

A Community of Second Language Writing at Arizona State University:

An Institutional Ethnography

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved March 2016 by the  
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2016

## ABSTRACT

This project is an institutional ethnography (Smith, 2005, 2006) that examines the lived experiences of nine second language (L2) writing teachers, specifically with regard to the interpersonal, material, and spatial relationships inherent in their work. Using interviews, focus groups, and a mapping heuristic for data collection, the study investigates the current culture of L2 writing that is (or is not) created within this specialized community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and the individual participant motivations as actors within a complex and dynamic network (Latour, 2007). Because findings from the study are relevant for a variety of fields and audiences, the dissertation is separated into three freestanding but interrelated articles.

Article one focuses on the data of one participant whose teaching roles/ranks in the writing program shifted over time: from graduate teaching associate to part-time adjunct faculty member to full-time non-tenure track writing instructor. Article two uses all nine participants' data and focuses on their perceptions of and experiences with L2-specific teacher training. Results share the perceived benefits and drawbacks of teacher training to specialize in working with multilingual student populations considering various material conditions present in the institution. In addition, the article locates additional programmatic spaces where professionalization happens (or can happen), and ultimately assesses and questions the justification of specialization of teachers within the writing program and where that specialization can/should occur. Article three reflects on a specific data collection technique—a mapping heuristic—and discusses the ways in which this method is beneficial, not only for observing the different connections that L2 writing teachers create in their work lives, but also for collecting data in any institutional

ethnographic study.

While these three articles are intended to be independent of one another, together they comprise a dissertation-length institutional ethnographic inquiry that demonstrates the diverse voices, motivations, and experiences of second language writing teachers that inform the decisions made in an institution known as a writing program. WPAs can use the knowledge and takeaways gained in the study to learn more about how to support and advocate for this important stakeholder group.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, friends, and mentors who have been my strength as I pursued my PhD and completed this project. But my deepest appreciation is for Ryan, who moved across the country for me to pursue this crazy dissertation dream, and who, for nearly a decade, has always believed in me.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to thank my dissertation committee, Paul Kei Matsuda, Shirley K Rose, and Mark A. James, for their incredible support and feedback throughout the dissertation process. Paul's critical questions never failed to challenge me as a writer and academic and helped to formulate my overall conception of the project. Shirley's encouragement and insights helped me learn to always think like a WPA, especially when things get tough and you wish to be anything but. Mark's focus on methodology and purpose contributed to my success in situating institutional ethnographic inquiry in my fields: rhetoric and composition, writing program administration, and second language writing. For their knowledge and contributions I will be forever grateful.

I have also relied on the expertise of friends in my academic cohort; each has helped me collectively and individually. Sarah and Juval, my L2 partners in crime, offered tons of ideas and thought of things to include to my work that I never could have figured out on my own. Jennifer, Cristyn, and Gin, who were my academic champions from other universities across the country, always offered me invaluable WPA advice and expertise. And my job market dream team, Dawn and Brent, provided commiseration and comic relief when it was most needed. Especially I thank my Arizona sister, Kaitlin, for being my first, best, most brilliant AZ friend whom I will keep in my heart forever. I am obligated to these forever pals for their empathy and their shared commitment to talking shop over coffees and beers.

In addition, I need to thank a few individuals at Arizona State University, without whom this project would never have gotten off the ground. Thanks to Demetria Baker for finagling my admin and teaching schedules so that I could have course release time to

work on my data analysis and drafting, and for requesting homemade caramels that provided me with procrastinate-baking time to think through my ideas. Thanks also to Sheila Luna for always being so on top of due dates and official paperwork, and who always does everything efficiently and with a genuine smile. Thanks too to Ruby Macksoud for her cheerful motivation and the opportunity to forge positive relationships with L2 writing teachers, many of whom became my participants and (even better) my friends. I also want to thank Camille Newton, who is no longer at ASU but who has been an enthusiastic mentor and collaborator literally since day one.

To my family and my friends: Those of you back in the Midwest, I thank you for trusting me to move far away and build a life in the desert, and I thank you for sending love, support, and good vibes across the miles. Specifically, my gratitude is extended to Mom, Munna, Fiss, Tess, Emily, and Wade. And finally, no great feat in my life could ever be accomplished without the love and unyielding support of my incredible Ryan. With you, I'm at home in my own skin. Thank you for loving me and thank you for being there. And last but certainly not least, Scouty, thank you for reminding me that no matter how stressed I am, there's always time for snacks, snuggles, and naps. I love you guys!

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## INTRODUCTION

A writing program is an institution that functions within an array of possible larger institutions of the department, the college, and/or the university. Writing program administrators (WPAs) are usually responsible for the planning and implementation of training, support, and professional development opportunities of their teaching staff within the writing program. Often these opportunities are provided so teachers can specialize in other types of classes beyond first-year composition (e.g., teaching second language (L2) writing, professional/technical writing, basic/developmental writing, or WAC/WID). The effective training and support of writing teachers bolsters the learning environment for students, and student success has traditionally been a key factor that contributes to writing program assessment and evaluation, as well as the light in which the larger institution sees the work of the writing program and its teachers. This dissertation argues that writing teachers are also an important stakeholder group in program assessment and evaluation, as their perceptions of training and support opportunities and their overall work experiences can inform WPAs of the relative success or failure of current offerings. In addition, this study asserts that institutional ethnography can be a viable methodology in investigating the lived experiences of writing teachers, because the methodology has the unique ability to examine their interpersonal, material, and spatial relationships to find out how things happen within a complex, ever-changing institutional landscape. This project does just that with a group of nine L2 writing teachers.

In WPA history, the field of writing program administration and the work of

WPAs have been linked with a number of metaphors including (for the field) military work (White, 1991) and orienteering (Helmets, 1999), and (for the administrator) icons (Cambridge & McClelland, 1995) and an array of male figures: father, husband, and ex (Hesse,1999). One recent metaphor for writing programs and WPA work comes from Seth Kahn’s plenary talk at the 2015 Council of Writing Program Administrators’ summer conference. Kahn (2016) likened this the field and its constituents to an *ecology*, “one that evokes nature and dynamism and adaptability” (p. 115). However, Kahn takes the definition a step further:

Not only are the people who work with us in our programs and on our campuses part of complex systems (and understand I mean this very inclusively: students, administrators, staff, all of us), but they’re people (and so are we) whose lives and livelihoods often depend on the health of the environment. And it’s really easy to lose sight of how connected we are within that environment. (p. 115)

In other words, the writing program’s level of (fill in your own descriptive noun here: success, prosperity, efficiency, prominence) should be a reflection of the contributions and experiences all of its stakeholders. WPA work, then, should be done with the experiences of all stakeholders in mind.

In many methods of program assessment and evaluation, the focus is often placed upon student success and assessing learning outcomes, though McLeod (2007) notes that this process “involves much more than simply asking the question of whether or not student writing has improved” (p. 96). In this dissertation study, I incorporate one important group of “other” participants and stakeholders: writing teachers of various roles or ranks (in this study, graduate teaching associates, part-time adjunct faculty



members, and full-time non-tenure track faculty members), and the ways in which their perceptions and experiences can inform a more comprehensive program assessment or evaluation, especially in establishing “cultural and social context, institutional context, [and] instruction” (McLeod, 2007, p. 96). In addition, the study has relevance to work with/in other writing programs and departments with similar challenges. The perspectives presented in each article/chapter are products of a method of analysis not yet used widely in rhetoric and composition, second language (L2) writing, or writing program administration research; however, it is a methodology that is well suited to investigate the *ecology* of a writing program’s environment and contribute to program assessment and evaluation.

### **The Major Methodology: Institutional Ethnography (IE)**

Institutional ethnography (IE) has its roots in sociology and anthropology. Sociologist Dorothy E. Smith (2005, 2006) proposes the methodology as a way to learn about the social relations that coordinate people, spaces, and texts within a working, constantly changing institution, a project of inquiry that “begins in the local actualities of people’s lives” (2005, p. 25) and assumes that people’s knowledge of their work lives is socially organized and affected by the material conditions of their work. Through this inquiry of social organization, IE uncovers *problematics*, which are places of friction or sites of contest that exist in an institution. These problematics function as places where research and discovery can begin. IE also acknowledges that the researcher is materially situated within the context she studies and among the participants she interacts with (LaFrance & Nicolas, 2012), which could be viewed as a limitation to the methodology.

A similar argument can be made concerning Kirsch's (1997) work on "multi-vocal texts," wherein she describes the risk of allowing the author to curate multiple voices of participants. However, researcher positionality is widely recognized, and the researcher's voice is regarded as the curator of the many voices she strives to be worthy of sharing. The methodology looks specifically at the diverse relationships that people have with institutional practices and how these individuals interact in light of the ruling relations. It "takes divergence as a starting point" (LaFrance, 2016, p. 2) and asks institutional ethnographic researchers to reveal what is constrained in participants' work and how the institutional context shapes how participants relate to each other/to others.

Campbell and Gregor (2004), in their primer on doing IE methodological work, situate IE as "a strategy for learning how to understand problems [that exist] in everyday life" (p. 6). They posit IE as a key conceptual tool used by researchers who want to investigate the "everyday/everynight" experiences (p. 27) of participants involved in an institution. Campbell and Gregor also acknowledge the gap in theory and practices that may be uncovered in data collection: "the literature may speak about the topic one way, while the people on the ground will speak about it another" (p. 52). This finding is most notably replicated in chapter two of the dissertation, when the nine L2 writing teachers discuss the training opportunities they experienced in order to teach multilingual first-year composition. Campbell and Gregor also note that IE begins in a researcher's personal experiences. What I observed and experienced as a graduate teaching associate and as the Assistant Director of Second Language Writing within my local writing program was combined with my academic interests in the fields of rhet/comp, L2 writing, and writing program administration to create the overall concept for my institutional

ethnographic inquiry.

Recently, a number of publications have encouraged the use of IE as a valuable methodology for the fields of rhetoric and composition and writing program administration. In their *CCC* article, LaFrance and Nicolas (2012) describe IE as “a methodology highly attuned to the context that surrounds a researcher’s questions,” one that “speaks to the desires of researchers to understand the variability and flexibility of institutional work” (p. 142). Because the field of rhetoric and composition is one that has historically focused on both context and practice, IE serves as an appropriate methodology that takes into account these two factors (context and practice) in individual participant experiences. In other words, “IE’s attention to the contextual nature of practice resonates with other active conversations in the field” (p. 143). LaFrance’s (2016) forthcoming article in *WPA: Writing Program Administration* asserts that IE is especially attuned to WPA work because of the methodology’s ability to “[uncover] the many ways practice takes shape within local contexts and in response to [an institution’s] material realities” (p. 2). LaFrance also maintains that IE helps WPAs understand individual participants’ “many value systems and unique approaches” to the work teachers do in the writing program, whether working with students in the classroom, attaining knowledge and expertise in training and professional development, or interacting with their colleagues and members of the writing program administrative staff each day. She asserts,

WPAs who are more attuned to the many different value systems at work within programs and how those value systems shape classroom practice in understandable ways are more effectively situated to support those in their programs in their everyday work, to usher in new curricular direction as necessary, and to respond to actual conditions that subtend classroom practice” (p. 23).

This research project adds to the growing body of work that uses IE to inform both rhet/comp and WPA fields.

A third contribution of this study proposes the use of IE in the field of second language writing, a domain that has yet to incorporate this methodology into regular use in research and publication. The presence and needs of multilingual student writers have been widely researched (Matsuda, 1998; Matsuda, 1999; Hyland, 2003; Matsuda, 2003; Matsuda, 2012; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2013), but what is less known is how to prepare teachers of this population in ways that are effective, feasible, and sustainable. Matsuda, Saenkhum, and Accardi's (2013) institutional case study found that writing teachers believed L2 students' language issues were outside the scope of the FYC curriculum and that they felt limited in their abilities to address this population's writing issues because of a lack of professional preparation activities (p. 82). While the results from this case study are telling, I propose the use of institutional ethnography to ascertain a more robust explanation of *why* and *in what contexts* teachers' views of multilingual students have been created. IE offers a more in-depth view into the social organization of a potential multitude of individual teachers' practices and belief systems. Using IE in the L2 writing field can reveal ways that "an individual's social alliances, experiences, and sensibilities play an important role in how that individual negotiates everyday institutional settings (such as classrooms, programs, or departments)" (LaFrance, 2016, p. 9) The IE work done in this study (specifically chapter two) also has the potential to articulate multilingual writing teachers' specific needs and expectations in professional development opportunities, which Matsuda, Saenkhum, and Accardi (2013) note are

helpful in “arguing for resources and opportunities” within the writing program and the larger institution (p. 82). The diversity of backgrounds of teachers who comprise the workforce of L2 writing specialists in the study’s institutional context (e.g., teachers who may not have prior training in rhet/comp or L2 writing/TESOL theory) can also be more clearly articulated and analyzed using IE as primary methodology.

### **Additional Texts**

Beyond IE, I drew from a number of additional key texts to inform my inquiry, and each is, in its own way, connected to institutional ethnography, to my participants, and/or to the project’s goals: understanding how individual teachers operate in this unique context, revealing the factors that contribute to teachers’ perceptions/experiences (and how participant role/rank may or may not affect these perceptions/experiences), and articulating ways that findings can inform the important work that WPAs do within their institutions.

### **Communities of Practice**

At the outset of imagining this project, I knew I wanted to investigate the community or culture of L2 writing within my home writing program: to what extent a community or culture existed; the multifarious, diverse perceptions and experiences of individuals working in and contributing to the community/culture; and in what ways institutional contextual factors ameliorated or constrained individuals’ ideas of community/culture. However, I first had to create a working definition of a *community* or *culture*. For this task, I leaned heavily on Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept of *communities of practice* (CoP). In their brief online introduction to CoP (n.d.), Wenger-

Trayner and Wenger-Trayner define the term as “people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain or human endeavor.” Members of a CoP “share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.” I created my methodological framework and formulated my interview question list with this definition in mind. Lave and Wenger (1991) note that communities of practice emerge from learning communities or what Wenger (2000) later calls *learning projects* that “deepen [participants’] mutual commitment when they take responsibility for a learning agenda” (p. 232). Chapter two focuses particularly on participants’ experiences in and perceptions of learning and being trained to teach L2 writing students in first-year composition. Lastly, I use Lave and Wenger’s (1991) assertion that “the practice of a community is dynamic and involves learning on the part of everyone” (p. 4) to reach desired goals. I began with CoP and found I wanted a more concrete schematic to explain how the diverse descriptions of the nine participants could be woven together in meaningful ways to discover areas of similarity and difference and to understand how the institution (the writing program) affected teachers’ perceptions and experiences.

### **Actor-Network Theory**

The broadest framework used to discuss participants’ experiences and descriptions of their work lives comes from Bruno Latour’s (2006) Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which attempts to explain how people, places, and texts (what Latour calls *actors* or *actants*) come together in networks—how many different, constantly shifting parts come together to make some semblance of a whole. ANT describes the relational ties that make up a network that is in a current state of change or evolution for each actor/actant that affects or is affected by his/her/its participation in the network. I

found Latour's discussions of how to write down texts particularly salient to the qualitative work involved in this research project.

Latour (2006) spends a bit of time in *Reassembling the Social* talking about how many researchers of social relations are authors of "bad textual account[s]" (p. 130). "In a bad text," he writes, "only a handful of actors will be designated as the causes of all the others, which will have no other function than to serve as a backdrop;" "if an actor makes no difference, it's not an actor" (p. 130). Those who employ ANT write about networks as "an expression to check how much energy, movement, and specificity our own reports are able to capture" (p. 131). I argue that each individual account from my nine participants can be taken at face value ("as-is"), but they can each be combined or contrasted, analyzed and reconfigured to breathe life into what once was simple storytelling account, now re-envisioned as a robust, multi-dimensional (yes, "messy," as Adler-Kassner would say) narrative that speaks to larger ideas, issues, and areas of concern.

I also employed ANT because Latour views a text that employs ANT to be a dynamic one that is part of the constantly ongoing conversation—not static and set in time and space, but instead as another actor in the vast, constantly firing synapses of the network in question: "a network is not what is represented in the text, but what readies the text to take the relay of actors as mediators" (p. 131). One of the main objectives within this project is to portray a snapshot of the work lives of nine L2 writing teachers as its own microcosm, and to use this dissertation to contribute to (many possible) conversations among scholars of WPA, L2 writing and rhet/comp, deriving my next actions from the trends I observe in collecting my data. In particular, the mapping

exercise I had all my participants complete will lend a tangible, visual representation to ANT.

### **WPA as Activist**

The ideas of communities (of practice) and culture and the realization of individual actors as active contributors to the overall network of an institution (and its successes and challenges) are further linked with the idea that individual voices are framed by a history that affects is affected by in institutional context. When these individual voices are valued within the context of the larger institution, change-making work can occur. Adler-Kassner's (2008) text *The Activist WPA* asks WPAs, as researchers, to have "a constant commitment to [the] ongoing, loud, sometimes messy dialogue among all participants" to cultivate change—specifically, to change the stories that are told about those involved in writing (p. 32). Adler-Kassner views those who do WPA research as *activist intellectuals*, academics who seek "to build connections between [their] intellectual work and specific work in specific sites among particular audiences" (p. 82). I see myself as the activist intellectual in this study who is developing ("with interested stakeholders") a narrative about nine L2 writing teachers that "reflects the interests and passions of those involved" (p. 83) and that contributes to larger discussions of the varying roles or ranks of writing teachers (chapter one), the training to specialize in teaching L2 writing (chapter two), and the advantages of using mapping techniques in IE research to inform writing program assessment and evaluation (chapter three).

As the researcher, I use Adler-Kassner's description of issue-based activism: my study works to identify participants' interests in ways that reflect their short-term goals in



the context of long-term strategies for action (p. 92). In issue-based organizing, the researcher/activist intellectual works from an agenda that addresses issues of concern for the group (here, the community of L2 writing teachers in the writing program); she listens to and works with the ideas and interests of a base of supporters (here, the nine participants); she situates short- and long-term goals of participants within their values (achieved through interviews and focus groups); and she works strategically, through a series of steps, to conduct analyses of what she finds in order to plan appropriate courses of action to help participants achieve goals (Adler-Kassner, 2008, p. 122).

### **Institutional Critique**

Like Adler-Kassner (2008), Porter et al.'s (2000) institutional critique is said to be an “activist methodology for changing institutions” (p. 610). It is also a methodology that takes into consideration the conditions of all stakeholders involved in the institution and works to improve them. Ideas from institutional critique are employed in this study by maintaining that an institution such as a writing program does “contain spaces for reflection, resistance, revision, and productive action” (p. 613). In addition, “constructing institutions as local and discursive spaces makes them more visible and dynamic and therefore more changeable” (p. 621). This IE study also acknowledges the space necessary for institutional changes to be made and, like institutional critique, locates places where change is possible.

However, there are some key differences between institutional critique and institutional ethnography that are important to consider. Porter et al. (2000) note that the critique focuses on physical structures and locations within an institution. Though IE does take into account the physical aspects of an institution, it also values and tends to

prioritize the more *social* and interpersonal aspects of an institutional space. Chapter three in particular notes how participants view the spaces in which they work, the materials they use, and the people with whom they interact in their work lives, and how these three elements interact with one another. Additionally, institutional critique works to articulate the “hidden and seemingly silent voices of those marginalized by the powerful (Porter et al., 2000, p. 631). This is a different assumption from IE, which values the stories of all individuals and their positionalities in the big machine. LaFrance and Nicolas (2012) note that IE takes institutional critique “one step further” and works to help researchers “identify stronger articulations between broader discourses and how work is done” in a writing program (p. 145). Finally, while institutional critique serves as a form of evaluation of an institution, IE does not function as an evaluation of the writing program. Instead, IE seeks to understand the complexities of the institution at hand by uncovering how people live their work lives and how they perceive these experiences. Writing teachers, second language writing specialists, and writing program administrators can then use what they find to contribute to an eventual evaluation and/or to work toward improving material conditions within their institutional contexts.

In this inquiry, I combine tenets from institutional ethnography, communities of practice, Actor-Network Theory, *The Activist WPA*, and institutional critique to uncover how things were happening in the lives of nine L2 writing teachers, with regard to their work experiences and in connection with institutional circumstances that were happening in a specific point in time. This collection of theories and knowledge has informed three separate inquiries, which are described below as three independent but interrelated articles.

## Article Overviews

The overall format of this manuscript is a collection of three separate, standalone articles, though each article is taken from the larger set of IE data collected in Fall 2014 from the single IRB protocol for the project. Each article contains valuable connections among and across articles to explore the overarching research questions involved in the research study:

- In what ways do second language writing teachers' perceptions and experiences contribute to a community/culture of L2 writing within a writing program?
- How can individual teacher experiences inform writing program assessment and evaluation and the work that WPAs do?

Article one is titled "From Graduate Teaching Associate to Adjunct to Full-Time Non-Tenure Track Faculty: One Writing Teacher's Experiences." This chapter details the changing perceptions and experiences of one participant, Lex, as her teaching role or rank shifted over time through three different positions: she started as a graduate TA, then moved into an adjunct faculty member after earning her MFA, and finally to full-time NTT faculty member. Lex's vast differences in her opinions regarding how she was treated by colleagues and how she felt about interacting with the writing program administrative staff suggest that more attention is needed to provide adequate sustained support for all roles or ranks of writing teachers while keeping in mind their varying situations, availability, and expectations. As Kahn (2016) notes, "A sustainable ecology [such as a writing program] can't survive without addressing threats to its health and can sustain itself positively and healthily with care, trust, and good faith" (p. 117). This initial chapter seeks to pinpoint the causes of one writing teacher's frustrations in an

attempt to learn more about the experiences of teachers of all roles/ranks.

Article two, “Accommodating for Specializations Within the Writing Program: Training and Supporting Second Language Writing Teachers,” brings together the voices of all nine participants and focuses on the commentary they provided in interviews regarding the training they felt they received (or did not receive) in L2 writing theory and pedagogy. Findings indicate that the amount of formal training (e.g., required training practica, additional L2 writing/TESOL theory courses) affected individual participants’ perceptions of their success in teaching multilingual first-year composition. In addition, participants noted several other experiences (initiated by the writing program and/or on their own) to be beneficial to them and “counted” them as training opportunities, such as L2-specific professional development workshops and talking with class- and officemates. A third finding indicated the major frustration in teaching the multilingual student population in this context stemmed from a perception of inadequate placement methods for L2 writing students and a lack in bridging the theory-practice gap in formal training procedures. This gap has been articulated recently by Bommarito and Cooney (2016, forthcoming) and suggests further work is needed to change the deep-rooted monolingual ideologies found in many composition classrooms. The results inform WPAs and L2 writing specialists alike and suggest a recasting of programmatic offerings and opportunities for writing teachers to specialize in teaching multilingual students, as well as advocating for multilingual ideologies and understanding in first-year composition classrooms.

The third and final article, “Mapping as a Heuristic for Writing Program Assessment and Evaluation and in Institutional Ethnography” telescopes backward from

individual participant experience to investigate a new data collection method, a mapping technique, and its potential for future use in (institutional ethnographic) studies in L2 writing and WPA contexts. The article reviews the Post-It maps created by three participants (Becky, Sam, and Lex) and focuses on their organization of the people, places/spaces, and materials/texts that they encounter in their L2 writing teacher positions, as well as the triangulation provided by their verbal explanations of these maps. The chapter notes the importance of knowing the sometimes competing values, ideologies, and spatial relations of a variety of program participants and how this knowledge can inform writing program assessment and evaluation (and the entities for whom these procedures are significant). I recommend that this mapping heuristic be sustained in future institutional ethnographic inquiries, particularly those related to writing program administration, due to the obvious link between IE as a multi-vocal text and the notion of the writing program as an ecology (Kahn, 2016). More specifically, the mapping technique can also be considered an “ecological frame [that] helps to make concrete the intersections that we otherwise often simply assume or assert. In other words, declaring that everything is interrelated is one thing; articulating *how* and *why that matters* is another entirely” (Kahn, 2016, p. 117, emphasis in original).

Each chapter has its own audience and implications; in addition, the individual chapters orchestrate related goals that speak to the project as a whole. One overarching goal is to articulate the importance of all stakeholders (here, teachers of varying roles/ranks) that contribute to the ecology, the community/culture, the institution of a writing program. A second goal is to contribute to the small but growing body of institutional ethnographic research in the intersecting fields of rhetoric and composition,

second language writing, and writing program administration. A final set of goals was personal in nature and was directly related to my experiences as the researcher. I wanted to gain expertise as an institutional ethnographer, and I wanted to learn the experience of using IE for a dissertation-length inquiry. I also intensely wanted to do justice to the nine participants who contributed much to my work. I have with each participant a friendly professional relationship and worked diligently to see and analyze their perceptions and responses with fairness and truth. Finally, I wanted to gain experience in viewing and presenting my research through a WPA lens, as this is a role I will hold upon finishing my degree.

## ARTICLE ONE

### FROM GRADUATE TEACHING ASSOCIATE TO ADJUNCT TO FULL-TIME NON-TENURE TRACK FACULTY: ONE WRITING TEACHER'S EXPERIENCES

*The integrity of higher education rests on the integrity of the faculty profession.*  
(AAUP, 2003/2014, p. 181)

*When there is a mismatch between faculty members' own sense of expertise and what the profession seems to value, one or the other may have to give. At the extremes, faculty members may question their identity as professionals and wonder if they belong, or they may question the legitimacy or coherence of the profession and choose not to belong. [...] Under any of these scenarios the faculty member is distanced from the professional community and unlikely to see him- or herself as contributing to it, making it difficult to sustain an image of oneself as expert.*

(Penrose, 2012, p. 114).

In recent years, many stories in the fields of composition and writing program administration and many public-news sites (e.g., *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and others) have exposed the physical and material realities of contingent faculty members in higher education. The plight of part-time adjunct instructors and full-time non-tenure-track faculty members has been widely documented in research studies, editorials, and conference presentations, and rightly so: a recent study in *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning* posited that upwards of 70% of instructional faculty in higher education was in some kind of non-tenure track position (Kezar & Maxey, 2014). The overall consensus regarding the treatment of this population is that current practices are “unethical” (Kezar & Maxey, 2014, p. 35) and inhumane. To have such a large percentage of the workforce in positions where they are overworked and underfunded is dangerous for any business, including a writing program. Kahn

(2016) recently likened the writing program to an *ecology* and notes that “A sustainable ecology can’t survive without addressing threats to its health” (p. 117). Contingent faculty in U.S. higher education are languishing, and the stories (see Adler-Kassner, 2008) being told about this burgeoning population are more often than not tales of hardship, frustration, and despair.

WPAs are generally acutely aware of contingent faculty issues and have contributed their knowledge and expertise in many venues: real-time, informal conversations have been happening, for example, on the WPA-listserv for many years; in addition, WPAs from many different institutions around the country have contributed enthusiastically to national organizations’ dialogues and statements on the topic of the ethical treatment of writing teachers who are contingent faculty (e.g., the Wyoming Resolution [See Trimbur & Cambridge, 1988]; the Coalition on the Academic Workforce [see NCTE, 2008]; and Lynch-Binieck’s biannual *FORUM: Issues about Part-Time and Contingent Faculty* [2016]). However, at their home institutions, WPAs often do not have access to resources (financial or otherwise) to make any lasting improvements to their local contingent faculty population’s work lives. Part- and full-time faculty members seem to be at an impasse: the predicament of what to do (regarding material and financial work conditions, service and professional development options, etc.) versus what can manageably be done (by the university and/or writing program administration, or by the teachers themselves) has resulted in little improvement in these faculty members’ experiences. A closer look, then, should be taken at the actual lived experiences of contingent faculty members, an inquiry that takes into account the “on the ground” perceptions and understandings of how they describe and carry out their work. Perhaps in



gaining a better understanding of the perceptions and day-to-day experiences of contingent faculty members in a program, WPAs may begin to find solutions to the issues related to the work lives of this population. The current study focuses on the individual experiences of one writing teacher and attempts not only to situate her perceptions within the current defeatist “tropes” (Brunk-Chavez, 2010) of contingent faculty experience in higher education and public-news platforms, but also to find manageable solutions that WPAs can implement to improve areas of frustration and dissatisfaction for this large, important writing teacher population. This article reviews the stories told about teachers of varying roles/ranks and uses these stories as a lens through which we can analyze the participant’s experiences and teaching roles in a writing program as they have shifted over time, from graduate teaching assistant to part-time adjunct writing instructor to full-time non-tenure track faculty member.

In order to change the way contingent faculty are regarded in the institution, we must look past the negative accounts and unfulfilled calls for action perpetuated by both previous studies and the media toward a new story with a fresh perspective. WPAs should work to share the experiences of the “everyday, everynight” realities of the teachers they oversee to university administrators and to the larger field of writing program administration (Campbell & Gregor, 2004, p. 27) in order to, as Adler-Kassner (2008) urges WPAs to do for writing students in *The Activist WPA*, change the stories being told about writing teachers within their own institutions and in conversations that span multiple sites, universities, and contexts. Understanding these contingent faculty realities may be a step toward providing a sustainable ecology for all roles/ranks of teachers (who are important stakeholders) in a writing program.

## **Review of the Literature on Varying Teacher Roles/Ranks**

In the literature that exists between the experiences of graduate teaching associates (GTAs), and contingent faculty members, which includes both part-time adjunct instructors (adjuncts), and full-time non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty, differences can be found in the amount of institutional, departmental, and/or programmatic support offered writing teachers of varying roles, as well as to the stories that are told about these roles in various spaces.

### **Research on GTAs: Supported and Encouraged**

On the whole, graduate teaching associates are researched much more extensively than other teacher roles/ranks. The nature of graduate teaching associates/assistants is that their role as writing teacher is secondary to their responsibilities that come from their program of study. GTAs, who are in graduate programs, often have a tuition waiver to complete their studies in addition to the stipend they receive as teaching associates, and they are also given extensive training and mentorship in the first year and beyond. Since part- and full-time instructors are not students, they do not need (and hence do not receive) this kind of funding. The greater level of support that GTAs experience may contribute to the fact that this is the teacher role/rank most often examined in research studies.

The goals in research on GTAs are often to improve the overall GTA experience, training procedures, and the like. The topics studied are varied: multi-year, longitudinal studies about GTAs' initial training and pedagogical preparation (Stancliff & Goggin, 2007; Reid & Estrem with Belcheir, 2012), initiatives writing programs can take in sustained training after the "new TA" practicum (Rupiper Taggart & Lowry, 2011), the

quandary of balancing GTAs' multiple responsibilities as graduate student, teacher, and researcher (Long, Holberg, & Taylor, 1996; Leverenz & Goodburn, 1998); and even advocating for an improved focus on preparing GTAs for WPA work—an end point that would put them far above the ranks of adjunct or full-time NTT faculty) (Elder, Schoen, & Skinnell, 2014). Deliberate care is given to ensuring there are elaborate programs and levels of support for GTAs, addressing issues central to any writing teacher but focusing on only this one role (e.g., classroom management and developing teacher ethos, grading and providing feedback, and developing and sustaining a cohort to bounce ideas off each another). For example, Swyt's (1996) "Teacher Training in the Contact Zone" provides suggestions for tackling "issues of diversity and conflict in the [writing] classroom" for "teachers, specifically new composition TAs" (p. 24). Overall, research conducted on GTAs sustains stories of hard work, diligent training, and sincere dedication by trainers and administrators. The research suggests that this role/rank of teachers, through their hard work, can be molded into theoretically sound writing teachers, shaped by an ethos of support and care.

This situation begs the question of why the same kinds of support and outreach are not at least offered to other roles/ranks of teachers, including part- and full-time contingent faculty members. This question has a number of easy initial answers. First, it is widely understood that non-GTA teachers are hired on the basis that they are already qualified to teach and therefore do not need additional support. And second, it may be noted that GTAs (as graduate students) are there to learn, while other roles/ranks of teachers are not. However, I argue that support services and training opportunities are important to offer *all* roles/ranks of writing teachers as a way for writing programs and

WPAs to improve their ethos and their relationships with contingent faculty members. This article suggests that *all* teachers, including adjuncts and full-time NTT faculty, would value similar opportunities for professional development and for sustained training and support.

### **Contingent Faculty in Academic Research**

By contrast to GTAs, the general consensus within research on and op-ed stories about contingent faculty (part-time adjunct faculty and full-time NTT faculty alike) is much more dire, negative, and loaded with political and emotional rhetoric.

There is, on the whole, not enough research conducted on contingent faculty to learn more about this embattled teaching population. Furthermore, when these conversations do occur, they rarely take place in the specific field of writing program administration or rhet/comp; rather, they can be found most often in journals with a less-specific institutional audience, like *Educational Policy*, *WorkingUSA*, *The Journal of Higher Education* and *Change Magazine*. Back in 2003, Schneiroy published “Contingent Faculty: A New Social Movement Takes Shape” in *WorkingUSA*, which detailed that numbers of contingent faculty had hit a “critical mass” (p. 38). More research on contingent faculty is needed in the WPA field in order to mitigate the gaps and start necessary conversations about how to support this large teaching population. Schneiroy appealed to public and university administrators to take note of this burgeoning role/rank of teacher, stating that contingent faculty have “emerged as a major factor in the politics of higher education” (p. 47). Since then, numbers have continued to grow, most recent reports estimate that over half (and sometimes up to 70%) of faculty in higher education is in some way contingent (Gehrke & Kezar, 2014).

A number of more recent studies have been published within the past five years, revealing that the attention to of contingent faculty issues is on the rise, though rarely in textual spaces frequented by WPAs. Kezar (2012) appealed to campus leaders in *Change Magazine* not only to recognize this group as a new faculty majority, but also to alert them that contingent faculty's often poor working conditions may have an adverse affect on students. This text served as a warning that without any changes to the current model (assumptions about the abilities and ambitions of contingent faculty, current working conditions, institutional policies and practices), higher education would soon be reaching a tipping point. A year later, Kezar and Maxey (2014) appealed again to administrators to rethink the treatment of contingent faculty in *Change Magazine*. Based on adjunct faculty in non-profit organizations, the study gave eye-opening (though unsurprising) testimony of the “abusive,” “unethical,” and “careless” treatment of contingent faculty (p. 34-36).

In another study, Gehrke and Kezar (2014) surveyed over 250 academic deans on the decisions they make pertaining to contingent faculty, calling these deans “key change agents” in the fight to equalize working conditions. Where much of the preceding rhetoric depicted administrators as relatively impotent in advocating for institutional decisions and policies that affected contingent faculty, the authors noted that these policies “are more likely to be in place at institutions where deans express attitudes in support of these policies” (p. 27).

### **Contingent Faculty Discussions in Rhet/Comp**

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) does have an extensive history of acknowledging and participating in the conversation on working conditions of teachers, to which many WPAs have contributed. In the “Position Statement on the Status

and Working Conditions of Contingent Faculty” (NCTE, 2010), conditions of employment including specific articulation regarding fair working conditions and compensation, involvement in shared governance, and the treatment of teachers (respect and recognition) are clearly presented. The benefits and disadvantages of higher education’s reliance on contingent faculty and the guidelines for establishing quality working conditions has also laid out since 1997 in the NCTE’s document “Statement from the Conference on the Growing Use of Part-Time and Adjunct Faculty.” As such, WPAs are not unaware of the current state of affairs. However, in the principal journal for WPAs falls short in their direct confrontation of this important issue through published articles.

In the journal *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, just one researcher has raised the issue of what to do about contingent faculty; however, despite the acknowledgment of the situation, the author provides many questions with few (or no) answers. Brunk-Chavez (2014) recognizes that most faculty development is focused on TAs, and that WPAs may assume that full-time NTT faculty “don’t need ongoing development beyond an orientation here or a workshop there,” and that WPAs “feel guilty asking [contingent faculty] to participate when they may be paid poorly, have limited time, or may not appreciate the need to join the writing program’s community” (p. 153). But in the same breath, she asserts that WPAs should provide professional development opportunities for contingent faculty that “create a program community that builds upon and actively promotes the strengths of the highest quality teachers” (p. 153). This disparity can be seen as problematic, as it sends mixed messages about what WPAs are (or should be) doing for contingent faculty. Of course, that research studies are not

being published in *WPA: Writing Program Administration* should not suggest that WPAs are unaware of what is happening with regard to contingent faculty. However, this article suggests that more attention to be paid in this particular journal to contingent faculty issues, as it is a key space for WPA-related knowledge sharing.

In the same year, Allison, Lynn, and Hoverman's (2014) report "Indispensable but invisible" details the working conditions of NTT faculty at George Mason University. Results found that contingent faculty are "dedicated," "career-oriented" educators who are constantly under financial hardship; they are hired last-minute with inadequate orientation opportunities and "limited access to resources" (p. 3-4); they are lacking in adequate spaces for meeting with students and access to materials and resources to facilitate their teaching; much of their work goes beyond the typical job description and is largely uncompensated. While the report is eye-opening and does provide a number of recommendations for improvement of contingent faculty working conditions, it must be maintained that this study provides just one report of a single group of contingent faculty in an institution of higher education.

All the studies pertaining to contingent faculty, in one form or another, provide similar types of responses in what administration can do to start recognizing these issues: An example from Waltman, Bergom, Hollenshead, Miller, and August (2012) from *The Journal of Higher Education* suggests that administrators "could significantly improve the level of job satisfaction and institutional commitment of [contingent faculty members] by supporting their teaching efforts, enacting policies that promote job security and advancement opportunities, and creating inclusive climates" (p. 431). The underlying gap in current research is that no existing publication has yet been able to articulate

exactly *how* this essential work could be done or even started.

### **Contingent Faculty in the Public Eye**

The narrative for contingent faculty in public-news sites explains their work situation, and it is, more often than not, painted as a very bleak picture. This role/rank of teacher is overworked and underpaid. Institutions are berated for “treating [contingent] faculty members as second-class citizens” (Mangan, 2015). Scandalous article titles like “9 Reasons Why Being an Adjunct is Terrible” (Kingkade, 2013) and “From Graduate School to Welfare: The PhD Now Comes With Food Stamps” (Patton, 2012) essentialize the story, giving resounding accounts and personal stories and calling the situation involving contingent faculty “the dirty little secret of higher education.” Appeals to pathos meant to upset readers exist in many public websites. In *USA Today*, Peligri (2014) interviews a handful of adjuncts on their financial woes and asserts that the “unfair practices” surrounding the treatment of adjuncts negatively affects students. In *The Chronicle of Higher Education* Jones (2012) calls the situation of deprofessionalizing higher education “alarming” and Jenkins (2014) points out the damaging effects of “adjunctification” firsthand, noting that the practice “harms the faculty as a whole.” In his listicle “9 Reasons,” Kingkade (2013) shares with the wide audience of *The Huffington Post* the major grievances of contingent faculty, including working at multiple institutions, low salary, tenuous job statuses, and inadequate materials and office spaces. Machado’s (2015) manifesto in *The New Yorker* calls the whole situation “a grim perversion of the power of teaching.” As expected, real solutions or answers in these texts are scarce, just like in the academic studies: Reporters throw up their hands and yell, “We should *do something* about this!” Yet concrete suggestions are



rarely suggested, largely because the topic still feels like a fresh wound. English

Professor Rob Jenkins' (2014) opinion piece in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* notes:

Unfortunately, much of the rhetoric surrounding the hiring of contingent faculty members remains emotionally charged, which is understandable, perhaps, but not particularly helpful. Bitterness and frustration, however justifiable, lead to impractical demands, unrealistic expectations, and in some cases, further inequities.

In just a few cases (Lewin, 2014; Miller, 2015; Schmidt, 2015), these more public stories have begun to suggest taking contingent faculty issues a step further than the academic research studies; Jones (2012) suggests, “As the saying goes, don’t mourn, organize. Organizations like Adjunct Action and Faculty Forward support contingent faculty on a national scale and regional iterations try to buoy spirits in more local contexts. However, no research has yet been completed on the outcomes of unionization efforts and how they may affect the contingent faculty experience. There is a gap in the knowledge of firsthand contingent faculty experiences that move beyond this “bitterness and frustration” trope. Additionally, current research fails to offer concrete suggestions in ways to improve contingent faculties’ work conditions and programmatic support services that are offered to them. These gaps prompted me, as a researcher and junior WPA, to reexamine the ways in which we gather information from and provide support to part- and full-time non-tenure track faculty.

The “familiar trope” (Brunk-Chavez, 2014) of the plight of contingent faculty assumes that these teachers are in these positions for good unless, of course, they decide to leave the profession altogether, while GTAs are well-supported though their positions as teachers are considered provisional, as they eventually will earn their doctorates and move onto bigger and better things. In reality, this is not always the case. This

discrepancy in stories between GTAs and contingent faculty is something that this study seeks to address through the investigation of one writing teacher's perceptions of her work, her relationships with coworkers and the writing program, and her outlook on what these roles say about the institution as a whole. The experiences of the participant, who has experience as a GTA, a part-time adjunct, and a full-time NTT faculty member, might provide WPAs with an awareness of "how people *feel* about what they do" (Adler-Kassner, 2008, p. 29), so that WPAs can provide ways to change the current stories (in research and in the media) about writing teachers in various roles. This study addresses the gap in WPA-specific studies of contingent faculty members and also provides an in-depth look into the changes in perceptions, experiences, and motivations of a single writing teacher as she moved through multiple teacher roles/ranks in the institutional context of a writing program. The ultimate goal for this inquiry is to show, through institutional ethnographic inquiry, how teachers' experiences are invisibly shaped by their role or rank in the institution and the larger institutional context in which they work. By analyzing the results, the WPA audience can then use this information to contribute to the continuing conversations (in the NCTE, for example, and in even wider venues) about contingent faculty perspectives and treatment. Specifically, I seek to answer the following research question: In what ways can the changing experiences of writing teachers inform how WPAs support writing teachers in multiple roles or ranks?

## **The Study**

To answer this question, I drew from a larger research project and focused on one participant's experiences (out of the nine participants in the larger study). I used institutional ethnography as my methodology. The methodology, participant information, and data collection and analysis procedures are described below.

### **Institutional Ethnography as Methodology**

This study is an institutional ethnography, a methodology whose goal is to investigate an institution or organization “to discover how our everyday lives and worlds are embedded in and organized by the relations that transcend them, relations coordinating what we do with what others are doing elsewhere and elsewhere” (Griffith and Smith, 2014). Institutional ethnography situates its research in the material realities of an institution; that is, how individuals who work within the institution perceive of the work that they do, and how these perceptions are informed by the conditions of their work. Moreover, this methodology foregrounds both participants and researchers as materially situated, intertwined within the local contexts present during the time of the study. This study, like all institutional ethnographies, explores the *problematics* (a “situated point of entry”) found among the *ruling relations*, what institutional ethnography creator Dorothy E. Smith (2006, p. 8) calls the “extraordinary yet ordinary complex of relations [...] that connect us across space and time and organize our everyday lives”; or, the social mechanisms in place that “sanction doing, knowing, and being” within the institution (LaFrance and Nicholas, 2012, p. 151, 138).

The kinds of findings that institutional ethnographies share are especially important for writing program administrators, who are “frequently called upon to explain *how things are happening*” in a writing program, and it benefits WPAs to know the

unique value systems and lived experiences of teachers in response to their local conditions (LaFrance, 2016, p. 2, emphasis in original). Institutional ethnography has proved to be an effective way to study not just the participant's experiences in general, but also how her movement through three different teacher roles/ranks informs the diverse practices and outlooks of teachers in varied positions that, when combined, "speak to who we are, how we identify, and what we value within the hierarchical structures of the workplace we call 'a writing program'" (LaFrance, 2016, p. 2).

### **The Participant, Lex**

Lex is currently a full-time non-tenure track faculty member in the writing program of a large university in the Southwest. She earned her MFA degree in fiction writing from the same institution and was employed as a graduate teaching associate during her three years working toward her MFA. The year after graduating with her MFA, Lex was employed by the same writing program as a part-time adjunct. At the time of data collection, she was "on the cusp of a new role" in the writing program, that being hired as a full-time writing instructor. She was one of nine participants in a larger study of second language (L2) writing teachers, but she was the only participant who had traversed three different teacher roles/ranks within the university writing program: GTA to adjunct faculty member to full-time NTT writing instructor. This unique fact combined with the revealing commentary she shared about her perceptions and experiences in holding each role prompted me to focus solely on Lex for this article. Lex's experiences are telling for a WPA, who must think through the values and singular experiences of individual teachers to manage, direct, and supervise staff and to share these experiences with larger governing bodies that make institutional changes and decisions.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

Lex completed two rounds of interviews from an initial list of interview questions (Appendix A), as well as a follow-up focus group interview with two other participants (Appendix B). During these interviews, she was encouraged to provide as much information as she wished, even if it meant straying from the original question list. The first round of interviews for this study occurred at the very start of the Fall 2014 semester, when Lex was about to begin her first semester as a full-time instructor. The second interview was conducted about a month later. During these interviews, Lex was asked to describe her position(s) and her perceptions and experiences working in the writing program, including any training she had received, her relationships with coworkers and members of the administrative staff, and the positives and negatives of her job. Lex also sat in on a follow-up focus group interview with two other full-time instructors in mid-February of the Spring 2015 semester. Her commentary analyzed in this article comes from these three sessions of data collection.

## **Data Analysis**

Lex's interview responses were recorded and transcribed by me. I then coded her responses using three major categories, listed in Table 1 below; roughly, these major categories gave Lex space to describe her educational background and teacher training experiences, to define the work and various positions she held within the writing program, and to evaluate the many aspects of her job as it shifted into various roles over time.

Table 1: Categories Used in Transcriptions

Category	Title	Specifics
1	Education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational background of participant</li> <li>• Training experiences before university</li> <li>• Training experiences at university (mainstream and L2 writing)</li> </ul>
2	Work in the writing program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describing position(s) in the writing program</li> <li>• Teaching L2 writing students</li> <li>• Communication with writing program (policies, L2-specific)</li> <li>• Relationships with coworkers</li> <li>• Relationships with administration</li> <li>• Mapping out participant's essential job tasks</li> <li>• Keyword search: <i>Community</i></li> </ul>
3	Evaluation of their job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positives of teaching</li> <li>• Struggles, frustrations, suggestions for improvement</li> <li>• How participant describes job to others</li> <li>• Keyword search: <i>Contingent faculty</i></li> </ul>

Upon reorganizing the transcriptions of Lex's interviews into new categories, a number of trends appeared that were directly related to the three teaching roles/ranks she held in the writing program (GTA, part-time adjunct, and full-time NTT instructor).

### Lex's Experiences

The purpose of this study was to learn more about Lex's experiences and perceptions of her work, her work relationships in three different teacher ranks/roles within the writing program as she moved through her multi-year teaching career as a graduate teaching associate, part-time adjunct faculty member, and full-time non-tenure-track faculty member. The context of the Writing Programs and larger programmatic and

institutional structures (e.g., training, course loads, job descriptions and expectations) affected Lex's perceptions of her job. Lex's specific experiences and insights shifted as her teacher role/rank changed from GTA to adjunct to full-time NTT faculty member. Furthermore, knowledge and experience gained from a previous role/rank often carried over to certain aspects of the succeeding roles/ranks.

### **Lex as GTA**

Lex's MFA program funding came with a Teaching Associate (TA) position. Originally, she didn't even think she would take the funding because of her reticence to teach:

To be honest, I always thought teaching was the scariest thing in the world. Teachers were always my role models, but it seemed like something I couldn't do. It seemed really scary to be at the front of the room, commanding everyone's attention, and it seemed like oftentimes it wasn't just a matter of commanding people's attention with your knowledge or skill set, but also with your personality... and I've always found that idea daunting. [laughs] So when I got my fellowship offer to [the university], I sort of debated whether I wanted to go here or not, because it was sort of associated with the teaching assistantship. But then I did decide to come here, because I was like, I'll get the chance to learn something new, to stretch myself in a new direction.

From the very beginning of the interview, it was clear that Lex's personality—ambitious, cautious, methodical—colored the choices she made in her work as an L2 writing teacher. The majority of her commentary regarding her GTA days is focused on the training she received to prepare to teach, rather than the teaching itself. It comes as no surprise that, as a GTA, she felt supported by her TA trainers and called herself “well-versed” in the goals and expectations of the writing program. She valued the cohort of graduate students and teachers new to ASU, enjoying the opportunity to talk about her classroom experiences. Her teaching materials and texts were “largely dependent on other

people,” and she said that without the “community” of her training cohort, she would not have been as successful.

With a fiction writing background, Lex came into her TAship without any knowledge of rhetoric and composition theory (let alone any L2 writing theory). Training as a TA provided her with both the theoretical background necessary to ground her practice and the practical knowledge necessary to build upon her experience and improve over time:

[N]ot only do I feel like I’m doing the right thing, but I feel like I have the tools to be able to refine my teaching, refine my pedagogy, and do even better for them. That was something the [training] definitely gave me. [...] As an MFA student, you don’t *have to* take any rhet/comp classes, *at all*.

In fact, Lex had such a positive time in her training experiences as a TA that, once she moved into the full-time NTT faculty position, she speculated about holding a similar role: “I think it would be a really good opportunity to mentor TAs because I learned so much from my mentors. I really valued them.” Because TAs are so well supported, especially in their first year or so, the mentoring experience stays with them and seems to transfer to their future teaching relationships.

### **Lex as Part-Time Adjunct Faculty Member**

Perhaps the starkest differences in Lex’s interview commentary were the positive descriptions of her experiences as a GTA versus the very negative descriptions surrounding her time as an adjunct.

**Material reality woes.** Overall, Lex felt she was not valued by the program or the institution during the two semesters she spent teaching a two-course adjunct load. Her sense of dissatisfaction stemmed from things as simple as her office placement as an



adjunct:

As an FA, it is *extremely* isolating. [...] on a very physical, geographical basis, we are separated from anybody else, and I think that's a recent situation. We were literally put in offices that were away from people of any other rank, and I think that was done to prevent dissatisfaction from brewing in the ranks. [...] We didn't really have a chance to socialize in the office with other people who *weren't* FA's.

FA's are temporary. Their contracts are renewed on a per-semester basis. The year that I graduated, because of [the university's] response to the ACA (Affordable Care Act), the FA's were limited to only teaching two classes. So [...] their time and their physical presence on campus was limited by the university in response to the health care act. So, not only do I feel like there were attitudes [that were] much more skeptical and much more cynical towards the community—the “community” that my office mates perceived had abandoned them, was exploiting them... there was also just physically less of a chance to get to see people, to talk to people, and to find people who had any sort of, like, “psychic energy” left for engaging with their peers.

Lex also mentioned the (lack of) monetary compensation that made her unwilling to put forth more effort toward her teaching, citing her situation as “*not* economically sustainable.” She reflected, I just *constantly* had all this anxiety, all this pressure. This constant sense of emergency about what I needed to do to make my life different.” Lex went on:

When you're already getting paid *so little*, and are so *clearly* dispensable to the university—it's a hard position to be in. To be like, ‘I *know* I need to put more into these students, because they *need* more help... and at the same time, anything that I put into them will help them, and on some level will help *me* as a person, because I'll feel like I've fulfilled my obligations toward them and toward myself, but then you feel like you're getting... screwed over [by the school]. Like, anything extra that I do is all for free, and without any other sort of material reward. [...] And there's not that much time to be involved in the community when we're both frantically trying to figure out how we can support ourselves.

As an adjunct, Lex felt strongly that “[she] was *not* a valued member of the community.” She continued, “That [position] did not really empower me to say things—especially when there is no job security. It's like, they could let me go whenever, why am I going to

say anything to stick out my neck, because I'm so vulnerable?"

**Adjuncts and communication with coworkers.** From a communication standpoint, Lex cited only one fellow adjunct that she talked to on a regular basis, but she admitted that the conversations were usually negative and filled with commiseration about their plight. Lex mentioned potential opportunities she did not take to get more involved in the writing program community because of her position:

I felt like there were a couple of things that I could have done and I thought they would have been interesting and helpful to my colleagues. Kind of small things but potentially something I could put on my resume, like volunteering [...] But then I was like... Why? [laughs] I know it's bad, but I feel like, *why* do *anything* extra when I'm not even getting compensated for what I'm doing right now? There were a few opportunities that presented themselves where I was like, "I just can't do this right now." [...] I don't think you can expect FA's to come to meetings, because they are not in any way getting compensated for any extra time that they spend on campus.

Furthermore, Lex felt as though the adjunct role was stigmatized among the other teaching roles/ranks in the program (full-time instructors and fully-funded TAs). She recollected an anecdote from the writing program's annual fall convocation, a meeting for all writing program teachers regardless of role/rank:

I didn't feel like a very legitimate member of the community [as an FA]. You know, even talking to people casually, like at convocation—people would ask, "What are you teaching?" and then like when you say you're an FA, you can see this little light in their eyes go out, like, "Oh—you're not going to be around very long." Like, you can see that they feel like they... like there's that much less of a reason for them to engage in conversation with you, because they feel you don't have that much to give back to them. It's very palpable—the difference between an FA and an instructor is very keenly felt by most FAs.

Often adjuncts teach only one or two classes and who, in many institutions, may not even have adequate meeting or office space. It is reasonable to connect this fact with Lex's feeling like an outsider. The defeatist attitude perpetuates even more when these part-

timers are not valued by the larger institutional community.

**Adjuncts and the administration.** Lex called the connection between adjuncts and the writing program “largely one-way” and also felt unjustified in seeking out administrative help or support, even when things were going well in her teaching:

During my first year as an [adjunct], I felt *really* isolated. You know, I felt like it had to be a *big* deal to go seek out someone. Like, I couldn't just go into [the Director of L2 Writing's] office and say, “Let's chat!” for example. Like, it had to be some sort of serious issue or problem. And I wasn't having any having serious issues or problems. So I felt like I wasn't justified in seeking out any mentor figures, and I didn't have access to any peers.

Teaching two classes in a space where she felt exploited and undervalued and constantly worrying about being able to stay afloat financially took a serious toll on Lex. When asked what her biggest struggles and frustrations were as an adjunct, she swiftly replied with a sad smile, “The horrible pay and complete lack of affirmation.” But she is well aware of why people like her stay in adjunct positions (or any contingent faculty positions where they are being treated unfairly): their love for teaching and for the students they teach. Lex commented on the expendable but essential role of the adjunct:

These things are awful, but I just like doing it too much. There's nothing else I would like doing more. And I think on some level, the university knows that, and they're like, well it doesn't matter how low we pay. People will keep filling up these classes.

As an adjunct, Lex enjoyed the teaching aspect and the fact that her schedule allowed her to work on her fiction writing. However, the negative aspects of her everyday work experience tainted her overall perception of the work that she did, so much that, when asked about her job, she felt it necessary to qualify the description:

This has happened to me a lot—people are like, “Oh, you teach at a university? That's amazing!” And then I feel weirdly compelled for personal reasons to qualify that I'm adjunct faculty, so they don't get the *wrong idea*. [laughs] Like, I don't want you to think that I'm more... professionally successful than I am!

What a weird situation to be in. [laughs again]

Because she felt so disconnected from coworkers and from the larger administration, Lex described her circumstance bleakly: her “personal sense of value” as a writing teacher came “almost entirely from [her] students.” It should go without saying that Lex was elated when she applied and was hired for an instructor position in the writing program—a full-time, non-tenure-track faculty position. It is interesting to note that the array of negative experiences she had as an adjunct strongly influenced the perception of her work as she transitioned into a full-time role/rank.

### **Lex as Full-Time NTT Faculty Member**

The relief Lex felt was palpable during the initial interviews, knowing that her time as an adjunct was all but over, and her new full-time teaching career would begin (“Finally!” she exclaimed). The follow-up focus group interviews were recorded after Lex had one semester of full-time teaching under her belt. When asked about her job, she commented that it had been “the hardest semester ever.” In this first semester, Lex taught five courses—four as full-time and then a fifth class as an “overload”—“teaching five classes [...] back to back.” She felt burned out, so much so that the spring semester, Lex chose to stick to only four classes. She reported, “I never thought I would have the day where I thought four classes was so easy. It feels *so easy* compared to five.”

**Managing full-time work compared to adjunct work.** Lex was positive when describing her new full-time job, citing first the weight that was lifted off her financially:

It’s made more of a difference in my personal life, I guess. I mean, in terms of actually being able to financially actually survive. I feel like I have a lot more, even though I’m working harder in some ways, I have more time for my own creative writing, because I’m not stressed out 24/7 about having to survive financially. I’m not constantly having to think about other jobs I need to get; I have this one job that I’m... I know what I need to do and I do it.

Another positive for Lex was the time she had to connect with other teachers, being on campus full-time:

I think one thing that's positive is that you know, and any point in time, if you're struggling, that there are people who share your struggles, who have been there in the past, who might have strategies to help you deal with them. I've gotten quite a few interesting ideas for materials that I could incorporate into the class, or for activities that I could do, or different kinds of assignments I could assign—just from chatting with people.

Because she wasn't preoccupied with making ends meet financially, and because she had a more dependable presence on campus, Lex felt more comfortable reaching out to office mates and other coworkers for support.

Lex also attributed her contentment with the full-time job to fastidious planning and time management skills when it came to her teaching to ensure she wasn't working for more hours than she was getting paid for—something that many NTT contingent faculty do not do as meticulously as she did.

I very rigorously track the number of hours I spend on anything related to teaching. I write it down in a log book, and I have a maximum that I will work every week, and I won't go beyond that. [...]right now, for teaching four, it's like 38 hours a week. I won't go beyond that. And I guess it is kind of arbitrary. It's based on what I see when I look around and see what people make in the private sector: how much they're making for that amount of work. [N: Does this include class time too?] Yes. So, I don't answer emails, you know, throughout the day. I have a designated couple times during the day that I'll go to my computer and answer all my emails at one shot. But I won't just answer them as they come in, because that's my time that no one's paying me for. I won't just sit down and bang out a few activities here or there—I schedule a couple hours per week to that, and do it all in that one time. I try to do a really good job of containing that away from the rest of my life, because I don't want to do work that I'm not getting paid for.

With the large (and growing) class sizes in Lex's institution, time management skills like hers seem like a necessity. Coping with the workload is a material reality that all writing

teachers encounter, and this reality came into a definite focus when Lex's institution made a change in the full-time NTT faculty job description from a 4/4 teaching load to a 5/5.

**The 4/4 to 5/5.** Interestingly, whereas the other two full-time writing teachers in the follow-up focus group interview were undoubtedly furious and up in arms about the institutional change in their job description, Lex was, as she called it, "the only dissenting voice" in the group. It was her experience as an "exploited," "vulnerable," "isolated," and "dispensable" part-time adjunct that gave Lex her divergent perception. She explained very clearly:

I feel like this [change from a 4/4 to a 5/5] is par for the course. I never... from the beginning, I've always felt expendable to [the university]. And when this happened, when we got the emails, it was just, "Okay, batten down the hatches, this is happening *again*." I feel like there's never been a time where I've felt secure here—or valued. I'm here because it works for me, for my schedule. Because I think it would be hard for me to find a private-sector job, where I could have so much of my own time for my writing, which is the most important thing for me. So, that's the only reason I'm here. From the beginning, I've always felt like [the institution doesn't] care either way. And I have absolutely no power or no voice in the department, so I'm just going to use it for my own purposes. So this hasn't changed my outlook; it's only validated what I've felt since day one about [the university].

In the follow-up focus group interviews, such discouraging statements from an obviously dedicated and hardworking writing teacher stood in stark comparison to the tears shed and frustration felt by the other full-time faculty members when asked about the 4/4 to 5/5 change. Lex was able to look at the change in job description objectively, though her reasons for staying in the position (presumably shaped by her adjunct experience) were disheartening at best. Even as she moved into a full-time position, Lex kept her traumatic experiences as an adjunct in recent memory, saying that as a full-time member of the

writing program:

I'm going to be tempted to go, "Oh, my struggles are over for now because I'm not an [adjunct]." But I know there are still people in my office who are [adjuncts], and they basically are like, great for you, but this still sucks. Like, this is still a horrible situation and it's tempting to be like, it doesn't matter to me anymore because I'm [full-time], but... I *don't* think it's good for students, I *don't* think it's good for the community to have people who are, like, who are valued at such a different level as the rest of the people.

As a GTA, Lex enjoyed "the good life" filled with close relationships with her cohort and her TA trainers. She felt connected to and supported by the writing program, which made her transition to part-time adjunct all the more negative. As an adjunct, Lex endured firsthand the financial stress and reclusive solitude of the part-time teaching lifestyle. The realities of her work life drained her, and she grew more and more negative as her adjunct time wore on. As expected, then, Lex's perceptions of her full-time NTT faculty position were much more positive, even when the institution changed her workload distribution without the teachers' consent, even when her coworkers openly displayed their anger and disappointment with the institution and threatened to leave the writing program. The history Lex has with her institution and her writing program as she moved from one role/rank to another affected her perceptions of her work life—and Lex's story is useful for WPAs as they compare relevant literature about teacher roles/ranks with the experiences of one particular teacher in a specific context. Though Lex's account is that of one teacher, her experience is informative because it is shared by many other contingent faculty at this institution and beyond. Knowing more about these singular practices can contextualize what teachers of different roles/ranks like and dislike, as well as value in their work and may help change the currently accepted stories that are told about writing teachers.

## Discussion

The predominant implication of Lex's interviews is that much of what she shared in her reflective experiences as GTA, adjunct, and full-time NTT faculty member aligned with current literature about these teacher roles/ranks, both in professional and academic documents/studies and leading stories shared in more public (online) venues. However, certain aspects of Lex's commentary are either in opposition to what these sources say, or it reveals perspectives of the writing teacher experience not generally studied or shared. Research studies, the majority of which address the graduate TA population (Long, Holburg, and Taylor, 1996; Levernz and Goodburn, 1998; Stancliff and Goggin, 2007; Rupiper Taggart and Lowry, 2011; Reid and Estrem, with Belcheir, 2012; Elder, Schoen, and Skinnell, 2014), put a lot of emphasis on the training of TAs to teach writing classes, providing TAs with rhet/comp background, and mentoring them as they move through their doctoral programs and into more professionalized roles. Certainly Lex felt supported by her TA trainers, especially because she felt she lacked theoretical background in rhetoric and composition, and also because the TA trainers were her direct connection to the administrative team in the writing program. She was also bolstered by the relationships she made through her TA training cohort. The simple fact that Lex's TA-focused commentary in interviews focused very little on her actual *teaching* experiences and more so on her own theoretical and practical training is an indication that WPAs and teacher trainers might consider offering similar training and cohort opportunities for teachers of all ranks/roles, provided such initiatives fit teachers' busy schedules.

As a contingent faculty member, both as a part-time adjunct and as full-time NTT



faculty, Lex's perceptions of her work seem to match the trending "stories" told about these teacher roles/ranks in widespread and widely read public publications. Her time as an adjunct was "*extremely* isolating" with very little opportunity to create a community within the writing program, because she was preoccupied with making ends meet financially. She felt her material conditions were inadequate. Though her perceived community improved as a full-time instructor, she continued to perceive that the institution devalued her position—in the wake of a 4/4 to 5/5 course load increase, and even though she maintained she would stay in her position. As both adjunct and NTT faculty, Lex's sense of self-worth as an educator came not from the support of administrators, mentors, or coworkers, but largely from her students. A 2012 *Journal of Higher Education* article by Waltman, Bergom, Hollenshead, Miller, and August corroborates these feelings; in their study of NTT faculty, they found their focus group "overwhelmingly enjoy[ed] teaching and working with students" (p. 418), finding the teaching aspect of their job "rewarding and satisfying" (p. 419). Furthermore, "In some cases, the satisfaction [NTT faculty] derive from teaching is the primary reason they stay in their positions" (p. 419).

Lex's commentary also aligns with the American Association of University Professors' report "Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession" (2003; updated 2014), who recognized that too often in the life of a NTT teacher, "little care is taken to enhance their professional development and advancement" (p. 174). As an adjunct, Lex was unwilling to "stick her neck out" and do more for and within the writing program, and as a full-time instructor, she was simply too busy to add anything more into her schedule. The AAUP continues:

Contingent faculty, both part and full time, are constantly confronted with reminders of their lack of status in the academic community. [...] [T]hese inequities weaken the whole profession and diminish its capacity to serve the public good. (p. 174)

Lex experienced feelings of embarrassment in having to tell full-time teachers she was “just an adjunct,” and her relief at landing a full-time job was diminished by the realization that there were still adjuncts being “exploited” by the institution.

Perhaps the most surprising finding in Lex’s interviews is the way she dealt with the 4/4 to 5/5 teaching load increase put in place by her institution. The other full-time NTT faculty in the study expressed the same old “bitterness and frustration” (Jenkins, 2014) in their response to the change, an understandable reaction, though not a particularly helpful one in addressing the issue head-on or taking steps to solve the problem. Instead, Lex felt grateful for her full-time position in spite of the threat of a 5/5 teaching load and unsurprised that her institution would make a decision like this: “[I]t’s only validated what I’ve felt since day one about [the university].”

The reasons for Lex’s reaction could be attributed to a number of factors. First, her personality and overall attitude toward her teaching differed from the other participants; she alone calculated the hours she would work each week commensurate to her pay and did not exceed that time, no matter what. It might also be that Lex’s relatively long-term history with the institution (and her experience in multiple teacher roles/ranks) was another factor. Because she had once felt very supported by the writing program (as a GTA), and because she had also experienced the opposite end of the spectrum with regard to departmental and institutional support (as an adjunct), her outlook on the 4/4 to 5/5 change in workload distribution differed from the other

participants in the study who had not held all of these roles/ranks. Lex's history in the program revealed to her the way the institution treated its writing teachers of all roles/ranks, and therefore she took the news more in stride than the other participants. She grasped the injustices experienced by contingent faculty, but she did not feel there was anything she could do. Acknowledging the experiences and practices of an individual who is part of a much, much larger institution is valuable for any WPA, as individuals' work lives can be collected together to inform the decisions a WPA makes in managing, directing, and supervising those who work in the writing program. A better understanding of what is happening "on the ground" in a program may also help WPAs begin to see where individual experiences may divert from the "familiar tropes" (Brunk-Chavez, 2010) and "stories" (Adler-Kassner, 2008) being told about teachers of all roles/ranks in both the literature of the field and the publications for the general population. I suggest that individual accounts like these be collected by WPAs (using institutional ethnographic methods) to gather data to work toward a comprehensive understanding of contingent faculty perceptions.

### **Conclusions**

What can WPAs (realistically) do to learn more about and help to change the stories about teacher roles/ranks? And where else might they look for resources to help solve these issues? The answer, of course, is far from simple. Thus far, more progressive ideas to contribute to finding solutions have been found outside the fields of writing program administration or rhetoric and composition.

### **What is Happening Elsewhere**

The majority of the literature on how to start tackling issues of teacher roles/ranks seems to be found in other places: for example, in a *Change Magazine* article by scholars of education (Kezar and Sam, 2013); in a report by doctoral students of sociology and anthropology (Allison, Lynn, and Hoverman, 2014); and in an article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* by a reporter who specializes in academic equity and labor issues (Schmidt, 2014 and 2015).

**Institutionalization.** Kezar and Sam’s (2013) look at ways to “move forward changes in policies and practices for contingent faculty” (p. 58) has its grounds in theoretical framework in the change-making process of *institutionalization*. This is the process of change “that becomes sustainable and embedded into the fabric of the institution” (p. 59). Kezar and Sam cite social psychologist and organizational development expert Edgar H. Schein’s text *Organizational Culture and Leadership* to assert that “when trying to create change in an organization, the key is trying to find a way to make it part of the culture of the organization—basic assumptions, norms and values, and policies and practices” (p. 59; from Schein, 1992). The community (or culture) that Lex refers to having as a GTA or full-time NTT faculty member (or missing, as an adjunct) is a vital aspect of the well-being of individual teachers, as well as the organizational whole. Institutionalization, broadly, has three phases:

1. Mobilization: Developing awareness, creating a network, breaking invisibility
2. Implementation: Developing a rationale; creating a regular meeting or task force; garnering outside pressure from unions, media, students, and accreditors, among others
3. Institutionalization: Addressing the climate of the campus, moving beyond small-scale to entire campus  
(Kezar and Sam, 2013, p. 80-81)

To connect institutionalization to this specific study, obtaining accounts like Lex’s is a first step in *mobilization*, developing awareness for individual teacher perspectives and perceptions and breaking the invisibility that contingent faculty (like Lex) may feel in their positions. The WPA may then move into the *implementation* phase after recruiting a cohort of contingent faculty who are committed to work on a task force. Only after these first two steps are established can the *institutionalization* phase begin. WPAs can use these three steps, as Kezar and Sam (2013) do for contingent faculty in their study, to aid all roles/ranks of teachers in creating a more cohesive, collective community within their writing programs. This study serves as one story to help develop awareness of teachers’ lived experience in a writing program, but there is a lot more work to be done in the realm of institutionalization to be successful in “foregrounding values and appreciating and respecting” all writing teachers” (p. 81).

**Steps to improve learning conditions.** In the 2014 report “Indispensable but Invisible,” authors Allison, Lynn, and Hoverman quantify the anecdotal stories about contingent faculty that have lately run rampant. 271 contingent faculty members were surveyed from their home institution, George Mason University, and the authors use the results to give a list of “suggested actions” (see Table 2 below) for university administrators to use in starting change-making work, including adequate compensation and benefits, job security, and attention to overall equity, as well as ideas for “improving learning conditions” overall (p. 65).

Table 2

*Suggested Actions for University Administrators (adapted from Allison, Lynn, & Hoverman, 2014, p. 65)*

Compensation	Benefits	Job Security	Equity
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay equity between contingent and tenure track faculty of similar rank</li> <li>• Compensation for work outside of compensated time</li> <li>• Compensation for trainings</li> <li>• Incentivize professional development</li> <li>• Travel money for conferences</li> <li>• Compensation for additional time spent to make courses accessible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking fees on sliding scale</li> <li>• Expand healthcare: Use the ACA as an opportunity to provide health care more broadly</li> <li>• Advocate for the inclusion of part-time faculty in student loan forgiveness</li> <li>• Offer childcare to these faculty members</li> <li>• Offer retirement options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Push for longer contracts</li> <li>• If a class is dropped because of enrollment, find other work for the faculty member</li> <li>• Move away from “temporary” employment and toward more term and tenure line positions</li> <li>• At the college and department level, genuinely consider contingent faculty for tenure track and term positions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representation on faculty senate and department meetings</li> <li>• Consider all faculty in [university’s] well-being initiatives</li> <li>• Office space</li> <li>• Support research of contingent faculty</li> <li>• Access to basic office equipment (e.g., computer, printer, phone)</li> </ul>
<b>Improving Learning Conditions</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give faculty a minimum of one month to prepare a course</li> <li>• Departments should facilitate course development if less than a month until course begins</li> <li>• All faculty should have access to office or private area to meet with students to comply with FERPA laws</li> <li>• Departments should integrate more with CTFE for orientations and trainings of all faculty</li> <li>• Departments should communicate copy codes and copier locations to all instructors</li> <li>• Copy centers should be open until 10pm to support instructors during class times</li> <li>• Better communication between student service offices and contingent faculty to better address student needs</li> <li>• Inform faculty of special needs of students before the semester begins so faculty can prepare</li> <li>• Assess how time-to-degree of grad students is impacted by teaching obligations</li> <li>• More accountability on departments’ overuse of graduate student faculty</li> </ul>			

Tackling the list of suggested actions that Allison, Lynn, and Hoverman (2014) may help provide WPAs with ways to improve practical concerns of all teachers

(not just contingent faculty). In particular, the suggestions in the “Compensation” and “Job Security” columns speak directly to Lex’s critiques of her adjunct and full-time NTT faculty roles/ranks, as well as the “Office Space” suggestion under “Equity” (p. 65). Furthermore, the suggested actions work toward the improvement of overall learning conditions for students—assuaging claims that contingent faculty’s working conditions have an adverse effect on those in their classrooms. If WPAs can advocate for suggested actions similar to those Allison, Lynn, and Hoverman recommend, they may feel less “guilty” (Brunk-Chavez, 2014) asking adjuncts and full-time NTT faculty to engage in extracurricular activities and professional development initiatives that, in turn, benefit students, the teachers themselves, and the writing program as a whole.

**Unionization.** Another item for WPAs to keep tabs on is how the unionization of contingent faculty is taking shape in or around their own institutions. Though Lex never mentions the possibility of unionizing in her context, her work in logging her work hours suggests it would be an interest of hers in the future. It is a facet of the national conversation around contingent faculty that merits some attention. Schmidt (2015) covers the rise of contingent faculty labor unions and their benefits—not only for faculty, but for campus administrators as well. Schmidt reports that this type of activism “send[s] the message that there are limits to [contingent faculty’s] exploitation by college administrations” and that “college administrators have begun to see payoffs—educational, financial, and otherwise” to help this stigmatized population “feel more satisfied and supported” in their work lives (2015). WPAs might consider learning more about unionization practices in their local institutions, and if a union is not possible, they might take steps to support all teacher ranks/roles equally in ways that are low-cost or

cost-free, for example:

[S]oliciting [...]feedback, instructing department heads to avoid last-minute class assignments or cancellations, and providing [contingent faculty] with orientation sessions, basic academic-freedom protections, and access to instructional resources, support services, and campus facilities. (Schmidt, 2015)

Interestingly, the above suggestions run very parallel to the suggested actions in “Indispensable but Invisible.” The support of WPAs and their attention to the larger conversation might encourage Lex and teachers who have similar experiences and perceptions to feel “they are part of a national movement” that can embolden them and make them feel less isolated and part of a larger, more active, more supported community (Schmidt, 2015).

That these conversations are happening in the fields of education, sociology, anthropology (and in the case of Schmidt 2015, on a public news website aimed at university faculty members and administrators) indicate that awareness of the issues involved with teacher roles/ranks is gaining some ground, though there is still a long way to go, specifically within WPAs’ own field. Though many WPAs may be acutely aware of the working conditions for their faculty members, the WPA research conducted is scarce.

### **In WPAs’ Own Backyards**

WPAs can also seek out sources from their own field, though the results are rather slim: just one article in *WPA: Writing Program Administration* has begun the conversation on how WPAs can approach the issue of teacher roles/ranks. Penrose (2012) investigates the professional identities of contingent faculty in her study. She establishes three defining elements in the “dimensions of professionalism” within an occupation (p.



112):

- (1) a specialized and dynamic knowledge base or body of expertise,
- (2) a distinctive array of rights and privileges accorded to members, and
- (3) an internal social structure based on shared goals and values.

These three dimensions, expertise, autonomy, and community, are often challenged or strained for contingent faculty. Their area of expertise is, more often than not, outside of the field of rhetoric and composition. Penrose (2012) acknowledges the irony that “though many FYC faculty have made long-term commitments to the teaching of writing, most are not members of the established profession as represented in our disciplinary discussions” (p. 109), which very closely describes Lex’s position in the writing program. Furthermore, as an adjunct and full-time NTT faculty member, Lex felt she often missed out on the “rights and status accorded to members by the broader society” (p. 115), including a respectable wage and socioeconomic stability. While she did eventually feel she had some autonomy in creating her major writing projects and assignments as a full-time teacher, Lex’s negative experiences as an adjunct adversely distorted her overall outlook as she transitioned to other roles/ranks within the program, causing her to approach what she considered a “step up” with extreme caution and wariness. The “abrogation” (p. 115) of Lex’s perception of herself as a valued member of the teaching community made work relationships as an adjunct (both with coworkers and with administrators) seemingly absent. Even as Penrose stresses that these social connections are “integral to the development of expertise and the maintenance of professional credibility” (p. 117), she acknowledges that the “practical realities of contingent employment inhibit participation in these critical forms of collegial interchange” (p. 118).

Penrose (2012) urges readers, especially WPAs, to view contingent faculty members as “collaborative and contributing” (p. 122) to the overall social structure and community/culture of a writing program. Many WPAs may already view their contingent faculty cohort in this way, but the perceptions from the contingent faculty population suggest otherwise. Should this become a more commonplace practice, Lex and other adjuncts and full-time NTT faculty may start to feel more a part of the work culture and therefore more valued—if not by the overall institution, then at least by the writing program, its WPAs, and its teachers of all roles/ranks.

The fact that Penrose (2012) alone has been published in the *WPA* journal calls for more studies to be completed and shared with the WPA community. This is not to say that dialogue isn’t happening; in fact, at the 2015 CWPA summer conference in Boise (where the conference theme was “Sustainable Writing/Program/Administrators”), Seth Kahn gave an incendiary and well-received plenary talk, which was later published in *WPA: Writing Program Administration* entitled “The Ecology of Sustainable Labor Equity in Writing Programs”—though he too reached outside of the WPA field and likened ethical labor practices in a writing program to environmental activism. Kahn asserted that a writing program community is like any ecology: “sustainable ethical labor practice depends on the same kind of respect for all a program’s inhabitants and resources,” whether GTAs, adjuncts, or full-time NTT faculty (2016).

### **Bringing it Back to *The Activist WPA***

Lex’s experiences as Graduate Teaching Associate, Part-time Adjunct, and Full-time Non-tenure-track Faculty Member are not unique, though her comprehensive trajectory of work experience and perception of each role are telling for WPAs, who can

learn from her struggles and insights to continue (or start) the conversation about varying writing teacher roles/ranks in individual programs and/or institutional contexts. To start changing the stories about teacher roles/ranks and how each fits into the larger dialogue (both in WPA and rhet/comp literature and in the public eye), Adler-Kassner (2008) suggests that WPAs “must get to the level of how people *feel* about what they do” (p. 29). This is not an easy feat; a WPA is often just one person, and (in Lex’s case) a WPA’s constituency can be huge. But for this story-changing work to happen, writing program administrators need to take the first step as activists and embrace “a constant commitment to ongoing, loud, sometimes messy dialogue among all participants in change-making work that ensures everyone is heard and, hopefully, represented” (p. 33).

Adler-Kassner (2008) gives WPAs a plan in *The Activist WPA* to make positive changes in the lives of writing teachers, starting with “developing alliances” (p. 184) with teachers regardless of whether they are GTAs, adjuncts, or a NTT faculty members. Listening to the stories of individual teachers like Lex (and participating in institutional ethnographic inquiries like this study) can help WPAs figure out which stories affect writing teachers of all roles/ranks the most, and how they as administrators might begin to understand “how things are happening” for real teachers with real lives, real values, and a real stake in the future of the writing program in which they exist.

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## ARTICLE TWO

### TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING TEACHERS: PROMOTING SPECIALIZATION WITHIN THE WRITING PROGRAM

The dramatic increase of international students in U.S. universities has necessitated many changes for writing programs. Perhaps the most important obligation in meeting the needs of second language (L2) or multilingual writers falls to writing teachers, who have had to rethink and restructure their classroom infrastructure (e.g., assignment design, readings selection, feedback and assessment practices), professional development, and pedagogies to best support this constantly growing population. These changes can be facilitated by writing program administrators, who oversee and orchestrate specialized training and professional development for teachers of first-year composition who work with multilingual writers and who also design and implement additional L2 support opportunities for all teachers in their programs.

I use the term *all teachers* in a number of different ways. First, the presence and needs of multilingual students are important for “all” teachers to consider in composition classrooms—whether the class is L2-specific or considered mainstream though historically, the concerns of multilingual students were solely the responsibility of ESL and/or applied linguistics specialists (Matsuda, 1999). This sentiment has been shared by many L2 writing scholars and WPAs over the past two decades (e.g., Silva, 1994; Roy, 1998; Ferris, 1999; Harklau, Siegal, & Losey, 1999; Santos, Atkinson, Erickson, Matsuda, & Silva; 2000; Matsuda, Canagarajah, Harklau, Hyland, & Warschauer, 2003; Matsuda, Fruit, & Barton, 2006; Preto-Bay & Hansen; 2006; Shuck, 2008; Matsuda,



2009; Miller-Cochran, 2010; Saenkhum & Matsuda, 2010; Matsuda, 2012; Matsuda, Saenkhum, & Accardi, 2013).

In “A Symposium on Fostering Teacher Quality” in *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, Brunk-Chavez (2010) urges WPAs to flip the script and resist the “familiar tropes” (p. 152) that writing programs are rife with ill-prepared and temporary writing teachers; instead, she suggests “[creating] a program community that builds upon and actively promotes the strengths of the highest quality teachers” (p. 153). This sentiment leads to the second intended meaning of the word “all”: it is meant to stand for all *roles or ranks* of teachers that comprise a writing program, whether graduate teaching associates, contingent faculty members (part- or full-time), or tenured faculty. This second interpretation is crucial to the study represented in this article, as the disparities in the participants’ training experiences and their perceptions of these experiences often varied depending on which teaching role(s) or rank(s) they held. WPAs should be expected to provide opportunities for appropriate training to all teacher roles/ranks so they can adequately support the multilingual students in their classes.

Of course, the presence and needs of multilingual writers is an issue that most (if not all) WPAs are already aware of. However, what is less known is what can actually, legitimately be done within a writing program (e.g., organizing initiatives, developing frameworks, creating professional development initiatives) considering a program’s teacher makeup, specific multilingual student population, and available time and funding. Furthermore, WPAs also need to consider alternative ways to provide teacher training and support of L2 writing initiatives and any other specializations within the writing program—specifically, what else (beyond required training practica) teachers might

“count” as training and support, and where/with whom this training/support can be found.

Another term to consider is *specialization* and what it means for the purposes of this study. I use the term *specialized* to indicate a teacher or group of teachers who have the ability to teach writing courses beyond the run-of-the-mill first-year composition courses—in this article, the specialization is in teaching multilingual FYC. To be specialized, teachers may have to go through a certain certification process that could include taking theoretical and/or pedagogical training courses or other professional development initiatives that focus on L2 writing or TESOL. Upon receiving training, teachers are then considered specialized and are able to teach courses that un-specialized teachers are not. Additional specializations that could occur in a writing program could be the areas of professional/technical writing, basic writing, WAC/WID, or digital humanities.

The present study is an attempt to understand nine L2 writing teachers’ perceptions of their L2 writing training (specialization) experiences in a large U.S. writing program. It is part of a larger institutional ethnographic research project; the goal is to determine to what extent a *community* (of practice; Lave & Wenger, 1991), culture, or *network* (Latour, 2007) of writing teachers who specialize in teaching multilingual writers exists, and what factors contribute to these teachers’ perceptions of the kind of community that is created—positive, negative, or a dynamic mix. A supported and supportive community of teachers (regardless of specialization) contributes to the overall strength of a writing program and ultimately the success of all its stakeholders: students, teachers, and administrators. The methodology used in this study, institutional ethnography, was chosen because of its ability to reveal how WPA work is informed by

the interaction of multiple stakeholders that function together (however imperfectly) to create a working institution. I suggest that in using this methodology in researching and analyzing the material conditions of their programs and employees, WPAs can employ institutional ethnography to create a fuller picture of *how things happen* (LaFrance & Nicolas, 2012) in a writing program and what factors contribute to the program's strengths and challenges. This article's aim, then, is two-fold: first, it seeks to advocate for the use of IE as a method of inquiry/methodology *for WPAs*, and second, it seeks to use IE to analyze data collected from nine participants to make suggestions *to WPAs* regarding the training and professionalization opportunities available for teachers, should they choose to specialize in L2 writing.

## **Institutional Context**

### **Participants**

Nine teachers in the writing program participated in this study: Becky, Clare, Ilinka, Jamie, Keren, Lex, Nicky, Sam, and Zosia. All of the participants were specialized, or certified in teaching multilingual (L2 writing-informed) sections of first-year composition, meaning they had met the writing program's internal certification/training requirements to be able to teach these special sections of FYC. Individually, their training/certification process varied. Jamie and Nicky were "grandfathered in" and did not go through the L2-specific certification within the writing program; Jamie was able to teach the L2 courses because of her masters in TESOL degree and because she started teaching before the training requirement was in place, and Nicky had had past ESL teaching experience at a different university. A majority of the

participants (Becky, Clare, Ilinka, Keren, and Zosia) took the one-semester training practicum concurrently with their first semester of teaching L2 FYC. Lex and Sam were the two participants who had further training; because they were graduate students, they took an introduction to L2 Writing Theory graduate-level course in addition to the L2 teaching practicum as part of their coursework.

Of the nine participants, three were TAs at the time of data collection: Ilinka, Zosia, and Sam. Six participants were contingent faculty and were full-time Instructors at the time of data collection: Jamie, Nicky, Becky, Lex, Clare, and Keren. A number of participants had had experience in additional roles/ranks within the writing program: Jamie, Becky, and Lex were previously TAs for the program, and Lex and Clare also spent a few past semesters as part-time Faculty Associates. Table 3 below gives the relevant participant demographic information.

Table 3

*List of Participants*

<b>Name (gender)</b>	<b>Teacher role/rank at time of study</b>	<b>L2-specific training received</b>	<b>First language</b>	<b>Degree(s) held<sup>1</sup></b>
<b>Becky (f)</b>	Instructor	L2 practicum	English	MFA* in fiction
<b>Clare (f)</b>	Instructor	L2 practicum	English	PhD in English (Literature)
<b>Ilinka (f)</b>	TA	L2 practicum	Macedonian	Pursuing PhD* in Applied Linguistics
<b>Jamie (f)</b>	Instructor	No L2-specific practicum	English	M-TESOL*
<b>Keren (f)</b>	Instructor	L2 practicum	English	PhD* in

<sup>1</sup> The asterisk (\*) denotes that the degree earned by the participant was done so at the institution in this study; therefore, these participants remained at the same university to teach after their degrees had been completed.62

				English (Literature)
<b>Lex (f)</b>	Instructor	Practicum and intro to L2 graduate course	English	MFA* in fiction
<b>Nicky (f)</b>	Instructor	No L2-specific practicum	English	MA in English
<b>Sam (m)</b>	TA	Practicum and intro to L2 graduate course	English	Pursuing PhD* in English
<b>Zosia (f)</b>	TA	L2 practicum	Polish	Pursuing PhD* in Applied Linguistics

### **L2-Specific Certification Procedures**

At the time of the study, there was a certification process to be trained to teach L2 sections of FYC: a one-course teaching practicum taken concurrently with the first semester any teacher taught one of the three L2-specific FYC courses (WAC 107, ENG 107, or ENG 108). The L2 training practicum course is open to writing program teachers of all roles or ranks; graduate student teaching associates (TAs) enroll in the three-credit graduate course, but part-time adjunct teachers (faculty associates) and full-time non-tenure track faculty (instructors) have the option of enrolling in the course, for which they do not pay tuition. In the practicum, participants utilized the same curricula depending on the specific FYC course(s) they taught, including major writing projects, readings on rhetoric, and course syllabi and calendar trajectories. Additionally, practicum participants completed weekly readings in second language writing theory and pedagogy (e.g., Bommarito & Cooney, 2016; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2013; Matsuda, Cox, Jordan, & Ortmeier-Hooper, 2011), wrote reading responses/journal entries linking their readings to their classroom experiences, and discussed their day-to-day classroom experiences in the

weekly face-to-face meetings.

In semesters before data was collected for this study, there existed a two-course requirement to teach multilingual FYC: the teacher practicum, as well as an introduction to L2 Writing Theory graduate-level course. This course was more theoretically-based than the teacher practicum and included a historical introduction to L2 writing. However, a dramatic influx of international students in Fall 2011 (L2 FYC sections ballooned from 21 in Fall 2010 to 37 in Fall 2011) created a need for more people to be teaching multilingual FYC. The training requirement was reduced as a compromise in Fall 2012, though the theory-based course was still offered each fall semester (and Sam and Lex did choose to take it as grad students).

### **FYC Course Descriptions**

This study took place at a large research university in the southwestern United States, specifically within the writing program in the English department. This writing program's main responsibility is to oversee the direction of first-year composition courses in the university. The FYC course sequence is two or three classes, and the university offers mainstream and L2 sections of each course. If a student's placement scores place them below ENG 101/107, they are required to enroll in WAC 101/107, which stretches the first semester of composition over two semesters. Multilingual students are given the agency to choose whether they would like to be placed into mainstream or L2 sections. See Table 4 below for a visual of how the courses are aligned based on placement test score. (ENG 105, Honors English, is included in the placement list, but the course was not used in this study.)

Table 4

*Descriptions of Placement options for First-Year Composition Classes<sup>2</sup>*

<b>Placement Test</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Course</b>
ACT English	< 18	WAC 101 or 107
	19-25	ENG 101 or 107
	> 26	ENG 105
SAT Verbal	< 460	WAC 101 or 107
	470-610	ENG 101 or 107
	> 620	ENG 105
TOEFL	< 560 (PBT) < 220 (CBT) < 83 (iBT)	WAC 107
	> 560 (PBT) > 220 (CBT) > 83 (iBT)	ENG 101 or 107
ACCUPLACER ® (8-point system)	< 4	WAC 101 or 107
	5, 6, or 7	ENG 101 or 107
	8	ENG 105
ACCUPLACER ® (12-point system)	< 7	WAC 101 or 107
	8, 9, or 10	ENG 101 or 107
	11 or 12	ENG 105

Figure 1

*Sections of Multilingual FYC, Fall 2014<sup>3</sup>*

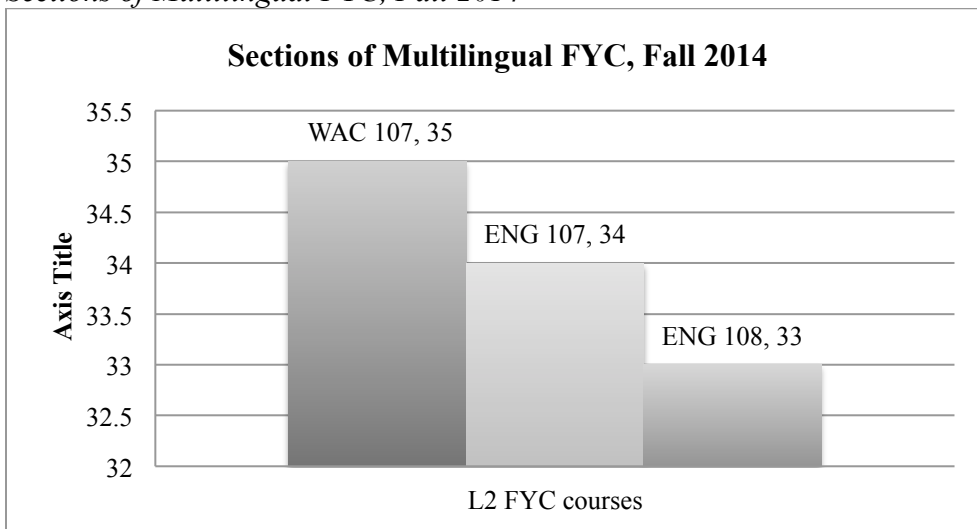
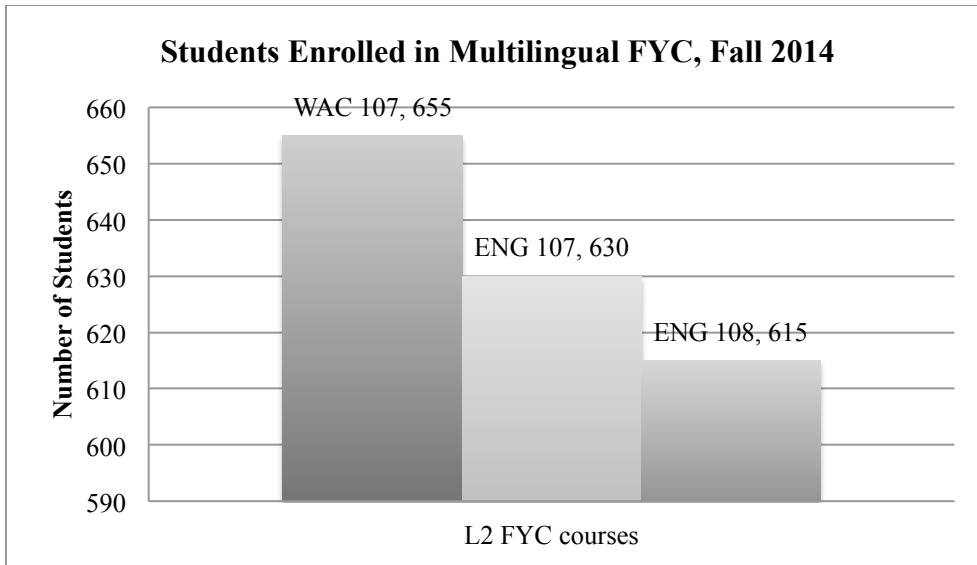


Figure 2

*Students Enrolled in Multilingual FYC, Fall 2014<sup>45</sup>*

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from the writing program's website ("What you need," 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Total sections of multilingual FYC in Fall 2014: 102.



### Teacher Roles/Ranks

In the writing program there are number of different roles or ranks of teachers available to teach first-year composition courses. Graduate teaching associates (henceforth TAs) are comprised of PhD and MFA students in English (from all graduate programs, including literature; English education; applied linguistics; or writing, rhetorics, and literacies in PhD and fiction or poetry in MFA). These TAs have a full tuition waiver and teach part-time (a 3-course teaching load each academic year) in addition to attending to their own graduate studies. Additionally, the writing program hires part-time adjunct faculty (faculty associates or FAs), whose course loads are capped at two each semester (2/2 teaching load), as well as full-time non-tenure track faculty (Instructors), whose course load was a 4/4 each academic year. FAs are not offered health insurance, but Instructors are. Two final ranks/roles, lecturers and tenured faculty, are found in the writing program however, none of the participants in this study held these roles, so they will not be discussed further.

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<sup>4</sup> Total students enrolled in multilingual FYC in Fall 2014: 1900.

<sup>5</sup> Special thanks to Demetria Baker for providing the statistics in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2.



## Methods

### Data Analysis and the Researcher in Institutional Ethnography

The overall methodology of this study (in this article, as well as the larger research inquiry that this article is a part of) is institutional ethnography. As a methodology framework, institutional ethnography does pose a few challenges that must be taken into consideration. It should be noted first that in using IE as a method of inquiry, “There is no ‘one way’ to conduct an institutional ethnography investigation” (DeVault & McCoy, 2006, p. 20). In their chapter on using interviews in an IE, DeVault & McCoy (2006) continue:

[T]he process of inquiry is rather like grabbing a ball of string, finding a thread, and then pulling it out: that is why it is difficult to specify in advance exactly what the research will consist of. Institutional ethnographers know what they want to explain, but only step-by-step can they discover whom they need to interview or what texts and discourses they need to examine. (p. 20)

Secondly, IE recognizes that the researcher herself is materially situated (LaFrance & Nicolas, 2012) within the site she is researching. In fact, generally speaking in institutional ethnographies, the research often begins because of an observed issue or problematic in the researcher’s local context and grows from there. The social relations that the researcher participates in (for example, as a graduate student and teaching associate; as a colleague or classmate) as a member of a larger social organization (for example, a writing program or a university) become the basis of her inquiry. Additionally, that two of my three dissertation committee members hold administrative

positions within the writing program was a risk for me, as I knew I might be unearthing problematics, issues, or challenges in participants' work lives that may portray these administrators' roles or actions in a negative light.

Therefore, what results in this article is the amalgamation of complex, messy, sometimes contradictory but nonetheless authentic experiences of nine individual second language writing teachers that are presented through the curation<sup>6</sup> of a researcher who is also intricately involved in the social relations found in their shared local context.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection for this study included semi-structured interviews between each participant and the researcher. Qualitative research, institutional ethnography included, considers the interview to be an “open-ended inquiry” of “talking with people” (DeVault & McCoy, 2006, p. 22-23). Semi-structured interviews included a list of scripted interview questions (see Appendices A and B for the interview guide), but participants were encouraged to expand their answers in scope and topics depending on the conversation that transpired from the initial interview questions. Participants had two interviews that were 45 minutes each. The first interviews occurred just before the fall semester began (August 2014), and second interviews occurred midway through the fall semester (October through December 2014). All interviews were recorded and then transcribed by the researcher.

Following initial transcriptions, the researcher analyzed participant transcripts and coded them by major interview question (see interview question lists in Appendix A for individual interviews and Appendix B for focus group interviews), and then by separate

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<sup>6</sup> I use the term *curate* (noun *curation*) in its Dictionary.com definition: “to pull together, sift through, and select for presentation” (2016).

participants' responses into *episodic units*, a term used by Brice<sup>7</sup> (2011). Brice describes an *episodic unit* as neither a keyword nor a key phrase; instead, it "is based on the categories in a coding system, and it lasts for as long as a participant continues to make the same kind of comment" (p. 163). For example, one of the interview questions (See Appendix B) asked if there was anything the participants wanted the writing program to know. Keren, a literature PhD student, provided an answer that did not seem finished at the end of her first response, so I prompted her to continue, thus creating a larger episodic unit.

Keren: I guess I want to make it really clear that even though this is not my area of scholarship, I *do enjoy it*. This is not a bus stop on the way to doing, you know, what I really *want* to do. In other words, I'm not just waiting for time to go by. I do enjoy what I'm doing. And if I had to do it for the rest of my life, I wouldn't be dissatisfied. But I'd want more money. [laughs] You know? I need more—I would need more recognition, because this job is *really hard*.

Me: How so?

Keren: Because it means that in many ways, I've had to reconstruct who I am as a teacher, and reconstruct how I teach students. And I have to *really* put myself within their positions in ways that I didn't have to do when I'm teaching literature. In ways that I don't have to do when I'm teaching residential students. So this job is very, very difficult, and yet it's very important, because many of these students are going to go back to their own countries. And what they've done

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<sup>7</sup> Brice (2011) uses the notion of the *episodic unit*, which was developed by Keith Grant-Davie (1992) and discussed in his original chapter "Coding Data: Issues of Validity, Reliability, and Interpretation."

and what they've learned here in the United States and at ASU is going to shape what they do and what their impressions are in their own country.

Loosely, data were organized and analyzed by recursive analysis of the interview transcripts into seventeen episodic units or major categories/trends found in table 5 below. I then regrouped each category to identify key themes and quotes from participants, resulting in four finalized episodic units.

Table 5

*Episodic Units Used in Data Analysis*

<b>Category Number</b>	<b>Episodic Unit</b>	<b>Description(s)</b>
1	Previous experiences (before teaching in the writing program)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational background</li> <li>• Past teaching and training experiences</li> </ul>
2	Working in the writing program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describing their position in the Writing Programs</li> <li>• Training (non-L2)</li> <li>• Communication of writing program policies</li> <li>• Experiences with coworkers</li> <li>• Mapping out their work experiences</li> <li>• "A day in the life" (job description)</li> <li>• Positives and negatives of their overall job in the writing program</li> <li>• Suggestions for improvement based on positives and negatives</li> </ul>

3	L2-specific commentary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching L2 writing</li> <li>• L2 students</li> <li>• L2-specific training</li> <li>• Communication of L2-specific program policies</li> <li>• Positives and negatives of working as an L2 writing teacher</li> <li>• Suggestions for improvement based on positives and negatives</li> <li>• “I am a writing teacher” (response and explanation)</li> <li>• How participants describe their L2 writing job to others</li> </ul>
4	Keyword searches of transcriptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Community”</li> <li>• “Contingent faculty” (also adjunct, non-tenure track)</li> </ul>

### Data Analysis

Following some preliminary keyword searches within the participant transcriptions, the researcher completed close readings of each interview, keeping in mind the “coordinating subjectivities” of individual perception and experience necessary in an institutional ethnographic analysis (Smith, 2005). Institutional ethnographic researcher Dorothy E. Smith (2005) draws from the work of linguist Valentin Vološinov (1973), particularly his discussion of “interindividual territory,” which recognizes that communication is a reciprocal relationship between speaker and hearer, and that this two-sided act is a constant negotiation of understanding symbols. As the curator of the nine participants’ individual experiences, I listened carefully to how each participant described and defined their role and its details, as well as the vocabulary each one used.

Idiosyncratic terms (e.g., teacher role titles: TA, FA, Instructor) specific to the research

site/context are explained whenever necessary. Participants' "everyday talk" was analyzed to determine the "experientially grounded forms of symbolic coordinating" found in the "local activities and relationships" involved in their roles as L2 writing teachers (Smith, 2005, p. 87). Determining how the participants talk about their everyday work lives helped the researcher find trends and connecting threads that drew out eventual *problematics*, or places for further research and discovery that grow out of individuals' varying orientations toward a situation, practice, or experience.

Specifically, this article reports results from the nine participants' "everyday, everynight" (Campbell & Gregor, 2004, p. 27) experiences in and perceptions of being multilingual writing specialists in a large writing program. The local, material conditions of a writing program are revealed through nine highly individualized accounts that are synthesized to better understand *how things are happening* and how core practices of L2 writing teachers take shape to adequately respond to the needs of a burgeoning international student population. Several interesting findings about the L2 writing teacher experience came to light from the interview process. The findings below are grouped into a number of trends, with initial discussion following each one. A larger discussion that incorporates multiple trends is presented at the end of the findings. These units loosely answer the following questions related to the support and training writing teachers need to specialize in teaching multilingual first-year composition:

- What are the participant experiences and perceptions of their L2-specific training?
- What additional opportunities do participants "count" as L2 writing training and support?
- What is "missing"—what are other ways that specialization can be acquired?

In light of these three questions, the results from the nine participants can be used to inform WPAs about best practices to incorporate formal and informal training and programmatic organization that takes into consideration the varying roles/ranks of teachers that comprise the program.

## **Results**

### **Training to Specialize in Teaching L2 Writing: What's Working Thus Far**

As stated above, participants' "official" (required) training experiences varied depending on their individual contexts. Of the participants whose L2 training was solely the L2 teacher training practicum, their evaluations of the training experience are diverse, with each person cited varying reasons. Zosia was satisfied with the training practicum, calling it "extremely helpful because we were able to share our experiences and our perspectives and hear what others are going through and what they're encountering. [...]" And also the fact that we were there, all together doing the same thing and thinking about the same issues." She also cited it as an opportunity that "forced everyone in that class to think about [L2] students in a little different way and consider their specific needs." She continued, "If there was one thing at [the university] that I found that was the *most* helpful, it would be the practicum." Becky agreed that the practicum was beneficial and cited the common teaching materials and the fact that all practicum participants "worked from a common syllabus" (e.g., using the same course calendar/trajectory, assignment handouts, and readings) to be helpful to the "learn-as-[you]-go" experience. She said she "frequently" went back to the shared online folders from the practicum that housed the major writing assignment introductory handouts, syllabus and semester calendars, and

samples of L2 student writing. Keren also found the Google Drive component of the L2 practicum “very helpful,” especially the student writing samples, as L2 writers “really like having writing samples to look at.” Because she was new to teaching L2 writing, Keren did not have any of her own students’ past samples, and the opportunity to share sample materials was “particularly useful” to her. As a full-time instructor, Keren also appreciated the practicum as a chance to create “casual acquaintances that I have with other teachers with whom I would not have acted otherwise.” Inherent in her instructor role was also the expectation to complete professional development—at the time of the study, the full-time non-tenure track faculty position was 80% teaching and 20% service/professional development.. Therefore, she enjoyed the practicum because for her it was a professionalization exercise: “Basically I wanted to hear, read, and see what [other L2 teachers] were doing in their classrooms. [...and] troubleshoot and brainstorm about our teaching practices.” The observations of other L2 writing teachers was an effective component in the practicum that Zosia and Clare commented on positively as well. However, not all recollections of the L2 training experience were positive.

### **Teachers’ Struggles/Frustrations with Current Training Procedures**

Beyond the practical tools novice L2 writing teachers were offered in the training practicum, there were a few negative or frustrating perspectives reported. While Clare agreed with many other participants that the practicum was a space to create a cohort of L2 colleagues, stating that “it’s *really* nice to [...] have a ‘this is a shared experience’ kind of thing,” she also felt that her overall knowledge as an experienced classroom teacher was not adequately acknowledged, leaving her feeling disrespected. She attributed this feeling to the classroom-style “setup of the thing”: “As a PhD and a



professional with many years of practice, you could get a chip on your shoulder if you're told you need to go back to school and figure all this out again." Specifically, Clare cited the weekly theoretical readings as being problematic because of their repetitiveness, with some readings being more helpful than others, asserting that "Lit review after lit review after lit review was not helpful." She also suggested having many more opportunities for practical conversations about what to do in the L2 writing classroom: "What works what doesn't? Cultural sensitivities. How to approach problems specific to L2 learners with basic comprehension. Repetition." She further explained her justification for more practicalities in the practicum as a way to bridge the gap between theory and praxis, or between tenure-track and non-tenure-track instructors:

I think that what we do as [full-time] instructors in the classroom is inherently practical. Our job is to teach and to communicate and to work directly with the student body. And many times, we are treated as a separate class of people from those whose job it is to think about pedagogy, to think about theory, and to think about these things in a different way. [...] I think they need to work a lot closely together. And I think the practicum is *trying* to do that.

According to Clare, the distinction between tenure-track and non-tenure-track writing teacher positions is that the NTT folks are seen as placing a greater emphasis on practical strategies needed for the classroom, as opposed to gaining knowledge on the theory that informs the praxis. She felt that the separation was intensified in the training practicum and wished that the connection between theoretical backgrounds and practical strategies had been better aligned and connected in her training. Clare makes an interesting point about the disparity between what she learned from the theoretical readings from the practicum and the skills she needed (but felt she was not getting from the practicum) with regard to practical classroom strategies for L2-specific pedagogy.

### **What Else “Counts” as Training and Support?**

Practicum-only participants also took advantage of additional opportunities they “counted” as training experiences beyond the practicum. Jamie and Nicky, the two participants who had no formal training to teach multilingual FYC, attributed a number of other factors as responsible for providing L2-specific training. Jamie’s M-TESOL degree prepared her for teaching L2 writers, including taking a graduate-level materials development class. She also noted that she considered most of her training to teach L2 composition to be an “on-the-job, learn from experience sort of thing” combined with overall past teaching experiences and attending L2-specific professional development workshops offered by the writing program. Nicky agreed with Jamie that the workshops were helpful, specifically because she did not have any L2 training from the writing program. Nicky was going to take the training practicum but taught an overload instead, because she did not have time in her schedule for both. She considered the workshops to be a version of training and remembers taking ideas about grading on grammar and rubrics from the workshops. Nicky stated that she would like to take the training practicum in the future if she had the time to do so: “I think it’s valuable [because] the more training that you get as a teacher, the more comfortable you feel in the classroom, the more comfortable you feel with grading these projects. And you build a cohort of coworkers.” Jamie also discussed having conversations with other instructors and colleagues, though she seemed able to create a cohort without the practicum. She notes, “there’s enough of a support system [of L2 teachers] that you could get [...] other people’s perspectives and get your questions answered.” In a large writing program with many teachers, there is more opportunity to meet a variety of individuals who have

specialized expertise, regardless of whether or not one takes opportunities to sit in on a practicum or a workshop.

TA Ilinka also cited conversations with coworkers as additional opportunities to talk through L2-specific issues and challenges as a kind of training. Ilinka shared an office with a woman who was taking the L2 practicum as well, “and that was where those good conversations were taking place.” She felt that more L2 writing teachers could benefit from having other “L2 people” in close proximity:

It would be very helpful if the administrators situated [L2 teachers] in the same space—instructors who are teaching the same course, and new [L2] instructors with more experienced instructors. I think that would be very helpful, because the time that you spend in the office, you *do* talk to people. [...] You will talk and exchange ideas, and you will grow as instructors.

Becky attributed gaining additional L2 expertise from her coworkers: “These really smart colleagues of mine come together and we talk about what’s working in our classrooms, and for me that’s gold.” Multiple participants including Nicky, Jamie, Clare, and Keren also cited coworkers as touch points for discussing L2-specific expertise, including classroom management, responding to student texts, and assignment design. This data suggests that for teachers who are unable to take additional L2 writing theory classes, the chance to bounce ideas off their colleagues who are in close proximity to them in their office spaces is ideal.

### **Specialization Training Beyond What’s Required**

Participants Lex and Sam were graduate students during the time of their L2-specific training (MFA in Fiction and PhD in English, respectively) and had coursework to complete; therefore, both decided to take the (unrequired) Introduction to Second Language Writing Theory course. Both participants were incredibly happy with their

experience and believed they gained a substantial theoretical grounding to bolster the practical skills they were to carry out as they took the practicum and taught L2 FYC for the first time. Sam noted that the additional class gave him the “full effect of curriculum design” for the L2 FYC classes. Lex considered the intro class was “a sort of gateway into the community” of L2 writing experts and teachers and took the course because she “needed more of a theoretical grounding before [she] tackled something that was, in some respects, more challenging than teaching mainstream composition.” Lex acknowledged that in her L2 writing teaching experiences, she couldn’t take for granted the kinds of background knowledge and skills that multilingual students bring to the writing classroom. She felt more prepared to handle L2-specific issues because of the theoretical training the additional class gave to her. Furthermore, Sam noted that having more than a hands-on practicum was beneficial to his teaching of L2 writing students because it helped him “in thinking about writing in second language terms in a way that aligned with the policies, the goals of the [writing] program.”

A one-course training program seemed to be sufficient for a quick fix to training a large number of teachers to specialize in working with L2 writing students in a short amount of time. However, participant results show that teachers who have the time and motivation to take additional training courses, such as more extended theoretical underpinnings to a particular specialization, would benefit from doing so. When asked if taking additional courses beyond the one-semester practicum was a possibility for them, participants had varied answers. Ilinka, who was close to graduation, wanted additional opportunities for training: “[M]aybe a couple more classes [in L2 theory] would have been nice.” Becky also noted that if she could find time in her schedule, she might learn a

lot from the Introduction to Second Language Writing course. However, the majority of L2 writing specialists in the writing program at this research site are full-time, non-tenure track faculty members whose course loads often do not allow them to find space in their schedules for a weekly graduate-level course that is accompanied with readings and often assignments like discussion posts or reading reflections. The writing program does provide a few additional L2-specific offerings for additional training and information, including a convocation meeting at the start of the fall semester and various workshops (e.g., grading on grammar, using rubrics, L1 vs. L2 use in the classroom) put on by the Second Language Writing Committee. Participants noted these opportunities as beneficial to them, though their participation in these events varied depending on their schedules.

### **Discussion and Implications**

There are a number of major takeaways from the insights of nine L2 writing teachers' training experiences. Overall, the results revisit the argument made in Preto-Bay and Hansen's (2006) "Preparing for the Tipping Point: Designing Writing Programs to Meet the Needs of the Changing Population" that "the academic success of students will depend on WPAs integrating the accumulated knowledge of those working in mainstream composition and those in L2 composition programs so that WPAs can design better curricula and teacher training programs" (p. 51). The writing program that served for the site of this study had already made some infrastructural changes to accommodate for multilingual writers (e.g., designing and implementing L2-specific sections of FYC, establishing a Director of L2 Writing position). However, I would argue that these steps, though beneficial in many ways, could be refined and additional training and resource

opportunities could be increased to even better meet the needs of the students and, specific to this study, the population of teachers who work with this specialized group of students. The real question (for which more research is necessary) is *how* to accomplish this.

### **Specialization is Beneficial**

The first takeaway is that when a writing program allows for its teachers to gain specialized knowledge in teaching beyond the mainstream FYC course, the program can better tailor its course offerings to meet the changing needs of the student body. The influx of international students at the research site necessitated a change in how teachers were trained to work with a multilingual population, moving from a two-course training sequence (of a theoretical introductory class and a weekly practicum) to a one-course teacher training practicum only. This institutional decision allowed for more teachers from various roles/ranks (graduate TAs, adjuncts, and full-time non-tenure track faculty members) to be trained quickly and easily. Full-time teachers with four or five courses in their teaching schedules can be specialized to teach an additional section of writing (e.g., multilingual, professional/technical, or basic writing) with just one course. The same procedures could be implemented feasibly for a program wanting to implement professional/technical writing courses, for example.

While the decision for expedited training has its benefits, some drawbacks were also mentioned, including teachers feeling that one training course was inadequate in providing a theoretical background to working with multilingual writers, as well as bridging the gap between theoretical discussions and finding effective practical strategies for teachers' day-to-day classroom experiences. Bommarito and Cooney (forthcoming

2016) acknowledge the challenges inherent in the theory-practice gap, stating, “Before being able to teach successfully with language difference in mind, [...] teachers must create the conditions necessary for that work” (p. 3). Indeed, first-year composition teachers have the largest opportunity for face-to-face interaction and work with multilingual writers, and so their responsibility to cultivate appropriate pedagogical approaches for working with this specialized group of students looms large. What Bommarito and Cooney (forthcoming 2016) suggest must have a “trickle up” effect: the training teachers receive must adequately prepare them for the important work they will do in the L2 first-year composition classroom, including finding practical applications for L2 writing theory. WPAs and second language specialists, then, (or WPA-L2 specialists) would be challenged to re-evaluate training procedures to determine ways to bridge the gap between second language writing theory and the practical needs that teachers have in the language classroom. With time and effort, “the theory part of teaching” (Bommarito and Cooney, forthcoming 2016), while acknowledged to be “the hardest part to integrate into [the L2 writing classroom] because it *does* take a lot of time and consideration to acknowledge and root out deep-seated monolingual norms and related monocultural biases” (p. 19, emphasis in original), may be more adequately addressed in training procedures by those who lead the practicum.

### **Reexamination of Current Procedures**

Another takeaway is that appropriate, thoughtful training is necessary for teachers to “specialize” effectively. For this group of participants, the specialization was L2 writing, but the same findings are informative for other variations within a writing program (e.g., basic writing, WAC/WID, professional/technical writing, and digital

humanities). WPAs should think about the timing of training, both in offering initial support (pre-teaching and/or concurrently with the first time a class is taught), as well as sustained support and training opportunities over time. As the participants mention above, a mix of theoretical and practical training is desired. Furthermore, training must be scheduled and offered keeping in mind the needs and schedules of teachers of all roles and ranks. Graduate TAs often have more room in their schedules for training opportunities than part-time adjuncts, who often teach in other locations, and full-time instructors, who may simply not have time to fit in a weekly training course. Furthermore, the two participants (Sam and Lex) who chose to take the additional theoretical training course were graduate students and more interested in theory than full-time instructor Clare, whose major complaint of L2 training was that she did not receive the practical teaching strategies she wanted for the classroom. Estrem and Reid (2012) note that TAs (who are likely new teachers) are heavily influenced by “the local peers/other TAs with which they work most closely” in their coursework and programs (in LaFrance, forthcoming 2016, p. 9). I found a similar mentality among my participants: the TAs, overall, felt very supported in their network or community, whereas participants in other roles/ranks felt less of a connection to their coworkers. Becky and Lex, who were TAs before moving into other teacher roles/ranks, reflected positively on their TA experiences but found those opportunities for collaboration less frequent in their new roles. The fact that all teachers seemed amenable to participating in additional training and professional development opportunities (as long as such opportunities fit into the mix with their other work responsibilities) should motivate WPAs to find space to offer these additional chances for training and support in their



programs.

How can a WPA leverage the different workloads and motivations of different teacher roles/ranks while still valuing specializations within the writing program? One suggestion is to incentivize specialization training. Writing programs could offer a course release or stipend for teachers interested in taking additional courses. Training opportunities that are not semester-long courses (e.g., workshops, meetings, day-long in-service trainings) could also be offered before and throughout the semester. Of course, these suggestions come with the need to advocate for additional funding and work force to allow for these changes to happen. Miller-Cochran (2010) notes that having one L2 specialist in a writing program is insufficient because “if specialists are expected to ‘fix’ all L2 writing ‘problems,’ that leaves little time for them to work on such faculty development” necessary for teachers to adequately attend to student needs (p. 214). Investing in sustained training for all ranks/roles of teachers furnishes a writing program with a legion of theoretically-savvy, practically-equipped language specialists and allows for the appointed “L2 person” to continually re-evaluate and improve faculty development opportunities.

### **“Counting” Other Training and Support**

In many cases, the training practicum allowed for participating teachers to create a cohort of individuals with L2 expertise, communicating with one another and establishing collegial working relationships. However, the participant interviews reveal that these kinds of relationships also occurred organically outside of the practicum, most frequently through conversations with office mates. However, each of these suggested changes would not be implemented without potential drawbacks. Sam noted the benefit

of finding out who the other “L2 people” were, and many of the participants sought advice from L2 specialists in the closest proximity. Zosia suggested a reorganization of teacher offices to place larger groups of L2 writing-trained teachers together, as well as to mix experience levels within an office—novice teachers with those more skilled. Doing so may be another way for teachers to collaborate and professionalize beyond a required training course—though the risk of being perceived as “ghettoizing” teachers by trade would need to be addressed. Additional factors to consider are the individual schedules and locations of part-time /adjunct and full-time contingent faculty members’ offices, so teachers are in the office on the same days as their L2 writing colleagues. There is a concern here, too: making changes like these may not allow students adequate time to meet with their writing teachers. As with any institutional change, consequences exist.

### **Institutional Changes Since Data Collection**

At the time of data collection, I was the Associate Director of Second Language Writing, a graduate-level administrative position working in tandem with the Director of Second Language Writing. As such, upon conducting an institutional ethnography and hearing the experiences, perceptions, and suggestions of my participants, I was able to implement a few small changes or initiatives with the writing program in a relatively quick manner and without large-scale administrative strain (e.g., reworking budgets or reorganizing office spaces).

**Online organization.** First, as Associate Director, I created an “organization” or group on the learning management system in use, Blackboard, that all L2 writing-trained teachers were given access to. The online group provided a space for those specialized in teaching L2 writing classes to share syllabi, readings, and pedagogical materials with one

another. It also included discussion boards, where teachers could post questions related to their teaching.

**Teacher feature initiative.** In addition to the online group, I started an L2 writing teacher feature initiative, a program wherein L2 writing teachers could nominate one another for a monthly feature. When nominated, the featured teachers were asked to complete a brief set of interview questions, providing information like why they enjoyed working with L2 students and what they enjoyed doing outside of the classroom.

Teachers were also asked to share a material or classroom activity that they had used successfully with multilingual students. I found that this Teacher Feature initiative was very well-received by the L2 writing teacher community, because it created program-wide recognition for teachers of all roles or ranks. It gave a real, human face to who is behind all the hard work within an L2 FYC course, and it supplied the nominated teachers with an opportunity to share the creative and challenging work that they do each day with multilingual students.

**Changes to the L2 training practicum.** Lastly, revealing teachers' frustrations in the gap between L2 writing theory and practice has encouraged me to rethink the teacher training practicum readings and discussion topics to better reach the needs of full-time teachers who desire more practical skills and solutions for working with this specialized population. This firsthand experience in conducting an institutional ethnographic inquiry has created a basis for action within the writing program, informed by a variety of the program's stakeholders, to create positive and hopefully lasting changes and initiatives that help writing teachers (in this case, L2 writing teachers) get the resources and support that they need, whether from teacher training and professional development

opportunities, additional offerings to share materials, or in creating spaces for teacher recognition.

### **Limitations**

As with any study, there are limitations to this research. The largest limitation is inherent in the methodology, institutional ethnography: the researcher is materially situated within the research context she is studying. The imbricated nature of the researcher, specifically the fact that I knew participants professionally and personally, has the potential for participants to alter or omit information shared in the data collection interviews. The fact that I also work closely with the writing program administrators (both the Director of Composition and the Director of Second Language Writing) may have influenced the way that participants talked about these individuals in our meetings.

A second limitation is the number of participants. Because of a number of factors (teachers were too busy or uninterested in the project, teachers were interested but unable to make the available interview times, or teachers did not read the recruitment email), there were only nine participants. Another reason for the researcher's decision of a small sample size was to make the transcription and resulting information load manageable for a dissertation-length project. I would suggest that an institutional ethnographic study in the future involve more participants, as doing so may create a more complete picture of the types of individuals who specialize in teaching L2 writing.

## Conclusions

Using institutional ethnography to gauge individual *actors'* (Latour, 2007) motivations, perceptions, and experiences in a *network* or *community of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991) within a larger institutional structure like a university can be beneficial to writing program administrators in informing their programmatic evaluations. It may be assumed that program evaluation should focus primarily on assessment of student learning outcomes, though it does not adequately portray the big picture and “should never be the only instrument” in the process (McLeod, 1992, p. 374). Incorporating institutional ethnographic methods in a program assessment/evaluation provides a means for examining the quality of experiences of other program participants and stakeholders—specifically for this study, those who teach the students in various roles/ranks. It is a careful and principled way to *see what's happening* (LaFrance & Nicolas, 2012) within a writing program and its individual stakeholders/participants to determine program needs.

Institutional ethnography brings to light how the work of WPAs is shaped by the interaction of multiple factors, perspectives, and actors. Administrative knowledge and acknowledgement of relatively unexamined stakeholder experiences is valuable in contributing to research that takes into consideration the full picture of a program's experiences and strengths, as well as its challenges, problematics, or areas of improvement. In a network or community such as a writing program (or more specifically, the collection of L2 specialists within a writing program), it is important for WPAs to remember that each individual person may be oriented to a situation in a different way. Valuing the multifarious perceptions of individuals to construct a picture

of a larger whole is a key component in conducting IE research, and the findings contribute historically unexamined perspectives in the development of approaches to writing program evaluation and research. In other words, IE has the potential to contribute to Matsuda's (2009) suggestion to integrate language issues and awareness "into the discourse of the intellectual work of WPAs" (p. 170) by uncovering potential gaps in L2-specific training or professional development offerings and by tapping into crucial stakeholders' perceptions and opinions.

And now, a caveat, or a few larger questions: What is the overall benefit to specialization within a writing program? Is specialization a practice that should take place "on-the-job," after teachers have been hired? Should professionals in the field of rhetoric and composition continue specializing in L2 writing (or professional/technical writing, or basic writing, or WAC/WID)? Or should the status quo be changed to an ethos of overall integration of specialized or "niche" skills into the larger rhet/comp field?

Historically, the fields of rhetoric and composition and second language writing have been divided between those trained in composition and those trained in ESL—the "disciplinary division of labor" (Matsuda, 1999). The influx of multilingual students in institutions of higher learning in recent decades necessitated a unification of these two disciplines, though in practice, the change has been slow. Many campuses, including the one studied in this project, look to appointed L2 specialists to train teachers and to handle all language-related issues within the writing program. Yet as indicated by this small sampling of "specialized" L2 writing teachers, current measures fall short in a number of ways, the largest being a perceived gap between theoretical knowledge and the practical skills necessary for teachers to feel equipped to serve the multilingual student population.

Bommarito and Cooney (forthcoming 2016) acknowledge the same theory-practice gap in their essay on translingualism and the importance of reflective practice in addressing language issues in the FYC classroom: Learning this specialization is a long-term process, and a one-semester teacher practicum cannot solve all issues or answer all questions for L2 specialists. Perhaps writing teachers would benefit from having language training inherent in their English degrees and required in their rhetoric and composition coursework—long before being hired to teach first-year composition. More research and thought is needed on this particular facet of the study.

Institutional ethnography can be a valid methodology that more specifically informs WPAs about the lived experiences of various stakeholders whose work lives take place within the writing program. The knowledge gained from analyzing how things happen for individuals within the framework of an institution can shed light on groups that have been previously unexamined and/or undervalued in program assessment or evaluation. Specifically, the well-being of writing teachers and their perceptions of and experiences with working in the writing program should be taken into account in program assessments or evaluations. Institutional ethnography gives researchers and WPAs (and WPA-researchers) the tools to listen to all voices that contribute to the writing program's success. To build a stronger program overall, a WPA must identify how people actually perceive themselves in relation to others in the program/community—in relation to the goals of the program and how the current environment (including relationships among varying teacher roles/ranks, specializations, and training/support for these specializations) is or is not addressing current issues or areas of struggle—what institutional ethnography refers to as *problematics*. By investigating participants and their recollections and

evaluations of their training and professional development experiences, WPAs can better understand how individuals relate to the spaces in which they work, the opportunities afforded (or not afforded) to them, and the people with whom they work. Ultimately, the benefit of using institutional ethnography in WPA work is the methodology's ability to turn the experiences of underrepresented groups into valuable knowledge.



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### ARTICLE THREE

#### MAPPING AS A HEURISTIC FOR WRITING PROGRAM ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION AND IN INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

One aspect of a writing program administrator's job, is conducting program evaluation and assessment. This article proposes the use of institutional ethnographic methods as a way to collect richer, more nuanced information about a writing program. Where many current methods for this task tend to focus on assessment of student learning outcomes, institutional ethnography (IE) is a methodology that provides a means for examining the quality of experiences of additional stakeholders that contribute to the functionality and success of a program, most notably writing teachers, whose everyday experiences and perceptions are important contributions but are often overshadowed in writing program evaluation and assessment by factors such as student placement and proficiency (McLeod, 2007). As McLeod (2007) states, "program evaluation involves much more than simply asking the question of whether or not the student has improved" (p. 96). Institutional ethnography is an effective methodology for WPAs to gather knowledge to inform a "comprehensive" program assessment and evaluation, including the "cultural and social context, instructional context, program structure and administration, content or curriculum, and instruction" that Witte and Faigley (1983) suggest (as cited in McLeod, 2007, p. 96). In particular, I propose including a mapping heuristic both for program assessment/evaluation and to institutional ethnographic data collection techniques, not only to help triangulate data (in conjunction with interviews, surveys, and other program assessment approaches), but also to help tease out the

intricacies and perhaps competing values, ideologies, and spatial relations of all program participants.

### **Program Assessment and Evaluation**

Though the terms *assessment* and *evaluation* are often used interchangeably, many WPA scholars consider the two to convey different goals of analyzing and appraising a program. Harrington (2013) provides a clear distinction:

Evaluation asks whether a course or program is effective, and the audience for evaluation is most often external. Assessment is a formative process, providing information for an inside audience who is interested in continued development of a course or program. (p. 165)

This distinction between terms is also seen in the Council of Writing Program Administrators' WPA Consultant-Evaluator Service, which provides an assessment "to determine a program's unique strengths and weaknesses, help resolve local and individual problems, and improve programmatic effectiveness" ("WPA Consultant-Evaluator," n.d.). A beginning step of an outside evaluation service such as this one is a self-study: an internal assessment to "reflect unique goals and contexts" of an individual institution" and to "assess the [program's] credibility of their programs, their faculty, and their curriculum" (Brady, 2004, p. 74, 80). In this case and in the case of any other program assessment, all stakeholders should be considered: administrators, faculty of all roles/ranks, staff, and students. Though there has been pressure to focus on student achievement and its link to program goals and outcomes, likely from a similar push for accountability in K-12 education, WPA scholars acknowledge the key role that writing *teachers* play in the overall evaluative landscape (and ultimate success) of a writing

program. Selfe (1997) recognizes the role of teachers in the process and views program assessment as “a means for reflective practice among teachers and program administrators” (p. 214) Quoting Selfe, Huot and Schendel (2002) advocate for a program assessment that “clearly respects and draws upon the work of teachers, putting the concept of ‘change’ and ‘reform’ in a local context and in the hands of educators” to allow for “greater understanding among all teachers and administrators within a program” (p. 214). This push to involve “the entire community” (Huot & Schendel, 2002, p. 225) in program evaluation/assessment persists into more recent scholarship, notably in the use of the methodology institutional ethnography.

Institutional ethnography (IE; Smith, 2005) has roots in sociology and anthropology and seeks to locate the material realities of individual participants within a larger institutional structure: their complex relationships, their personal comprehensions, and their lived experiences. LaFrance (2016, forthcoming) writes in *WPA: Writing Program Administration*,

A rich understanding of these material realities is particularly important for WPAs, who are frequently called upon to explain *how things are happening* in classrooms, placement processes, assessment activities, and the many other procedures that organize faculty and students under the auspices of a writing program—an approach that requires a complex sense of more than simply what is happening” (p. 2, emphasis in original).

LaFrance and Nicolas (2012) advocate for increased use of the methodology to conduct research within the field of rhetoric and composition and in writing program research due to IE’s ability to recount the “situated variability of experience within institutions, casting

individuals as active and interested, mindfully negotiating the competing priorities and material conditions of their work day” (p. 133). Indeed, incorporating IE as a methodology in writing program research and writing program evaluation/assessment may shed some light onto the perceptions and day-to-day involvement of multiple stakeholders that contribute to the life of a program, as these myriad experiences “speak to who we are, how we identify, and what we value within the hierarchical structures of the workplace we call ‘a writing program’” (LaFrance, 2016 forthcoming, p. 2). Often program assessments are attempts to see the big picture: they “are grounded in assumptions that change can occur and that teaching and learning can improve because of assessment and because of the various views that different groups of people can bring to the table for further discussion” (Huot & Schendel, 2002, p. 214). Therefore, this article recommends the use of institutional ethnography in a writing program’s assessment and/or evaluation procedures as a way to ensure the individual perceptions of an assortment of invested stakeholders accurately inform and shape reports of the larger institutional landscape. Furthermore, it posits a mapping data collection technique as a heuristic that, when used in an institutional ethnographic study, can provide a visual representation of participant experiences and a triangulation of other data collected: “interviews, case studies, focus groups, textual analysis, discourse analysis, autoethnography, participant observation, and archival research” (LaFrance & Nicolas, 2012, p. 134). Ultimately, the research questions that guided my inquiry were as follows:

- In what ways can mapping activities reveal the interpersonal, material, and spatial relationships of writing teachers within a writing program?
- How does a mapping heuristic better inform the inquiry involved in an institutional ethnography?

## Methods

Because it is viewed as an “ethical obligation” of writing program administrators (Huot & Schendel, 2002, p. 207), program evaluation and assessment procedures that take into account individual experiences should be carefully devised and implemented. There are many complex and overlapping, interacting factors that contribute to a writing teacher’s everyday work life. Therefore, multiple data collection tools may be necessary to fully capture the ways that teachers to describe their jobs. To combat this complexity, I devised a mapping activity or heuristic for participants to complete during data collection to organize the interpersonal relationships, materials/texts, and spaces/places inherent in their jobs as second language (L2) writing teachers. Smith (2006) asks institutional ethnographers to initially situate their research by “looking up from where [they] are” (p. 5) within the institution. Researchers can then determine how individual participants’ perceptions and experiences inform a larger social organization. I devised the mapping heuristic after I “looked up” from my own understanding as the instructor of a L2 writing teacher practicum and graduate teaching associate (henceforth TA) and regarded the differences in perception of work experiences felt by other L2 writing teachers of different roles/ranks that exist in my writing program—namely, my fellow TAs and full-time non-tenure track faculty members, who hold the title of instructor. Their experiences *felt* different to me, felt complicated and layered, but I struggled to create interview questions that adequately got to the root of their differences. To tease out their subtle variations of perception and experience, I took a cue from Peeples’ (1999) chapter on WPAs and postmodern mapping, as well as Ortmeier-Hooper’s (2007) mapping activity



used in her dissertation.

### **“Dynamism, Multiplicity, and Fragmentation” of Being**

Peebles (1999) maps out a variety of work experiences of one WPA and sees WPAs in general as “subjects of academic organizational space;” that is, through inspecting the maps, the “dynamism, multiplicity, and fragmentation of people/positions” (p. 153) within an organization or institution like a writing program can be revealed. Much like the writing teachers in the present study, Peebles’ (1999) WPA subject’s experiences were elaborate and layered. He constructed his maps in order to explain the subjectivities of the complex, malleable realities of the subject’s work: “One of the ways [researchers] attempt to see something that is fragmented and dynamic is to place it against a relatively stable background, whereby we can at least mark its movements across space” (p. 154). Where Peebles’ goal was to contribute to the search for the WPA identity (p. 153), the present study can contribute to the L2 writing teacher identity within the writing program, as well as to helping portray an accurate picture of the organizational structure of a writing program as a elaborately-constructed institution whose many stakeholders contribute to its overall success. Having participants map their experiences not only allows for triangulation of other methods (in this study, semi-structured interview conversations), but also helps to answer “how English departments negotiate the choppy and contested waters of defining ourselves to ourselves [i.e., assessment], as well as to others [i.e., evaluation]” (Royer et al., 2003, p. 29).

### **Mapping as Methodology**

Ortmeier-Hooper’s (2007) dissertation study included elementary-aged children, and to help them organize their thoughts and their ESL experiences, she had them draw

maps using different shapes to signify different people and places. I modified her mapping heuristic slightly to include the use of color-coordinated Post-It notes: blue for people involved in their day-to-day work lives, orange for the places and spaces in which they conducted work business, and yellow for materials and texts inherent in their positions. Participants were presented with a large piece of drawing paper (the “static background” that Peebles 2007 refers to), the Post-It notes, and a pencil and were given instructions for the work map exercise (see Appendix C). I chose Post-Its because of their ability to be moved around the page, and I suggested that participants use the pencil to draw connections or make clarifications among Post-Its if needed. They were given 20 minutes to create their best maps of their L2 writing teacher lives, and then they were asked later in the interview to refer to their maps and use them to help explain their experiences in their work.

Using mapping as a facet of data collection is useful to determine how experiences vary among individuals and viewpoints. Porter and Sullivan (2007) reflect on the use of mapping techniques in a study based on the situation of professional writing within multiple departments. They view the methodology as revealing, because “Let’s face it, faculty have different maps of the world in their heads” (Porter & Sullivan, 2007, p. 20) and may perceive seemingly stable concepts, terms, and structures very differently.

Mapping one’s work experiences visualizes the diverse views and perceptions of writing program teachers’ experiences, because individuals do not always look at the same situation in exactly the same way; they may situate their experiences “in different places and according to varied hierarchies” (Porter & Sullivan, 2007, p. 20). I asked participants to map out their versions of their work realities so they could “investigate

their own positioning in institutions as well as to investigate and analyze a variety of relationships among various institutional spaces within and outside the writing program” as Peebles (1999, p. 154) does with his single WPA subject. I also attempt to further Peebles’ work by conducting my data collection based on his encouragement for WPA scholars to analyze maps “*across cases*” (1999, p. 155, emphasis in original). In particular, this article takes the accounts of three L2 writing teachers, Becky, Sam, and Lex, and provides commentary on their disparate descriptions of what constitutes their work.

By adopting a mapping heuristic to contribute to the list of institutional ethnographic methodologies, the multiple factors and perspectives that shape the work of the multiple stakeholders that comprise a writing program can be more clearly revealed. Harrington (2013) notes that “any assessment activity that is driven by [a WPA’s] sense... of true curiosity will result in information you can use. And when that happens, everyone benefits” (p. 166). I also was encouraged to undertake this mapping activity because of its potential to explore the multifaceted aspects of writing teacher identity. In their 2015 chapter exploring the multiple identities of L2 writing teachers, Racelis and Matsuda assert that “research specifically examining how language teachers negotiate and reconcile multiple identities remains scarce” (p. 204). I use the ideas and suggestions from Harrington (2013) and from Racelis and Matsuda (2015) that relates to writing program assessment/evaluation and extend it to my own data collection procedures, and what resulted provides some interesting differences in the way teachers of different roles/ranks viewed (and mapped out) their work lives within a writing program.

### **Participants: Becky, Sam, and Lex**

This article reports on one facet of a larger study involving nine L2 writing teachers. The three participants featured in this article—Becky, Sam, and Lex—were selected because of the maps they created in their initial interviews with me: specifically, they were the three participants who decided to use the pencil provided not only to write on the Post-It notes, but also to draw extensive connections among the notes (and therefore among the people, places/spaces, and materials/texts with which they interacted as L2 writing teachers). Another key explanation for including these three participants is because of their positions within the writing program, described below.

**Becky** is a full-time non-tenure track faculty member, also known as an instructor, in the program. She earned her MFA degree in fiction writing from the same university she is now teaching in full-time. As a graduate student, Becky was a graduate teaching associate (TA) and spent three years teaching in the program as part of her funding before being hired as an instructor. At the time of the study, she was teaching three sections of multilingual first-year composition. Her course load at the time was five classes per semester: she taught a fourth class for her full course load and also opted to take on a fifth class as an “overload” schedule for additional pay. Becky is married and has one child, who was just under two years old when she participated in the study.

**Sam** is a PhD student in English, studying rhetoric, composition, and linguistics. He was working in the writing program as a TA during the study. The TA course load is two courses per semester, with the exception of the TA’s first semester of teaching (when the course load is one class) or if the TA holds any additional administrative roles within

the writing program (when he/she is offered a one-course course release). Sam was not teaching L2 writers at the time of the study, but he had taught two sections of multilingual FYC the previous two semesters. Additionally, part of Sam's TAship at the time of the study was the role of graduate student trainer for new TA cohort in their first year at the institution. The new TA practicum's focus on theories of rhetoric and composition and linking theory to practice in the FYC classroom seemed to direct Sam's explanations for his Post-It map organization.

Lex is an instructor in the writing program and was beginning her first semester of full-time employment with the institution at the time of the study. Previously, she had spent two years working as an adjunct (part-time) faculty member, known as a faculty associate (FA), teaching two courses per semester. Before her time as an FA, Lex was, like Becky, an MFA student in fiction writing and held a TAship, which afforded her a 2/2 course load. Lex was very excited to start her time as a full-time instructor because it meant she was supplied with health insurance and did not have to work at multiple universities as she had been doing for two years since graduating with her MFA.

### **The Study**

This study took place within the writing program of a large state university in the southwestern United States. During the time of the study (Fall 2014), the writing program was the largest in the country, serving 415 total sections of first-year composition in the fall semester. Of this number, there were 102 total sections of FYC specifically for multilingual students, the majority of whom were international students ("Enrollment Figures," 2014). Becky, Sam, and Lex chose to participate in the study

because of their experience in being trained to teach and teaching multilingual FYC.

The methods in this institutional ethnography employed a combination of face-to-face semi-structured interview conversations with individual participants and a mapping activity/heuristic that informed part of the conversations. Upon signing official IRB paperwork, each participant was given 20 minutes to think about and construct his/her map of the people, places/spaces, and texts/materials that were involved in their day-to-day work lives as L2 writing teachers. Maps were created by hand with Post-It notes and a writing utensil, and participants were encouraged to draw connections between Post-It notes wherever they saw fit. I started with the list of interview questions but let the participants guide the subsequent conversation depending on the topics they chose to discuss. One particular interview question asked participants to refer to their Post-It maps and explain their organization and rationale. See Appendix C for the work map instructions and Appendix A for the list of initial interview questions. In writing up this article, I consulted a graphic designer to create digital renderings of the participant maps in a cleaner grid style for ease of viewing. These three participant maps can be found in Appendices D, E, and F.

Once data was collected and transcribed, I analyzed the three participants' responses, focusing on the "local activities and relationships" they included when referring to their maps (Smith, 2005, p. 87). My goal was to see how individual L2 writing teachers organized their perceptions of their work: to find any commonalities or divergences, and to triangulate their Post-It maps with their oral reflections of their jobs—specifically, for this article, in the way they talked about their teaching experiences and relationships that were forged with multilingual students and their colleagues within

the writing program. Determining how the participants talk about their everyday work lives helped the researcher find trends and connecting threads that drew out eventual *problematics*, or places for further research and discovery that grow out of individuals' varying orientations toward a situation, practice, or experience.

## Results

**Where did they begin?** The easiest comparison I found was in simply looking at the initial organization of Becky's, Sam's, and Lex's Post-It maps (See appendices C, D, and E). Becky and Lex, full-time instructors in the writing program, began their maps with a blue "people" Post-It for "students" and organized the rest of their maps around that central note. Becky connected the "students" Post-It to the locations (orange Post-Its) in which she interacted with: "Google hangouts – digital meeting," "Social media – Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram," "My office," and "My classroom." Lex actually included three blue Post-Its for her major groups of students: "Native speakers of Chinese," "Native speakers of Arabic," and "Native speakers on non-Chinese and non-Arabic languages." She then connected these blue Post-Its to yellow materials/texts Post-Its for the assignments she used in FYC and other sources such as the Internet and access to the campus library, as well as to an orange Post-It for her classroom meeting space.

Contrasted with instructors Becky and Lex, TA Sam chose a different central organization: In the center of his map is a Post-It for "curriculum," on which he also wrote "purposes, goals, objectives, definitions of writing and literacy" and drew arrows toward the eventual "assignment sequence" for his FYC course. The central "curriculum" Post-It was then immediately connected to two other yellow "texts/materials" Post-Its for

“Textbooks and materials” and “Resources for common activities” including peer review, and grammar and citation lessons. When reflecting upon his map construction, Sam noted that “Curriculum is always at the center for me; purposes, goals, and objectives; definitions of what writing is, what literacy is, and *how* those components are encapsulated in the assignment sequence or arc for the semester.” He continued, “Talking about these purposes and objectives and goals [of the curriculum] and relating them to assignment sequences is really important.”

The differences in central organization between the two full-time writing teachers and the graduate TA may be reflective of what the individual participants value first and foremost in thinking about their work within the writing program. Another practical reason for this discrepancy is the differences of responsibilities between instructors and TAs. Because instructors Becky and Lex are full-time teachers, they spend the majority of their days at work doing teacher-related tasks, including planning and creating materials for classes, teaching, holding office hours, and meeting with and providing support for students. Both of the instructor-participants spent time in their interviews reflecting on why they chose to teach multilingual writers. Becky said that she “absolutely fell in love with teaching,” and that she “*love[s]* the population” of multilingual students at her university because “they have a really cool global perspective.” She notes that her foray into teaching L2 writers was “Surprising... and exciting” because “It’s made me such a better teacher. [...] That challenge to be precise and specific [in explanations to multilingual students] has made me a better teacher, and it makes me want to keep teaching, keep clarifying.” Lex agreed with Becky’s comments that her interactions with L2 writers allowed her to “learn a lot about [her] students’



cultural values.”

Sam’s map is very different organizationally from the maps of Becky and Lex. His organization was more or less like a set of concentric circles, with yellow “texts/materials” at the center, followed by blue “people,” and ending with orange “places/spaces” on the periphery. As a graduate student, Sam not only has fewer class sections and students to worry about—he also has the responsibilities inherent in his work toward his PhD, including writing his dissertation. In fact, Sam included his knowledge of L2 writing “scholarship” as one of his blue “people” Post-It notes—a reflection of his engagement with his scholarly work. Furthermore, where Becky’s and Lex’s experiences and reflections were centered around students, Sam placed students in the bottom right-hand corner of his map, the farthest away from the center where he started from. In reflecting on his students, Sam did not link them to the cultural understandings they brought to the classroom, as Becky and Lex did. Instead, he focused on the language abilities of his students and noted the “diversity of abilities” and the disparity in understanding that occurred in his L2 writing classes. He felt at a loss: “I didn’t quite know how to handle it. [...] I didn’t go slow enough to help the students who were having trouble, and I didn’t go fast enough to keep the more fluent students interested. And that was a sort of frustrating middle ground that I felt was the dark side of the compromise. Because I don’t know how well I served *any* of them in the class.” The way in which the three participants “organizationally positioned” their students (Peoples, 1999, p. 156) in the overall picture of their work lives lends some insight into what they prioritize in their jobs—though all three participants are L2 writing teachers, their central focuses differed depending on what particular teaching role/rank they held.

## Colleagues, Mentors, and Others in the Writing Program

Another item of interest among participant work maps was whom they chose to include on the rest of their blue “people” Post-It notes, beyond the students they taught, as well as the commentary they provided for the interpersonal relationships associated with their jobs and how these relationships related to their teaching of L2 writing. While all three participants included the same *kinds* of relationships with people (coworkers, students, administrators, etc.), their explanations of and perceptions about those relationships differed greatly depending on individual experiences (past and present) and contexts.

Becky named the following groups of people on her blue Post-Its: “mentors,” “colleagues from ASU,” “colleagues from other universities” (whom she had met through attending conferences during her MFA program), and “administrators” (e.g., the WPA and director of L2 writing within the writing program). When asked about the “mentors” Post-It note, Becky began to talk about her background in her MFA program and in fiction writing. She said that her MFA background “absolutely” affects her teaching of L2 writers and regularly draws from past experiences with mentors, classmates, and colleagues from her MFA program:

As a fiction writer, my goal is empathy. For every character I write, even my villains. [...] Every single person, then, I have empathy for, and I don't get frustrated. [With L2 students] sometimes the conversation skills aren't there, and they're frustrated, and they're jet-lagged, and they're culture-shocked. I think it's really made me an understanding person, patient. Fiction writing has made me a really engaged teacher.

Becky also expounded on her past experience as a TA in the writing program, attributing

her success as a full-time instructor in this specific context to the training and support she received as a TA:

The TA community is so cool at [the institution]. I loved it; it's been amazing preparation for academic work in general. I've had a *lot* of colleagues who were teaching L2 already. [...] I was shocked and delighted by my [initial TA training] experience. I really got *so much* out of it. [...] Curriculum-wise, we did a *ton* of training, reading really important works. They didn't give us a particular ideology [in composition theory] to follow, but a wide variety of readings, so we could get a baseline of the field. [...] And, if I have a problem, I have backup, and I know *who* to go to, and if I have any questions, I just feel super-supported.

The support Becky felt she received as a graduate TA helped her to feel confident in navigating relationships and protocol within the writing program (e.g., who to contact if a student plagiarizes), and it also forged positive relationships with coworkers early on in her teaching life in the writing program that persisted up to the time of the study. Becky noted that her coworker relationships were “*hugely* important to me.” She continues:

I'm in an office right now with some pretty experienced instructors. [We share] advice about what kinds of comments are helpful in a workshop, methods for creating more understanding in the classroom, and just unique situations—you know, “What would you do when *this* happens?” If I have questions I can go to them. I lean on them heavily.

Lex also acknowledged the presence of colleagues and mentors in her work map, though she organized them a bit differently and was less positive in her reflections. She separated her Post-Its into those she felt she obtained L2 resources and knowledge from: the WAC and L2 writing directors were on one Post-It, and next to it is one that reads “office mates, post-MFA peers, and second language teachers that [she] met in [L2-specific teacher training experiences].” She also included a note for what she referred to as “facilitators” between herself and her students—the WPA and the writing program manager and administrative assistant. Lastly, Lex included a final blue “people” Post-It

for the “MA and PhD students at ASU and other universities,” stating in her interview that they “have helped me more than anything else to access the rhetorical traditions of [her multilingual] students.” However, when asked to elaborate on the collegial connections she experienced in the writing program, Lex’s responses were largely negative, due to her recent past experiences as an adjunct faculty member. Overall, Lex felt undervalued by the writing program and the larger institution because of her adjunct role. She noted that as an adjunct, “I felt *really* isolated. You know, I felt like it had to be a *big deal* to go seek out someone” like a coworker or administrator for support. “I felt like I wasn’t justified in seeking out any mentor figures, and I didn’t have access to any peers.” Because she felt unable to connect to colleagues during her time as an adjunct, Lex focused her Post-It map discussion on the students. Her frustration with the part-time adjunct position carried over into the asymmetrical relationship between herself and the university, and the mismatch in the responsibility she felt she had for her L2 writing students:

I really feel like with L2 writers, you do need to take more time with them. And when you’re already getting paid so *little*, and are so *clearly dispensable* to the university—it’s a hard position to be in. To be like, “I *know* I need to put more into these students, because they *need* more help... and at the same time, anything that I put into them will help them, and on some level it will help *me* as a person too, because I’ll feel like I’ve fulfilled my obligations toward them and toward myself, but then you feel like you’re getting screwed over [by the school.] I can see how [adjuncts] would *not* want to teach L2 writing.

Needless to say, Lex was very excited to get her first semester underway as a full-time instructor in the writing program.

Finally, Sam’s blue Post-It notes were clearly separated from one another:

“Colleagues” were a part of his work life to “Help set L2 writing in context with larger

program goals;” “Mentors” were there to “set conditions for reflective teaching;” and “Coworkers” (e.g., his fellow L2 and mainstream teachers, the new TAs with whom he worked) were a means to “share/provide helpful materials” for the classroom and to “question complexities” that occurred with regard to teaching L2 students and the overarching “goals, purposes, and outcomes” of the program. Surprisingly, Sam did not feel the need to discuss his relationships with coworkers or administrators; instead, he focused on his experiences working with the new TA teaching practicum. He noted that helping new TAs in “developing a reflective practice,” including “developing strategies for reading a classroom, taking in data, analyzing and interpreting that data, and adjusting your practice accordingly” were things he discussed with the new TAs and then directly “applied it to [his] second language writing class.”

Overall, the three participants’ work relationships varied depending on their past learning and teaching experiences, the amount of time and previous roles they held within the writing program, and their current situations related to their job (e.g., who was in their offices and whom they worked with and talked to on a regular basis). Another large factor in their perception of interpersonal work relationships was how supported by their colleagues, administrators, and the overall program or institution they felt.

### **Resources for the Classroom and for the Writing Teacher**

On their work maps, all three participants included Post-It notes that described the resources they implemented into the classroom when working with multilingual students, including technologies, textbooks, and other sites of information. However, the location of these resources with regard to the full layout of their maps and the connections to other Post-It notes (or lack thereof) is significant. In addition, the categorization of student and

teacher resources and the extent to which individual participants described and organized these resources varied by individual experience.

Becky's resources for her L2 writing students were written mainly on the yellow "texts/materials" Post-Its (e.g., assignments, supplemental texts, and websites related to major writing projects). However, she also organized a few additional resources as orange "spaces/places" Post-Its and not as "texts/materials," including technologies like the learning management system Blackboard, Google Hangouts for "digital meeting" time with students and social media, on which she connected with her students ("Facebook, Twitter, Instagram"). In addition, Becky included materials Post-Its on her map that were not directly related to her classroom teaching experience, but rather to other facets of her work as a writing teacher. For example, she counted "committee meetings," English "department meetings," and "various service work" as materials inherent in her job. The decision to organize her map in this way reflects Becky's job description as a full-time instructor in the writing program, which included a 20% service and professional development requirement.

Lex also represented online technologies like Blackboard, online discussion forums, and email as "places/spaces" (orange Post-Its), and like Becky, she referred to her physical textbook, instructional materials, and assignments she had developed for the L2 writing classroom to be yellow "texts/materials." It is interesting to note that other online platforms such as "faculty access to scholarly literature/research" provided by university library access and the Internet, which Lex noted "provides genres, genre samples, and content materials that are more accessible to students" were also texts/materials and not places/spaces—perhaps because she viewed the orange Post-Its as

locations where there was interpersonal interaction, and the yellow Post-Its as places where she and her students could obtain information but not necessarily interact with it. In her discussion about her map, Lex noted that she considered online spaces to be “democratizing,” saying that “technology is an equalizer that many (if not all) international students are already comfortable with” in her own experiences. She went on to say that the Internet was “an amazing facilitator” for her job, an “incredible wealth of potential materials” that her students already “knew how to navigate.” Finally, because Lex completed her work map a week or so before her first semester as a full-time instructor began, she did include a yellow Post-It, much like Becky, that described “other work requirements” such as “service as a new instructor.” Lex added a description on that Post-It that reflected what she aspired to do as a full-time employee within the writing program: “I hope to serve in a capacity that better connects me to my fellow teachers and university,” a sentiment that parallels her earlier frustrations with the perceived lack of communication she felt as an adjunct faculty member.

As was seen in previous sections, Sam’s organization of his map differed from Becky’s and Lex’s maps because his yellow “texts/materials” Post-Its were his central organizing principle—not students. In his perception, the people associated with his position as an L2 writing teacher (e.g., students, colleagues, mentors, coworkers) stemmed from his overall knowledge of the curriculum and the goals and objectives of the larger writing program. He did also include one additional yellow Post-It that he considered “really important, but it has no connection” to his current map: Sam’s “Tech” Post-It included resources like the learning management system Blackboard, PowerPoint, and email. However, in a note at the bottom of that single Post-It, he wrote “mostly

disconnected from my approach,” and he further indicated its disconnect by not drawing any lines to or from the Post-It. When asked about this part of his map, Sam critiqued his own practices, saying he needed to pay more attention to making the classroom-technology connection because it is “a huge mechanism for connecting with students.” Furthermore, Sam created his map with a much smaller scope than both Becky and Lex. He only included facets of his work life related to teaching and did not include other aspects related to his TAship, including his work with new TA training and his dissertation. Perhaps Sam decided to compartmentalize the different areas of the full picture of his position as a TA and focused on only L2 writing teacher parts of the job for completing his work map.

### **Discussion and Implications**

The maps of Becky, Sam, and Lex offer a few key insights for WPAs and for institutional ethnographers alike. By viewing the visual representations of what constitutes “work” for multiple individuals within a large institution such as a writing program, one may be able to tease out any notable similarities and/or differences in values, ideologies, and spatial relations and how they contribute to a larger perception of what is working (and what is not). By further triangulating participants’ created maps with interview questions, discussion, or explanations, one may shed light on, as Peebles (1999) says, “what is privileged and what is obscured” in individual writing teacher experiences within a writing program—a “complexly organized” institutional space (p. 155). This part of my larger institutional ethnographic study acts as a potential window into the complexities of L2 writing teachers’ positionalities, with the ultimate goal of



“construct[ing] better spaces/practices” for all teachers regardless of role/rank within the program (Peeples, 1999, p. 155). Knowing these varying positionalities may also contribute to the further understanding of the factors that contribute to L2 writing teachers’ identities, an area of research that is relatively scarce (Racelis & Matsuda, 2015). Two key areas are what (and whom) the participants prioritized according to their map construction, as well as a more focused look at the specific interpersonal connections they included.

### **What (L2) Writing Teachers Prioritize**

Full-time instructors Becky and Lex placed students in the center of their Post-It maps and positioned the rest of the people, places/spaces, and materials/texts involved in their work lives in relation to their students. This student-centered visualization of a writing teacher’s perceptions of work makes sense for full-time teachers, who have full four- or five-class course loads every semester, and who do not experience the other responsibilities of teachers of differing ranks. Sam, as a graduate TA, had a different job description inherent in his role in the writing program, including the prioritized role of graduate student, the research necessary for his dissertation work, and the administrative position of working with new TAs. Therefore, it follows that Sam’s map would differ somewhat from those of the instructors.

However, that Sam chose to put curriculum in the center of his map suggests that the organizing principles of his work as an L2 writing teacher begin in a very different place from Becky and Lex. As such, these findings suggest that the training and professional development offerings of a writing program should take into account the organizing principles of writing teachers by role/rank and be sensitive to their

prioritizations. What TAs, who may have more investment (and more recent experience) in working with theoretical underpinnings, expect to learn in a program-wide workshop for L2 writing teachers, for example, may fall flat with adjunct and full-time faculty members, who may be anticipating things to be suited for a more student-centric purpose. WPAs and others responsible for professional development strategies should then keep in mind the differences in what individuals and groups of teachers prioritize.

### **What Interpersonal Work Connections Reveal**

The work maps (combined with participant commentary) also suggest individual differences in experience with regard to interpersonal connections. As a self-proclaimed “committee bug,” Becky talked at length about the value of personal connections she experienced within the writing program, not only as an MFA student, but also as a full-time instructor. Her past experiences as a very supported TA in the writing program seemed to carry over to her very positive perception of the connections she felt she still had to others as an instructor.

Becky’s confidence in being able to lean heavily on her colleagues, administrators, and friends within the program is a stark contrast to Lex’s recollections of past experiences as an adjunct faculty member within the program. As a part-time writing teacher, she did not feel her individual experiences in and out of the L2 writing classroom warranted her any voice in the writing program or with her colleagues. Because she was “only a part-timer,” Lex was reticent to make connections with office mates and other L2 writing teachers. Her rhetoric about leaning heavily on technology and other “equalizing” sources and spaces in her work life are another hint at how she positioned herself. Lex’s more optimistic commentary and her Post-It note indicating the future committee work

that she hoped to undertake as a full-time instructor suggest a change in her outlook about where she stood in the overall makeup of writing program and, in return, her overall job satisfaction.

Sam's interpersonal relationships within his organization of his work map seemed to function more as connections to the curriculum and less as collegial relationships than the instructors. Overall, his map organization was much more methodical and rigidly organized than Becky's or Lex's maps, and therefore the relationships with people with whom he interacted in his teaching life came off as more functional rather than collegial. This is not to say that Sam did not experience any friendships or positive connections in his work life. Certainly he considered the ability to work with colleagues to "help set L2 writing in context with larger program goals" and to tap his mentors to "set conditions for reflective teaching" to be assets to his role as TA and L2 writing teacher. The fact that Sam's interpersonal connections on his map and his commentary regarding these relationships differed from Becky's and Lex's perceptions suggest that taking individual constituents' knowledge, understandings, and experiences into account can be an eye-opening approach to determining what writing teachers of different roles or ranks prioritize, as well as what factors may contribute to job satisfaction.

Institutional ethnography asks researchers to explore individuals' distinct positionalities. LaFrance's (2016, forthcoming) article expresses a similar view, stating that "an individual's social alliances, experiences, and sensibilities play an important role in how that individual negotiates everyday institutional settings (such as classrooms, programs or departments)" (p. 9). Peebles (1999) argues that mapping one's experiences is "an effective way of representing the fragmentation and fluidity of human subjects" (p.

154). The map heuristic, then, may be a useful tool for revealing the “dynamism of individuals” (LaFrance, 2016 forthcoming, p.9) within a single institutional context. In turn, these findings may be useful for WPAs in other colleges and universities.

### **What Maps Mean for the Future:**

**Of program assessment and evaluation.** Beyond the results of this study, there is also some discussion needed about the mapping activity/heuristic used in my data collection. I would argue for its further use as a tool in performing program assessments and evaluations for a number of reasons. Program assessments should communicate as full a picture of a writing program as possible, and this transparency allows for bringing “differing values to light, telling multiple stories rather than providing consistently clear answers to problems” (Ward & Carpenter, 2002, p. 214). That all three participants featured in this study constructed maps with ranging similarities and differences speaks to the diversity of constituents that make up a writing program. It is also an indication of the way under-examined stakeholders (e.g., classroom teachers) are subjects of the space in which they work. Peeples’ (1999) study that uses mapping techniques to study the work of WPAs can be extended to other program stakeholders that are instrumental to a program’s success: “By seeing [writing teachers] as organizational subjects, we construct new images of [them and their work] that help us better envision possibilities for alternative organizations of our work” (p. 153).

The ability to visualize teachers’ perceived “collaborative and communal” interpersonal connections and triangulate their maps with commentary about their experiences may be what is needed in program evaluation/assessment “to help highlight the issues and assumptions” of the work of various teacher roles/ranks within a culture or

community of a writing program. This work, then, “may be a primary source of collective adaptation to the diverse views we represent” (Royer et al., 2003, p. 46). Brady (2004) notes that program evaluation and assessment are useful tools that can “foster conversation, collaboration, and change” (p. 80). The use of a mapping activity/heuristic should be considered for its potential contribution to writing program assessment and evaluation, because of its ability to provide insight into a less-examined but nonetheless significant group/stakeholder within the writing program: the classroom teacher. Using a mapping technique in program evaluation provides a synergistic approach that includes an examination of the constituents who traditionally have had less of a voice in the matter.

**Of institutional ethnography.** In addition to writing program research, I also recommend more frequent use of mapping activities in institutional ethnographic research. IE is methodology that is “especially attuned to the concerns of writing program administration and work within writing programs” because it “uncovers the many ways practice takes shape within local contexts and in response to the material realities” of a writing program (LaFrance, 2016 forthcoming, p. 2). A mapping activity like the one used in this article visualizes the realities of individuals and/or groups and allows both participants and researcher to draw from what they create and describe their spatial and interpersonal relationships inherent in their work. It is especially helpful in determining perspectives that may vary widely from person to person or (as is evidenced in this study), between participant roles or ranks in the institution. The site of an institutional ethnographic inquiry is always one of “contest, disorder, divergence, and disagreement—created in the interactive tensions between what are loosely related sets of individual

practices that live below official, institutional, or professional discourse” (LaFrance, 2016 forthcoming, p. 2). A mapping heuristic could be used by WPAs, institutional ethnographic researchers, and/or WPAs as IE researchers to examine how these individual practices and perceptions are informed by the institutional expectations, and vice-versa. Mapping adds to the wide-ranging tool kit of institutional ethnographers and helps triangulate data. When combined with, for example, interviews, focus groups, and textual artifacts, maps may contribute to the successful portrayal of the lived experiences of participants (Campbell & Gregor, 2004).

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Improvement**

As with any study, a number of limitations are present. The first limitation is attributed to my own struggles as a novice institutional ethnographer: My overall design of the mapping heuristic used in data collection (See Appendix C) had, in my opinion, some large ambiguities that could be improved for further data collection. Due to my lack of firsthand knowledge in collecting data for an institutional ethnography, I overlooked a few key issues that came to light only after my data collection had ended. First, I did not realize that participants might interpret my major Post-It note categories (people, places/spaces, materials/texts) in different ways. The issue of how to categorize technologies (e.g., online learning management systems, discussion boards used in the writing classroom, digital meeting spaces like Google Hangouts) plagued the analysis—is a technology a material, or should it be considered a space? In addition, the directions for the mapping heuristic gave no directions in where, with what, or with whom the participant was to *start* creating his or her map. The fact that I did not specifically ask

participants to start in the center of the paper, for example, or to include a blue “people” Post-It for themselves resulted in participant maps that varied widely in overall focus and scope. While this choice (or rather, lack of organization on my part), *did* reveal things I may not have otherwise noticed, I feel that providing more specific directions would better streamline participants’ results.

The maps revealed in my analysis of the three participants that Becky and Lex included a larger scope, or more out-of-class activities and features of their work lives on their maps (e.g., committee and service work), but Sam included *only* the people, places/spaces, and materials/texts that were directly related to his L2 writing teaching. For example, Sam did not include any Post-It notes about his dissertation work or his TA trainer position, both of which are important and viable aspects of what constitutes a full picture of his “work” within the writing program that were left out. In the discussion of his Post-It work map, Sam drew from his TA training experiences to inform his answers, though this specific experience was missing from his map. While it is worth considering *why* Sam tended to compartmentalize his teaching and PhD candidacy into separate entities, it may also have been a completely unconscious decision. I also wonder whether other additional factors in Sam’s experience contributed to his making of the Post-It map in such a way. For example, Sam was a PhD student in rhetoric and composition, and in addition, he also had had previous experience as the Assistant Director of the Writing Program (a graduate-held administrative position) and a new TA trainer. Lastly, though the larger full study from which this article comes had nine teacher participants, I used only three in this article because the other six did not provide detailed connections among Post-It notes. In future iterations of using this mapping heuristic, I will more clearly

define the overarching expectations and scope of the activity, as well as provide less ambiguous directions and descriptive categories that I expect participants to work with to create their maps. I would also encourage the participants to draw connections wherever they saw fit. Overall, the mapping technique needs to be refined for future data collection.

A second major limitation considers the possible issues that choosing a mapping activity as part of one's research method may present. In Peeples' (1999) chapter on mapping one WPA's work experience, he noted that maps don't always paint a full picture; they are often "critiqued for their ability to hide, erase, and colonize some spaces as they open up and privilege others" (p. 154). For example, there is no way for me as a researcher to know if my participants are being 100% honest and forthcoming in their creation of the maps. What they include and what they leave out could be completely unintentional—or not. The number of participants in this study is also problematic, because although three maps have provided ample information to discuss and postulate, they barely scratch the surface of the multitude of maps that could have been created by individuals in the writing program. The inclusion of three different participant maps for this study could have resulted in vastly different results. (For a more nuanced discussion of maps and the methodology of visual design, see Barton and Barton (1993), Soja (1989), and Woods (1992).

A final limitation relates to the nature of (institutional) ethnography as a methodology that fits the description of a "multi-vocal text" (Kirsch, 1997), namely the my own positionality as a researcher. In her *College English* article "Multi-Vocal Texts and Interpretive Responsibility," Kirsch (1997) claims that "one limitation of multi-vocal



texts is that cultural, historical, and material differences can remain unexamined or hidden” (p. 194), which corroborates the issues noted by Peeples (1999). Kirsch continues: “Multi-vocal texts are...staged by authors who select different voices in order to create an impression, prove a point, or develop a theory” (p. 194). This is common in ethnographic research methods; Clifford (1983) calls an ethnographer’s work a “virtuoso orchestration by a single author of all the discourses in his or her text” (p. 139). Indeed, it is the responsibility (or the burden) of any ethnographer, including an institutional ethnographer, to cull the hours of interview recordings and pages of transcription to decide what to present and what to leave alone. In IE literature, researcher positionality is widely recognized. The IE researcher is always materially situated within the context she studies (LaFrance & Nicolas, 2012), and this positionality has the potential to shape the actions of researcher and participant, and to shape the eventual presentation and analysis of data. For example, at the time of this study, I (as the researcher) was a colleague and personal friend of all three participants Becky, Sam, and Lex. Furthermore, I was holding a graduate-level administrative position within the writing program I was studying and we were all working in, resulting in my close connections with the WPA and director of second language writing. These relationships and associations have the potential to skew how participants talk about people, objects, or policies within the writing program: on one end of the spectrum, participants could divulge more information to me because of our familiarity; on the other end of the spectrum, they could be reticent to include information they may perceive to be detrimental to their positions or the work they do within the writing program. Personally, I also have the obligation to present a complete and balanced interpretation of the data I collect, but completing this task to perfection is

nearly impossible. Because institutional ethnographers essentially curate multiple participant perspectives to obtain a clearer picture of a complex system or institution, they must, as Kirsch (1997) contends, “take responsibility for sorting through the data they gather in the field while recognizing that such data are always shaped, to a large extent, by researchers’ values, theoretical perspectives, and personal histories” (p. 195). The responsibility of the IE researcher to negotiate what she presents (and therefore what is obscured) is a matter that demands her constant awareness and attention.

### **Conclusion**

Writing program evaluation and assessment are opportunities for WPAs and all stakeholders to look closely at what we do each day as our work within an institution, “to examine what we do and why, and how we might do it better” (Burnham, 2002, p. 304). This article was an attempt to do just that: to share the perspectives of three L2 writing teachers with regard to how they organize and situate themselves and others. The organizational space in which Becky, Sam, and Lex created their Post-It maps reveals differences in standpoint, whether by individual or by teacher role/rank (full-time instructor vs. graduate TA). Institutional ethnography is a useful methodology “Because it takes divergence as a valuable starting point” in an inquiry and because it “can help WPAs to understand the many value systems and unique approaches to classroom practice at work within a program and on a campus” (LaFrance, 2016, forthcoming, p. 2). Furthermore, despite the researcher’s struggles in creating the mapping activity/heuristic, it was successful in its attempt to “capture some of [the three subjects’] simultaneous, fragmented, fluid organizational positions” (Peeples, 1999, p. 154). Ultimately, both the

technique of mapping as a data collection and the use of institutional ethnography as a methodology in writing program assessment and evaluation prove to be useful endeavors in accurately presenting and making visible the complex, dynamic social processes, the multifarious perceptions, and the diverse experiences of all writing program stakeholders, whether to program evaluator services, to WPAs, or to IE researchers.

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## CONCLUSION

This inquiry was developed from a variety of personal interests that were amalgamated into a dissertation-sized research project. Upon reading LaFrance and Nicolas' (2012) *CCC* article on the merits of institutional ethnography in composition research, I knew that I wanted to better understand the methodology and figure out a way to try it out in my own institutional context. IE, it seemed, was an appropriate methodology for learning more about teachers in my writing program, whose work lives were comprised of various roles and relationships, and whose overall experiences in the program were affected by their institutional context, the people with whom they interacted, and their own personal motivations and actions.

### **Revisiting the Study**

As a graduate student with aspirations of being a writing program administrator, I knew that the teacher workforce in a program (and the relative health and wellbeing of this workforce) was a vital factor in a program's success and sustainability. I also knew that these teachers were in many cases more than my colleagues—they were my mentors, my mentees, and my friends. Even more, they were my friends regardless of teacher role or rank. I came into my PhD program with three years of adjunct work experience, and I knew how potentially isolating that experience could be. Therefore, as a graduate TA, I made a concerted effort to get to know as many coworkers as possible, whether a fellow TA, a part-time adjunct instructor, or a full-time faculty member (tenured or not). When the university decided to change the full-time non-tenure track faculty members' job

descriptions from a 4/4 teaching load (with 20% service/professional development) to a 5/5 (with 0% service/professional development), I commiserated with my teacher-friends, feeling sort of powerless (and guilty!) because I held the role of graduate teaching associate with low course loads and lots of funding and support. There wasn't much I could do from my position, but as a PhD student, this development pushed me to investigate how things like this happen in an institution like a writing program. As a budding WPA, I wondered what *I* would do as program administrator should something like this happen on my watch—or more specifically, what I *could* realistically do. This was the moment that my interest in institutional ethnography aligned with my interest in WPA work, and thus I decided to investigate the lived experiences of teachers of all roles and how these multifarious perceptions and motivations could better inform the work of WPAs (with regard to training and professional development opportunities, developing a culture or community of [L2] writing, and program assessment and evaluation).

To narrow down the search for participants for my study, I looked to another one of my specializations, which is second language writing. As the Associate Director of L2 Writing in my program, I led the L2 writing teacher training practicum and worked closely with these teachers as they were trained or specialized to teach multilingual FYC. The training practica were always successful, though they were not perfect: teachers were sometimes dissatisfied by the chosen theoretical readings, and we often had intense conversations during our meetings regarding our program's placement procedures, the varying levels of students in a class, and the perceived gap between L2 writing theory readings and practical strategies that teachers of multilingual students could use in their classrooms. I also knew that working with multilingual students required, to quote one of

my participants, Becky, “more of everything” from the writing teacher perspective. As an L2 writing scholar, these firsthand experiences prompted me to choose a participant group with the L2 writing specialization factor in common. This choice allowed me to focus the interview questions to this more localized group.

**Implications.** This project has a number of major takeaways described in more detail below. It takes a look at a writing program as an institution and focuses on one major stakeholder group that are a critical mass in a writing program and should be taken into greater consideration in program assessment and evaluation. I argue that these stakeholders can provide essential knowledge of a program—the effectiveness of training procedures, resources, and professional development opportunities; the current state of communication between teachers and administrators; the material conditions experienced by teachers of all roles/ranks—and that this knowledge is beneficial for assessing and evaluating the vitality and effectiveness of the program. By using the methodology of institutional ethnography, the project brings together multifarious voices. Participants’ perceptions and experiences as L2 writing teachers are brought into the forefront of a WPA’s consciousness. With this valuable knowledge, a WPA can be better equipped to quickly respond to local problems and issues while keeping in mind the individual experiences of her employees and coworkers. As this project is a “nontraditional” dissertation with three freestanding, separate but related articles, the details of research questions and findings are organized by article below.



## Research Questions and Findings

**Article one**, “From Graduate Teaching Associate to Adjunct to Full-Time Non-Tenure Track Faculty: One Writing Teacher’s Experiences,” was written for the WPA audience and asks the following research question:

- In what ways can the changing experiences of writing teachers inform how WPAs support writing teachers in multiple roles or ranks?

Though the large-scale study was comprised of nine L2 writing teachers, I focused on one participant, Lex, for this article. Her experiences within the writing program shifted as she moved through three of the available roles or ranks of teacher—from a graduate teaching associate as she pursued her masters degree to a part-time adjunct faculty member, and then onto a full-time non-tenure track writing instructor. Lex’s perceptions of her role changed as she moved between positions, specifically regarding the support she felt she received from coworkers, mentors, and members of the writing program administration.

As a GTA, Lex felt very supported and perceived strong connections with her fellow graduate students in her training cohort. As an adjunct faculty member, she detailed her frustrations with the material conditions of the role and the repercussions of these frustrations with regard to the relationships she maintained and/or lost. Lex also felt undervalued and taken advantage of by the writing program and the larger university. Finally, once hired full-time in the writing program, Lex’s overall outlook became much more positive overall, though her recent experiences as an adjunct faculty member were still fresh enough wounds to make her wary of the relationships she maintained in her full-time status. Furthermore, when faced with an institutional change in the workload of

full-time instructors, Lex's reaction was very different from her colleagues: instead of feeling exploited by the writing program, Lex took the institutional decision in stride and was relatively more resilient than her peers. The seemingly drastic changes in Lex's perception of her job based on her role or rank is important for WPAs, who, though often aware of these problems, should even more keenly take into consideration the work experiences of all those employed within the writing program, and whose commitment to teacher equity may be a worthy first step in changing the stories (Adler-Kassner, 2008) about contingent faculty members in higher education.

**Article two**, "Accommodating for Specializations Within the Writing Program: Training and Supporting Second Language Writing Teachers," incorporated all nine participants in the larger study, and it focused on their experiences in and perceptions of the training they received (or did not receive) in teaching L2 writing in the writing program. The audience for this article is a combination of writing program administrators and second language writing scholars and teachers. This facet of the project had three research questions that are detailed below.

- Question 1: What are the participant experiences and perceptions of their L2-specific training?
- Question 2: What additional opportunities do participants "count" as L2 writing training and support?
- Question 3: What is "missing"—what are other ways that specialization can be acquired?

The impetus for this article was the varying participant perceptions due to their disparate individual experiences in training. While some participants had had a longer relationship with the writing program and had been trained as TAs, others were newer to the program and had received their (mainstream) teacher training elsewhere. The same kinds of

differences occurred in participants' L2-specific training, though seven of the nine participants were trained in-house. Though the overall consensus regarding L2-specific training was that it was a positive experience, a number of problematics (Smith, 2005) emerged, such as the existence of inadequate placement procedures and the varying levels of student ability in a single class. Perhaps the most significant finding was that participants felt they were missing practical ways to bridge the theory-praxis gap in the teaching of multilingual students. I suggest that WPAs and L2 writing scholars (and WPAs who are L2 writing scholars) to conduct further research to determine more explicitly manageable ways to fill that gap.

A second finding is that factors beyond required teacher training practica were considered to “count” as training and professional development by the participants, including L2-specific workshops offered by the writing program's second language writing committee and opportunities to chat and collaborate with coworkers in their work spaces (offices, copy room). All participants noted that they would love the opportunity to do more training, networking, and knowledge-building; however, often teachers' busy schedules and material realities of their work lives (e.g., having large numbers of students and course sections, the time needed to provide feedback to L2 students, lack of other L2 colleagues in their offices) prevented them from participating as much as they wanted.

The article also deals with the notion of specialization, or the different additional “certifications” or “specialties” that writing teachers may choose to add to their teaching repertoire, depending on the (oft changing) needs of the writing program. Specializations like these could include professional/technical writing, basic or developmental writing, and WAC/WID, but for this article, the specialization was obviously the teaching of

multilingual student populations. Overall, the findings suggest that teachers benefit from establishing and maintaining a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and are offered numerous opportunities to strengthen their relationships with the different actors in their job network (Latour, 2007), and that offering opportunities to specialize may help create those kinds of communities. I endorse the suggestions in the literature that for now, WPAs should work to facilitate professional development and training opportunities (formal and informal) and should advocate for a reorganization of teacher offices in ways that keep teacher specializations in mind.

**Article three**, “Mapping as a Heuristic for Writing Program Assessment and Evaluation and in Institutional Ethnography,” is a reflection on the overall methodology for the larger project and proposes a new data collection heuristic (a mapping technique) into the work of institutional ethnographers. Two research questions asked:

- In what ways can mapping activities reveal the interpersonal, material, and spatial relationships of writing teachers within a writing program?
- How does a mapping heuristic better inform the inquiry involved in an institutional ethnography?

Three of the nine participants, Becky, Sam, and Lex, were featured because of the notable differences in their map creation, organization, and explanation. The mapping heuristic challenged participants to look up (Smith, 2006) from their personal experiences as writing teachers and think about the relationships they had with people, places, and things at their work: the interpersonal, spatial, and material connections inherent in their work. The results share the multitude of factors that contribute to the (L2) writing teacher identity, including their role or rank in the program and the relationships with coworkers and administration members that grew out of those roles/ranks (or not). It also notes the

complexities of their work lives that reach beyond the boundaries of the writing classroom—it informs WPAs of the additional stakeholders and material factors involved in the successful completion of writing teachers’ responsibilities.

The mapping heuristic is also a great fit for institutional ethnographic research, which is a methodology that typically investigates sites of “contest, disorder, divergence, and disagreement” (LaFrance, 2016, p. 2). When participants create a visual representation of the actors/actants present (Latour, 1991) and the connections they perceive to be happening (or not happening) in their lives as writing teachers in order to accomplish their work, and when they are asked to further explain these perceptions, researchers can determine specifically where any divergences exist and the reasons behind their existence. I suggest that institutional ethnography incorporate a mapping heuristic into their regular methods because of the activity’s ability to clearly establish participant standpoint(s) within a larger institution like a writing program, whose individual, multi-dimensional stakeholders come with their own fragmented, fluid positionalities (Peeples, 1999).

### **Limitations to the Project**

As with any research, a number of limitations can be found in each of the three articles. Below I mention limitations that I have perceived across the three articles and the larger project.

One major limitation to the project as a whole is the size of the study. When compared to the overall size of the writing program and to the cohort of L2 specialized writing teachers, the participant list of nine individuals is very small. Participants agreed

to take part in the study after receiving an email from me that was sent out to all L2 writing teachers. In addition, of the nine participants, there was a representation of teacher roles/ranks (six full-time NTT instructors and three GTAs) that was not completely reflective of the complete makeup of teacher roles/ranks. In the writing program, there were also L2 writing teachers who were part-time adjuncts and lecturers (a role/rank not discussed in the study; this is a NTT position with a three-year renewable contract, versus the year-to-year contract of the instructor role/rank). In addition, only one of the nine participants was male. The breadth of individual teacher perceptions and experiences could have reflected a more diverse representation, and had this been the case, different trends may have emerged.

Another limitation for this larger study is inherent in the methodology, institutional ethnography, and in my role as ethnographer. I consider myself to be a novice institutional ethnographer, and this study was my first foray into the methodology; as such, errors were made that could have been avoided due to my inexperience. If I were to tackle the same project again, I would carefully edit the interview question list I generated, which in its original form was too broad overall. I learned firsthand through this inquiry the embedded nature of the researcher within the institutional context and among the participants and the individuals to whom they referred in their responses. I found myself struggling to be subjective in my data analysis because of the close ties I held to the participants who were my colleagues and friends. I was also a graduate student and GTA during the data collection, and these roles may have impacted participant responses as well. This issue of material situatedness, or the matter of being embedded in a culture, is inherent in institutional ethnographic research (LaFrance &

Nicolas, 2012), but I did not anticipate the specific ways it would affect me as a researcher until it happened to me firsthand. Related to situatedness is the relationships I had with my dissertation committee: Two of my committee members were also the WPA and the Director of Second Language Writing, and therefore the commentary participants provided often referenced these individuals and their contributions to the writing program and to participants' work lives. This situation ran the risk of skewing participants' responses; they may have been more (or less) forthcoming and honest in their interviews because of my proximity to these administrative entities. In the planning stages of this project, the WPA mentioned that it was a definite risk and limitation to the study to take on such an inquiry; however, the positionality of the researcher in multi-vocal texts (Kirsch, 1997) has been widely acknowledged and, in my opinion, my embeddedness in the institutional context is an asset to the study (even when it is also a risk).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Although this project is by no means a perfect example of institutional ethnography, I argue that this methodology has been a worthwhile endeavor for a dissertation-length inquiry, as well as when taking each article individually. As a whole, I would recommend that more PhD students incorporate institutional ethnography into their dissertation studies, particularly when the projects involve work with writing programs and writing program administration, the experiences of teachers and/or teacher trainers, or the theories/practices of teaching writing, rhetoric and composition, or second language writing. The ability to see how things are happening in an institutional space or community (LaFrance & Nicolas, 2012) is a benefit to all parties involved. Very few

dissertations in the fields of WPA, second language writing, and rhetoric and composition have utilized this methodology, and I recommend that the practice be continued so it can be improved upon.

Related to article one, I recommend that WPAs and WPA scholars continue their inquiries of differing teacher roles/ranks and how these affect writing teachers' perceptions of their work and job experiences. Specifically, I suggest that more work be done to incorporate ideas from *The Activist WPA* (Adler-Kassner, 2008) to assess current material conditions (Smith, 2005) within a writing program and to create opportunities for positive changes to occur in the writing program and in the work lives of writing teachers.

Significant to article two, I recommend that WPA and L2 writing scholars and teachers continue the dialogue about L2 writing specialization within the writing program. Current training procedures and support/professional development opportunities should be continually re-analyzed, and those who create, offer, and/or participate in such initiatives also need to be regularly tapped for their perceptions of these training experiences. I also suggest that similar inquiries be conducted in writing programs of various sizes, student constituencies, and locations (e.g., four-year research universities and teaching universities, small liberal arts colleges, community colleges, and two-year schools). The differences in material working conditions of writing teachers in different locations may provide insight in ways that my study could not.

Article three prompted me to recommend that institutional ethnography adopt my mapping heuristic as a viable method of inquiry to reveal the interpersonal, spatial, and material relationships experienced by writing teachers within their programs. Institutional



ethnography often begins at a point of divergence within a local context (LaFrance, 2016), and this mapping technique offers participants the opportunity to create a visual representation of their work experiences and the relationships inherent in their “everyday, everynight” experiences working in a writing program (Campbell & Gregor, 2004, p. 27). I also recommend that research that includes mapping heuristics be continued in the field of writing program administration because of the technique’s ability to share the ways in which writing teachers (and anyone else who participates) create their identities, and the varying factors that contribute to this identity creation (Peeples, 1999).

I would also recommend that even more work be done with the data I have collected in this larger-scale study that was not presented in my three articles. There is one major spinoff project that did not fit into the confines of this dissertation-length project that I hope to continue in the future: I want to focus on the university’s decision to change the job description of NTT faculty members and their course loads (4/4 to 5/5) in more in-depth and nuanced ways that were not possible in this current project.

Specifically, I would like to bring in more feminist methodologies (e.g., Hesse-Biber, 1993; Kirsch, 1993; Roberts, 1997;) and texts that focus on the lives and experiences of contingent faculty in higher education and in the writing program (e.g., Schell, 1998; Malenczyk, 2013; Bérubé & Smith, 2015). Institutional ethnography has been grounded in feminist standpoint theory (Harding, 2007) and recognizes that knowledge is inextricably bound within larger networks and hierarchies; in other words, “it matters who speaks, under what conditions, and for what purposes” (LaFrance and Nicolas, 2012, p. 143). A study that focuses on this particular 4/4 to 5/5 institutional change is useful for WPAs and other administrative bodies in higher education to garner much-needed

insights into the lives of contingent faculty members and the feminist perspectives that have gone relatively unexplored in the current manuscript.

### **A Final Word on the Project**

A writing program is an institution that depends on myriad factors and on individuals, who contribute to the life of the program and to the successful completion of its goals and aspirations. Institutional ethnography is a befitting methodology for exploring what is happening in an institution such as a writing program and can give WPAs and other researcher-scholars valuable insights into ways to improve the lives and work experiences of all stakeholders involved.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS, FALL 2014

## **A Community of Second Language Writing at Arizona State University: An Institutional Ethnography**

### **Intro Script**

Thank you for agreeing to this interview. I will be asking you a series of questions about your role as an L2 writing teacher. My goal is *not* to evaluate your performance. This is not a critique or a review. Instead, my goal is to *understand from your perspective* what your experience is like—what is working well for you, what your current concerns or struggles are. I want to see how the Writing Programs (and the L2 writing aspect of the Writing Programs) is working from your perspective. My project will evaluate the environment that you work and exist in, not the teachers.

### **Key Terms**

L2 Writers – Students whose first language is not English

Community – A group that shares common characteristics and interests; one that acknowledges and offers support of its individual members

### **Teacher Interview Questions**

1. What is your educational background?
2. Do you have any teaching experience before teaching at ASU? If so, can you describe it?
3. Tell me about your teaching experience.
  - a. How do you approach students?
  - b. What experiences/people do you believe have influenced the way you teach/feel about teaching?
4. Describe your experience with L2 writers in general.
5. Has your experience with L2 writers changed upon working at ASU?
6. What do you do currently as a feature of the Writing Programs at ASU?
  - a. Tell me about how you became a part of this community.
  - b. What kind of classes do you teach?
  - c. Tell me about your overall experience teaching L2 writing courses.
  - d. Tell me about your L2 writing students.
  - e. Are there specific moments that stand out in your memory of working with L2 writing students?
7. What, if any, L2-specific training did you receive at ASU?
  - a. Describe your experiences.
  - b. Describe the relationships that you have that came out of this training.
  - c. In what ways have you been satisfied with your L2 writing training?

8. Are there people you work with that you talk to when you have any issues with or questions about your job?
  - a. Describe any specific moments that stand out in your memory.
  - b. Have your experiences or relationships changed over time? (From a beginning teacher in the Writing Programs to now, for example)
  
9. Do you ever discuss L2-specific writing issues with anybody?
  - a. Who are these people?
  - b. What kind of relationships do you have with them?
  - c. Have any of these relationships shifted over time?
  
10. How do you learn about policies in the Writing Programs?
  - a. How would you describe the kind of communication the Writing Programs has with you, and vice versa?
  - b. How would you describe the kind of communication you experience with specific L2-related issues/topics?
  
11. Please describe, in as much detail as possible, your job/work/routine.
  - a. What do you do inside the classroom?
  - b. What do you do outside the classroom?
  - c. Describe a specific moment that stands out in your memory.
  - d. As a teacher in the ASU Writing Program, what are some of your responsibilities?
  - e. Are there guidelines given to you about working with L2 writers?
  
12. Describe the materials you use while working with L2 writers.
  - a. Textbooks
  - b. Types of technology (learning management systems, email, etc.)
  - c. Grammar contracts (or any other kind of contract)
  - d. Writing projects
  - e. Other written genres (discussion posts, paper proposals, etc.)
  
13. What are the most positive aspects of your work?
  - a. Teaching your course(s) in general?
  - b. Specifically concerning L2 writers?
  - c. Considering your co-workers?
  - d. As a member of the Writing Programs teaching staff?
  
14. Can you identify specific areas of your work with L2 writers where you struggle or are frustrated?
  - a. In class
  - b. Outside of class
  - c. Communication
  
15. Can you identify specific areas of your work with L2 writers that you feel could be improved?

- a. In training?
- b. In being supported by Writing Programs staff?
- c. Considering materials for teaching L2 writing sections?
- d. Other support/opportunities for you as a teacher?
- e. Other support/opportunities for your students?

16. Tell me what it's like to be a part of the ASU Writing Programs.

17. "*I am an L2 writing teacher.*" Would you say this about yourself?

- a. What does it mean to be an L2 writing teacher?
- b. Does an L2 writing teacher differ from a mainstream writing teacher? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS, FALL 2014



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**Focus Group Questions**

1. What do you see as the most influential issues shaping your professional practice (moving forward)? In what ways is the WP involved (or not) in assisting with this task?
2. What is the most essential to you? (As a writing teacher, as an L2 writing teacher, as a teacher in the WP...)
3. What (if anything) has changed for you since we last met?
4. The 5/5... Tell me about it. Describe what's happening in the department in your own words. Tell me how you feel about it. How (if at all) does this change your outlook on your job in the Writing Programs?
5. What is/are your next step(s)? What will summer and fall bring? Do you have a "Plan B," and what might that entail?
6. At the risk of leading you into any answers, what (if at all) do you think the 5/5 will do to your experience in the Writing Programs? (You discussed in previous interviews how connected and supported you feel here in the WP-- has anything changed yet? Will it?)
7. Is there anything you'd like to tell the Writing Programs administration (or English Dept.) about your experience/perceptions?

## APPENDIX C

### WORK MAP ACTIVITY/HEURISTIC FOR PARTICIPANTS

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**Work Map Activity/Heuristic**

Mapping exercise (adapted from Christina Ortmeier-Hooper's dissertation, 2007)

**Materials:**

Colored Post-It notes

- [color 1] → people (coworkers, administrators, mentors, students)
- [color 2] → places (classroom, office, admin offices, other rooms/buildings)
- [color 3] → materials (texts, textbooks, assignments, forms/paperwork, classes/training, meetings, other work requirements)

Large poster paper

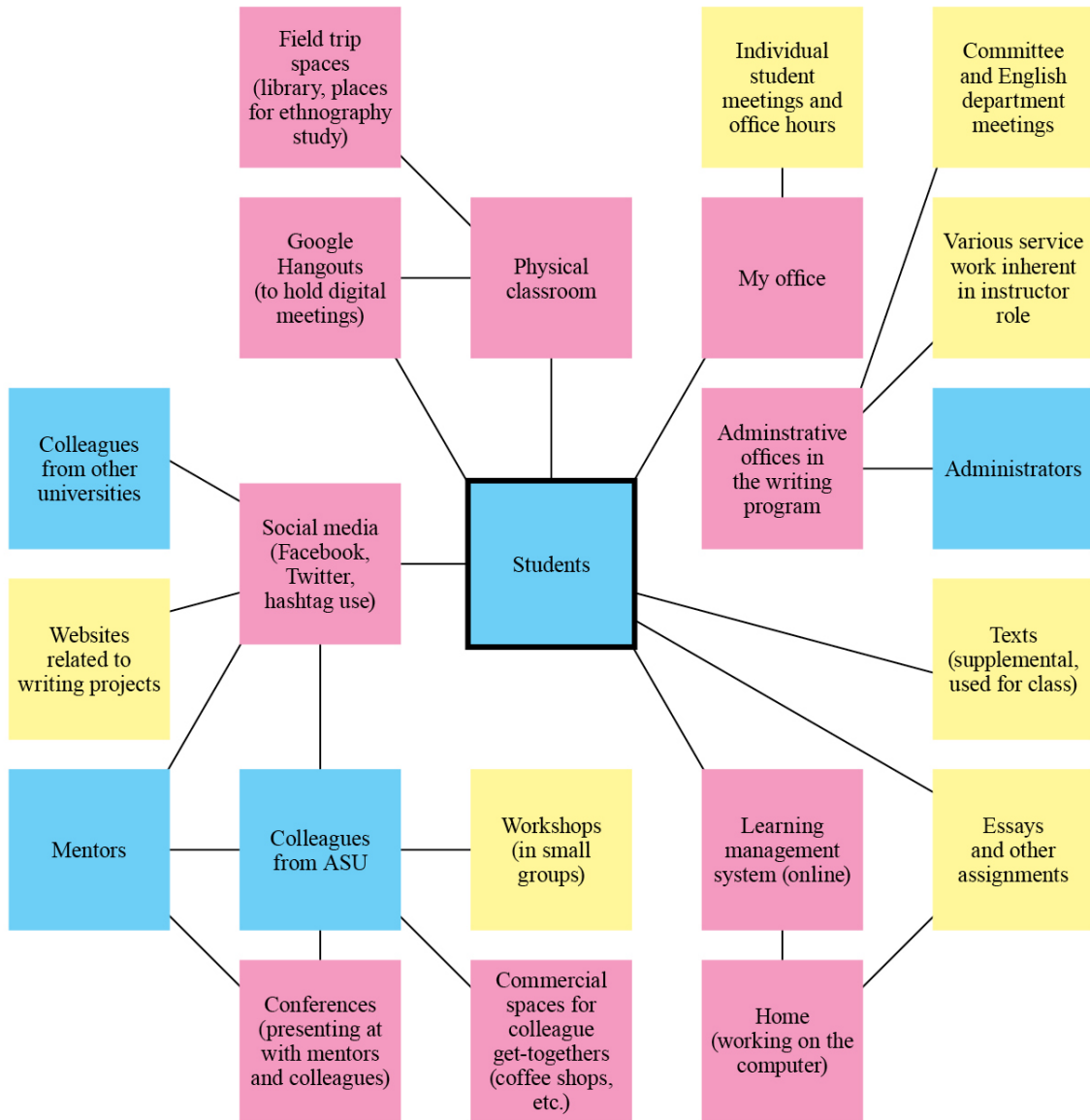
Writing utensil (marker, sharpie, pen/pencil)

**Directions:**

1. Participant writes names of people, places, and materials used in his/her work on the appropriate Post-It notes.
2. Participant writes name on the poster paper.
3. Participant arranges Post-It notes to map out his/her work experience.
4. Participant draws lines/connections/notes to add clarification to arrangement, if needed.
5. Participant and interviewer discuss the Work Map.

APPENDIX D  
BECKY'S WORK MAP

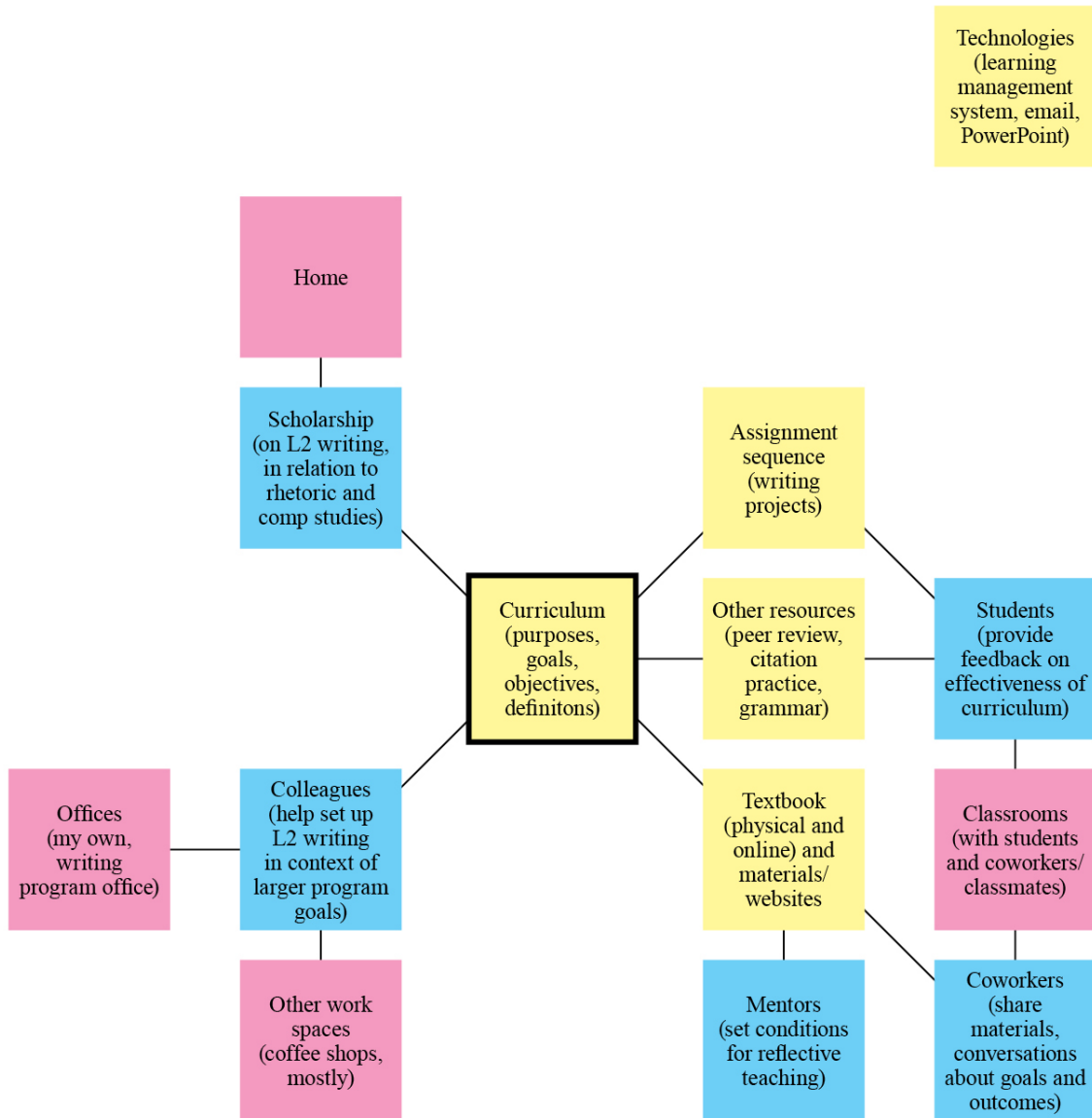
## Becky's Work Map<sup>8</sup>



<sup>8</sup> Key: Blue = people; Yellow = places/spaces; Pink = materials/texts

APPENDIX E  
SAM'S WORK MAP

## Sam's Work Map<sup>9</sup>

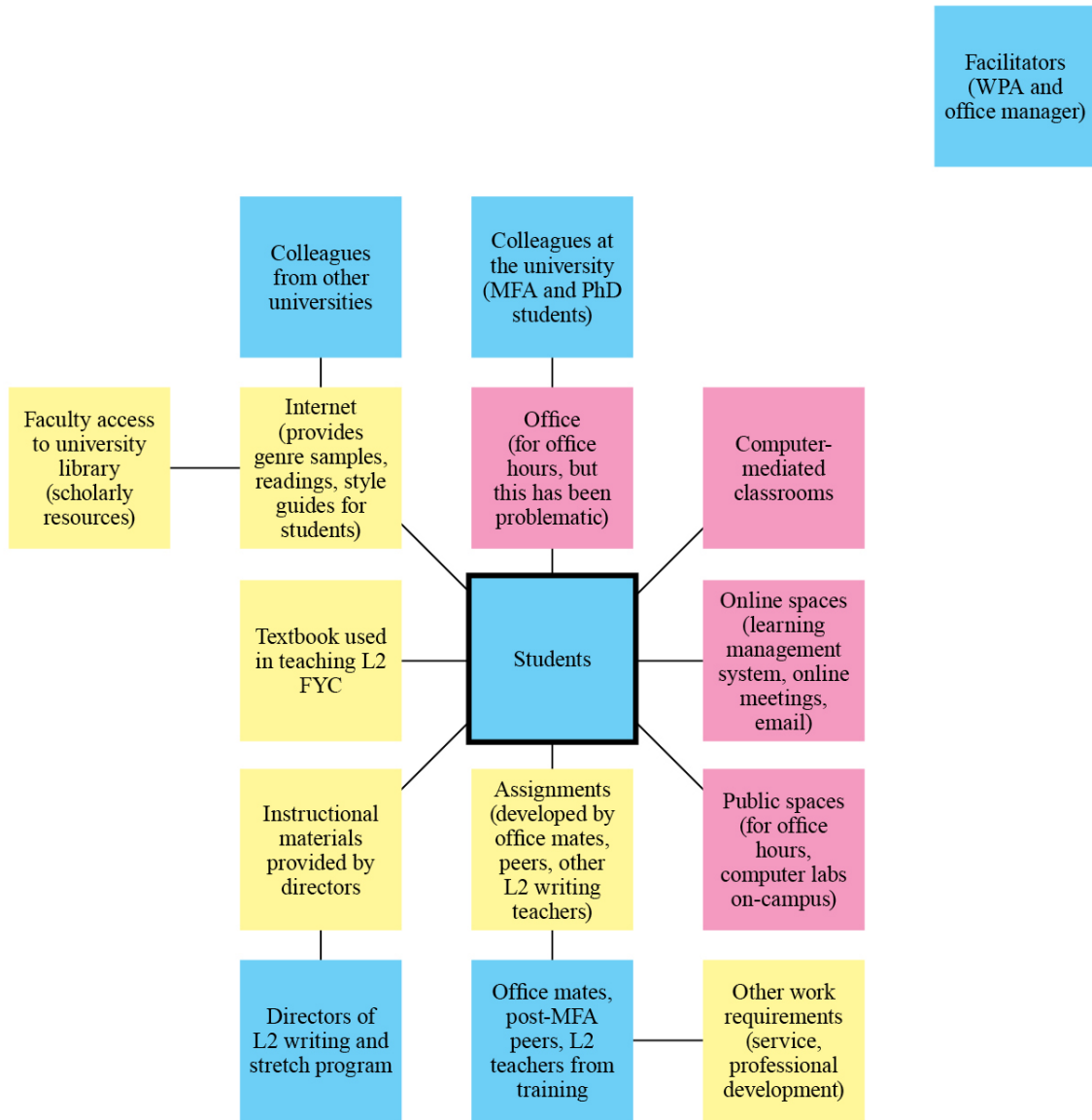


<sup>9</sup> Key: Blue = people; Yellow = places/spaces; Pink = materials/texts

APPENDIX F  
LEX'S WORK MAP



# Lex's Work Map<sup>10</sup>



<sup>10</sup> Key: Blue = people; Yellow = places/spaces; Pink = materials/texts