat. Like, um, my physical, psychological, and emotional, they’re, like, it’s a hit or miss, but there’s something there, at least” (sentences 1-2). George aligned with the assessment scoring scale in identifying their higher scoring areas of Physical, Psychological, and Emotional Self-Care. In these areas, George did not expand on how physical, psychological, and emotional self-care were present in their life, nor did they reference any other resources for those types of self-care in their narrative.

George revoiced the assessment in identifying low-scoring self-care categories as well, revoicing Quinn’s response again – “And then, like, my spiritual and relationship is pretty much non-existent” (sentence 3). By re-voicing Quinn’s response, George was seeking common ground with Quinn to offer support as they were going through similar experiences. George often inhabited this identity in their responses. They were open about their experiences and often related to others’ narratives in discussion throughout the study.

In discussing relationship self-care, George identified Alex, their son, as a significant relationship in their life, a topic that came up again and again for George. Being in a gender-based identity transition, George often pointed to Alex as the sole stable factor in their life. This became especially prevalent in talking about relationships, as George referenced stepping away from toxic relationships as an important step in their self-care practice.

GEORGE

5. And then, like, the one friendship that I’ve been, like, spending a lot of time with, I kinda realized over the weekend that it’s very, very toxic.

JP:

6. Mm

GEORGE:

7. And so I have to, like, step away from that.
8. And so it's just, I'm trying, and it's getting better, but the whole, like, having friendships and, like, working on spending time with people outside of our mutually inhabited places is kind of a wild concept to me that I haven't done a whole lot.

George referred to a relationship with a neighbor that they had recently realized was toxic and needed to step away from. They voiced the need for friendships separate from “our mutually inhabited places” as “kind of a wild concept to me that I haven't done a lot” (sentence 8).

9. Um, and then I was also raised Christian, and I just do not feel comfortable being there anymore.
10. Um, it's- I would like to have some sort of spiritual community or connection or something.
11. I haven't quite gotten to what that is yet.

In the next part of their response, George referenced the experience of being raised Christian, which both revoiced Quinn's earlier response and echoed a theme prevalent in the Monday group's responses. George indicated the desire for a spiritual community, but, like Quinn, George stated that they “haven't gotten to what that is yet” (sentence 11).

In responding to George, JP affirmed George's statement about stepping away from the toxic relationship to reframe George's reading of a low score on the self-care assessment. By doing this, JP brought the conversation back to the topic of relationships, complicating the view that relationship self-care only means cultivating relationships with the idea that “really good self-care” can be “when we realize a relationship is toxic” (sentence 13).

JP:

12. Mm-hm.
13. I think that's really good self-care when we realize a relationship is toxic.

14. So, I mean, I know that that's not maybe building that, but you know, that is good self-care to step away from that.

GEORGE:

15. It was a kind of surreal experience.

16. I realized that pretty much since, like, middle school, there's been three people that I've actually been close to.

17. One was my friend Jade from, like, middle school to early high school, then my now, like, my soon-to-be ex-husband, and then my neighbor friend Chloe.

18. And, like, two of those were just friendships, and one was, like, basically my only romantic relationship ever. And I realized a lot of the- a lot of similarities between them.

19. Like, just being toxic, being manipulative, lots of lies, making me feel like shit. And it was a big step to say no more, and I'm not- I'm calling it out now.

20. [This happened when I see the red flags] and then I, like, posted about that on Tumblr, and, like, people reached out to me, people, that- one person that I actually knew in person, and then two of my mutuals that I could- like, I hadn't interacted with them a lot.

21. And then, that was from Sunday to Monday, like, during Monday and yesterday, like just people that I don't have [unintelligible] that didn't see this post.

22. It was good bonding and stuff.

23. Like, wow, that's- that's weird timing.

JP:

24. Mm. Mm-hm.

GEORGE:

25. It was cool, though.

26. It was good.

JP:

27. Thank you for sharing.

GEORGE:

28. It's progress.

29. Look at me trying to do this healthy relationship thing.

[laughter]

GEORGE:

30. What a concept.

JP:

31. Mm.

32. Thank you.

33. You wanna just keep circling around?

In the final part of their response, George elaborated on their new view of relationships by referencing several resources they draw on to cultivate positive relationships, especially as they move into a new phase of stepping away from toxic behavior: “And it was a big step to say no more, and I’m not- I’m calling it out now” (sentence 19). George referred to a relationship resource, Tumblr, where they got positive feedback from social media connections from posting about the toxic relationship. This affirmed George’s decision for themselves – “It’s progress. Look at me trying to do this healthy relationship thing” (sentences 28-29).

Response Three: TINYLO

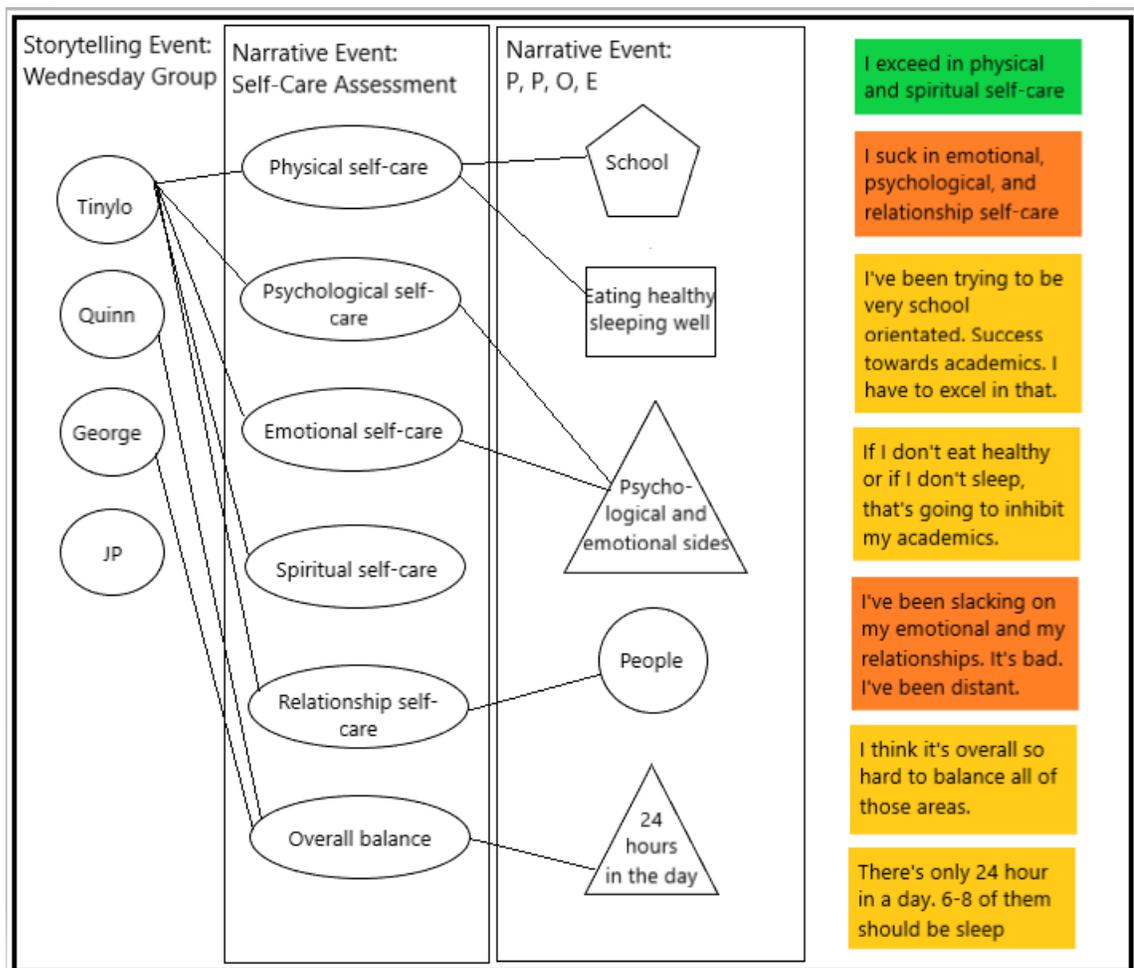


Figure 25: Tinylo's Response Diagram

TINYLO:

1. Aaight, sure.

JP:

2. Okay.

TINYLO:

3. Um, I guess an overview of my self-care is, I see a lot of 0s and, um, I guess I excel in physical self-care and in spiritual self-care, but I suck in emotional, psychological, and relationship self-care.
4. Um, I guess part of the reason why is because I've been trying to, like, make sure I'm very school orientated, like, my mentality is just, like, school, like, I gotta get done, so any way to, like, reduce my overall stress or anything that would inhibit my ability to- what's the word succession- succeed?
5. Success towards academics, like, I have to excel in that, like, if I don't eat healthy, or if I don't eat enough, or I don't sleep enough, that's gonna inhibit my academics or if I don't view things in a more, uh, stress-free way, or, like, I guess to view like, negative situations as- with more awareness, instead of as just an emotion, like all your emotions, go and just deal with, like, living really stress-free life.
6. And that is just allowing me to, like, be more successful, so that's what I've been trying to do.
7. But I've been slacking on, like, my emotional, 'cause I was trying to cut my emotional side out and my psychological side, I'm just, like, pushing that away.
8. And then, like, my relationships, like, it's bad, from like, I'm kinda, like, being distant with a lot of people. But, yeah.
9. That's me.
10. Heh.

JP:

11. Mm-hm, mm-hm.

TINYLO:

12. I'm also good, thinking that school wise or life-wise.

In his response, Tinylo revoiced Physical and Spiritual Self-Care as areas he “exceed[s]” in and Emotional, Psychological, and Relationship Self-Care as areas he “suck[s]” at (sentence 3). Tinylo stated that school was a high priority and that his self-care routines were focused on reducing his stress through physical self-care: “Success towards academics, like, I have to excel in that, like, if I don't eat healthy, or if I don't eat enough, or if I don't sleep enough, that's gonna inhibit my academics” (sentence 5). As

well, Tinylo referred to the idea of living stress-free and approaching emotional situations with “more awareness instead of as just an emotion” (sentence 5). Though Tinylo did indicate that he scored low on the Emotional, Psychological and Relationship categories and acknowledged that these areas had taken a back seat to his schooling, he resisted the idea that he needed to change anything and provided justification for reframing his score: “I’m also good, thinking that, school wise or life-wise” (sentence 12).

QUINN:

13. I think it’s, like, overall, so hard to balance all of those areas, like.

GEORGE:

14. There’s only twenty-four hours in a day.

QUINN:

15. Yeah.

JP:

16. Mm-hm.

GEORGE:

17. And anywhere from six to eight of those should be, ideally, dedicated to sleep.

JP:

18. Mm-hm, mm-hm, mm-hm.

19. Yeah.

20. It’s just something to be aware of, right? It’s just- and maybe that’s what you get out of today, right?

21. It doesn’t, you know, and especially maybe these last couple of weeks, your physical’s really strong, keep that, right?

22. Keep that up strong.

23. Okay.

24. Tom?

In response to Tinylo’s response, Quinn and George spoke up, breaking the usual pattern of the conversation that the class used (instructor first sets up prompt, each student responds, instructor sums up the responses at the end when everyone has taken a turn) to voice resistance to the assessment and voice support for Tinylo. Quinn said, “I

think it's, like, overall, so hard to balance all of those areas, like" (sentence 13). Quinn's response reframed the assessment's normative scoring scale and voiced the sentiment behind all of the students' responses thus far, which was, it's hard to balance all of these self-care areas when your life is already out of balance being in school and working so hard on academics. George said, "There's only 24 hours in a day... and anywhere of from six to eight of those should be, ideally, dedicated to sleep" (sentences 14 and 17), voicing the difficulty of balancing all so many personal and academic expectations, pushing back against the assessment's normative 'high/right' and 'low/wrong' scoring scale, which, despite the open-ended content and JP's repeated statements about thinking open-endedly about the concept of self-care, had many students phrasing their behaviors in terms of 'good/right' and 'bad/wrong' when identifying their scores. Following this exchange, JP offered a brief summary and response: "It's just something to be aware of, right? It's just- and maybe that's what you get out of today, right? It doesn't, you know, and especially maybe these last couple of weeks, your physical's really strong, keep that, right? Keep that up strong" (sentences 20-22). JP referenced the stressful last few weeks of the semester, echoing a theme that had come up often in the past few class periods, that was not to change anything drastic while trying to study for finals. JP's response redirected the conversation back to the assessment and re-validated it as a useful topic of conversation, while still trying to acknowledge the difficulty that the students voiced with living up to the normative standard presented by the assessment.

Response Four: TOM

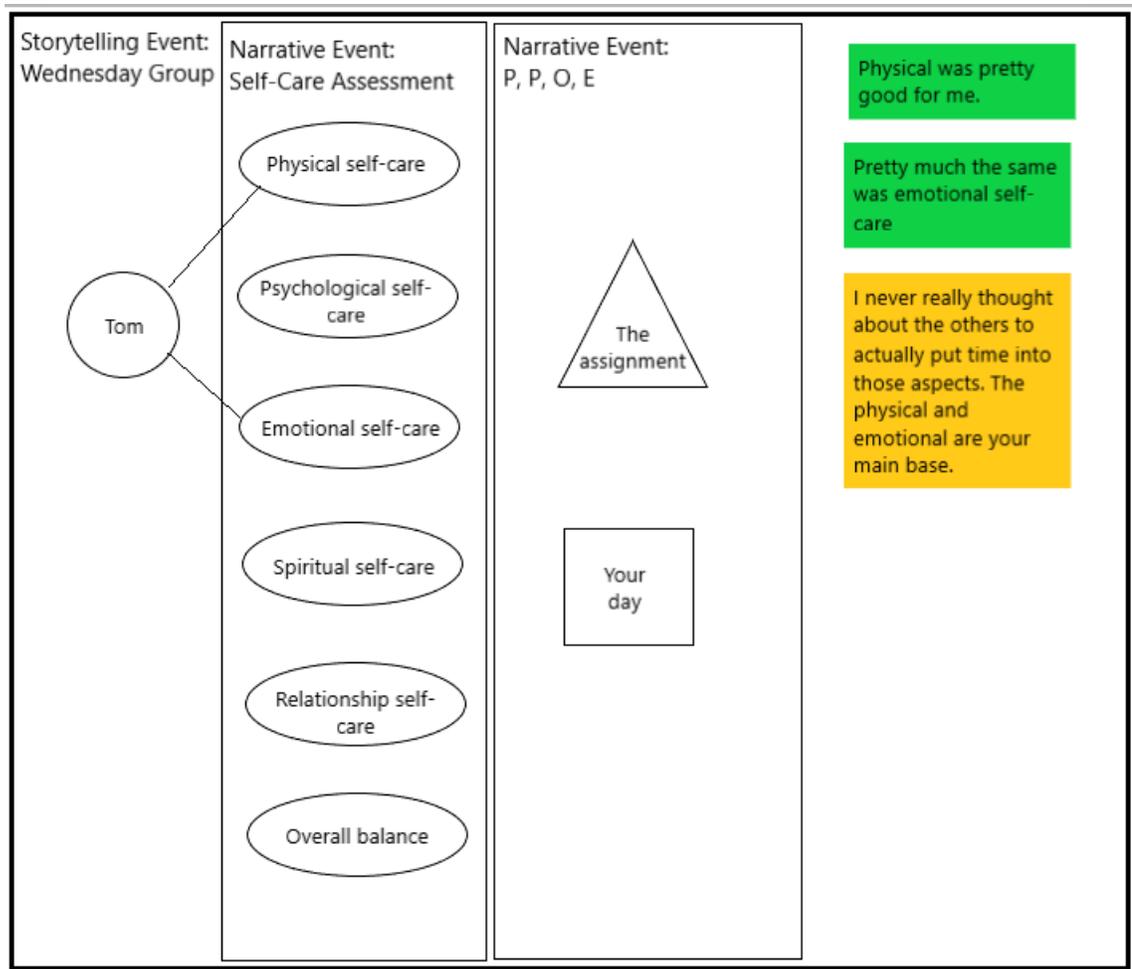


Figure 26: Tom's Response Diagram

TOM:

1. Um, kinda shadow what people already said.
2. Um, think so, yeah, physical was probably pretty good for me.
3. And after that, or actually, pretty much the same was emotional self-care.
4. But all the other aspects were pretty low for me.
5. Um, I think so, maybe, that's just like how- or at least, how I typically think about self-care just, like, physical and emotional.
6. I never really thought about other- others to actually put some time into those aspects.
7. Um, I know they are very important, and when I have, um, put some time in the other aspects, I feel so much better, but I feel like it's just, like, the physical and emotional are, like, your- your main base.
8. It's like when the assignment is about due, you just have to do it, so those are, like, you would need to have them in order to be, like, mentally, um, insane- I don't know, mentally- so you're able to work and stuff. But the other ones, like, even if you're lacking on, you can still kinda go on with your day.
9. But yeah, they're definitely helpful.

JP:

10. Mm-hm

TOM:

11. The other ones.

12. Yes, like, I should really do some more [unintelligible].

JP:

13. Mm-hm

TOM:

14. Yeah.

JP:

15. Thanks for sharing.

16. Kanye, do you think you would like to share?

In his response, Tom revoiced the other students' responses, echoing similar themes that had already been voiced in the discussion. He revoiced the areas of Physical and Emotional Self-Care, saying, "Um, think so, yeah, physical was probably pretty good for me. And after that, or actually, pretty much the same was emotional self-care" (sentence 2-3). Though Tom aligned himself with the normative direction of the assessment's scoring scale in identifying his high-scoring areas, he reframed a low score on the other categories on the assessment, saying, "I never really thought about other- others to actually put some time into those aspects. Um, I know they are very important, and when I have, um, put some time in the other aspects I feel so much better, but I feel like it's just, like, the physical and emotional are, like, your- your main base" (sentences 6-7). Though Tom did acknowledge that the other areas were "definitely helpful" (sentence 9), he revoiced the sentiment raised by other students that the need to practice all of these different categories of self-care was not compatible with being a full-time student and juggling all of the responsibilities that students in the class juggled. JP affirmed Tom's

response by saying, “Thanks for sharing” (sentence 15) before referring to Kanye with a direct request to contribute to the conversation.

Response Five: KANYE

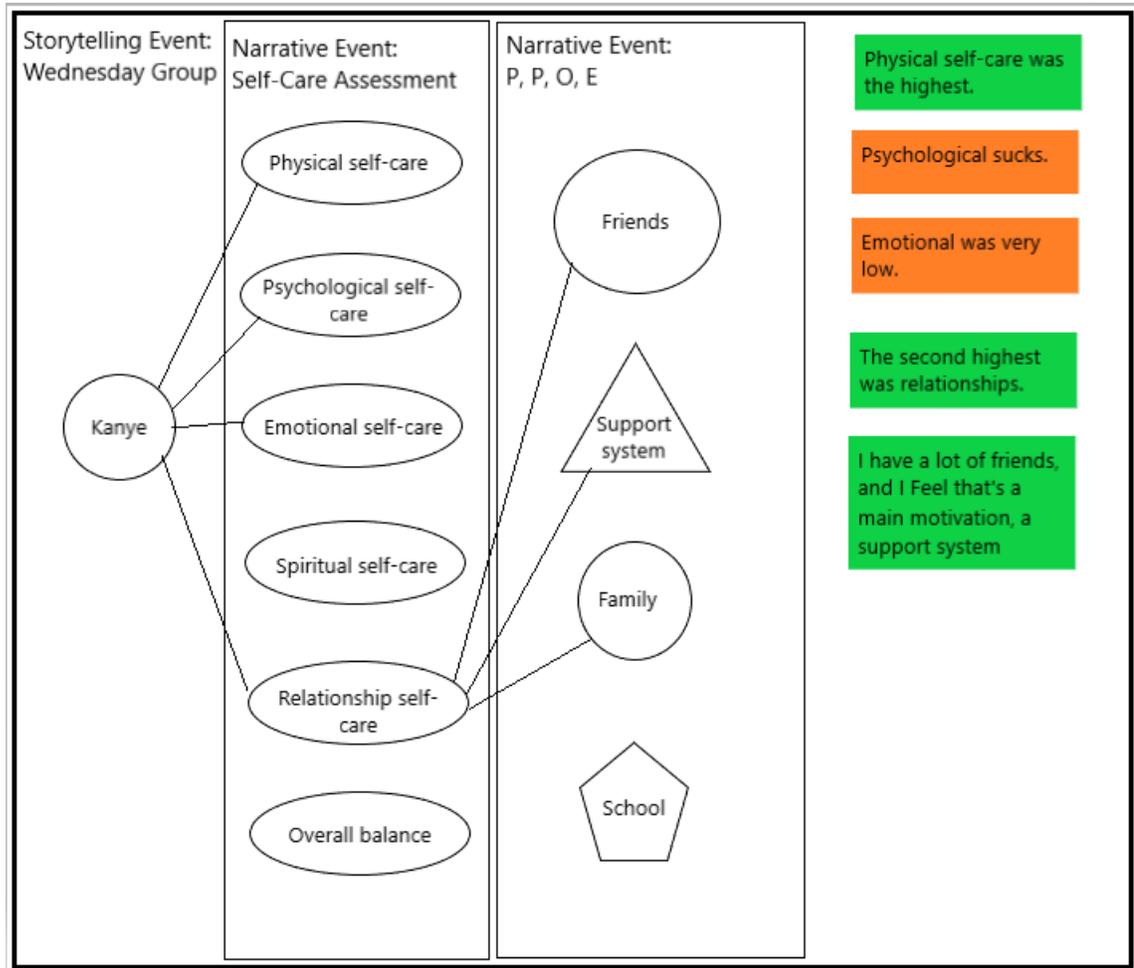


Figure 27: Kanye's Response Diagram

KANYE:

1. Um, I pretty much have the same result as, like, the others.
2. Um, physical self-care was the highest.
3. Um, psychological sucks.
4. Um, emotional is very low.
5. And the second-highest was relationships, so I'm good there.
6. And that's, like, I think, relates to the whole, like, I have, um, like I have a lot of, like, friends, and I feel like that's, like, a main, um, motivation, like, a support system, I guess.
7. And I feel like, yeah, that's what I take [unintelligible].
8. I can't do it.
9. I'm sorry, I can't think.

JP:

10. It's okay.
11. I know.
12. Yeah.
13. It's been an adjustment, these past- these long days for you these past couple weeks.

KANYE:

14. And, um, like, I think the whole, like, um, family, like, calling to check on you when [unintelligible] and, like, take time to see friends, and, yeah.
15. Do a lot of, like, school things, [unintelligible] yeah.

Kanye revoiced the responses of other students before him, saying, "I have pretty much the same result as, like, the others" (sentence 1). Like others in the class, Kanye identified Physical Self-Care as his highest scoring area, without offering much elaboration or referencing any other resources he drew on to cultivate physical self-care. Next, Kanye revoiced Psychological Self-Care as "psychological sucks" and Emotional Self-Care as "emotional is very low" (sentences 3-4) without offering elaboration or referring to any other resources he drew on. Kanye identified Relationship Self-Care as his second-highest scoring area and referenced social resources such as his friends and family as "a main, um, motivation, like, a support system, I guess" (sentence 6). He emphasized that he found it helpful for "family, like calling to check on you ... and, like tak[ing] time to see friends" (sentence 14) before trailing off and stating that he was tired due to his new job. Kanye had previously stated that his new job required him to start work at 5:30 in the morning, and he was having a hard time coping with the long days he had between work and school. JP revoiced Kanye's schedule to reflect to him that she understood and empathized with his long schedule and balancing work and school.

Summary of Findings

In this analysis, a strong sense of the complexity of academic probations students' experiences in higher education institutions and the complexity of identifying the 'most helpful' rhetorical direction to use when communicating with students in academic distress has emerged. Despite the strong support in the literature for the effectiveness of course-based interventions in increasing academic probation student persistence (Humphrey, 2006; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Renzulli, 2015), the findings from this study would suggest that students' experience of being on probation and on navigating their academic and personal lives while in school are far more complex than the (sometimes) boilerplate classroom prompts and activities offered in the academic skill development curriculum. The contrast of closed-ended, normative curriculum prompts with open-ended, more ideologically neutral curriculum prompts, coupled with a willingness on the part of an instructor to be flexible in the ways that she talked about the curriculum provided a useful framework for me in delving into subtle discourse shifts that prompted students' revoicing of and resistance to the institutionalized success/failure narrative, as well as a preliminary understanding of why they revoice or resist the discourse with which they are presented.

Prompt One: The Right Way to Study

The first curriculum prompt referenced in the study, the "9 best scientific study tips," (2015) video, is an example of a closed-ended curriculum prompt – it presents one path to achieving academic success and one definition of academic success. Paced in such a way that leaves the viewer little room for reflection or questioning, the video presents itself as hard to refute. Likewise, in the instructor's set-up of the video, by connecting it to other topics covered in the class and asking students to respond in the

affirmative to the video, JP encouraged students to revoice the video and directly refer to the study strategies it mentioned. In the student response examples, the students in both discussion sections in the study directly revoiced the strategies in the video – Steven (Monday Group) revoiced the strategy of taking practice tests, and Kanye (Wednesday Group) revoiced the strategies of setting a goal for each study session and studying in chunks.

There were subtle ways that students resisted the normative narrative of the video as well. Steven, for instance, positioned himself as a savvy student with an awareness of when resources mentioned in the video are available and when they are not (such as when professors do and do not offer practice tests). In positioning himself this way, Steven also resisted the struggling student identity implied by being on academic probation. Though Kanye did not reference any people, places, objects, or events outside the video, he likewise positioned himself as a savvy student well-versed in implementing the strategies in the video. In his response, Kanye provided anecdotal evidence to illustrate that the goal strategy and the study in chunks strategy were not foolproof strategies and required trial and error on the student's part to implement effectively.

Prompt Two: I Give Myself the Best Chance to Learn When I...

The second curriculum prompt, the fill-in-the-blank prompt from *Turning Point*, was still closed-ended in form, with its association to the list of six critical issues for learning in college and the instructor's prompt that encouraged students to revoice the prompt in their responses (Weinsheimer, 1993). The second prompt was different from the first in that it prompted students to personalize the content by prompting them to fill in the blanks with a first-person statement, and it elicited responses from students across

the two discussion sections that revoiced the curriculum's stated six critical issues but also provided more overt space for students to resist or counter the curriculum's rhetorical direction by bringing in conditions for ideal learning not mentioned in the text.

For instance, in the Monday group, in addition to revoicing the concept of course schedule design, Sylvia referenced an outside resource, a math tutor on YouTube who she regularly uses to help supplement in-class study materials. By doing this, Sylvia implicitly added an issue critical to learning in college – that is, the ability to bring in outside resources to supplement those provided in class. The act of identifying critical learning issues not mentioned by the text was done across several of the Monday group students' responses – JD, for instance, referred to the importance of staying committed to her decisions. She emphasized that the best learning for her occurs when she feels committed to her major and her path. Similarly, in the Wednesday group, a pattern of adding personalized conditions to the critical issues of learning emerged. By way of an example, as was typical in their responses, George identified several vital considerations to them that went beyond the six referred to in the text. George pointed to the importance of list-making, finances, and their son to their wellbeing as well as their success in school.

Though the instructor mirrored the rhetorical direction of the curriculum prompt in setting it up for the class to respond to, JP did leave space to incorporate additional references into the conversation and let students direct the ebb and flow of conversation once the topic had been set up. This, coupled with the sentence that encouraged personalization (I give myself the best chance to learn when I...), seemed to promote

more overt resistance to or augmentation of the curriculum than occurred with the first prompt studied.

Prompt Three: The Balanced Way to Practice Self-Care

The third curriculum prompt, though ideologically neoliberal in its form, came across as an ideologically neutral and open-ended prompt in the classroom, when coupled with the instructor's open-ended prompt to the class when opening the discussion about the prompt. Whether it was the more personal content or the instructor's more open-ended discussion prompt, the resulting heteroglossia in students' responses was much more overt, and their resistance to the normative, Likert scale ranking format of the assessment came through in both discussion sections. For instance, Sarah (Monday Group) initially revoiced the prompt by rating herself on the scale provided, emphasizing the areas of Relationship and Spiritual Self-Care. However, she went on to reframe her discussion in terms of justifying her lack of commitment to spirituality and highlighting the ways in which she was maintaining strong relationships and the increased importance of that to her at this point in her life.

In the Wednesday Group, for instance, Tinylo was hard on himself as he revoiced the curriculum prompt by reporting his scores on the assessment, identifying three low-scoring areas. However, he went on to reframe the low scores in terms of naming the reasons why or explaining other priorities he had at this point in his life. In fact, during Tinylo's response, the class came together to resist the normative ranking scale, naming several reasons that such a regimented self-care practice might be difficult for a college student to maintain. The collective resistance of the normative ranking scale seemed to bring the class together in a moment of class-wide resistance that the instructor supported

by asking prompting questions, making affirmative verbal cues, and just sitting back to let the discussion take its course.

Because of the small, localized sample and highly context-specific responses for each of the students, as well as the methodology by which I analyzed the data, there is not a convenient series of themes or codes to discuss in the fifth and final chapter. Students' responses built on their trajectory in class. They also fed off each other and the instructor and grew together over the weeks they were together. It is challenging to remove utterances from the fabric of the class conversation, and it was difficult enough to draw the boundaries around the responses that I did. On top of this, my reading of this data is colored through the lens of teaching the same class for three years and continuing to do academic support work where there are so many thematic similarities in the ways that students talk about and engage with the experience of doing school. For this reason, this dialogue is a tapestry to me, comprised of threads of conversation from this class and others across semesters, years, and locations. Three shapes have emerged in this tapestry, that I will call, for the sake of naming them, consideration points. They are not themes in the qualitative sense, but they are themes in the literary sense – that is, they are the coalescence of meaning taken from the story by the reader, the lessons learned from the text. It is these consideration points, the importance of neoliberal and normative narratives in college students' experiences, the beauty and rarity of critical pedagogy moments in classroom settings, and the role of balance in supporting student learning and development, that offer an entry into my discussion of the significance of my work and the implications of this research.

Chapter Five

Through this work, I have begun to understand the subtlety of resistance, the necessity of personalization and self-ownership, the utmost importance of balance and mental health awareness, the changeability and resilience of the human spirit, and the ingredients necessary to spark moments of collective resistance in the classroom. As a teacher, I have become more acutely aware of how and when to speak, when to joke and when to be serious, and I know that it almost always helps to be more personal and more fallible. In discussing the findings from this study, I will first highlight the consideration points that arose from using diagramming and sociolinguistic discourse analysis to understand students' self-positioning concerning normative understandings of 'doing school,' responding to and resisting curriculum prompts and the instructor, and the alignment, or lack thereof, between students' talk, an instructor's talk, the curriculum, and the neoliberal context in which we find ourselves in higher education today. Where relevant and necessary, I will draw on new literature to underscore the importance of the themes here. I will also discuss the implications of this work to instructional practice, in supporting students in academic distress, to research, and policy. I will highlight some directions that I and others may take this work in the future, and I will attempt to make meaning of this, knowing that I am only one reader of it.

Consideration Point One: Complicating the Association of Normative and Neoliberal through Self-Empowerment, and Person-Centered Learning Communities

To be in higher education is to be a participant in a system that often partners with neoliberalism for its gain and to categorize and control those within it (Zepke, 2015). In

the Academic Probation Intervention Course, there is a necessity in teaching students to be savvy, aware participants in the system, because of the outcome and accountability-based culture that imbues higher education (Zepke, 2015). For students to succeed, arguably, there is a place in their plan of study for them to become more aware of the neoliberal ideology around them and an opportunity to induct them into the academy as self-aware actors who benefit from the system. In the study, this first took the form of reinforcing effective learning strategies with a rhetorically closed-ended video. When presented with a closed-ended prompt, students across both discussion groups overtly revoiced the tenets of effective study strategies, translating them into their own experiences, agreeing that there was at least some measure of effectiveness in using the strategies in the pursuit of being a successful student. The study strategies video was not the only neoliberal-adjacent prompt that students were presented with, however. The self-care assessment, which ranked categories of self-care on a quantitative scale, emphasized a performative quality, which has been identified as a key tenet of neoliberal ideology (Fielding, 2006; Zepke, 2015).

As students in the course encountered elements of neoliberal ideology in the curriculum and in course discussions, they positioned themselves as both within and without that way of thinking. This act (re-voicing, and yet personalizing, the curriculum and repeating the normative way to ‘do school’ that they had been taught throughout their educational experiences, and yet actively participating in a discussion activity designed to reframe their educational experience in college in a new light post-probation) might be viewed as resistive in that students who have been identified in the institutionalized normative scheme of success and failure as ‘on probation’ name the strategies they

employ successfully, reframe or reject low scores they just gave themselves, or go on personal, anecdotal tangents rather than directly answering an instructor's question. In response to the self-care assessment, students came together to collectively resist and reframe the assessment, taking the results out of the numerical realm and into the personal, where complicating factors outweigh quantitative scores.

A useful lens for viewing how APIC students' place within and without the system comes from Fielding (2006). Fielding (2006) dealt with the same-but-different nature of the performative system of "high performance learning organization" and collective, empowerment-focused coalition of "person-centered learning communities" because both deal with the integration of personalization into the functional system of education, although in different ways and to different ends (p. 302). In the "high performance learning organization," personalization and student voices are used in service of improving the status quo and meeting the metrics that measure the effectiveness of the "functional" (p. 302). In "person-centered learning communities," this relationship is reversed, with function serving the purpose of furthering individual and community growth and learning with a higher moral imperative placed on elevating student voices in service of the greater (public) good (p. 302).

In teaching the APIC as well as in studying the dialogue students in it, I wonder about the intention behind the course design – are the opportunities for personalization meant to fulfill human performance metrics (by increasing retention outcomes) or are the opportunities for self-reflection in the curriculum meant to further a goal of personal, individual (and by extent, community) growth? I do not know if it is possible for the course to be fully one or the other of these. I have worked in the academic support space

for a few years now, and the rhetoric about personal success layered over community success and institutional success is everywhere. Success is presented as a normative pathway that involves a lot of hard work, personal sacrifice, self-awareness, application of appropriate strategies, and timely accessing of appropriate resources. Students who have failed are meant to show the appropriate level of gumption and grit that indicates their likelihood of ‘getting back on track.’ Though this idea and its language are decidedly neoliberal in tone, it is a lazy comparison to fully conflate normative and neoliberal. Normative is a shorthand that allows for simplification of ideas to be presented in concise and shallow ways. Neoliberalism is a more profound and pervasive ideology that promotes ways of knowing and ways of acting that conform to a system designed to control. Zepke (2015) engaged in “futures work,” imagining the future of student engagement and its association with neoliberalism (p. 696). In two of Zepke’s imagined futures, student engagement in higher education had some alliance with the ideology, whether total conformity to or a reformed, though still present “elective affinity” with neoliberalism (p. 698). The third of Zepke’s imagined futures involved a scenario where student engagement in higher education has broken away from neoliberalism, reframing a “democratic-critical conception of engagement that is participatory and dialogic, leading not only to academic success but success as citizens” (p. 700). Work in this vein can often be extended in such a manner – two of the three possibilities involve some association with or conformity to neoliberalism. If one might extend this ratio (in a highly un-statistically accurate, unscientific way), two-thirds of the futures we might envision for higher education spaces have some sort of relationship with and interdependence on neoliberalism. Higher education’s connection to neoliberalism

will likely continue, and we can teach our students to navigate the ideology and capitalize on that connection. If we view students and ourselves as having one foot in the capitalist system and one foot out, we can best position ourselves to realistically negotiate the balance between the neoliberal and critical narratives that imbue students' lives and experiences in higher education.

Consideration Point Two: The Importance of Critical Pedagogy Moments

Elsewhere in this document, I have outlined critical pedagogy as a philosophy and practice, after McLaren's (2015) poetic and inspiring notion of a community uprising of revolutionaries taking back the classroom, centering the classroom as a space of change, empowerment and community building. This pedagogy is underscored by a belief that structural inequities exist, minoritized voices have been silenced, and that such inequities must be actively dismantled, and those silenced centered and prioritized via classroom conversation, course design, and teaching (McLaren, 2015). I have also discussed that while I am attracted to critical pedagogy, I also very much fail to implement it. I am as guilty as anyone of falling back on a normative shorthand tinged with a critical awareness of the pervasiveness of neoliberalism in the classroom. In the context of the APIC, and in supporting students in academic distress, there is a tough negotiation between the reality of the performative nature of institutional outcomes and the desire to do what is best for the student. Advisors and professors are telling students to drop classes they have no numerical chance of passing. Students are appealing to come back three weeks after being suspended, planning to repeat the same courses, to give themselves the numerical advantage of getting an F taken off their transcript. What can we, as practitioners, teachers, administrators, even researchers do?

Sometimes, the answer is that we need to be facilitators, to put aside our egos and let students take ownership of their space and their education. For students in the APIC, the third curriculum prompt, the self-care assessment, prompted what I would view as a critical pedagogy moment in both small group discussion sections. When initially presented with the assessment, students in both sections dutifully ranked themselves using the provided measures and participated in the discussion prompt as planned by the instructor. For each student, though, as they talked through their ranking, they found reasons to reframe their initial assessment so that it was more forgiving and less black and white. Whether each student learned from the previous to follow this pattern, I will never know for sure, but it seemed that each student felt empowered to take ownership of their scores (good or bad) and reframe them in a way that presented a better sense of balance and a more forgiving approach to assessing themselves. The instructor provided fodder for such reframing to occur by offering support, including a well-placed probing question, and generally stepping back to let the conversation take the direction it would. In the Wednesday Group, the students moved beyond individual reframing and empowerment and came together as a group to redirect the conversation. They took over the educational space by enacting their critical agency on the topic and curriculum prompt and making a collective decision to redirect the conversation. The instructor facilitated this decision and was part of the collective move away from the neoliberal towards the critical pedagogy that privileges the voices of the oppressed and brings the fringe to the center in classroom space. The conversation sparked a collective understanding in the students and the instructor that they were in control of the direction of their talk and that they, as a group, could make whatever they wanted of that time. The

greater good of this is a collective sense of empowerment, a community of support, and the deep-rooted sense of ownership that comes with feeling secure in your place.

A sense of place is at the foundation of critical pedagogy as I have come to understand it. One may say that critical pedagogy in the classroom comes with experience, authority, and a strong sense of place. New in my place, I am certainly not leading a blaring, McLaren-inspired charge these days as I seek to professionally legitimize myself and my ideas. I work in a tutoring center at a predominantly white regional comprehensive institution where my identity is validated – I blend in: I have the privilege to blend in. I feel askance from the institutional norms, though, for several reasons, the least of which is the newness of my association with the institution. Another is that the space is decidedly lacking in cultural competency. The environment is more conservative than where I have been in the past. I do not want to make waves, being a lower-level administrator in a grant-funded position, hoping to make inroads to a higher rank and more permanent status. But cultural competency and understanding of implicit bias largely lack from day-to-day conversations. People are kind and treat students with respect, but there is a lack of critical awareness here. I find that I am swimming against the current, ducking under and blending in to avoid too much attention being paid to my opinions and beliefs. I abide by what I have written here, and I think about speaking and acting with less neutrality because I know this is part of the problem and being able to be neutral is part of my privilege as a white person. I know that there comes the point where one must move past being inwardly annoyed to outwardly taking a stance and being an ally, advocate, and facilitator of critical dialogue.

Without the actions of individuals, critical pedagogy, in moments, or as a practice and pedagogy, goes by the wayside of a system that privileges normative shorthand and a sense of white complacency. In the classroom, I relied heavily on a combination of planning, trust-building, and flexible conversations to create ingredients that could promote critical pedagogy moments in the classroom. Moments of collective uprising, of community resistance, will happen in classroom spaces, and they are partially the responsibility of the course instructor, who put the ingredients into the pot and perhaps stirred a bit, or stopped stirring at the right time to leave space for others to talk. They are also the responsibility of the students, of the sense of community between individuals, and the way that, sometimes, people see their place within the system and are able to deliberately step out and back in again to serve a goal of resisting. These moments are crucial in the classroom, in my opinion. They are the thing that stays with me long past any course evaluation, any piece of engaging writing, any single instance of making myself look like a complete idiot in front of the class, and I have plenty of all of those. Critical pedagogy moments are those where the conversation sparkles and comes alive, the students and the teacher come to something as a group that they would not have come to individually. A new understanding is made. People may walk out of such an occurrence and go back to their lives, acting the way they ever did. But something has indelibly shifted.

Consideration Point Three: Promoting Balance

In my headspace here, two years out from conducting this research, I am left with the question, what does it mean to resist normative shorthand for ‘doing school’ the ‘right way,’ to rewrite one’s definition of success or failure, or understand one’s purpose for

pursuing an education in the broader context of the public good? What is it in service of? Does the act of personal or collective resistance promote a greater sense of well-being in the person who has resisted? Does it promote a higher achievement of a performance metric (that is, by setting up a context in which someone can resist the institution, the institution is served because that person persists)? As I discussed some of these ideas recently at a conference, my panel's discussant pushed back at my interpretation of my data saying that positioning neoliberal and critical as opposing linguistic forces was creating a false dichotomy (good = counternarratives, self-ownership, and perhaps, individual separation from the institution; bad = neoliberal, normative, mainstream). I disagree with this sense of a false dichotomy; instead, I see my choice (after those giants who came before me), to identify points where the tension between these opposing linguistic forces is highest as a sort of balancing act in a complex identity space that students on academic probation and, indeed, all students who struggle with success, failure, and obstacles on their educational journeys, inhabit.

In looking for routes into understanding what students in the study said, for ways to contextualize their experiences, I thought a lot about mental health. Students in the APIC were quite open with their disclosure of addiction, mental health issues, and a gambit of things such as dealing with anxiety and depression, struggling with a lack of sleep, and trying to find balance amidst the stress of college student life. Many teachers in higher education I have talked to have supported the idea that students are more open about talking about mental health; indeed, there is an increasing number of college students nationwide using mental health services (Canady, 2018). It does not seem coincidental to me that the curriculum topic where students banded together and resisted

the neoliberal rating scale was the self-care topic. A conversation around promoting balance is ostensibly a more open-ended affair that perhaps spirals away from institutional norms, where individual experiences and voices are valued, and the classroom promotes a community of support (Fiori & Consedine, 2013).

It is to this end that we, as teachers, practitioners, researchers, perhaps even as learners in our own classrooms, should seek to promote balance and encourage others to promote balance. I have recently begun an exploration of the implications that assets-based frameworks have for supporting students in academic distress. It is apparent that the prevailing research uses one deficit or another to describe students on academic probation (they failed to perform at minimal levels, they lack motivation, and they suffer from weaker social ties). Assets-based models of understanding the experiences and mindset of students in academic distress are emerging in the literature. In a doctoral dissertation, Bledsoe (2019) studied the concept of motivational momentum as a framework to understand the journey of students returning from academic suspension at a community college, finding that strong motivation, fueled by activities such as long and short term goal setting, promoted resiliency among students. In other words, students whose environment promoted in them a sense of strength and momentum were imbued with a greater sense of their ability to persist and an increased ability to persist. Others echoed the finding, emphasizing the role of purposeful, supportive, multifaceted, strengths-based support for students in academic difficulty (Tovar & Simon, 2006). When practitioners, such as advisors, instructors, and counselors, carefully and purposefully support academic probation students in examining and reframing their behavior and experiences, the “academic uncertainty” of being on probation “may be a

true transition point for students, ...[a] moment of crisis [that] present[s] a flashpoint at which students may choose to move actively toward taking more personal responsibility for their own academic outcomes” (Tovar & Simon, 2006, p. 561).

Intervening on behalf of students on academic probation, promoting a sense of momentum for them, empowering them to take ownership, all of these are balancing acts, at the fine point of tension between teaching students to be more savvy participants in a neoliberal system and empowering them to take ownership, individually and collectively, of their journeys as they approach success and failure without the normative shorthand of the false dichotomy of success/failure that we all grew up with and struggled with in different facets of our lives. The normative shorthand of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ is to be avoided, resisted, at all costs. Students do resist it, and we, as educators, should promote opportunities for them to do so.

A Return to the Research Questions

Question One

Considering these points, I return to my research questions and reflect on the answers I have found through this work. The first question I sought to answer was, how does the rhetorical direction of the curriculum and the instructor’s discourse influence the rhetorical direction of students’ in-class discourse? The more straightforward answer to the question is that it depends on the context (doesn’t everything?). In considering the three curriculum prompts studied here, they ranged from closed-ended, ideologically consistent with the normative, institutional narrative of ‘doing school’ the ‘right way’ (the study tips video) to the middle-ground of a less closed-ended, more ideologically neutral prompt that for, whatever reason, prompted both a normative response and a

counter response (the fill-in-the-blank prompt from *Turning Point* and the self-care assessment). Though the curriculum remained fixed across the two discussion groups, the way that the instructor talked about the prompts and the ways that the students responded varied across the two groups. The instructor-student and student-student interactions, as well as the students' own experiences, mood, and any other number of untold factors influenced the responses as much if not more than the curriculum. Because the curriculum is a constant in the classroom, though, it made sense as a starting point to understand some of the factors that seemed to influence the direction of classroom conversations, per the theoretical perspective and methodology employed here. I was interested to see what students would do with different types of curriculum. Would they repeat what they were told? Why were they doing so? If they were given less direction by the curriculum, would they provide their own details? How did the instructor influence the direction of the conversation by agreeing with or disagreeing with the curriculum? Where was the locus of institutional influence in the classroom – did the instructor present herself as an institutional representative? Why?

The study tips video, which spiraled towards the institutional mono-narrative and presented the most ideologically normative rhetorical stance, seemed to prompt the instructor and students across the groups to revoice the prompt the most directly. The instructor agreed with and referenced the prompt in her set-up. Overall, student respondents referenced at least one of the nine tips from the video and repeated language from the video in recounting how the tip was applicable to their approach to school. The video was succinct and easy to remember – I have seen it every semester for at least three years, and I still find myself nodding along to the jaunty tune and agreeing with the

seemingly simple and scientifically proven study tips. The video offers a clear and unambiguous approach to follow. It is normative.

However, it is simplistic to say that students repeated what they heard. In several instances, students referenced approaches, people, or resources that were not mentioned in the video. They also personalized the tips to suit their situations and thus took the content and made it their own, deftly, and in a savvy, informed way. In talking to the instructor at a later point after I had begun my analysis of the data for the study, I asked about the video and what JP thinks of it now, looking back on her earlier experiences teaching the APIC. JP said that it provided a succinct summary of topics that had been covered already and, given that it was shown in the middle of the semester, showing the video was an easy way to get students to look back on and take an inventory of the things they had thus far learned (JP, personal communication, March 7, 2019). It makes sense, given this information, that the overarching pattern of the prompt was to promote conversation that followed the direction it laid out.

The second prompt, which was a fill-in-the-blank reflective exercise following a reading that presented six ‘critical issues’ to successful learning from one of the APIC texts, *Turning Point*, still followed a normative rhetorical stance with a fixed perspective on what it means to ‘do school’ the ‘right way’ (via six definitively critical issues). One of the differences with *Turning Point* is that it left space within the readings for students to write in reflections, and it encouraged them to personalize their answers and customize their approach to navigating probation. The instructor summarized the text but did not overtly pass judgment on the issues discussed. In fact, the question students were asked to respond to was the overarching summative question at the end of the reading, “I give

myself the best chance to learn when I [fill in the blank].” Given the more open-ended opening question that JP posed for discussion, students’ responses varied more widely. Students referenced one or more of the six critical issues, or they identified other on-campus or off-campus resources, people, or states of mind that helped them set themselves up for the best chance to learn. Given the fill-in-the-blank approach taken by the text, it makes sense that students’ responses would be more personalized and less cohesive. Each student presented a different definition of what ‘the best chance to learn’ meant. The instructor did not pass judgment on either the text or students’ responses.

The third prompt, the multi-question self-care assessment that asked respondents to rank themselves across different areas of self-care, took an ideologically neoliberal form, with a prescribed ranking system that was designed to identify high and low scores and provide a definitive answer. However, the assessment discussed topics of spirituality, emotional and mental health and did so in a non-threatening and nonjudgmental way. The instructor echoed the nonjudgmental and non-threatening tone and content of the assessment by mentioning several times throughout her set-up of the class discussion that she believed self-care was important and highly personal. She thanked students for their participation in the discussion and seemed to place a value in the discussion space on each person’s unique perspective. Students’ responses to this prompt most closely followed the direction of the centrifugal linguistic force, the counternarrative that I have described elsewhere. Students overtly resisted the idea of ranking themselves as being good and bad at different types of self-care. They reframed and justified their score by bringing in outside evidence and alternate interpretations of why they scored the way they did. In the Wednesday group, the students went further to question the content of the

assessment as a group and work together to solve the problem that one student referenced of not having enough time in a day to accomplish all of these supposed essential goals.

In considering the three curriculum prompts, the more complicated answer to the research question is that the rhetorical direction of the curriculum prompt does seem to influence the direction of class conversations for both students and the instructor. The personal connection that students or the instructor have to the topic and content of the prompt matter to the ways that individual students respond to the prompt. The class's and the week's tone matter to the depth with which students respond to the class discussion. And, most importantly, students are influenced by each other in class – especially as time went on through the semester that I observed them, the students would build on and reference each other's answers as much as they would the curriculum. They referenced their responses from previous weeks and took up threads of conversation that continued from week to week. The curriculum, while it made for a convenient narrowing mechanism for selecting which passages to analyze, is but one thread of an intricate tapestry that influences conversation participants to respond the way they do.

Question Two

The second question I sought to answer through my research was, how does academic probation students' classroom discourse both revoice and resist the normative success narrative? The answer to this question is both more straightforward than the first research question and far more complex, affecting the way that I have come to view students who fit the condition of being on academic probation, and, indeed, any student dealing with mental health or physical health issues, trauma, isolation, oppression, or any number of other invisible conditions. Students in the APIC did both – they revoiced and

resisted the normative success narrative. They revoiced it to serve to normalize themselves (and thus resist the normative definition of a successful student when they had been labeled as not successful) – they were savvy students who knew what they were doing when they set a goal or studied for a test or completed a weekly planner. They resisted it by placing equal weight on factors not presented in the institutional text, adding their own resources to a canon of supplemental materials and academic success strategies (thus revoicing the narrative by normalizing their approach as equally valid as that presented in the curriculum). They seemed to be able to position themselves with one foot in the normative and one foot in the counternarrative and achieve a delicate and necessary balance between the two narratives in a way that impressed me greatly, given the labels that had been imposed on them.

Implications

In the beginning of this work, I questioned the need for the ‘struggling student’ label that pervades the student persistence literature along with other problematic monikers such as ‘at-risk,’ ‘low-achieving,’ and the more politically correct one that I have settled on through much reading and my work here, ‘in academic difficulty.’ For institutional and operational purposes, labels can be important (first-year student, student on academic probation, student of color). The truth is, though, that if we look to the students in this study, if we ask them to label themselves, they would say, they are students. They implicitly and explicitly resist the label of probationary student through the narratives they shared. In class conversations, the APIC students presented themselves as completing their tasks, achieving their goals, making informed decisions, and operating within the educational system every day. It is almost as though, given the

opportunity to reflect on who they were in relation to the neoliberal successful student archetype, they measured up and decided they should be called students too. And what else should they be called? The emerging research would support the notion that students who are supported with assets-based frameworks, who are trained to play to their strengths and are affirmed for their choices and experiences, are more likely to persist (Bledsoe, 2019). The work of supporting students in being students is the work of a great village of educators, practitioners, researchers and policymakers striving towards supportive and affirmational rhetoric that spans disciplines and operates on the individual and collective levels, that is both invasive and flexible. But it's not as if I'm asking us to change the whole system, to deconstruct and smash the system of ivory-towered grand narratives that seek to unify us under a singular, mainstream definition of success, to break open the barriers and spread the beautiful, chaotic heteroglossia of diverse voices across the fields of equity. Or, maybe I am.

Implications for Teaching and Practice

For teachers, this work has many implications. The hope is that self-empowerment narratives find a place in the classroom, but that collective, public good is also derived from accessing and persisting in higher education. Though a challenging and perplexing notion, inhabiting a place at the intersection of the neoliberal and critical pedagogy narratives seems to be the best way forward. At times, it could be surmised that closed-ended curriculum prompts and instructors who align rhetorically with the institutional message encouraging students to buy into a series of prescribed strategies, which can be useful to promoting student success and persistence (Palmer, Maramba, & Dancy, 2011). In my experience as an instructor teaching sections of the Academic

Probation Intervention Course, it was often useful for students to choose strategies from a closed-ended list of suggestions and try them out in practice and reflect on the process. Students selected sound strategies but were able to feel some ownership in picking and choosing those strategies that worked for them and in reporting back to the class about how the process went.

From this study's findings, it would seem that incorporating a mix of closed-ended, normative, and open-ended, ideologically neutral curriculum prompts and, as an instructor, moving between aligning with the institutional narrative and encouraging students to resist the institutional narrative, is the best mindset with which to move forward. This is, of course, easier said than done in most instances. It takes a great deal of skill to design lesson plans that facilitate these goals and a great deal of luck and circumstance for such plans to come together as intended. From a Bakhtinian perspective, it would seem that an instructor must learn, through trial and error, to create opportunities for these tensions to exist in classroom conversations and then recognize them and be flexible enough to let them play out when they come to fruition.

The takeaway I am left with is that work like this is done in layers. There is the first layer or the initial reaction to the thing that was said in class. As teachers and students, we operate most often in this layer. We cannot remember classroom conversations well enough to be objective in our recollection of them, so we only are able to react to them at the moment, and if we have not planned and considered our response in class enough, we are left with a sense that we left something on the table when it comes to making the most of the conversations we have with our students. With the benefit of classroom discourse analysis, we can access deeper layers of meaning. Having

a mechanism for capturing an objective recording of classroom conversations and the ability to return to what was said later imbues our teaching practice with a depth of understanding to which we are not privy in the moment. We can look back at moments, termed here “critical pedagogy moments,” and understand the ingredients that enabled them to happen. Having access to recorded classroom conversations is like going back in time and, though not being able to change the past, being able to use the past to inform the changing of the future. As teachers, we prepare for our classes. We plan what our students will read and discuss, and we identify what we hope they will learn from doing so. Some of us plan what we will say about the material in class. Do we ask ourselves what we intend by including certain materials or saying certain things? If the answer to this question is no, we are leaving something on the table. By looking back at recorded classroom conversations, we can ask ourselves retroactively, what was our intention by including this material or saying this thing? We can understand ourselves through this work.

I mean to say that my work, and classroom discourse research more broadly, has an implication for teacher development and understanding how to develop an effective curriculum, talk about it in class, and learn from the experience. I am not going to say that I encourage all teachers to undertake a study of classes in their field or use the approach in their own classroom, but if they chose to do this, they would learn a great deal. I certainly have. I do not view careless and offhanded comments in the same way anymore when I have seen them immortalized on the page. I believe that intention is essential not only to the set-up and plan of a lesson but its execution as well, and in the moment-by-moment responses that students have with each other and that the instructor

has to students. As teachers, we inhabit a dual role of advocate/coach and gatekeeper of institutional access (via the grades we assign). We want to side with the students in their endeavors, but we also represent the institution, and we walk a fine line between these two. We may not be able to do much about this dual role, depending on our status within the academy, but we must be aware of it and speak with intention. This is what this research has taught me and what I hope it will teach others.

Implications for Research

Academic probation students are an understudied population – throughout my own doctoral process, I have routinely had the experience of reading recent, wonderful, critically important dissertations (e.g., Bledsoe, 2019; Rivera, 2019) and talking to scholars whose work references the same work that I have referenced here. Indeed, our literature reviews may almost be copies of each other because so much of the emerging research in this vein draws on the same limited pool of foundational resources. There exists a call in the post-positivist research as well as qualitative investigations on the topic for more work that examines the contextual, lived experience of students on academic probation. There is very little work that examines the rhetoric of success and failure and the classroom discourse of academic probation students. The excuses for why this research is not carried out more prolifically place the blame on the students. Barouch-Gilbert (2019) commented in a discourse analysis of institutional academic probation policies that institutions tend to portray students on probation “as lacking capabilities—their abilities being below average—and dependent upon others to meet academic requirements” (p. 331). Likewise, passive institutional academic probation policies that rely on student-initiated actions (James & Graham, 2010; Lindo et al., 2008)

often fail to take into account the profound role that advisors, faculty, students, and other support services have on the persistence of students in academic difficulty and returning from academic withdrawal (Bledsoe, 2019). The current scope of the literature and research on this population indicates that we (scholars, educators, and institutional representatives) label students as less than with a variety of problematic, oppressive, and triggering labels. We dismiss them as incapable of acting without support but then fail to initiate the structures that are needed to support their success and persistence. As a discipline, we must go beyond understanding the lived experiences of students on academic probation. We must promote and undertake work that rectifies the conundrum of expecting students on probation to be incapable of persisting without support and, yet, failing to initiate the support that they need to persist. We must reframe the way that we view these students and study ways to remake the system that labels them and leaves it at that.

I hope that, in a small way, my work promotes a move that is already in progress away from deficit-based ways of supporting students in academic difficulty, distress, and on academic probation. The ways that students humanize and normalize themselves in classroom conversations in an academic probation intervention course suggest that there is much we need to yet understand and document about their experiences, perceptions, and intersectional identities as they experience being rhetorically and physically marginalized in institutional spaces. I hope to encourage a sensitivity to the ease of dropping back into normative language, in classroom spaces, in academic support, and in the work of advisors, counselors, coaches, and mentors. The complexity in the ways that students revoice institutional rhetoric (via curriculum) in one utterance and in the next

position themselves as savvy and successful students despite being labeled by the institution as not successful speaks to the need for a balanced model for understanding the experiences of students on academic probation. More research to uncover the subtle tension between neoliberal and critical pedagogies, the nuances of the normative shorthand, and the role of each of these interplaying with each other in conversations in higher education spaces is needed.

Another way that my work contributes to the research field is in bringing classroom and conversation analysis methodologies to higher education spaces. Classroom discourse analysis, though commonly employed in K-12 educational settings, has yet to breach the postsecondary barrier in a significant way. Because of my background in English and Writing Studies, I have long wondered why some of the methodologies and theoretical perspectives there have not yet migrated to Higher Education (even though they are occurring in the same institutional spaces). For a recent example that has implications for the direction I hope my research will go, I have turned to the writing center studies literature as scholars there somewhat more frequently draw on conversation and classroom discourse analysis in higher education. Denny (2018) used conversation analysis to uncover ways that writing consultants and student clients used conversation to talk about and rewrite their writing, including the varied purposes for a new conversation space termed “Oral Writing-Revision [OR]” (p. 35), which referred to the oral action of rewriting a written sentence, either by the writing consultant or student client during a writing consultation session.

Though Denny’s (2018) study is well-designed and offers a fascinating perspective on the tutoring of writing and peer-to-student writing development, it is not

the findings, but rather the methodology that has implications for my work. I can see the usefulness of classroom and conversation discourse analysis in many spaces in higher education. Currently, I work in a tutoring center, overseeing the writing support program and development of a writing center. The neoliberal rhetoric of working hard for increased opportunities, the idea of education as a personal investment in a future full of greater individual gains pervades the ways that we talk about supplemental instruction, tutoring, and academic support as giving students who use the services a competitive edge. The student is our customer, and we often use customer service metaphors to reinforce the appropriate behaviors we expect our tutors to exhibit while they are in the learning center. I wish to further my studies by exploring the ways that normative, neoliberal, and critical/resistive rhetoric is at play in the academic support space. How do we talk about learning strategies in the limited scope of time we are offered with each student who seeks tutoring services? Given the ease with which I have always slipped into the rhetoric of normative shorthand in the classroom, how pervasive might I find that rhetoric to be in tutoring conversations? Conversely, how may tutors and students work together towards empowerment rhetoric and, even, perhaps liberatory pedagogy, given the low-stakes, mentor/advocate relationship that tutors often have with their clients? Given the emerging work around assets-based, affirmative support for students (Bledsoe, 2019 and others) and the focus in academic support on scaffolding such concepts as metacognition onto content knowledge development (“The LearnWell Projects,” 2019 and others), doing systematic analysis of the ways that tutors and students are negotiating the balance of neoliberal and critical narratives, and the things that they are saying when they talk about learning and success, in different disciplinary contexts, would contribute

to better program design and assessment and would give us another way to understand the roles of success and failure rhetoric in the living and learning experiences of college students.

More work must be done to document and understand the rhetoric of success and failure and its impact on the educational experiences of marginalized students. The capitalistic narrative of education increasing individual opportunities is inspiring to many – I have listened to and used this rhetoric myself when convincing students to come to the tutoring center. The ‘pay to play’ metaphor for the neoliberal educational experience holds much weight – education *is* a costly investment in (hopefully) increased future opportunities, and it *is* both a highly personal and highly collaborative effort. I wish to further the work done to understand this rhetoric in academic support spaces, where peer tutors model a successful version of the learning experience and writing consultants engage in a collaborative effort to provide useful feedback and further the development of writing confidence. Discourse analysis methodology has applications to any educational space where talk happens, and there is a tension between the institutional, the individual, and the collective narratives winding through the conversations that occur. It is crucial to promote the study of the impact that curriculum and instructors have on students’ navigation of these rhetorical complexities. I hope that my work has contributed in a small way to this effort. We must continue to bring different identity development frameworks, researchers, and theorists to bear on this conversation. There is no simple formula to quantify the college student experience. There is no simple portrait to paint of the college student. I believe that we must, as a sector, allow the diffusing effect of heteroglossia to overtake us. Our world is diverse, and its voices are many. Bakhtin

(1981) surmised that mono-narratives increasingly lack the power to unify it, and because of this, institutionalized monologic rhetoric works doubly hard to less effect.

Implications for Policy

I have argued throughout for a break from the institutionalized mono-narratives that unite and unify our experiences in higher education, that solidify a definition of what education is and its purpose, both for the individual and society. Those who misunderstand the role of a theoretical perspective that advocates for breaking down grand societal structures and narratives would argue that the alternative is absolute chaos, that in a post-truth domain, there is nothing fixed or standard or even real. This is a misuse of such a perspective, and, within such an understanding, there is no reason to turn to or elevate postmodernism as a useful perspective. I would like to argue that the theoretical perspective I have used does offer a rational and purposeful way through the break from unifying mono-narratives and the elevation of diverse, minoritized voices that are absolutely necessary to the work of supporting college student access, persistence, and success. It is helpful here to draw a bit on the relationship between postmodernism and higher education policy to understand the implications that my work has for the ways that we must update our understanding of the role of unifying narratives in an increasingly a diverse world and the institutional/policy implications of such an update.

Parsons (2005) argued that the landscape of higher education policy is more diffuse, decentralized, and fuller of competing interests than ever before. Despite a lack of common ground in the new higher education policy landscape, a loosely postmodern perspective offers a lens with which sort through and recognize the variety of narratives and interests, seeing common themes and forming new alliances (Parsons, 2005).

Postmodernism is a lens that must be applied with care – it does not work well as a catch-all or a strict theoretical lens, which is why I have coupled it to Bakhtin and used methodologists such as Wortham (2001) and Barwell (2014) to operationalize the theory in research practice. After all, an adherence to total relativism is not useful to institutional and federal policy in higher education. A postmodern approach is useful, though, to bring to bear research that identifies and understands the ways that students navigate labels, the ways that they talk about themselves, the experiences, tools, and resources that they value on the ways that we reshape institutional, state and federal policy, and the way that we talk about students differently in these spaces.

Block (2014) operationalized this approach in a discussion of navigating institutional change from the role of a department chair. Block (2014) advocated for institutional leaders to engage in policy work shaped by the Multiple Streams Framework [MSF] that acknowledges and tolerates the ambiguity of a rapidly changing environment with many interests competing for limited resources while leveraging timing to enact change when it is most opportune to enact it. The ability to do this, and the theoretical frameworks that make it possible to understand how are grounded in the same perspective that shaped my work. In a landscape that is rife with discourse (both written and spoken), the methodological considerations I have employed here are much applicable to policy.

In a job talk earlier this year, I was explaining my research to a group of students who seemed very interested in the ways that institutions talk to students on academic probation and how institutions define academic probation. I talked about how students in both the academic probation intervention courses I taught and that which I observed often

positioned themselves as expert students working through difficult or challenging times and how they felt alienated by a system that labeled them as in academic difficulty and put them in a separate category from the rest of the general population but did not necessarily offer them much additional support.

“Do you think these things can change, or that your research will help change these things?” one of the students asked. I answered that I hope to shift the conversation around probation on campuses. In the current conversation, practitioners and scholars often operate from a more deficits-oriented perspective. I hope that my work influences a move towards a more inclusive, strengths-oriented perspective. I answered that I do not know how possible it is to change institutional policy around probation and suspension. This research has implications for both changing policy and communicating it, especially in understanding the ways that communicating academic probation policy information affects students’ persistence and attrition outcomes and their campus engagement. To change institutional policy around academic probation and suspension is challenging, as it involves a top-down revision of policies around admission and readmission, course attempt limits, and applying something equally and objectively across the institution. Perhaps it is not possible or necessary to change institutional policies in this way. It must be helpful to understand the difference between the performative institution and the person-centered institution and adjust institutional communication strategies to fit the goals that the institution has identified (Fielding, 2006). In a person-centered institution, such functional processes associated with academic probation would serve a higher purpose of connecting students to resources, empowering students to succeed and placing students in contexts meant to support the development of resilience, self-growth, and

motivation (Fielding, 2006). If anything, shifting the policies that label students, that passively issue rhetorical statements without instigating any support structures is necessary. Policies that move us toward Fielding's (2006) person-centered institution are the type that I advocate for, where functional, institutional processes services and supports the person, without seeking to purposelessly label them, alienating them by categorization.

Epilogue

As I write this, I have spent over a year observing, recording, thinking about, reading, transcribing, and making meaning of the students' narratives in this study. It has been more than two years since I conceived of and titled this research project and wrote the initial drafts of Chapters One and Two. I have moved more slowly through this process than others, and not as slow as some, partially because also in the last two years I became a mother and caregiver, and partially because I have never been the fastest writer in the world or the ablest to avoid procrastinating in the summer sunshine. At the point where I am at, I hope for this to be good enough. I hope to turn a new page where this work builds, and I go into more depth and to a finer level of linguistic analysis as I grow professionally and personally and am finally, finally able to put the letters Ph.D. after my name.

Many of these students are gone from MU; they are finished with college, or they dropped out or transferred. I do not know what has happened to most of them, although JP probably knows because she has stated several times to me that the students in this class in the spring of 2018 were a special group and have kept in touch with her in a variety of ways. I believe her, and I feel privileged to have observed this class. What the

students in the class said goes beyond each of their individual stories, each of their insights, positioning statements, and identity work. I do not pretend to have created work here that is generalizable in the statistical sense; I did, after all, observe only twelve people talking about a variety of highly personal things for eight weeks and then analyze it based on the worldview of a somewhat obscure Russian literary and social critic. I have also not created work that gives any definitive answers about what happens to the rhetorical direction of students' in-class speech when responding to a curriculum prompt.

I must be honest and say that I initially tried to make this section more 'scholarly' – dry, impersonal – and I was spinning my wheels, stalled, staring down the barrel of a deadline that I was afraid I could not meet and did not end up meeting anyway, because life intervened in the way that it often unexpectedly has, and I moved two states away to take a job. But, at the end of this past summer, I went to the beach, and it was sunny and beautiful, and my son ran as fast as he could across the sand, legs a-blur, sun hat falling around his shoulders on its strings. The day trip had the effect I had hoped it would have – it drew me out of my head and into the world. I realized that I could only, at this point, write this in the narrative style I had been doing because my story is intertwined with the stories in this study. I am not separate from this work, even though I was a silent observer in the corner of the classroom, my voice only appears a few times across the recordings, and I am no longer teaching in the program in which I conducted this research. I have grown through this: I have to share this story and cap off my doctoral journey, and I am in the driver's seat to make meaning of this talk. It is my responsibility to do that authentically and respectfully and understand the frame I bring to the analysis.

Throughout my decades of experience in the education system, as a student and later as an educator, I have grappled with the notion of being successful, of being validated, and measuring my accomplishments. There was a long period where I measured this externally, against a barometer of good grades and high levels of academic achievement. An A was acceptable; anything else was a failure. I did not have a sense of success as measured on a spectrum or expressed in diverse ways. I hung the measure of my self-worth on a grade-based standard. Looking back on my teenage and young adult years, I see so much of the same all or nothing attitude that students in the APIC negotiated. Either it was all success or all failure. There was no learning in failure. There was no sense in being vulnerable and asking for help because these were qualities inherent in failing. There was the hard work that paid off in success or the unchangeable personal qualities that resulted in failure. None of this changed for me until I became a parent. I was thirty-three when I gave birth to my son and suddenly was bowled over by the responsibility of giving life, the anxiety and total desire to protect above all, the pressure to breastfeed and the failure to do so, in the midst of trying to keep making academic progress by the same standards to which I had always held myself. It was a downward spiral of my mental health, fueled by sleep deprivation and unmet expectations. I was utterly alone in my sense of failure (although I was and am lucky to have an equal and supportive parenting partner): No one else in my life saw me as a failure – parenting a newborn is really a series of choices you make, based on the information you have at the time, the values you hold, and the best balance of right for you and right for your child. And a lot of blind, sleep-deprived choices made on what you hope are the right instincts.

Looking back over the last years, with a bit more sleep and perspective, my son gave me a great gift. I am still new to parenting. I make choices that, at their best, are a balance of what is right for my son and for me, for my family and our life. I fail in small ways all the time, whether it is to promise something on which I cannot deliver, or it is getting angry at something and not keeping myself composed. I have to recover from that, or else, what would be the point of living? Failure is not paralysis. Vulnerability is not weakness. The internal struggles for perfection that I experienced in my schooling seem small and needless. The paralysis I sometimes experienced which, I understand now was a fear of failure manifesting as procrastination, where I stayed up all night not working on an assignment, is not a part of my life anymore because I support a developing human and have to carry on with that task at all times of day and night. My work, my life, has a direction now, a purpose, in a way that I struggled with in the past. I have found fulfillment in my own work, direction in my career and aspirations in ways that I could not have before. I am not saying that my life prior to becoming a parent was not meaningful or fulfilling, but that now, as a parent, I have become okay with being good enough, with getting by, with picking myself up and trying again. I want more than anything to build trust with my son. It is a continuous work that goes through each day and accumulates when he leaps into my arms or calls for me when he has had a nightmare. So, sometimes I fail. I pick myself up, I smile, and I move forward. The gift my son has given me is that before becoming his mother, I could never see the simplicity of this: Sometimes, I fail. I pick myself up. I move forward.

In planning this study, I said that the things the students might say in the class were unpredictable, and the themes that arose from class discussions would be likely

unknowable until I got to analyzing the data I had collected. In some senses, this was true. Contextually, every group of people is unique. The things that they say on any given day are constructed out of a sense of time, place, mood, and a variety of social and identity-based influences. In fact, across the two sections observed and recorded for the study, the tone and topic of conversations varied greatly, despite coming in the same week of the term (one or two days apart), and despite being in response to the same prompts and instructor set-ups. At the same time, students in the classes relayed similar reactions and sentiments to those in the sections I taught in the years before I moved from teacher to researcher in the context of the APIC. This sense of same and different has informed and imbued how I analyzed the data here, depicted it in the diagrammed student responses, and the meaning I have made of this study as I pause at this point in my scholarly development to put these words to paper and publish the thing that we call a dissertation, although it will likely be carved into small parts and remade as something else, and hopefully, ultimately contribute to a book.

What I have come to understand is that this is as much my story as it is the story of the students in the spring of 2018. My journey as a parent is the same path along which I tread as a scholar. I recently learned about the use of autoethnographies in educational research, as systematic narratives that track the researcher's relationship and development concerning the research subject, as a mechanism for understanding the culture that the researcher and the research seek to understand (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010). I did not previously associate this concept, process, or product with educational research, and I do not believe that I set out here to write an autoethnography, nor do I believe that this work is autoethnography in the technical sense. I like the idea, though, that the researcher's

point of view informs the understanding of the culture in which the research is situated. The meaning I have made of the classroom talk presented here is much colored by the last three years of my life, my journey into parenthood, and my self-separation from the idea of success and failure as a binary. As an educator, I have continually sought to better understand my students, better talk to them, and more consistently be inclusive in my language as well as my practices. The ideas presented here are themes derived from the analysis, not in the sense of coded themes, but in the sense of points of consideration that arose upon diagramming and making meaning of student responses. I have come to view this work as aimed at teachers and curriculum designers, with the primary goal of shaping classroom conversations. Secondly, it is aimed at advisors, coaches, counselors, and other university administrators who work directly with students in academic distress. The further-reaching implications of the work deal with shaping institutional communication and educational policies, as they deal with students on academic probation and with, more broadly, student persistence and attainment.

In viewing this study (and the students in it) at the intersection of neoliberal and critical pedagogy rhetoric, one must ask the question of whether it is at times useful to encourage students to revoice normative strategies and the normative, perhaps neoliberal, institutional rhetoric. A complicating factor to consider is that normative does not always equate to neoliberal, and there are some neoliberal tendencies (such as prioritizing the individual over the collective), that can be empowering for students who have consistently had their identity or experience invalidated by their interactions with institutional rhetoric. In this analysis, a strong sense of the complexity of both academic probations students' experiences in higher education institutions and the complexity of

identifying the ‘most helpful’ rhetorical direction to use when communicating with students in academic distress emerged. Despite the strong support in the literature for the effectiveness of course-based interventions in increasing academic probation student persistence (Humphrey, 2006; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Renzulli, 2015), the findings from this study would suggest that students’ experience of being on probation and on navigating their academic and personal lives while in school are far more complex than the (sometimes) boilerplate classroom prompts and activities offered in the academic skill development curriculum at MU. In the data, the students resisted the normative notion of being a failure. They did this by providing a boilerplate answer to a question (thus, answering by rote) or by adding in a reference that positioned them as a savvy student. They brought their own varied experiences to bear on the curriculum prompts, thus elevating their experiences to the same status as institutional rhetoric. They took ownership of their journey, and they positioned themselves as successful at doing so. At the same time, they positioned themselves as savvy participants in a neoliberal system, using the opportunities presented to personalize their intake of the curriculum, to tailor their learning to their individual experiences and preferences. It is my belief that students will continue to do this, given the presence of a supportive instructor and some opportunities for directed self-reflection. It is also my belief that institutions (and their stakeholders) have responsibilities to provide better, more aspirational, assets-based, inclusive rhetorical frameworks for talking to students about success and failure.

We educators must model for our students what it means to fail and succeed and fail again in many small ways that lessen the impact of failure and provide fewer chances for one big failure to be the end of everything. We also must change the way we talk

about it. We must raise critical consciousness and seek critical pedagogy moments in our work. We must find the moments of the highest tension and reframe them as the moments of greatest balance. Is it easier to rewrite a system of practices than it is to change the way people talk about something? Is it too much to ask of institutions, of researchers, policymakers, teachers, students, to sit in the companionable human silence that follows a conversation, feeling the humanness of each other, together, in pursuit of a common good (achieved, perchance, through individual means)? When all the talk is done, we may, indeed, sit in silence because something has indelibly shifted between us.

Illustrations

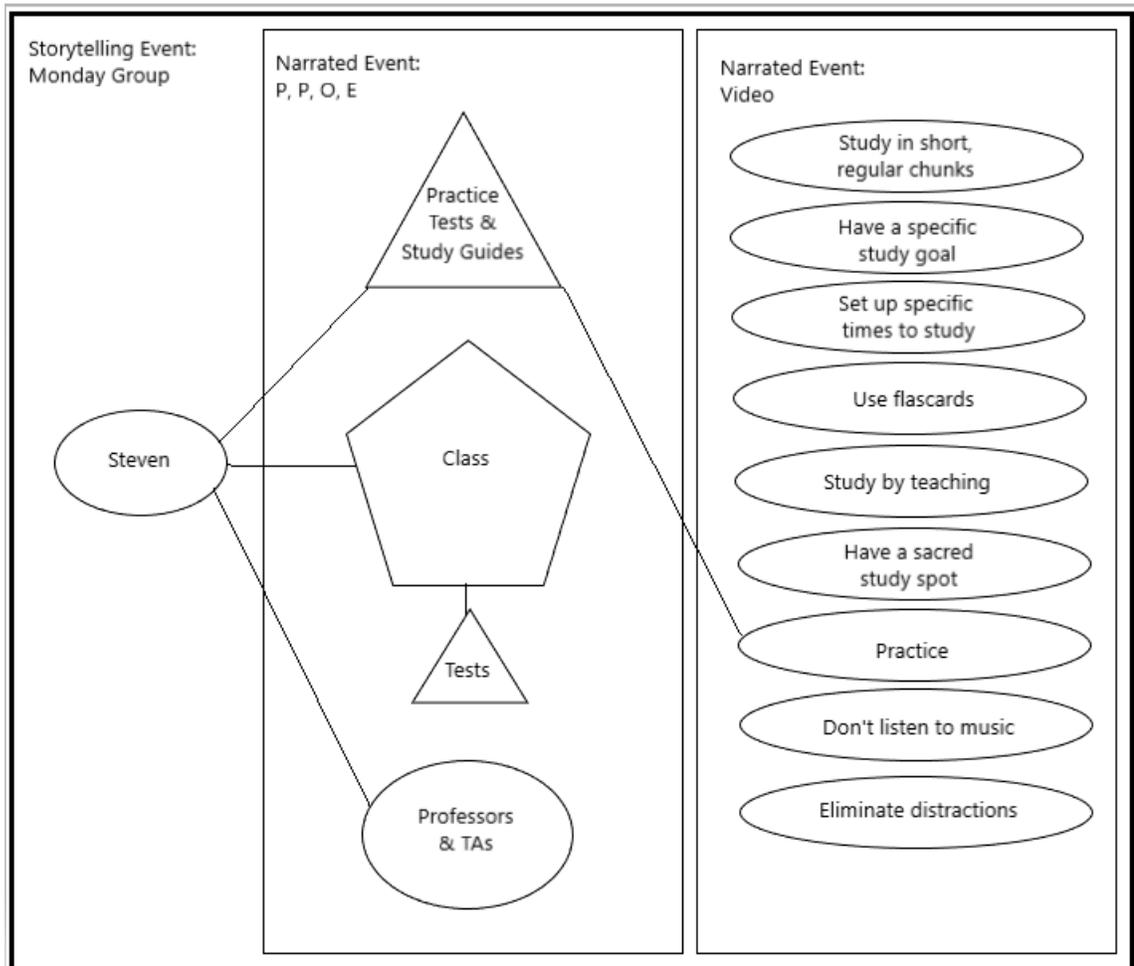


Figure 28: Steven's Response Diagram

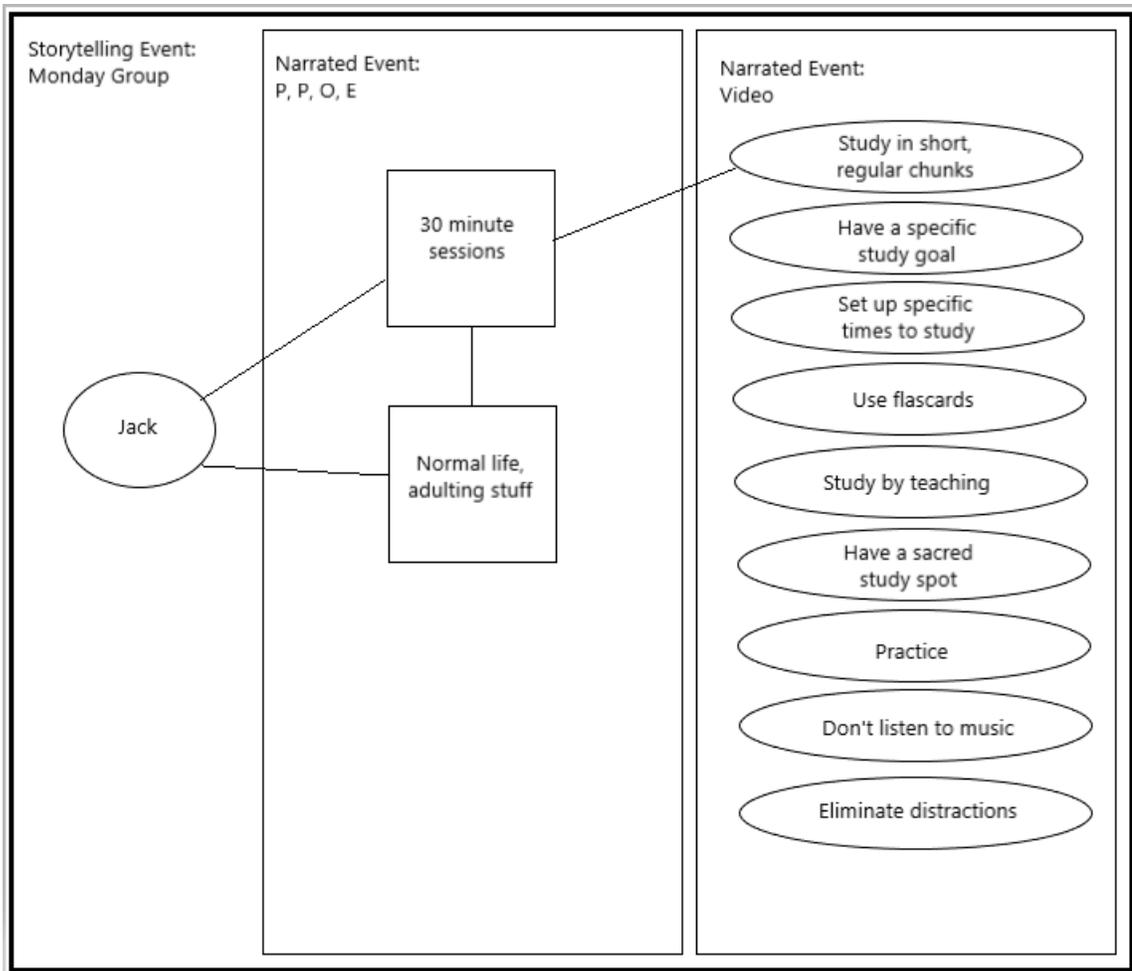


Figure 29: Jack's Response Diagram

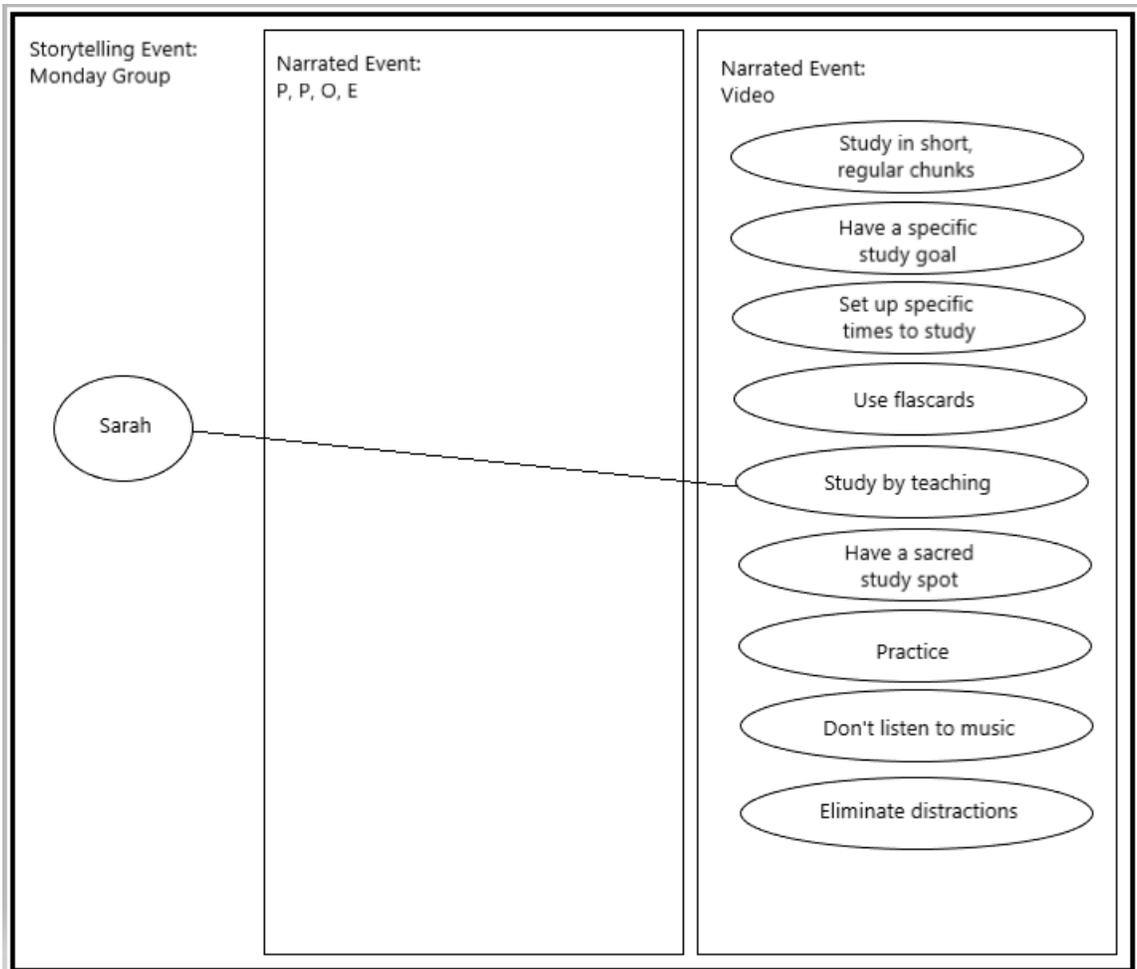


Figure 30: Sarah's Response Diagram

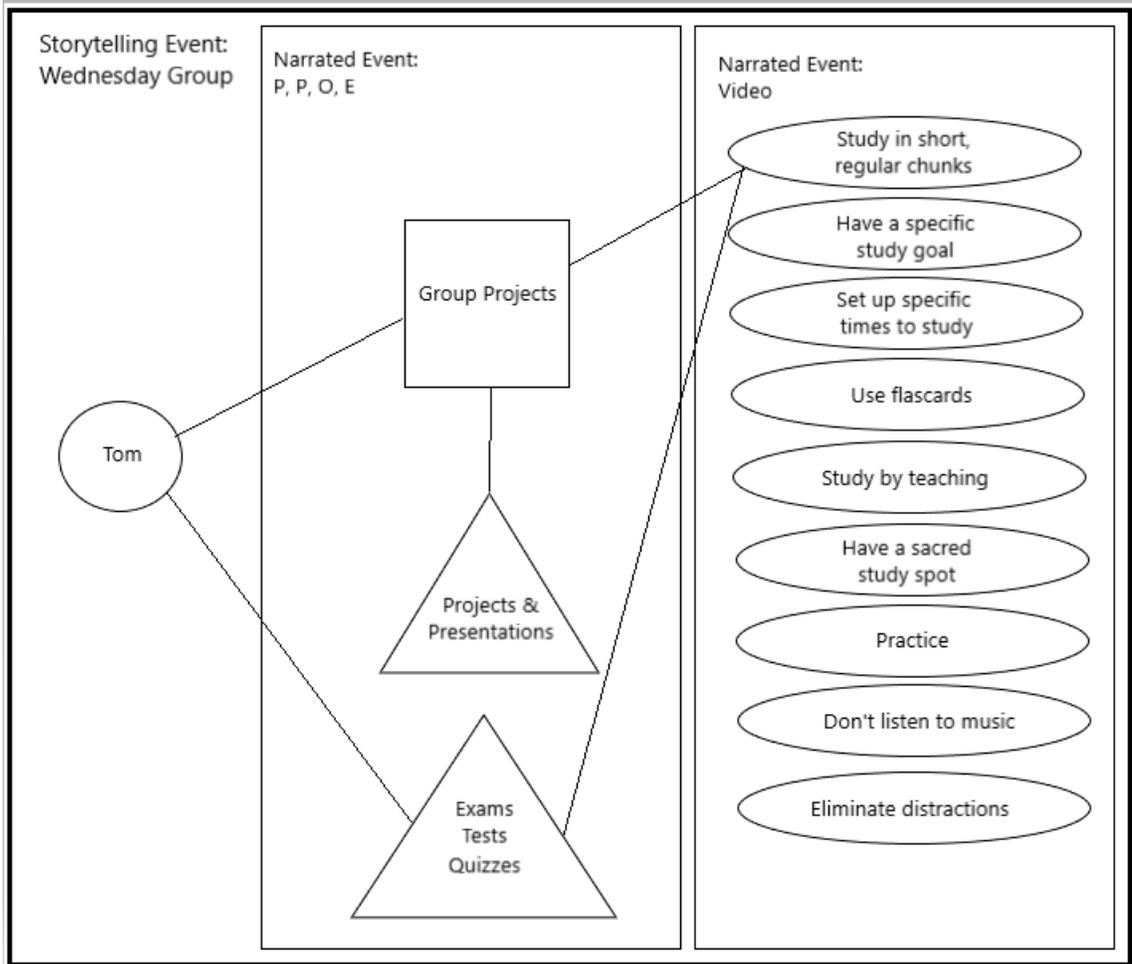


Figure 31: Tom's Response Diagram

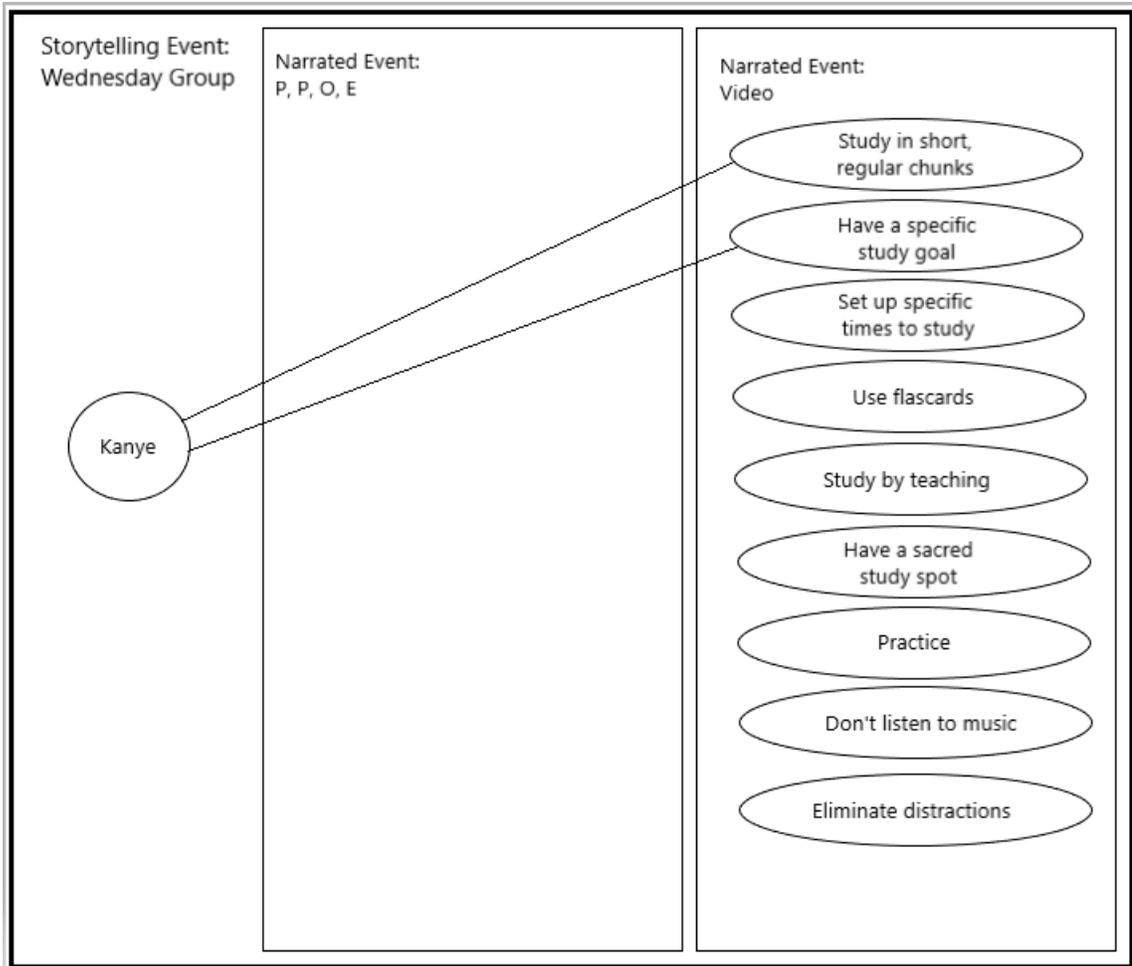


Figure 32: Kanye's Response Diagram

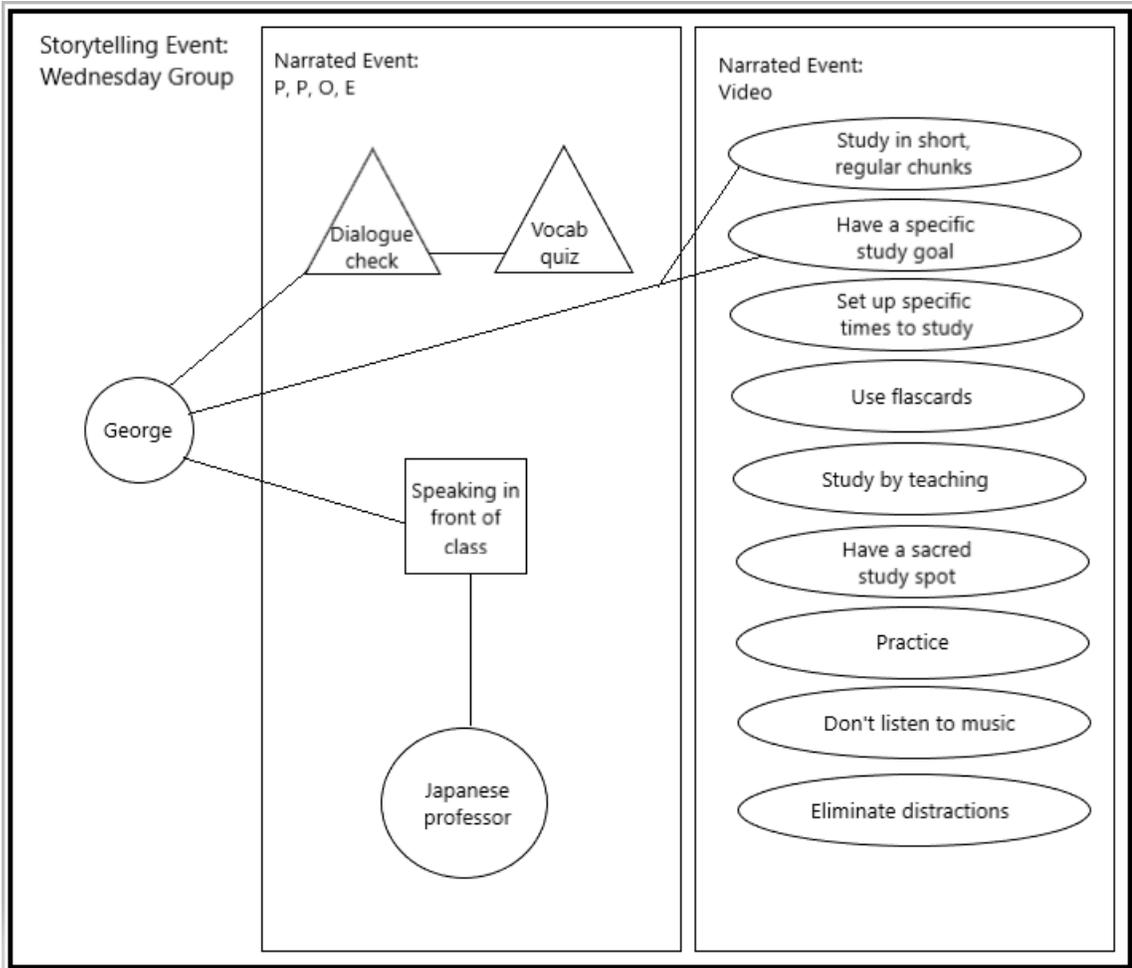


Figure 33: George's Response Diagram

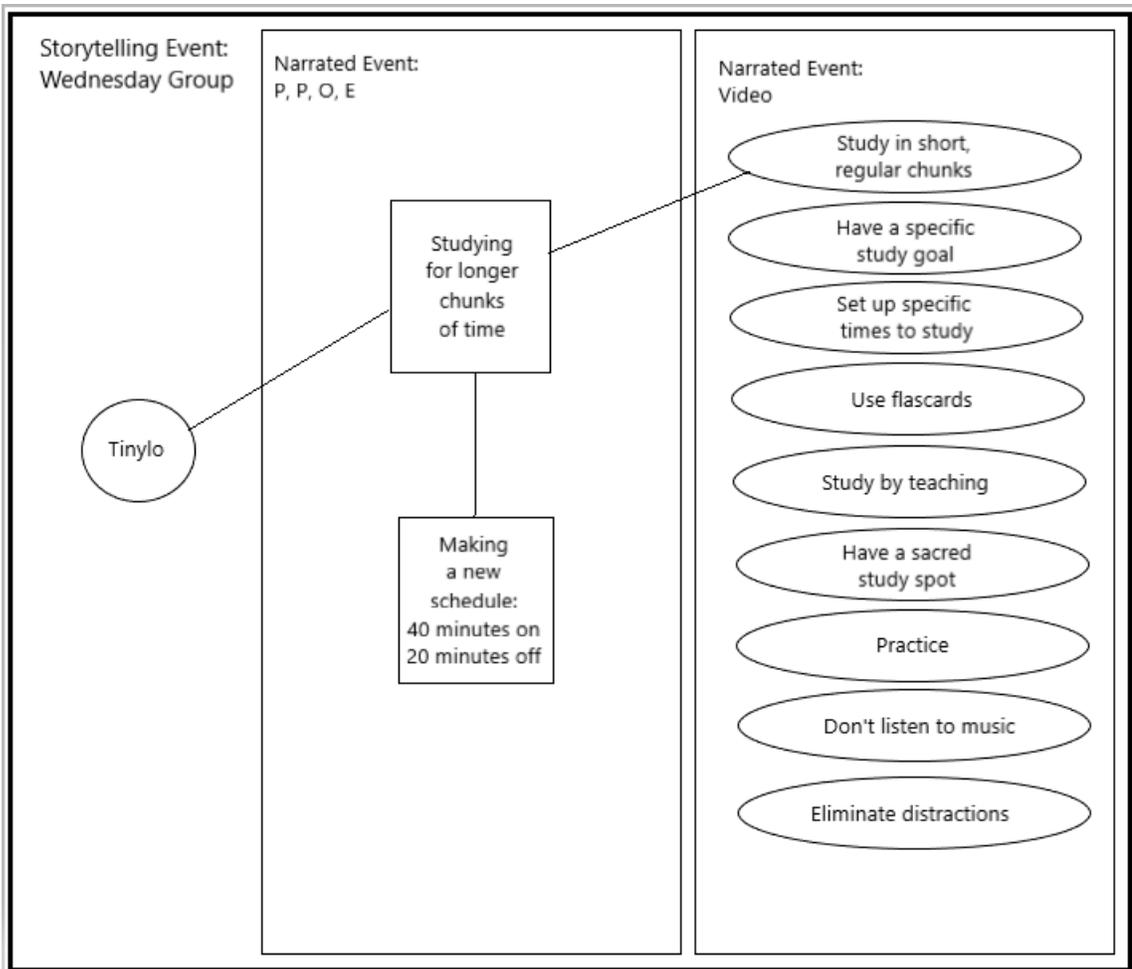


Figure 34: Tinylo's Response Diagram

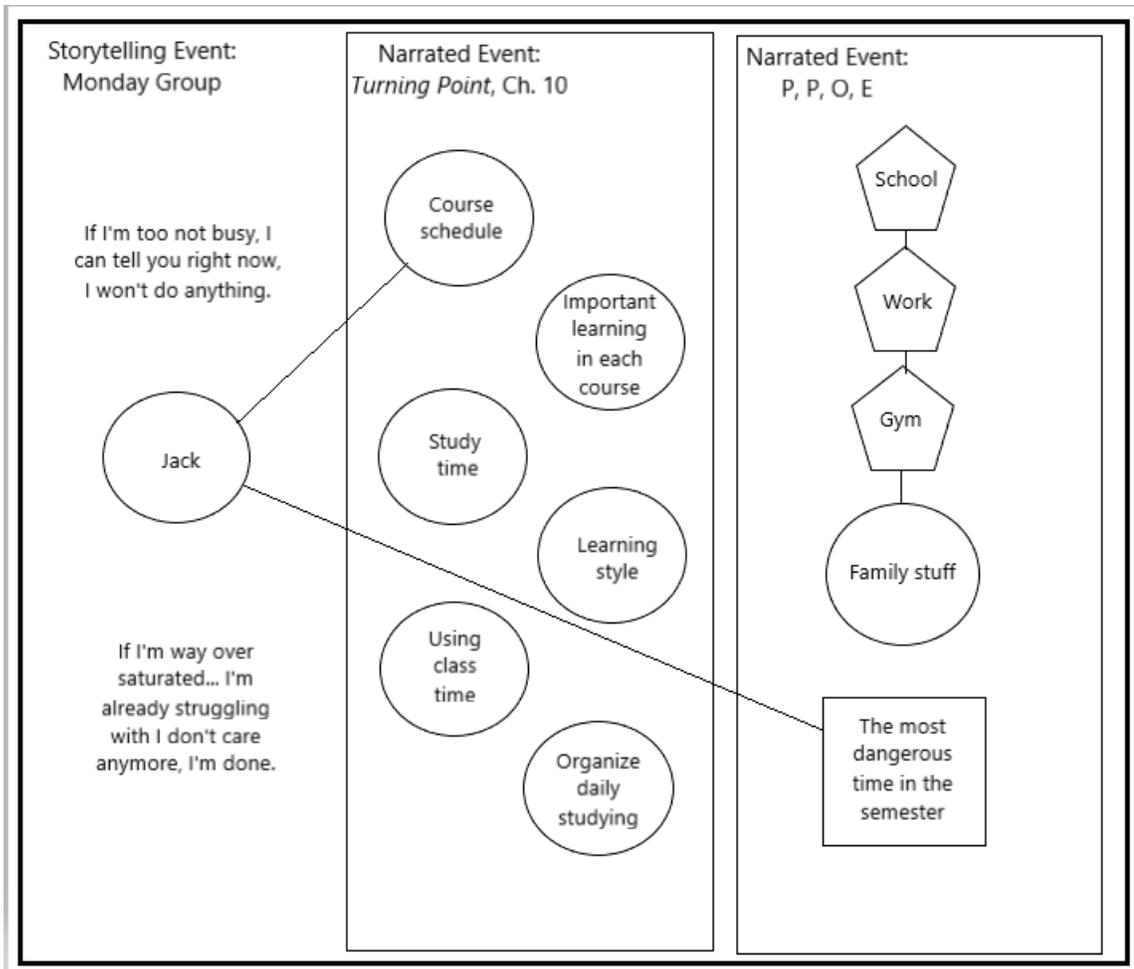


Figure 35: Jack's Response Diagram

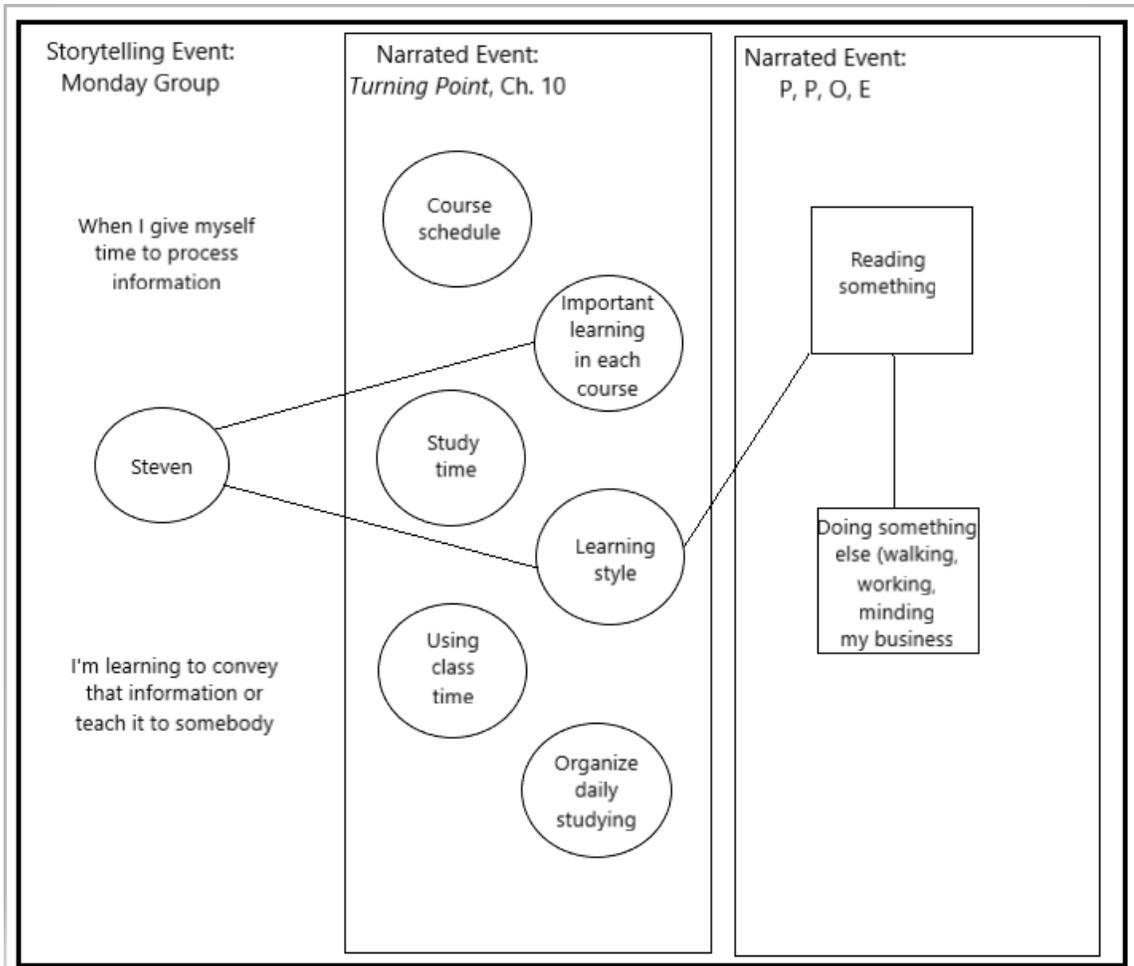


Figure 36: Steven's Response Diagram

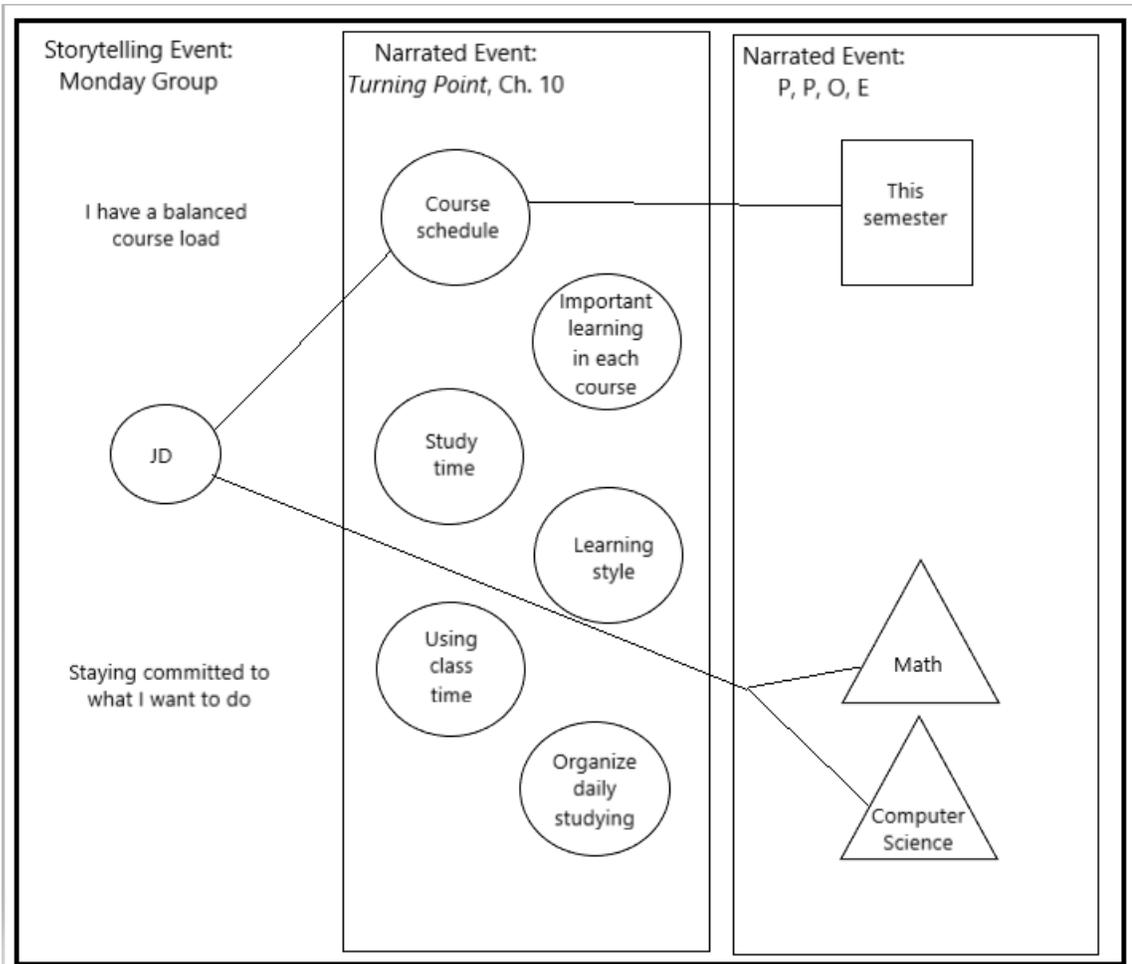


Figure 37: JD's Response Diagram

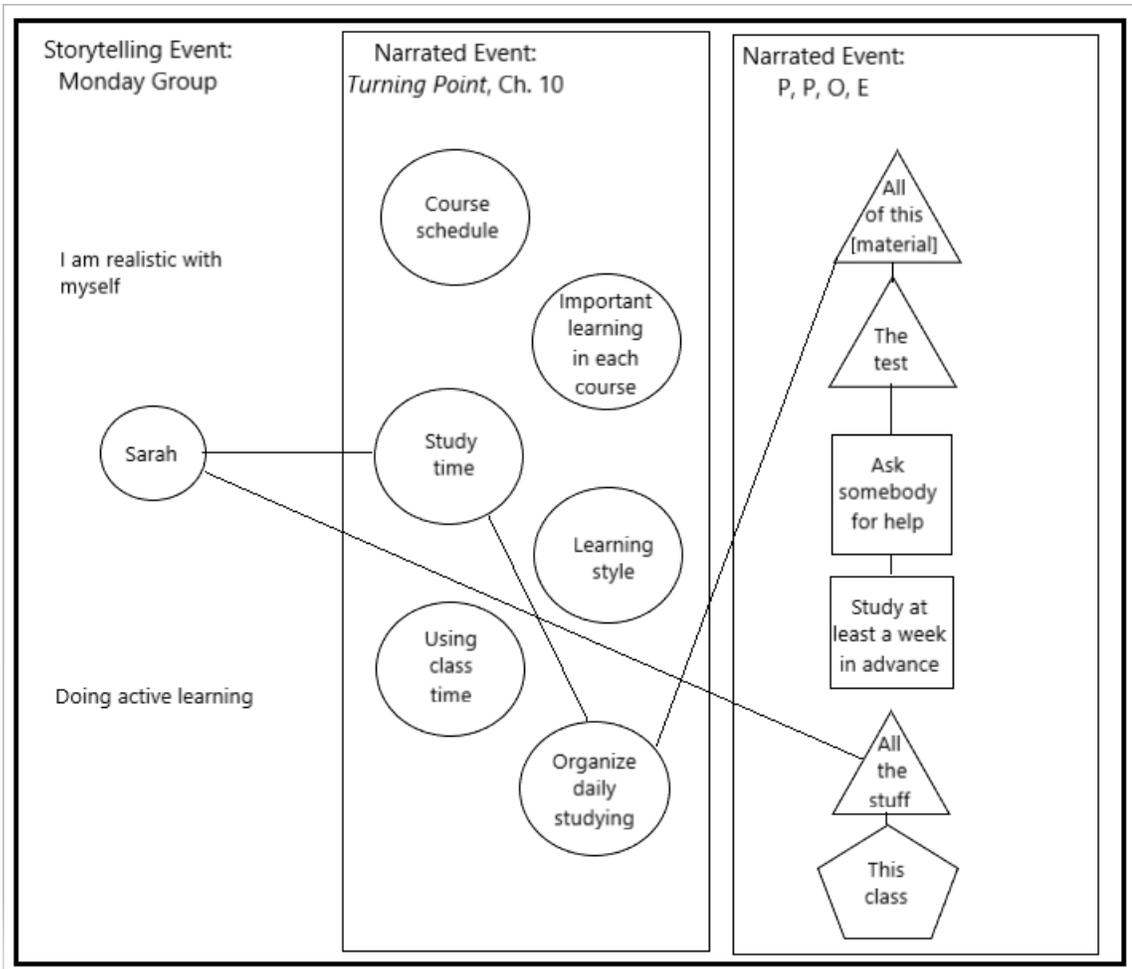


Figure 38: Sarah's Response Diagram

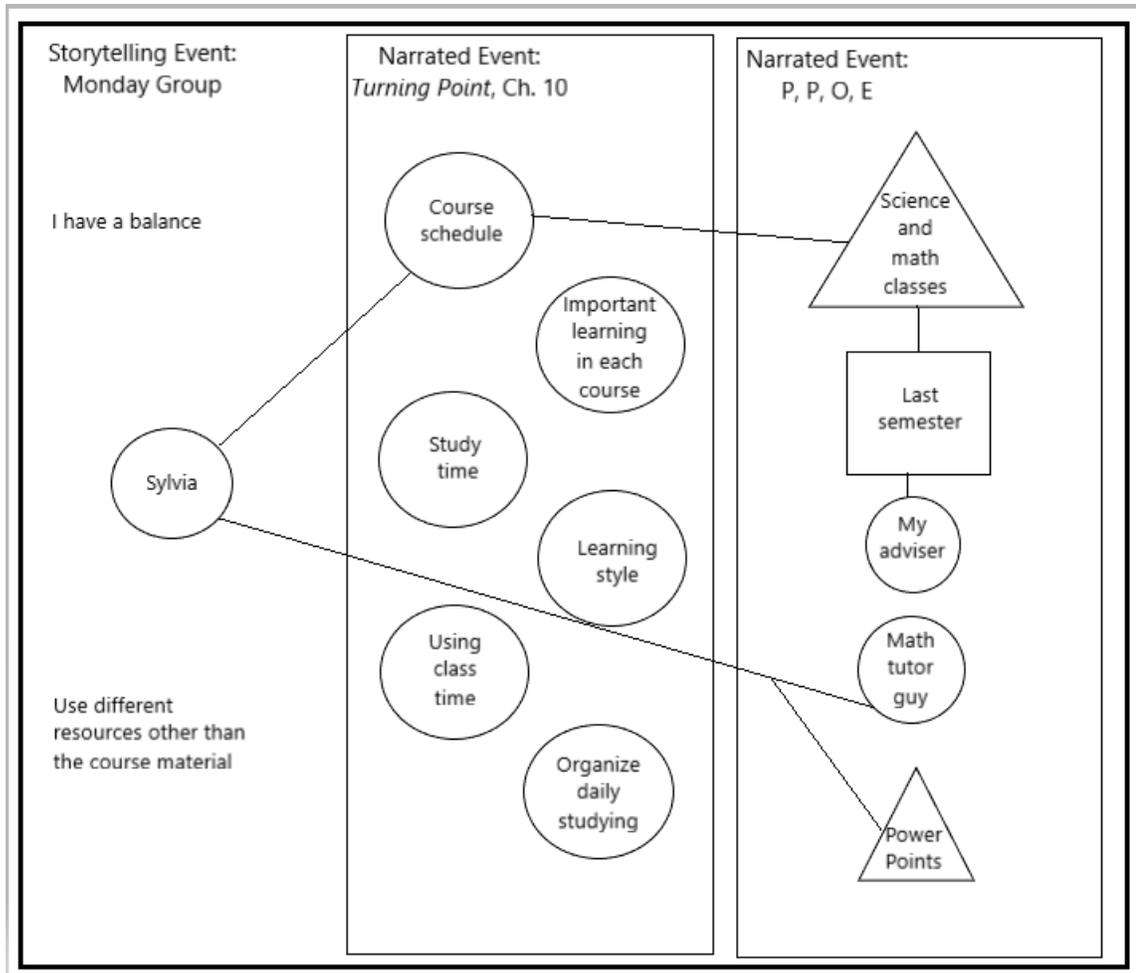


Figure 39: Sylvia's Response Diagram

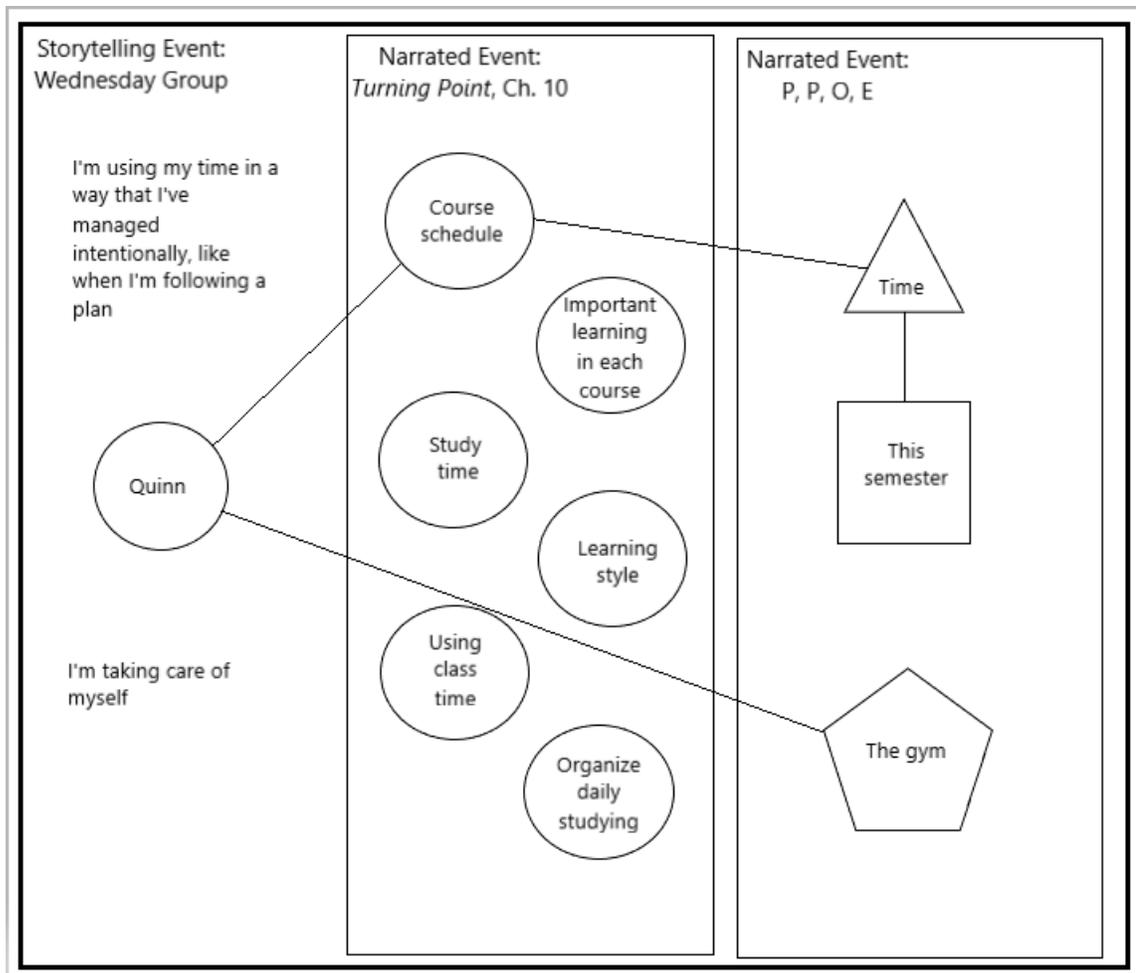


Figure 40: Quinn's Response Diagram

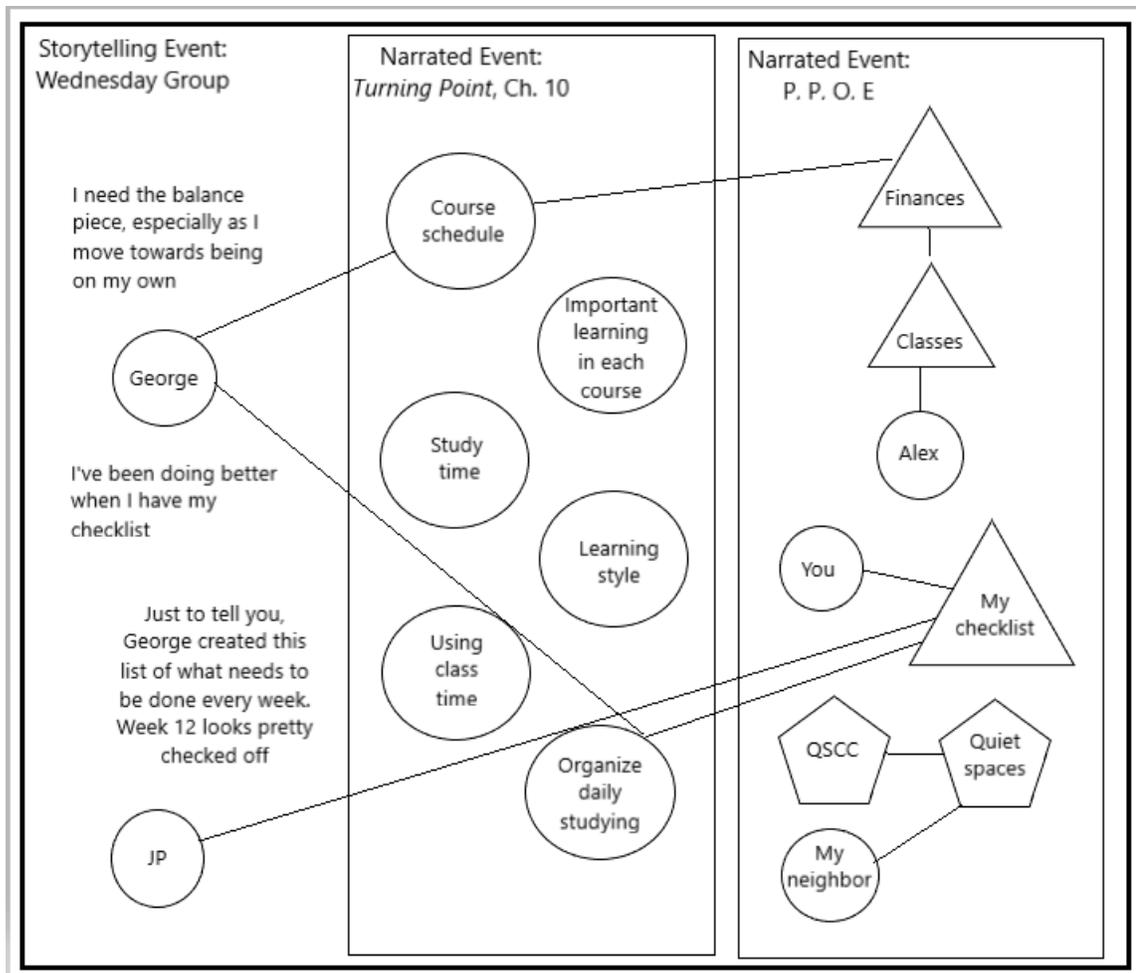


Figure 41: George's Response Diagram

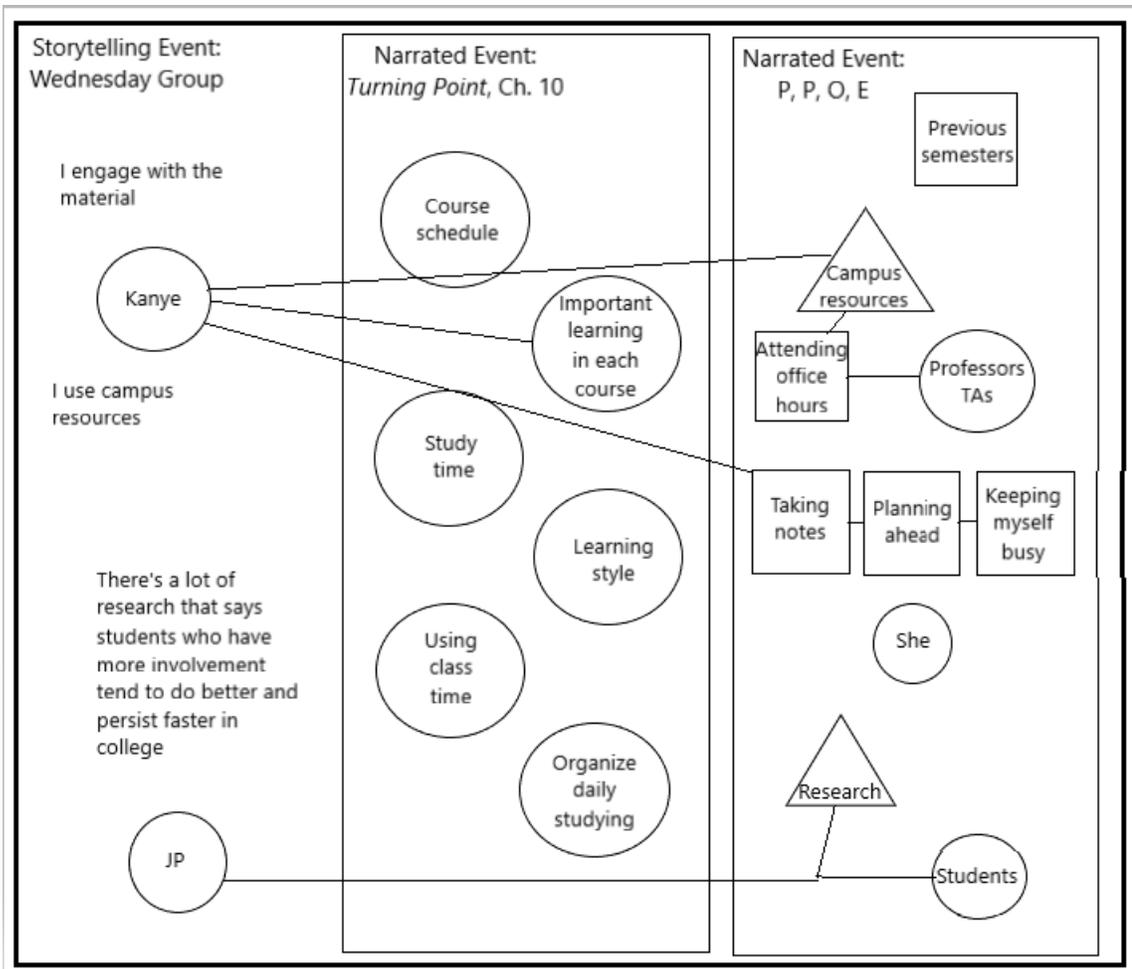


Figure 42: Kanye's Response Diagram

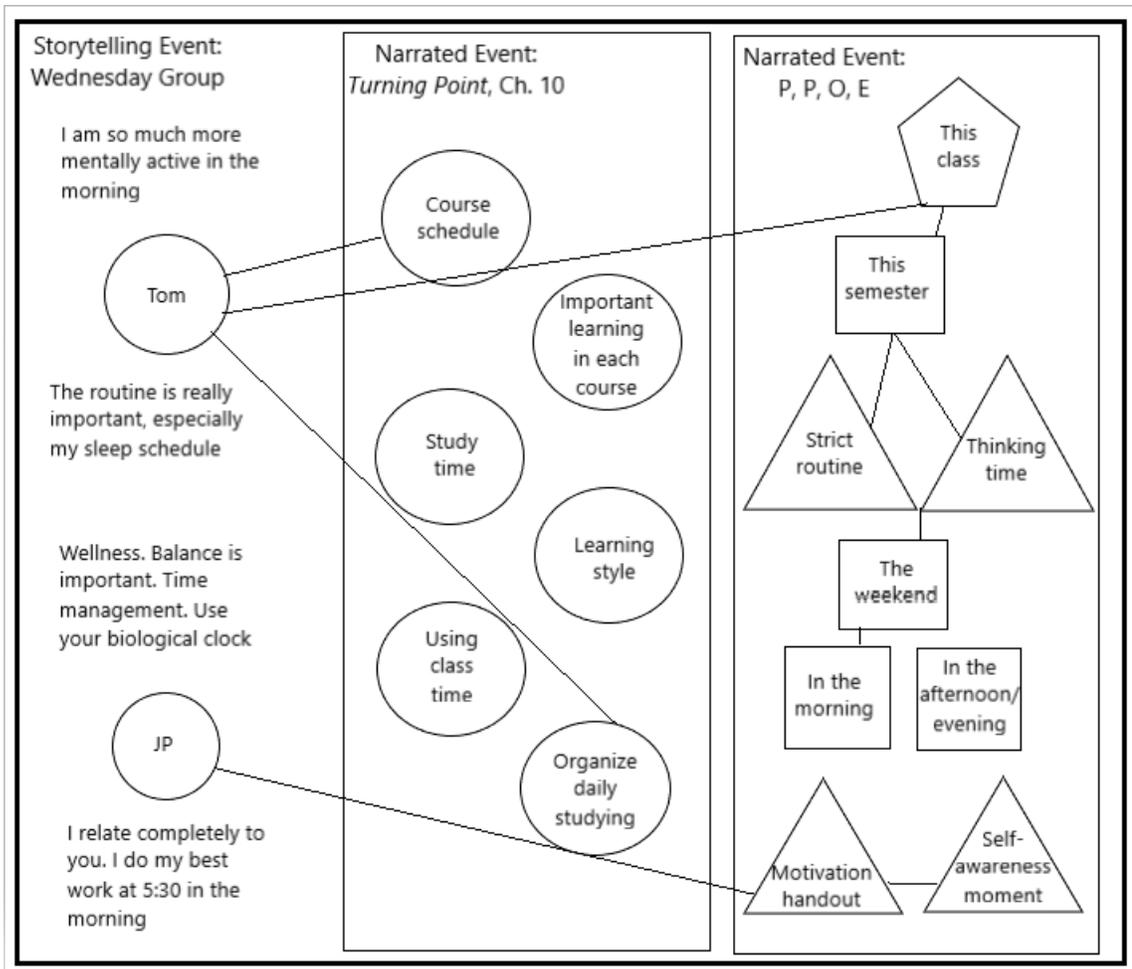


Figure 43: Tom's Response Diagram

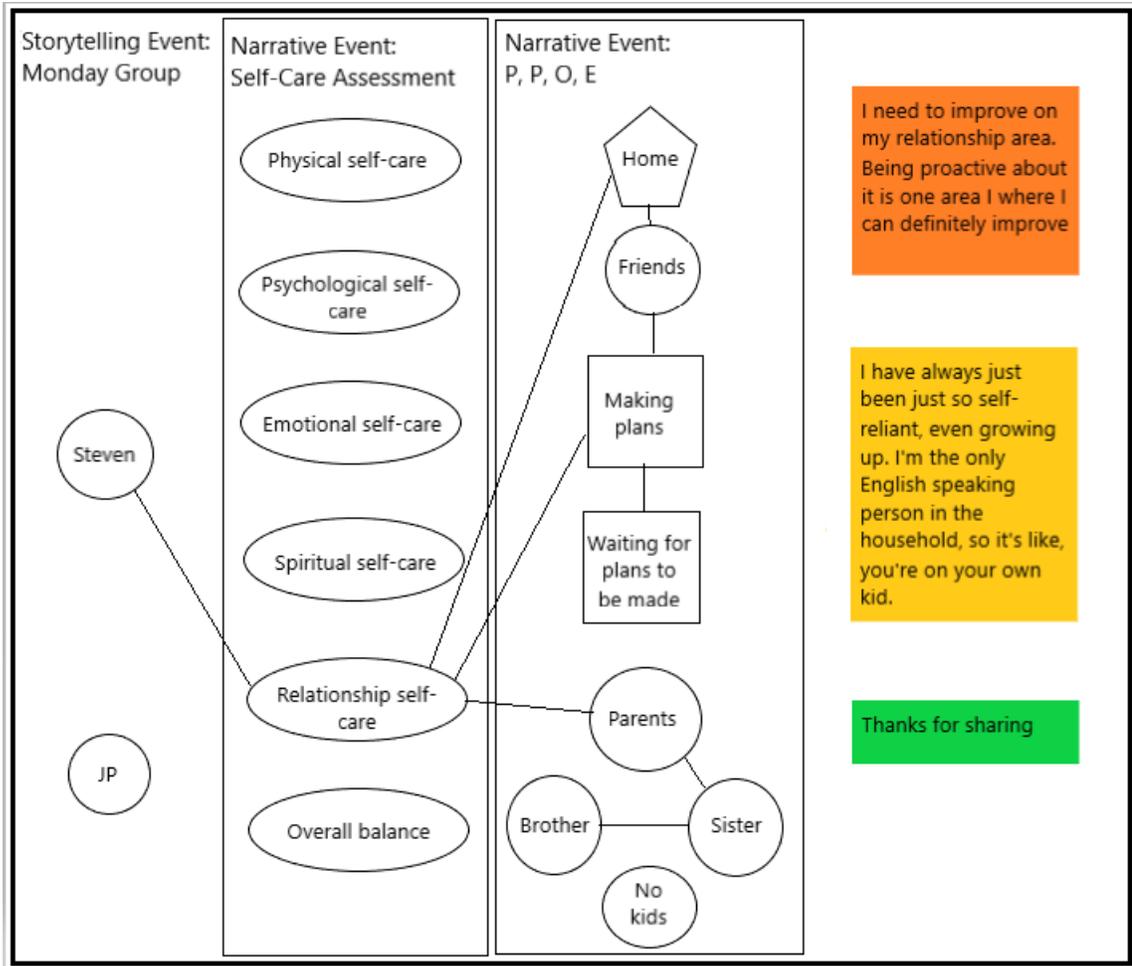


Figure 44: Steven's Response Diagram

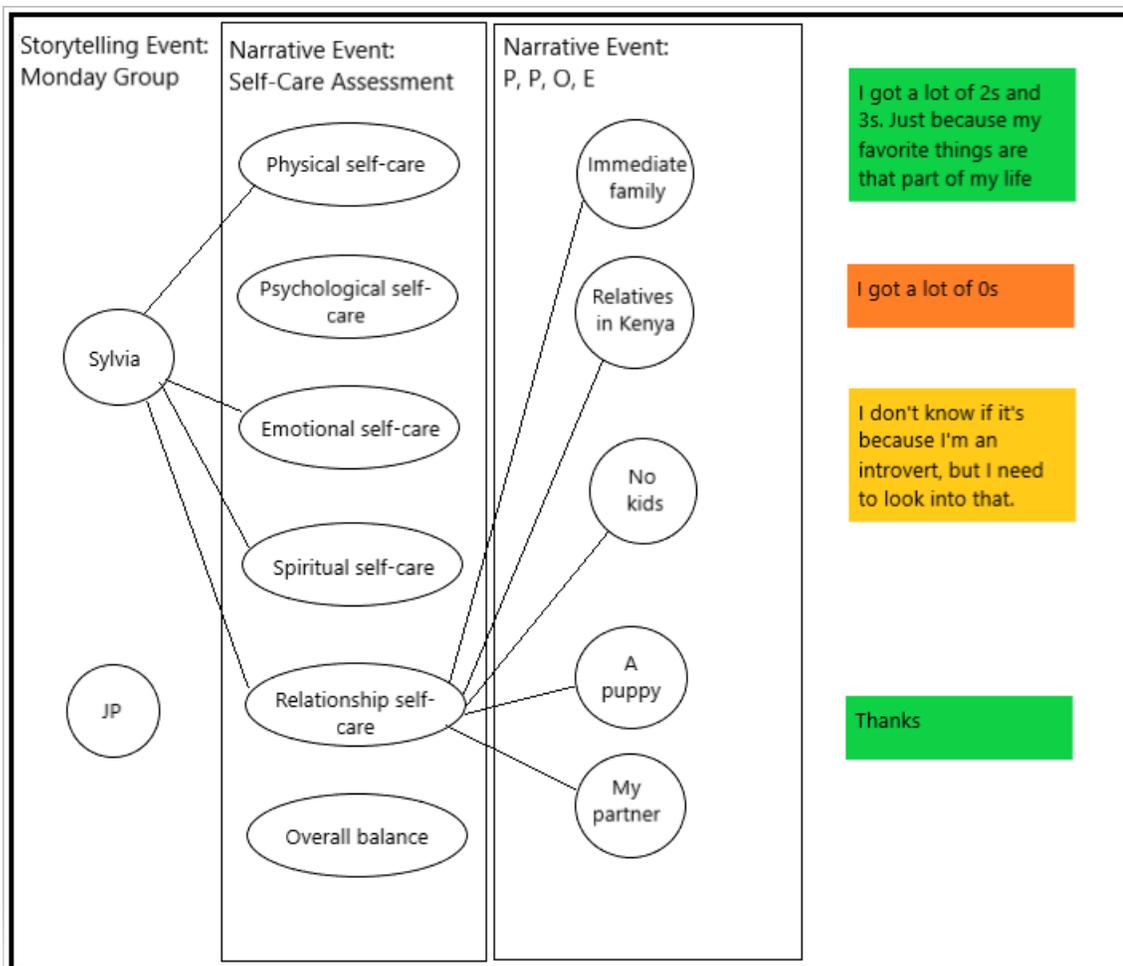


Figure 45: Sylvia's Response Diagram

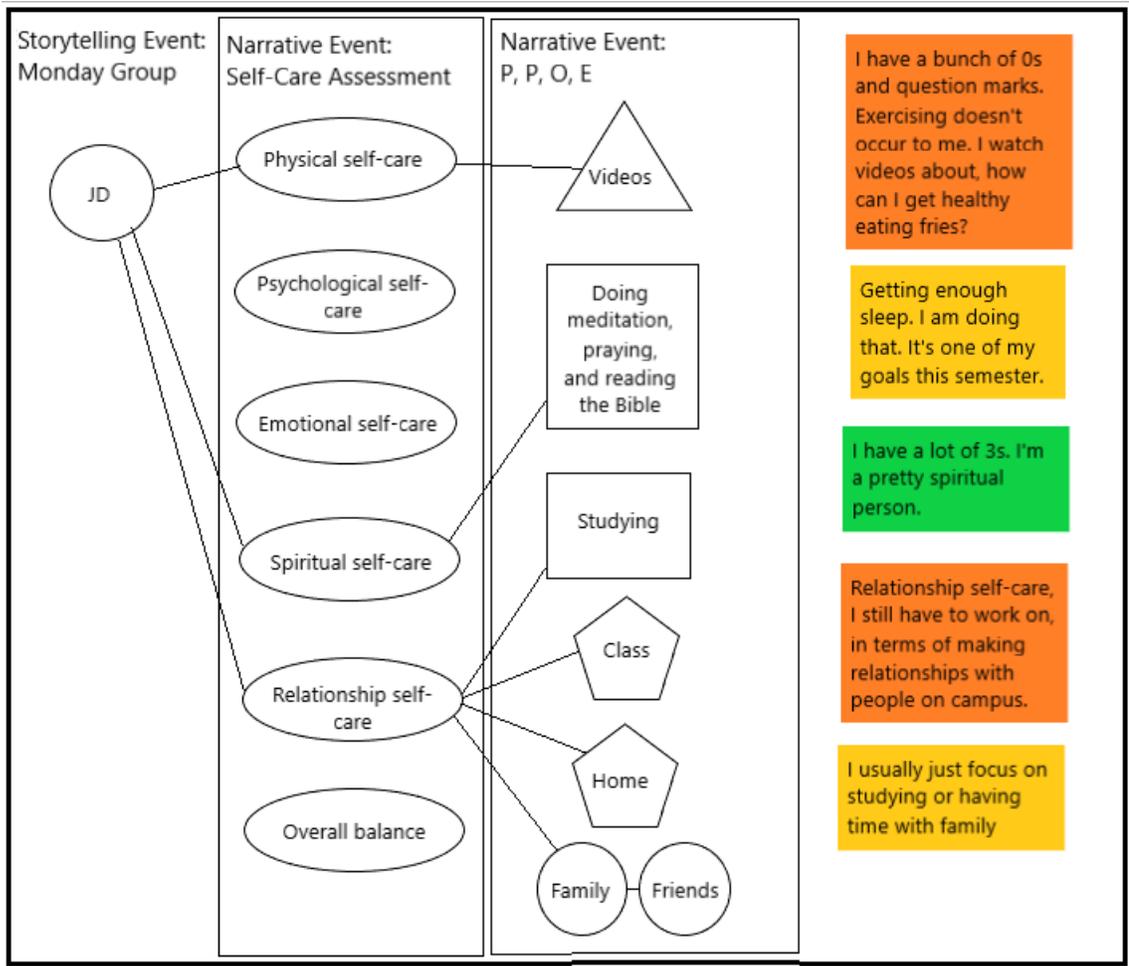


Figure 46: JD's Response Diagram

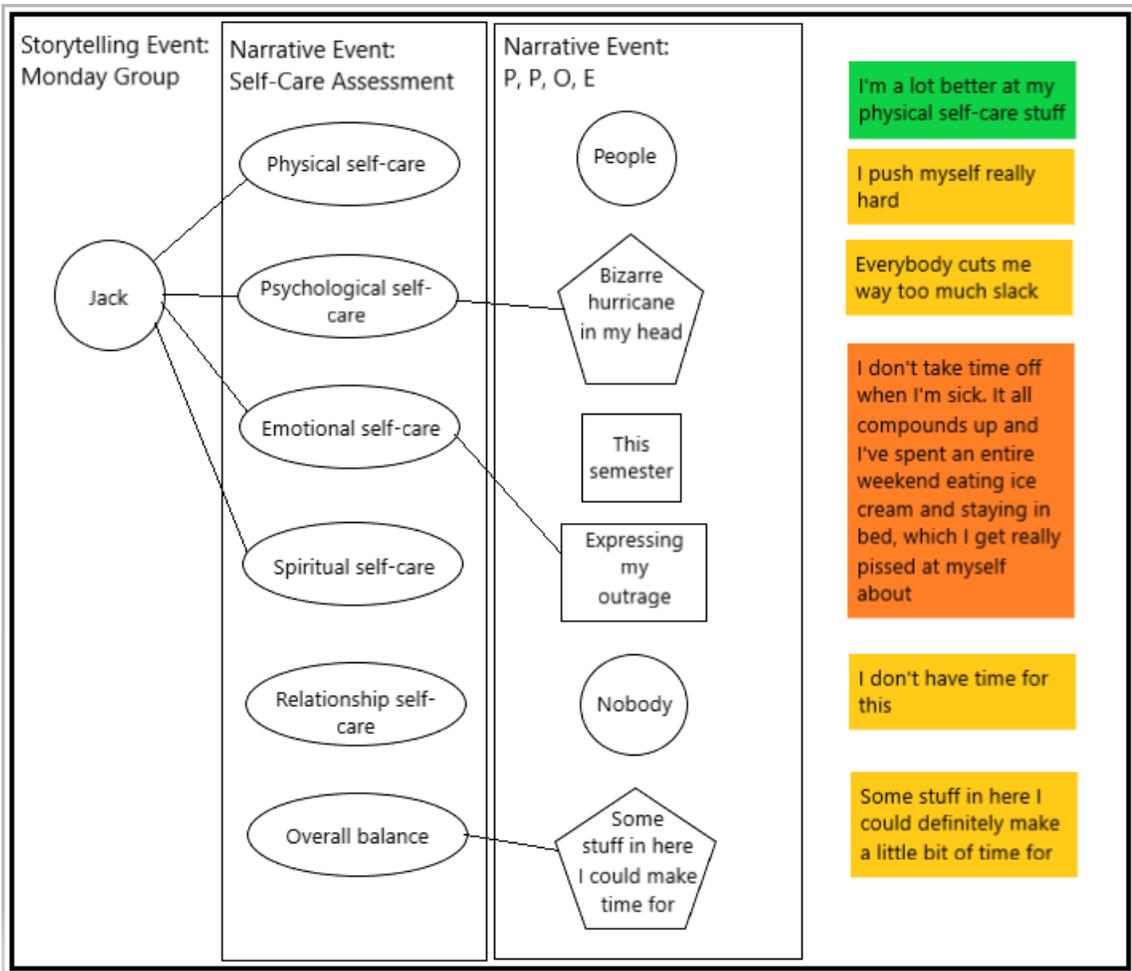


Figure 47: Jack's Response Diagram

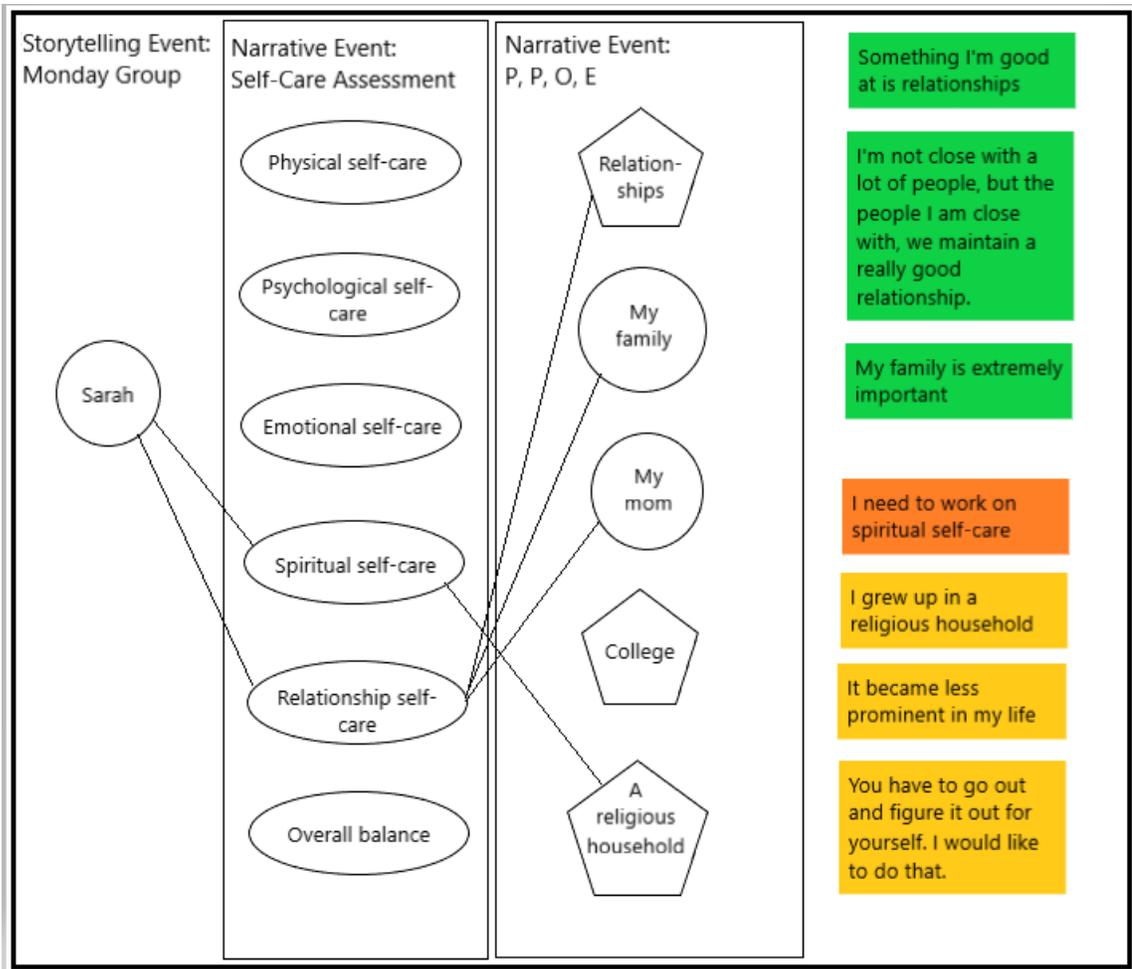


Figure 48: Sarah's Response Diagram

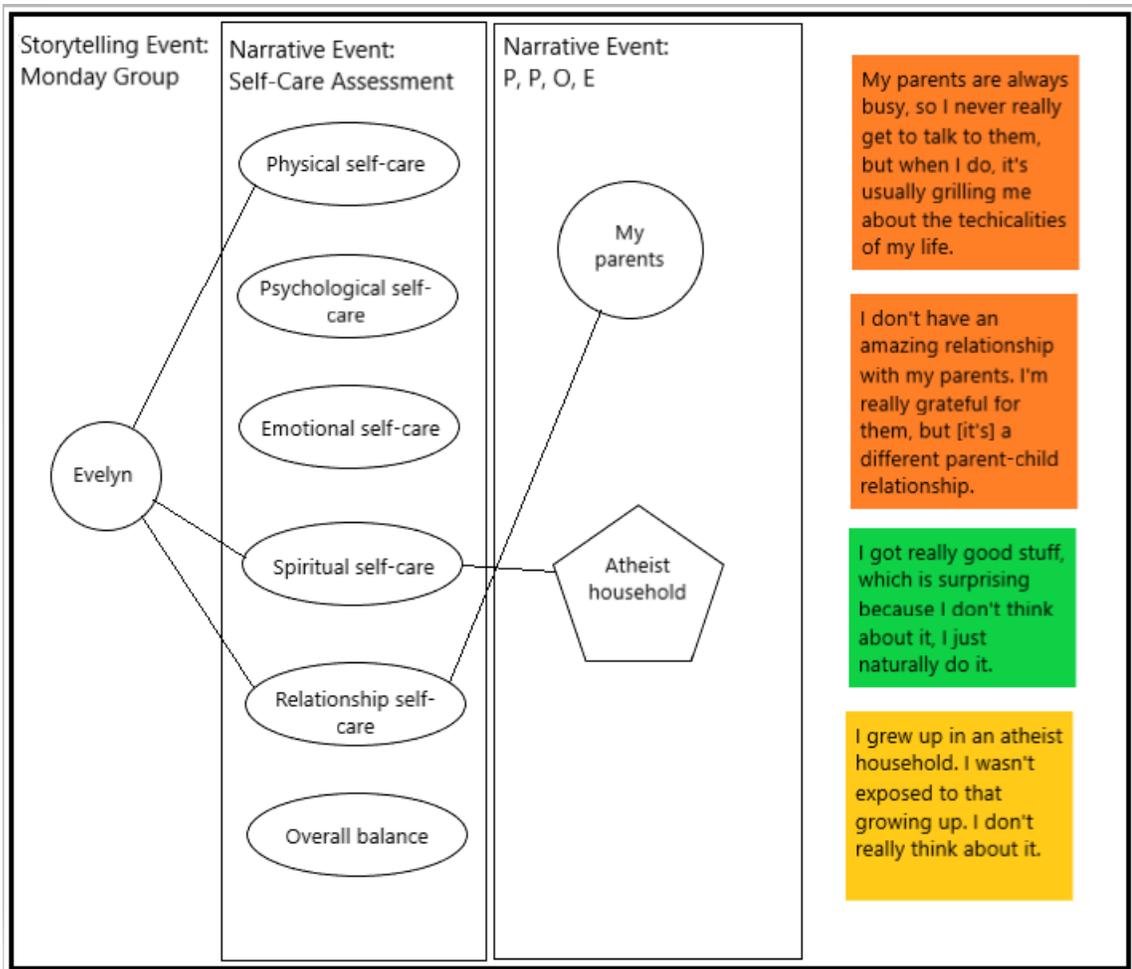


Figure 49: Evelyn's Response Diagram

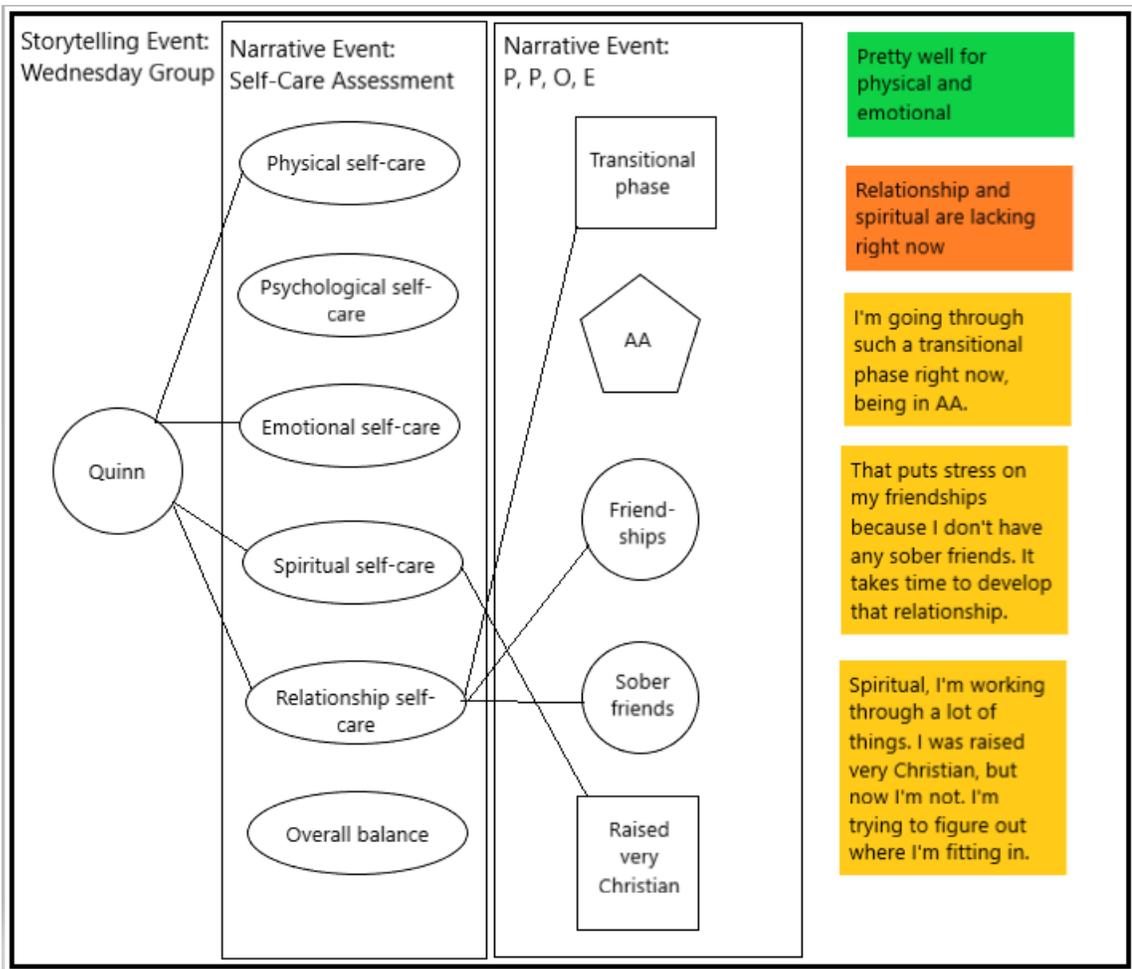


Figure 50: Quinn's Response Diagram

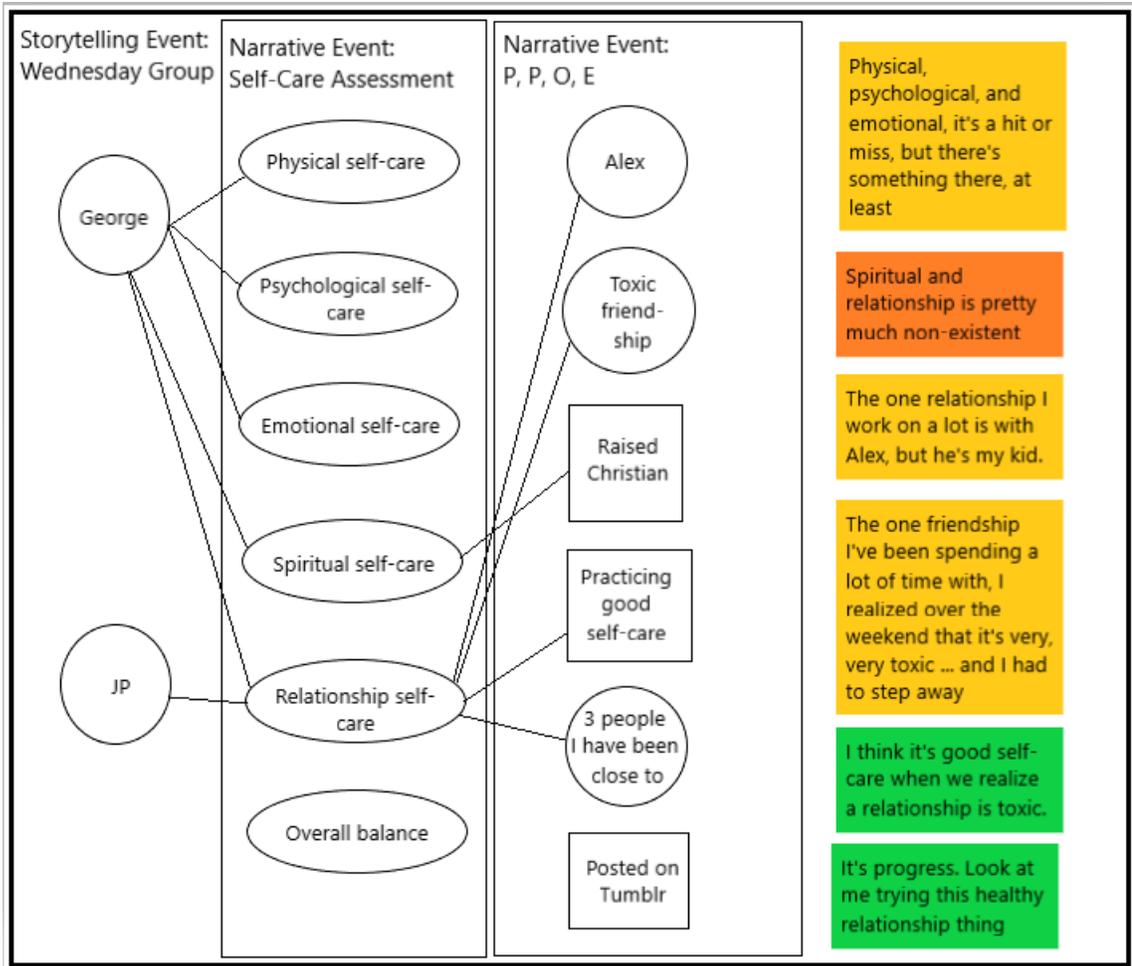


Figure 51: George's Response Diagram

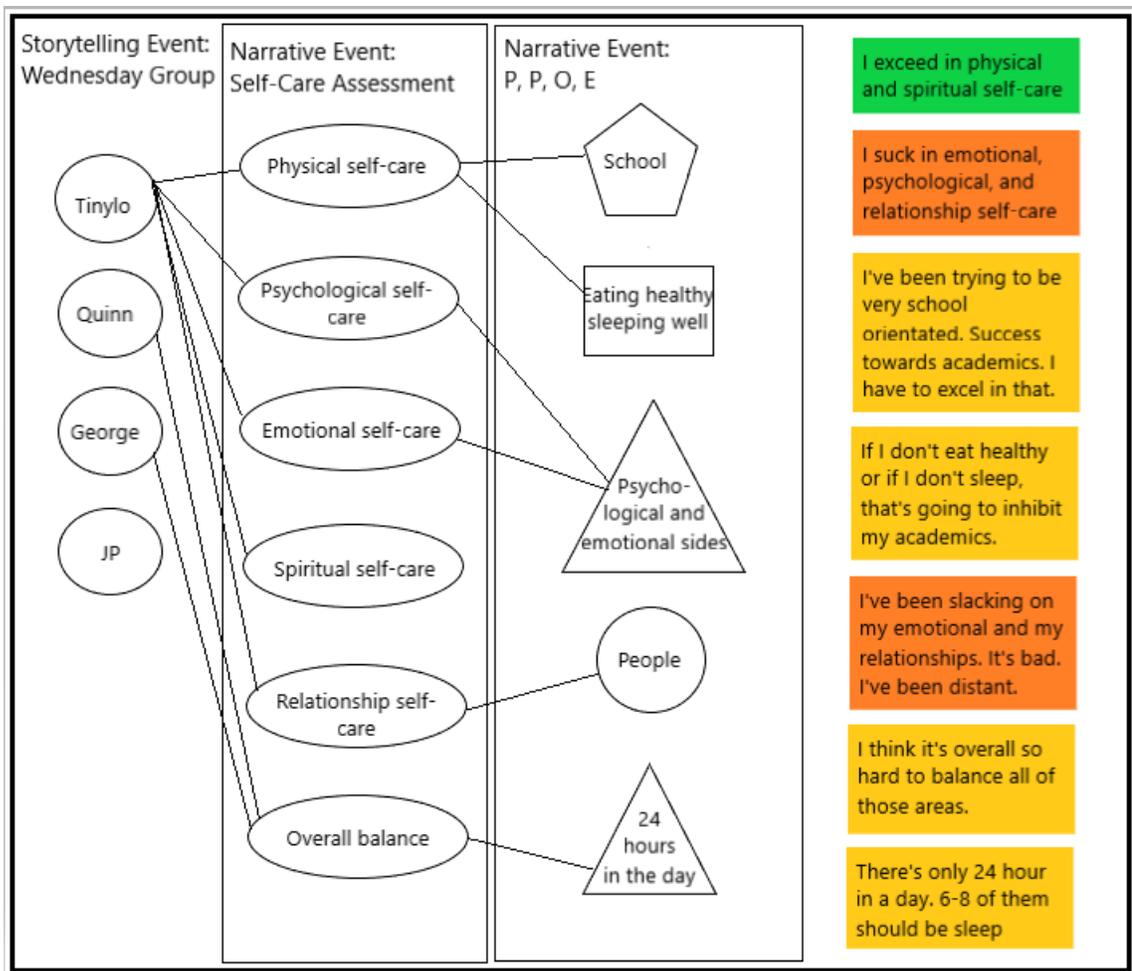


Figure 52: Tinylo's Response Diagram

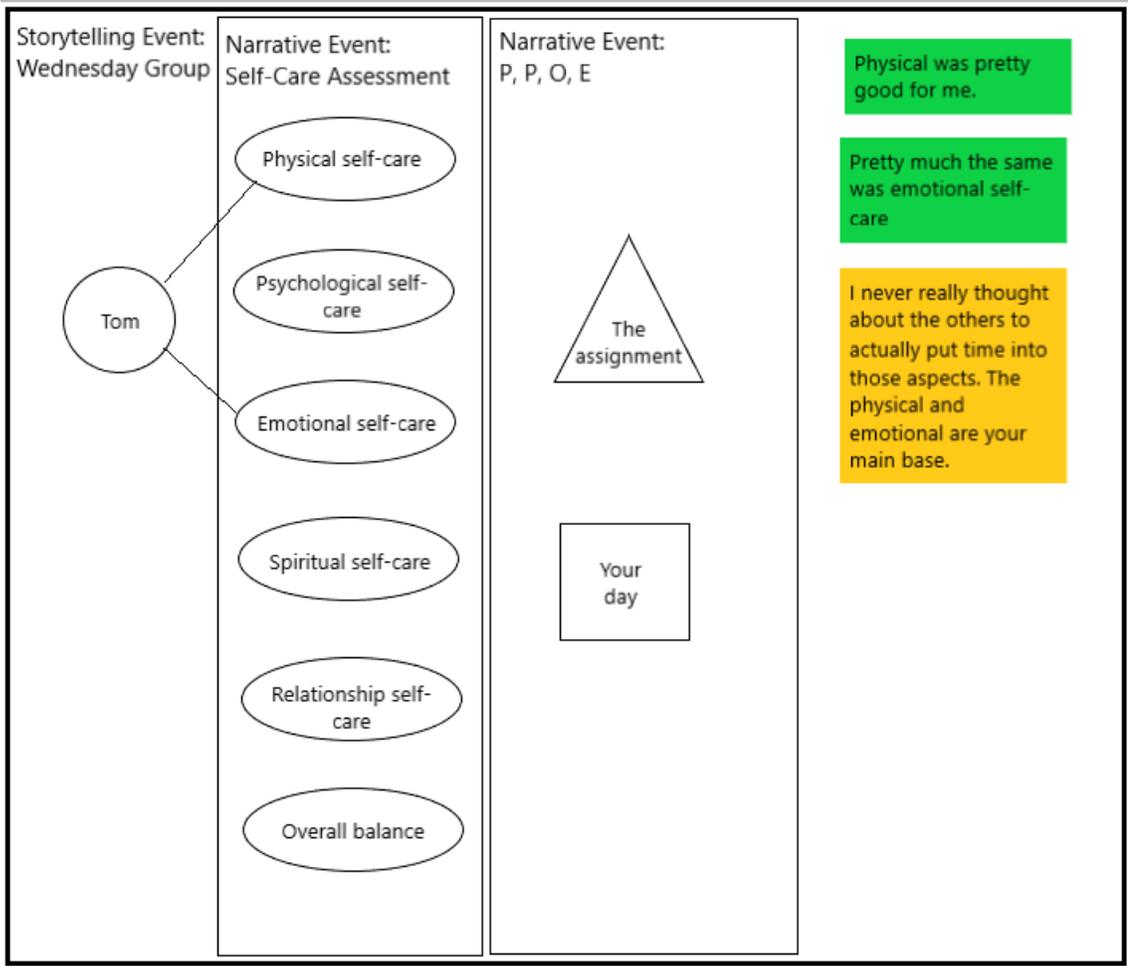


Figure 53: Tom's Response Diagram

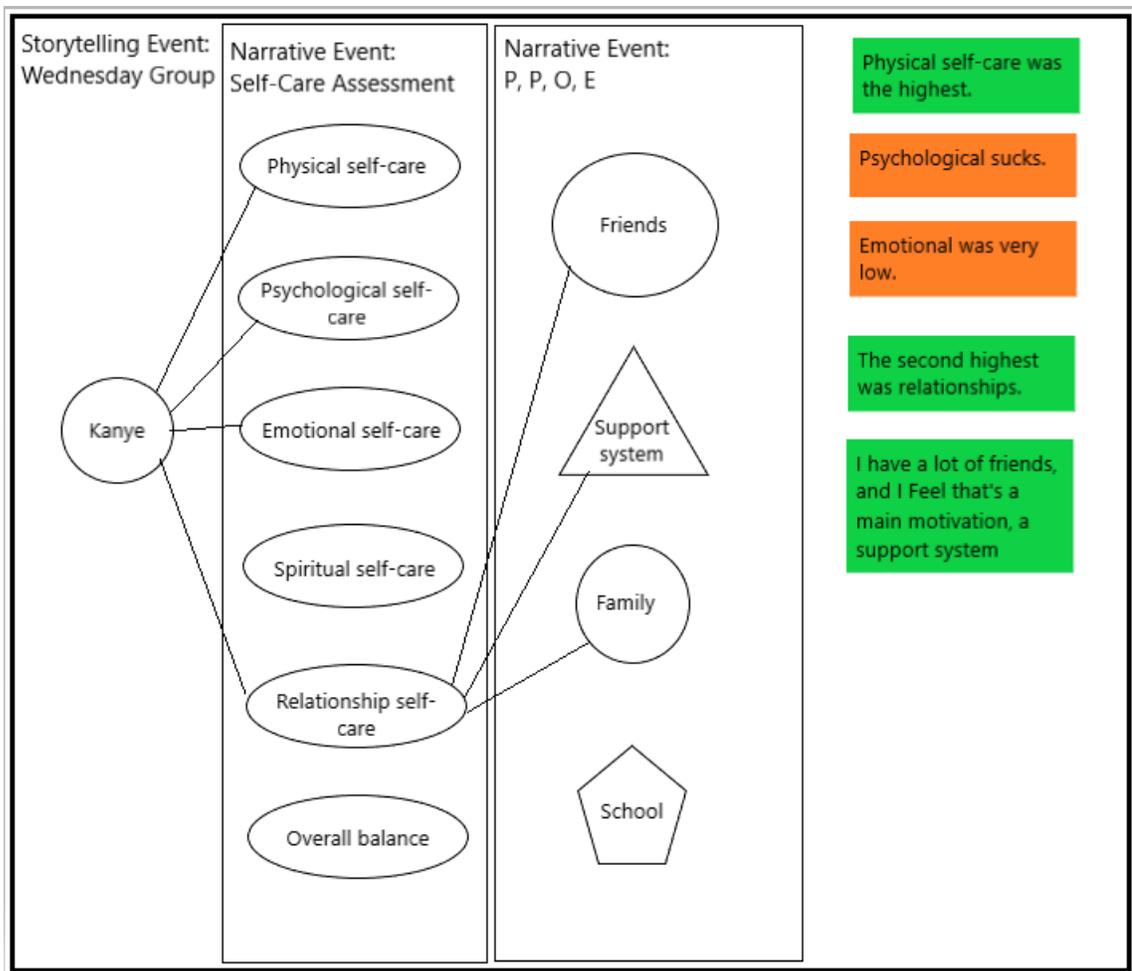


Figure 54: Kanye's Response Diagram

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APPENDIX A

Activity Systems Observation Protocol (ASOP)

This observation protocol is adapted from Lewis and Scharber's (2012) Activity System Observation Protocol (ASOP). I have included the segments of the protocol that I found most useful and applicable. I also found it helpful to draw a visual representation of the classroom with each student's position labelled. This helped with transcription, but also gave me a space to note any particularly interesting quotes, visible or notable gestures or instances of body language, as well as record the types of tools students brought with them into the classroom.

Subjects/social actors (e.g. initiator, participants, roles or positions in activity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the initiators? Participants? Other roles • In this activity, who acts/talks? How? When? • Note anything about the dynamic between or among social actors that relates to the activity object/purpose or outcome 	
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the assumptions about community embedded in the activity • What are the social arrangements • What are the physical arrangements of tools/objects? • How do social actors use or transform community in the activity system? 	
Rules for interaction in the activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the rules or norms or actions and interactions within the activity? • How do social actors enact or respond to or transform or resist the norms? 	
Division of labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the work to achieve the learning goal distributed among the social actors? How has this distribution been determined? • Does the current distribution of labor accomplish the learning goal? • Do all social actors participate in accomplishing the learning goal? Are their talents/skills used? • Are any social actors privileged or marginalized in this distribution? • Is the distribution smooth? Are there tensions? Explain 	

Classroom layout diagram:

APPENDIX B
APIC Course Outcomes

I have presented the learning objectives here modified to illustrate where they spiral towards and away from institutional norms, as they are written in the course packet (with bold and italics emphasis added):

1. *Assist you in developing your individual definition of success.*
2. *Provide assessment tools to aid you in increasing your self-knowledge relevant to academic performance & success.*
3. Help you **determine factors interfering with your academic progress at the Midwestern University.**
4. *Help you design and carry out a personalized plan for academic improvement.*
5. Increase your awareness and **effective use of campus resources** (to assist in implementing your educational plan).
6. Help you to **explore the culture of the higher education environment on this campus (and how to navigate challenges & use resources offered to students).**
7. Assist you in **cultivating more effective communication, problem-solving and critical thinking skills (e.g., through participation in a small group).**
8. Help in **increasing mastery of academic skills & strategies.** (APIC packet, 2018, p. 5)

APPENDIX C
“9 Best Scientific Study Tips”

The image shows a YouTube video player interface. The video title is "The 9 BEST Scientific Study Tips". The video has 10,719,535 views and was uploaded on Sep 3, 2015. The video player shows a progress bar at 0:09 / 3:25. The video content features the title "THE 9 BEST SCIENTIFIC STUDY TIPS" written in large, colorful, hand-drawn letters. To the right of the text are several office supplies: a black binder clip, a pink eraser, a blue pen, a yellow highlighter, and two gold paper clips. The video player controls include play, pause, volume, and full screen buttons. Below the video player, there are icons for likes (209K), dislikes (2.7K), share, save, and a menu icon.

The 9 BEST Scientific Study Tips

10,719,535 views • Sep 3, 2015

209K 2.7K SHARE SAVE ...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p60rN9JEapg>

APPENDIX D Self-Care Assessment

The following worksheet for assessing self-care is not exhaustive, merely suggestive. Feel free to add areas of self-care that are relevant for you and rate yourself on how often and how well you are taking care of yourself these days. When you are finished, look for patterns in your responses. Are you more active in some areas of self-care? Do you tend to ignore others? Are there items on the list that hadn't even occurred to you? Listen to your internal responses and dialogue about self-care, and take note of anything you would like to prioritize moving forward.

Rate the following areas according to how well you think you are doing...

3 = I do this well (e.g., frequently)

0 = I never do this

2 = I do this OK (e.g., occasionally)

? = This never occurred to me

1 = I barely or rarely do this

Physical Self-Care

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eat regularly (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get regular medical care for prevention | <input type="checkbox"/> Eat healthily |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get medical care when needed | <input type="checkbox"/> Get massages |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take time off when sick | <input type="checkbox"/> Take vacations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wear clothes I like | <input type="checkbox"/> Get enough sleep |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do some fun physical activity | <input type="checkbox"/> Do some fun artistic activity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Think positive thoughts about my body | <input type="checkbox"/> (Other) _____ |

Psychological Self-Care

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take day trips or mini-vacations | <input type="checkbox"/> Make time for self-reflection |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have my own personal psychotherapy | <input type="checkbox"/> Write in a journal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make time away from technology/internet | <input type="checkbox"/> Attend to minimizing life stress |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read something unrelated to work | <input type="checkbox"/> Be curious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Notice my thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> Say no to extra responsibilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engage my intelligence in a new way or area | <input type="checkbox"/> Be okay leaving work at work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do something at which I am not expert | <input type="checkbox"/> (Other) _____ |

Emotional Self-Care

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spend time with people whose company I enjoy | <input type="checkbox"/> Love myself |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stay in contact with important people in my life | <input type="checkbox"/> Allow myself to cry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Re-read favorite books, re-view favorite movies | <input type="checkbox"/> Give myself affirmation/praise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Identify and seek out comforting activities/places | <input type="checkbox"/> Find things that make me laugh |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Express my outrage in social action or discussion | <input type="checkbox"/> (Other) _____ |

Spiritual Self-Care

- Make time for reflection
- Find a spiritual connection or community
- Be aware of non-material aspects of life
- Try at times not to be in charge or the expert
- Identify what is meaningful to me
- Seek out reenergizing or nourishing experiences
- Contribute to causes in which I believe
- Read or listen to something inspirational
- Spend time in nature
- Be open to inspiration
- Cherish my optimism and hope
- Be open to knowing
- Meditate
- Find time for prayer or praise
- Have experiences of awe
- (Other) _____

Relationship Self-Care

- Schedule regular dates with my partner
- Call, check on, or see my relatives
- Share a fear, hope, or secret with someone I trust
- Stay in contact with faraway friends
- Make time for personal correspondence
- Allow others to do things for me
- Make time to be with friends
- Ask for help when I need it
- Communicate with my family
- Enlarge my social circle
- Spend time with animals
- (Other) _____

Workplace or Professional Self-Care

- Take time to chat with coworkers
- Identify projects/tasks that are exciting
- Balance my load so that nothing is “way too much”
- Arrange work space to be comfortable
- Get regular supervision or consultation
- Negotiate/advocate for my needs
- Make quiet time to work
- Take a break during the day
- Set limits with my boss/peers
- Have a peer support group
- Identify rewarding tasks
- (Other) _____

Overall Balance

- Strive for balance within my work-life and work day
- Strive for balance among my family, friends, and relationships
- Strive for balance between play and rest
- Strive for balance between work/service and personal time
- Strive for balance in looking forward and acknowledging the moment

Areas of Self-Care that are Relevant to You

- (Other) _____
- (Other) _____
- (Other) _____

Adapted from Saakvitne, Pearlman, & Staff of TSI/CAAP (1996). *Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization*. Norton. Adapted by Lisa D. Butler, PhD.

ⁱ I chose this pseudonym to preserve the student's anonymity

ⁱⁱ I conducted a 10-year search of general academic, education- and psychology-specific databases, the digital dissertations database, as well as a journal-specific search for *The Journal of Higher Education*, *The Review of Education* and *The Journal of College Student Development*.

ⁱⁱⁱ JP is the pseudonym chosen by the APIC instructor. It is used here to preserve anonymity per the requirements of the institutional IRB.

^{iv} I chose this pseudonym to preserve George's child's anonymity. I reached out to George and asked them to choose a pseudonym for their child but heard nothing back.

^v Course pack information anonymized to preserve the integrity of institutional IRB requirements for anonymity.