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Getting to Denver: Instructor Participation in the Design of Writing Program Assessment Technologies

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Getting to Denver: Instructor Participation in the Design of Writing Program

Assessment Technologies

by

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Bachelor of Arts in English, University of New Mexico, 2002

Juris Doctorate, Washington and Lee School of Law, 2005

Master of Arts in English, University of New Mexico, 2014

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in English

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DEDICATION

For my family:

My husband, Adrian, and our beautiful children, Kian and Maryam;

To my parents, Behin and Robert;

And to my sister and family, Shedeh, Charlie, and Cyrus.

For all that you've done and continue to do.

Thank you.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation presents a framework for writing instructor participation in the design of writing program assessment technologies. I base this framework on a case study into the participation of 16 non-tenure track (NTT) and graduate teaching assistant (GTA) writing instructors in the design of a final portfolio assignment prompt for the first-year composition (FYC) program at the University of New Mexico (UNM). I specifically question how Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) and assessment designers can address the needs, interests, and values of writing instructors in the design of writing program assessment technologies, including the important need for instructors' agency and professional autonomy in the context of standardized technologies. Relying on Broad's Dynamic Criteria Mapping and Wenger's social theories of community and participation, I present and analyze a methodology for fostering collaboration among instructors in the design process. Finally, I present findings relating instructors' participation to the concept of writing assessment validity.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation examines the pressing issue of writing instructor participation in the design of standardized writing program assessment technologies for first year composition (FYC) college or university writing programs. I present a case study of the efforts by the FYC program at the University of New Mexico (UNM) to design and implement a standardized assignment prompt for the final portfolio assignment in the program's traditional FYC courses. UNM is a R1, Hispanic serving institution (HSI) that relies heavily on what the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) (2016) has termed Non-Tenure Track (NTT) faculty (part-time, adjunct, and non-tenure track instructors) and Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs). The goal of the study was to engage these writing instructors in designing an assignment prompt that would be flexible enough to meet the interests, values, and needs of these instructors, while still serving the accountability and other needs of the FYC program and the other participants in the assessment.

Through a pragmatic and constructive analysis of this case study, I will show that these writing instructors' participation in the design stages of the assessment was essential to ensuring that instructors' needs, interests, and values were met within the final design structure and use of the assessment technology. I will also argue that recognition of instructors' mutual agency and professional autonomy should be valued within the design of the assessment technology. I will articulate a framework that Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) and other assessment designers can use to approach interactions with instructors in designing standardized writing program assessment technologies. And, finally, I will question whether instructor participation can be considered as influencing the validity of the assessment technology.

I.   The Need for the Study

Writing program assessment is a rhetorical act that requires WPAs and/or other writing assessment designers to balance the needs, interests, and values of diverse and often conflicting participants in assessment, including FYC students, writing instructors, public and university officials, and the wider public (Yancey, 1999; Adler-Kassner & O'Neill, 2010). Bureaucratic participants (such as public or university officials) often use assessment as a means of accountability, demanding that WPAs measure student progress towards a construct of literacy in exchange for permitting WPAs and writing instructors to maintain control over their programs and curriculum (Adler-Kassner, 2008; Adler-Kassner & O'Neill, 2010; Huot 1996, 2002; Yancey, 1999). WPAs and writing instructors, on the other hand, primarily value assessment for purposes of the teaching and learning of writing (Adler-Kassner & O'Neill, 2010; Huot, 2002; CCCC, 2014). This divide in values and purposes for assessment can create complexities and tensions that WPAs and assessment designers must successfully navigate in designing assessment technologies that can be used successfully both in the classroom and for accreditation and other accountability purposes (Gipps, 1994; Adler-Kassner & O'Neill, 2010).

At the same time, WPAs have responsibilities as both administrators and mentors of their instructional workforce (Strickland, 2011). This workforce is increasingly made up of NTT and GTA instructors (CCCC, 2016). For example, a 2010 study by the Coalition on the Academic Workforce (CAW) found that 75.5% of the 30,000 faculty surveyed from higher education institutions identified as NTT, many of whom were teachers of English (CAW, 2012). The 1988 Wyoming Conference and the Conference on College Composition and Communication's (CCCC) 2016 position statement on NTT faculty have recognized the tenuous position of these NTT and GTA writing instructors, noting that many of them are

overworked, underpaid, and offered little official support (Trimbur & Cambridge, 1988; CCCC, 2016). Other composition historians have similarly decried the second-class status of these instructors, offering historical explanations for their status ranging from disparities in educational and workplace models of higher education (Connors, 1997; Strickland, 2001), a lack of appreciation for the substantive content and worth of writing education (Crowley, 1998), the elevation of literature over composition in English instruction (Miller, 1993), or the feminization of writing education and its workers (Schell, 1998).

WPAs thus hold important responsibilities with respect to the instructors in their program and must ensure that their policies and practices are not only ethical and sound but also encourage instructors' motivation, preparation, and professionalism. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) (2019) recognized the importance of collaborative approaches to preparing English language teachers in a position statement that suggests professional development efforts should emphasize "(1) collaborative learning, (2) participatory professional development, (3) collaborative knowledge production, [and] (4) [a] commitment to cultural competency." Moreover, I would argue that WPAs responsibilities towards professional development are doubled with regard to GTAs, to whom WPAs not only have responsibilities as administrators, but as the mentors and educators of future academic professionals who will be expected to research, teach, and serve their students, departments, and institutions. Efforts such as the Council of Graduate School's Preparation of Future Faculty programs have specifically acknowledged the importance of preparing GTAs by engaging them in assessment practices, as such participation encourages these future educators to both value assessment and appreciate its relevance to scholarship and teaching (Denecke, Michaels & Stone, 2017). WPAs should likewise strive to generate an appreciation and familiarity with assessment practices in their preparation of GTAs.

As I hope to show through this dissertation, I believe that writing instructors'

participation in the design of writing program assessment technologies can help WPAs and

other writing program assessment technology designers address these complex tensions and

needs, including the need to design valid assessment technologies and to effectively motivate

and prepare instructors in their program. I acknowledge, however, that fostering

collaboration and participation among writing instructors sometimes can be extremely

challenging. Banta and Blaich (2010), for example, have argued that, while faculty

engagement in assessment practices are essential to "closing the loop" of institutional

learning, assessment practices often lack effectiveness due to the "defensiveness" of faculty.

They note, however, that "there is reason for that defensiveness,"

> Assessment is, at its core, a subversive activity. Although most institutions operate
>
> the way they do because faculty, staff, students, and administrative leaders genuinely
>
> believe that the current structures promote learning, the current state of affairs at
>
> almost every institution is based on a delicate set of compromises and optimizations
>
> in which many parties have participated and which few care to alter. Assessment
>
> evidence can call into question long-standing agreements, priorities, and modes of
>
> practice because these do not support student learning in the ways in which the
>
> people who created them imagined. Many assessment efforts' lack of impact may be
>
> just as much about the willingness of institutional stakeholders to reconsider deeply
>
> held assumptions about their institutions in light of evidence as it is about the quality
>
> of assessment programs themselves. (p. 27)

WPAs and other assessment designers will encounter many challenges in designing

standardized writing program assessment technologies, including challenges arising from the

resistance or even apathy of the instructors in their programs. There is therefore a need for

research that explores how WPAs and other assessment designers can design assessments that meet the diverse needs, interests, and values of the various participants and purposes of assessment, while effectively collaborating with the writing instructors in the program.

This study attempts to address these important needs by critically exploring and theorizing instructor participation in the design of standardized writing program assessment technologies. I will examine how the needs, interests, and values of the instructors at UNM were negotiated within the design process and structure of an assignment prompt that the FYC program intended to use for both instructional and assessment purposes. I also hope to present a positive and proactive model and framework for instructor participation in the design of assessment technologies. Thus, this dissertation will, as Adler-Kassner & O'Neill (2010) have suggested, try to "reframe" discourses about writing assessment by presenting a positive and proactive approach to instructor participation in the assessment technology design process.

II.   Research Questions

My research questions are:

1. *How can WPAs and other assessment designers successfully address the needs, interests, and values of the diverse participants in the design of writing program assessment technologies, with a specific focus on addressing the needs, interests, and values of writing instructors in the design of standardized writing assessment technologies?*

2. *How can WPAs and other assessment designers effectively collaborate with the program's writing instructors in the process of designing writing program assessment technologies?*

3. *Can instructor participation in the design of writing program assessment technologies be considered a part of or as influencing the validity of the technology?*

III.   An Exploration of the Language, Limitations, and Intent of this Study

The above questions rely upon several terms of art informed by writing assessment and other relevant scholarship. The following sections below will briefly review and explain what I contemplate by the terms. These explanations will likewise clarify the focus and some of the limitations of this study.

A. Who are the "Writing Instructors"?

While I specifically sought to engage NTT faculty and GTAs in my study (as opposed to tenure-track faculty), I have decided not to include distinctions of institutional hierarchy within the narrative frame of my research questions or study. I thus generally refer to all instructors or faculty engaged in the teaching of a FYC writing program as "**writing instructors**," regardless of job title or security. Like Danley-Scott and Scott (2017), I believe that all writing instructors should have "a seat at the assessment table." NTT and GTAs work at the core of FYC programs, and that core is where student learning, retention, and achievement happens. WPAs and assessment designers will need to effectively engage this core in order to successfully design and implement assessment technologies.

Nevertheless, I understand that sometimes these differently positioned instructors will have differing needs, interests, and values. They likewise bring different experiences and perspectives to the work of a FYC program. Moreover, I do not want to mask the disparities and potential marginality of NTT and GTA instructors in a misguided appeal to collegiality (Carter, 2008). I specifically sought to engage with NTT and GTAs in my study to counter some of these potential disparities by encouraging their active participation in the design of UNM's standardized assignment prompt. My use of the term "writing instructors" is therefore meant to convey respect and not a sense of idealism. As such, I will specifically

refer to NTT and GTA instructors by that designation whenever it appears necessary or wise to do so. I do not want to create unnecessary distinctions between the different instructors in a program by constantly and unnecessarily distinguishing them, especially when those instructors are essentially all teaching FYC courses.

B. What is a "Standardized Assessment"?

Additionally, I understand that some readers may tend to associate the term "**standardized assessment**" with high stakes testing and potentially detrimental laws, programs and/or policies designed to demand instructors' alignment with external mandates. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002), for example, represents just such a policy. NCLB has been particularly criticized because of its failure to engage teachers in the design of high-stakes, nationally mandated standardized tests. A significant corpus of research has clearly shown the negative effects of NCLB on K-12 teachers. "NCLB has been associated with a narrowing of the curriculum, low teacher morale, increasing levels of teacher stress and anxiety, decreasing sense of professionalism and autonomy, and a greater experience of stifled creativity…. [and] higher rates of teacher attrition" (Rubin, 2011, p. 414, internal citations omitted).

Clearly, the effects of high stakes testing can be quite profound. However, I specifically wish to disavow the negative connotations of high stakes testing and other high-pressure external mandates from the concept of standardization. Throughout the context of this dissertation, I use the term standardization simply to refer to any element or technology that has been systematized (Feenburg, 2002), identified, or aligned (Wenger, 1998) according to some communal standard and achieved some measure of consistency. As I will explore in Chapter 3, I do not see problems with the standardization of meanings or practices *per se*, as

standardization can lead to curricular improvements and alignment within a community. Rather, I believe that the problem with standardization arises primarily from the potential instrumentalization of instructors that may occur when assessment designers and WPAs excessively limit instructors' ability to negotiate with the design of an assessment technology. I note that some scholars have used the term "communal assessment" (Broad, 2000, 2003), in part, I think to avoid these negative connotations. I personally referred to the final portfolio assignment prompt as a "model" prompt during the course of this study and in the text of the prompt itself in order to avoid these negative connotations. But by using "standardized" instead of "communal" in referring to these assessment technologies in the context of this dissertation, I have attempted to reclaim the term and help rid it of its *mythos* of instrumentalization. I thus refer to "standardized assessments," but welcome readers' substitution of the phrase for more friendly terms such as "communal" or "model" if so desired.

C. What is "Writing Program Assessment"?

My research questions are also specifically geared to the field of **writing program assessment**. "Assessment" can be understood as an "act of judgment" that is "multidimensional, descriptive/analytic, authentic, problem solving, here-and-now, contextualized criteria, formative/process-oriented" (Tchudi, 1997, p. xiii). All assessment is, at its core, an act of reading (Inoue, 2015); as such, it is also an act of interpretation and construction (Smagorinsky, 2001). This study focuses specifically on internal program assessment through the evaluation of student writing, as opposed to assessment through the evaluation of other actors (such as teachers or the program itself by an external evaluator) or other artifacts (such as curricula, retention rates, or grades). And my "site of inquiry" is

likewise limited to the level of the writing program, as opposed to other sites such as the classroom, the department, the institution, the community, or various accrediting and administrative bodies (Adler-Kassner, 2010, p. 9). As explored further below, this is a significant limitation to this study's application and should be noted throughout.

D.   What is an "Assessment Technology"?

I have also framed my research questions using the metaphor of an **assessment technology**. My research study focuses on the creation of a single assessment instrument: a standardized assignment prompt for a final portfolio assignment in a FYC program. My topic, then, essentially deals with the design of an artifact, instrument, or tool that is to be used for both teaching and programmatic assessment purposes. I could, if I so desired, take an instrument-focused approach to this dissertation, arguing specifically about the validity of the model portfolio assignment prompt in this study. Certainly, there is a vast body of literature to support this type of approach (Huot, 1990). But I have specifically avoided taking this approach, as it contradicts my focus and basic philosophy as a researcher.

Neal (2010) has argued that much of assessment scholarship has been on a quest to find a technological solution to writing assessment, whether through tests, or portfolios, or even learning outcomes. But he argued, and I agree, that such quests stem from unhealthy philosophies of technology that ultimately place the needs of assessment instruments over the needs, interests, and values of those whom the instrument should be designed to serve. As Neal states,

> Enormous financial and human resources are wasted in the attempt to develop and
> refine assessment instruments for multiple purposes and contexts without
> considering the full range of the technological system, including the procedures,

processes, and consequences of the decisions that will be made based on their

results. Instead of considering the fuller context of writing assessments, we seem to

prefer tweaking flawed assessment systems as if we could correct their problems by

somehow refining them. In this way the 'problem' with most assessments is

incorrectly identified as having yet to develop the right instrument to produce

reliable results rather than as looking at how and why decisions are made based on

the results gathered by the assessment. (Neal, 2010, p. 19)

Neal has argued that a focus on finding and validating specific assessment instruments

promotes unhealthy philosophies towards technology and encourages assessors to "ignore or

miss the larger technological system at work within writing assessments" (p. 19). He argued

that assessment instruments, such as the model portfolio assignment prompt in this study,

are just one element of larger assessment systems that functions uniquely within their

context. Writing assessment, under Neal's formulation, thus could be seen as functioning

both *with technology*, through prompts and other assessment instruments, and *as a technology*

itself, or as part of a larger technological framework designed to assist educational decisions

for specific contexts and uses. He argued that viewing assessment *with technology* allows

educators to evaluate how a specific instrument functions within a system, while viewing

assessment *as a technology* allows educators to focus more widely on how the overall

assessment is functioning as a system of which the instrument is only a part.

Neal (2010) relied heavily on the work of Madaus (1991, 1993, 1994; Madaus &

National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy, 2001) in this call to view

assessment as a technological system. Madaus (1993) has argued that assessment is a

technology because it is "something put together for a purpose, to satisfy a pressing and

immediate need, or to solve a problem" (p. 12-13). He argued that standardized tests and

assessments satisfy complex and highly political needs and problems related to education which, ultimately, control what and how instructors teach, and students learn (Madaus, 1991). Similarly, Madaus has argued that testing technologies control what politicians, assessors, educators, students, and the public value in education and that testing technology is shaped by these values, in turn. He thus has repeatedly emphasized that testing technology, like all technology, is inherently value-laden:

> Our values and social relations determine not only how tests are used but the nature of the tests themselves. The entire test development process—the domain we decide to measure, the cultural background and specialized training of test developers, the material chose for inclusion, the design of individual items, the language and idioms used, the directions given, the validation process, and so on—stacks the testing 'deck' in favor of certain values and groups in our society, and it unintentionally assures that other values and groups are dealt a weaker hand. (Madaus, 1993, p. 14)

Madaus therefore stressed the importance of paying attention to the design of assessment technologies, as these technologies are inherently political and can have profound social consequences.

Both Neal and Madaus argue that understanding assessment as a technology can encourage WPAs and assessment designers to consider both the technical and the political aspects of their design. In this sense, viewing assessment *as a technology* responds to unhealthy philosophies of technology that serve to render technologies invisible or transparent. **Instrumentalist philosophies of technology**, for example, view technologies as "neutral tools, objects, methods, or procedures that people use in order to make a decision or make the process easier, faster, or more efficient or to meet some other desirable end" (Neal, 2010, p. 21). **Deterministic philosophies of technology** view the progress of technology

as almost an imperative that is out of human control, and "technologies often appear to support or promote their own growth and development so that, in essence, they exert agency over their own prospects" (p. 23).

These instrumentalist and determinist philosophies can mask the inherent ideological and political nature of assessment. Huot and Neal (2005), for example, have argued that cultural narratives about assessment largely paint assessment technologies as progressive, ideologically neutral, efficient, objective, and reliable. Viewing assessment technologies as inherently neutral and progressive can strip affected humans of their agency and autonomy, as the control exerted by assessment designers through the technology appears to be almost natural and inevitable, and thus invisible or transparent.

But assessments, like all technologies, are not natural or inevitable; rather, they are both ideological and political (Madaus, 1991, 1993; Neal, 2010; Huot & Neal, 2005). Interested parties have historically used assessment technologies to surveil and cast judgment on students' capabilities and instructors' and programs' effectiveness, thereby and thereafter imposing their understandings of literacy through measures designed to rectify any perceived failures (Huot & Williamson, 1997). Notably, the origins of the composition studies at American universities has been traditionally associated with the creation of an assessment technology: namely, the late-1870's Harvard entrance exam (O'Neill, Moore & Huot, 2009). This technology caused the Harvard faculty to perceive a crisis of literacy amongst incoming students, leading eventually to the "almost universal practice of examining college entrants on their writing abilities, and… the subsequent widespread establishment of first year composition required for entering college students at many colleges" (Brereton, 2012, p. 32). Such perceived literacy crises can be considered the impetus for writing education and writing assessment (Trimbur, 1996). And the perception of these crises continues today,

especially as new technologies challenge and redefine traditional notions of literacy and its practices (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011).

Questions about the design of assessment technologies, then, are not just questions about what will make for the most efficient or reliable assessment instrument; they are instead questions about ideology, power, and control (Scharton, 1996), including the power to control perceptions of literacy and literacy education. Adler-Kassner (2008), for example, has identified three questions as the "heart" of the composition studies field: "[1] How should students' literacies be defined when they come into composition classes? [2] What literacies should composition classes develop, how, and for what purpose? [3] How should the development of students' literacies be assessed at the end of these classes?" (p. 14). Adler-Kassner argued that these are all ultimately questions about assessment.

I would likewise extend these questions as relevant to the design of writing assessment technologies. Thus, I believe that tree questions should live at the "heart" of the design of assessment technologies:

1. What counts as literate activity under assessment technologies?

2. What literacies should assessment technologies promote?

3. And what is the best way to design these technologies to assess these literacies?

And, to these three, I would add a fourth core question:

4. Who and what should be involved in that design?

The answers to these questions matter, especially when the questions regard the design of standardized writing assessment technologies. After all, we are debating who gets to define what counts as literate activity both inside and outside the FYC classroom. "To control testing is to control education, to control what will be valued and taught within the schools" (Huot & Williamson, 1997, p. 44). I therefore join Neal (2010) in his call to evaluate

assessment both *with technology* and *as a technology*. An over-emphasis on finding the 'best' instrument can blind assessment designers to important questions about how the instrument is functioning within a specific system. But an absolute delegation of the design process can blind assessors to the values and power dynamics inherent within the design of the instrument itself. I thus use the term "assessment technologies" as a means to refer to both assessment instruments and the larger systems of which the instruments are a part, and I do so in order to avoid an overly instrumental focus and to promote healthy philosophies and perspectives towards assessment design.

E. What is "Design"?

The term "design" in my research questions encompasses two related concepts: (1) design as structure or form and (2) design as process or methodology. Technological design can be and is associated with form or structure: how various instrumentalities within act and interact to make up the structure of an assessment technology. But design also includes action of creating and recreating those technologies: how technologies are created, implemented, used, and revised (Feenburg, 2002, 2010). In this sense, design as a methodology emphasizes process, shifting focus to the systems or approach taken to arrive at the design form.

The two emphases (design as form and design as methodology) are conceptually unique in that one focuses on product and the other on process, yet they are also so interdependent that they can be unified in the single term 'design.' The two are, what Wenger (1998) has called, a "duality," much like participation and reification are processes essential to the social construction of meaning. The "processes [of] making something explicit, formalizing, or sharing are not merely translations; they are transformations—the

production of a new context of both participation and reification, in which the relations between the tacit and the explicit, the formal and the informal, the individual and the collective, are to be negotiated" (Wenger, 1998, p. 67). Similarly, Feenburg (2002, 2010) has recognized that the material or technical and the social realities of technologies are simultaneously expressed. As explored in Chapter 3, Feenburg's critical philosophy of technology suggests politics of the design process will always influence a technology's resultant form.

Thus, when I use the term "design," readers should assume that I refer to both the design methodology and the design form. But I will specifically refer to design as a methodology or design as form whenever I need to address a concept separately.

F. Why focus on "Design Methodologies"?

Due to my avoidance of instrumentalization and emphasis on design as a methodology, my goal in this dissertation is to articulate a methodology to help WPAs and other assessment designers think through questions about instructor participation in the design of standardized writing program assessment technologies. I believe that WPAs and other assessment designers need a workable methodological framework for thinking through questions about how to involve instructors and address their needs, interests, and values in the design of these technologies. This framework must capture the theoretical complexities of this issue; after all, this is an issue that touches on issues of human nature and material form. But this framework also must be pragmatic and workable, giving concrete advice on *what to do* and *how to approach* those social and structural issues.

My emphasis on design as methodology is characteristic of what Yancey (1999) terms the "fourth wave" of writing assessment scholarship. Huot's (2002) *(Re)articulating*

Writing Assessment is a seminal text in this fourth wave. Huot argued for a basically methodological and ethical rethinking of validity, with a goal to rearticulate writing assessment scholarship so that it became more focused on student learning, more concerned about consequences of the assessment, and, most notably, designed through local methods with specific contexts and purposes in mind. His "new theory and practice of writing assessment" thus demanded that writing assessments be site-based (respond to specific needs), locally-controlled (by institutions or programs), context-sensitive (by respecting "the instructional goals and objectives as well as the cultural and social environment"), rhetorically-based (as valued and defined by composition-studies research), and accessible (meaning transparent and available to students) (p. 105).

By focusing on local needs and design of assessment technologies, writing assessment under this "fourth wave" of scholarship can be understood as an active and interactive rhetorical performance (Yancey, 1999). Much of this "fourth wave" writing assessment research has therefore focused on shaping and defining this performance, providing various methodologies for assessment designers to adapt for their local contexts when designing assessments. This wave is continuing to grow and has even influenced scholarship outside of the composition studies field. For example, Lederman (2018) has argued that writing assessment research from psychometric perspectives has moved towards more rhetorical and methodological approaches to assessment design, as is the case with Kane's (2006, 2013) validation arguments or Mislevy, Stenberg, and Almond's (2002, 2003) evidence-centered design.

Numerous scholars have specifically characterized their "fourth wave" scholarship as a call to view writing assessment as a type of qualitative research, thus specifically linking the rhetorical performance of writing assessment to the practices and theories supporting

empirical research methodologies (Huot, 2002; O'Neill, Schendel & Huot, 2002; O'Neill, Moore & Huot 2009; Nora, 2010). Huot (2002), for example, has argued that WPAs should view writing assessment as a type of localized research, as "a way of asking and answering questions about students' writing and the programs designed to teach students to write," explaining that viewing assessment as research will encourage administrators to focus on the goals of the assessment (p. 148). Similarly, Rose and Weiser (1999) have argued that composition studies scholarship should be defined to include research into writing programs, explaining that the overarching criterion of whether activity is considered research should be whether a WPA's "expertise and energies" are being deployed "in responsive and responsible ways" and to satisfy a "need to gain understanding and insight into the culture and practices of the writing program and broader institutional context" (p. 10).

I likewise suggest that WPAs and other assessment designers should understand their writing assessment technology design methodologies as a type of scholarship in which they ask and gather data about the proposed structure of their assessment instruments in the context of their assessment system. Such a view of the design process as scholarship encourages assessment designers to bring a critical attention to the methods and theoretical frameworks informing the design, such as academics do when designing research studies. And one of the primary goals of this dissertation is to provide a model for such research design.

Such methodological approaches to the design of assessment technologies can also be considered a form of social action (O'Neill, Schendel & Huot, 2002; O'Neill, Moore, & Huot, 2009). Adler-Kassner (2008), for example, has argued that the service work of the WPAs can be an impetus for social change when approached with pragmatic and proactive philosophies. She argued that perspectives that tend to view WPAs' work as purely

intellectual or theoretical position them "as agents who can only refute analyses… not as ones who can also take actions reflecting [their] interests and those of others" (p. 83). She therefore advocated for WPAs to adopt an activist intellectualism in their scholarship and work and engage the community in "reframing" narratives about literacy and education.

Adler-Kassner and O'Neill (2010) later applied this activist stance to the issue of writing assessment. They argued that administrators must reframe popular beliefs about writing in higher education (such as those reflected in the U.S. Department of Education's *A Nation at Risk* (1983) or the Spellings Commission Report, *A test of leadership* (Miller, et al 2006)) so that assessment, and the teaching of writing, can come to privilege the needs of instructors and students. In doing so, they emphasized the importance of shaping public discourse about writing assessment by relying on psychometric assessment language (such as validity and reliability), sharing stories of writing program work, and promoting different metaphors about writing assessment. Huot and Neal (2005) have similarly recommended that WPAs attempt to reshape narratives about assessment technologies through their assessment work, noting that discourses about assessment technologies have reflected instrumentalist values because of the way that those discourses have historically been approached as a technological problem with a technological solution.

I echo the concerns and approach of these scholars and suggest that WPAs and assessment designers consider instructor participation in the design of standardized assessment technologies as a method to reshape unhealthy narratives about assessment and literacy education. This narrative reshaping is especially needed in this context. We need to shift narratives so that instructors are understood as human beings who use assessment technologies to serve their needs and interests as human educators, and not perceived or treated as some automatons or assembly line workers who simply teach to the test designed

by a disconnected and superior group of elites (Chapter 3). We likewise need to shift narratives that portray instructors as either oppositional or uninterested in assessment practices and unqualified to opine on assessment design (Chapters 4 and 5). But to shift these narratives, we also need to value instructor participation in the design process. And to do this, instructors need to be present and given an opportunity to participate throughout the design process, and not just at the end when major design decisions have already been made.

I therefore focus primarily on design methodologies in this dissertation as a way to contribute to the growing body of "fourth wave" writing assessment scholarship. And I do so in the hopes that this research can contribute to the positive developments in assessment practices and scholarship that arise from our fields increasing understanding of writing assessment as a rhetorical and methodological act.

IV.   Outline of the Dissertation

The three research questions that I have articulated above are all interrelated, as each question involves considerations of the other two and each was intended to build upon the other. But for pragmatic purposes, I have organized this dissertation by specifically presenting my findings as relevant to each research question in its own chapter. But I will refer to other chapters, and research questions, whenever I see relevant interrelationships.

Chapter 2 details my researcher orientation and design methodology. In so doing, I present some of my findings regarding the instructors participating in my study and the model portfolio assignment we created. A significant goal of my study was to test and articulate a methodology that would successfully engage instructors in a collaborative assessment design process. As such, I present my methodology chapter as its own sort of

findings and specifically refer interested readers to the section on instructor recruitment and participation as a model for their own future approach to engaging instructors in writing program assessment design.

Chapter 3 presents my findings and arguments regarding my first research question. Relying on Feenburg's (2002, 2010) critical philosophy of technology, I argue that instructors need to participate in the design of standardized writing assessment technologies in order to ensure that their needs, interests, and values are addressed in the technology. I also specifically discuss the importance of instructors' needs for acknowledgement of their mutual agency and professional autonomy in the design of the technology. I suggest that WPAs and other assessment designers attempt to find a balance between this need and the program's needs for standardization or accountability by framing the design as a negotiation between these needs or values. I further suggest that the negotiation of individual versus standardized needs can be informed by the theoretical framework of Miller's (2007) conception of *kinetic energy* and recognition of instructors' mutual agency.

Chapter 4 presents my findings and arguments regarding my second research question. I review literature regarding writing assessment technology design, including Broad's (2003) Dynamic Criteria Mapping, and perform a critical analysis on my own design methodology to explore how instructors and the program negotiated their needs, interests, and values in the design of the model portfolio prompt. I similarly explore how Broad's methodology can be informed by the social theories of community and participation underlying Wenger's (1998) communities of practice framework to help foster an effective and collaborative design process with writing instructors. I present some of my interactions with instructors as illustrations of Wenger's social theories in application.

Chapter 5 relates the issue of instructor participation in writing program assessment technology design methodologies to the question of validity. Using *unified construct validity* as a basic organizational framework, I relate instructor participation to the evidential and consequential facets of validity theory, discussing how instructor participation influenced the assessment's interpretation and use. I present some of the qualitative and quantitative data gathered in my study in support of this argument. I suggest that instructor participation should be considered an essential part of validation processes, although I do not specifically attempt to redefine or rearticulate validity theory to accommodate such participation within the concept of validity itself.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I briefly summarize some of my findings and arguments and provide my concluding thoughts on the study.

Chapter 2: My Design Methodology

I.   Methodology as Findings (Researcher Orientation)

As a broad overview, this is a mixed methods case study of the UNM FYC program's project to design a model or standardized assignment prompt for its final portfolio assignment across its traditional FYC courses. I gathered quantitative data in the form of a Likert-scale student survey and eventual program assessment scores of student portfolios. But my emphasis in the study was primarily on gathering qualitative data in the form of focus groups with instructors, survey responses from instructors and students, online and social media engagement with instructors, collection of teaching materials and resources created by instructors, and evaluation of the FYC program's assessment scores of the student portfolios.

With that said, I would like to take a somewhat unusual approach to the rest of this methodology chapter. Certainly, I intend to review the methods that informed my research study, thus satisfying the basic requirements of the genre and providing necessary insight into the orientation and limitations of my study. Yet I intend this section to serve also as a findings or results section, as my research questions and arguments touch specifically on issues of methodology and thus my experience and approach to the study were directly relevant to its outcome.

For example, my first question (*How can WPAs and other assessment designers successfully address the needs, interests, and values of the diverse participants in the design of writing program assessment technologies, with a specific focus on addressing the needs, interests, and values of writing instructors in the design of standardized technologies?*) will be answered quite simply in Chapter 3: you address these interests and needs by, first, negotiating with instructors in the design of the assessment and,

second, using that design process to generate a technology that reflects and expresses those interests and needs in its structure or form. The claim is not particularly ground-breaking, as much (if not all) writing assessment scholarship can be construed as expressing a concern for instructor involvement in assessment practices. Huot's (1996; 2002) consistent emphasis on context and local needs certainly envisions a central role for instructors and students, and he and other scholars have discussed specific considerations about fostering a "culture of assessment" among these participants (O'Neill, Moore, Huot, 2009). Even the CCCC's (2014) position statement on writing assessment has asserted that, "[a]ssessments of written literacy should be designed and evaluated by well-informed current or future teachers of the students being assessed."

I thus assume that instructor participation in the design of assessment technologies is an established value in the composition studies field. However, the relevance and significance of this study comes not through my emphasis on the value of instructor participation. Rather, its significance comes from my more pragmatic orientation.

Yes, you need to engage with current and future teachers in the design of standardized writing program assessment technologies. But *how*?

Thus, my exploration of research design here serves as both establishing background for the findings provided in later chapters and as its own object of analysis, as this research design was essential to the process that generated the prompt. Moreover, as I was the GTA who spearheaded this project, my personal experience and growth in designing the assignment prompt is also relevant to establishing this argument. I, too, learned and benefitted from the experience of designing the prompt. As such, I often take a narrative, reflective approach throughout this dissertation, exploring my growth and mindset as a researcher as the design process unfolded.

This emphasis on experience also reflects the essentially pragmatic orientation that informed my research and analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). As a pragmatist, I was willing to gather and analyze data from a variety of sources and perspectives, taking an essentially mixed method approach to the study, with the goal of finding solutions for the specific problems I encountered.

My method of data collection and analysis has been largely guided by Corbin and Strauss' (2008) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 3rd edition. In this third edition, Corbin and Strauss articulate what has come to be known as "evolved grounded theory," a basic rethinking of the well-known grounded theory methodology developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. Evolved grounded theory is a rigorous and concept-driven methodology of qualitative research that engages researchers in a process of theoretical sampling. Researchers reflexively collect, code, and analyze data; develop and sort information into categories and concepts through analytical tools, memos, and diagrams; and then revise data collection methods to achieve a state of theoretical saturation. While theory-generation can be a goal of evolved grounded theory, theory generation need not be the only or even main goal; thus, it can provide a useful methodological framework to explore case studies, such as my own.

Evolved grounded theory is based on an ontology of symbolic interactionism (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Chamberlain-Salaun, Mills & Usher, 2013). Symbolic interactionism is an essentially pragmatic and constructivist philosophy developed by the Chicago-school of Social Scientists (George Herbert Mead, John Dewey, Herbert Blumer, and Anselm Strauss). This philosophical foundation results in a method that understands meaning as being created through action and interaction: "Or, more properly speaking, knowledge arises through the (note the verbs) acting and interacting of self-reflective beings" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.

3). Both the action of the researcher and participants *and* their interactions with and among each other are essential to knowledge generation. This means, also, that the situation and perspective of the researcher cannot be separated from the 'truths' arrived at through the research process. The role of knowledge is also essentially pragmatic under this philosophy: "Indeed, they (knowledge and action) both feed into each other. Knowledge leads to useful action, and action sets problems to be thought about, resolved, and thus is converted to new knowledge. In a continuously changing world, generating one contingency after another, this interplay of practice and inquiry is also continual" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 4-5). I thus present myself as a researcher who is oriented within the pragmatic constructivist philosophies of knowledge creation with regards to writing assessment (Royer & Gilles, 2003), with specific emphasis on theories of participatory and situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

Corbin and Strauss (2008) have articulated sixteen "assumptions about the world" which underlie their pragmatic constructivist methodology of evolved grounded theory. These assumptions were and are essential guides to my data collection and analysis, shaping my conceptual construction, actions and interactions, identity, and perspective as I attempt(ed) to both engage with the participants and make sense of my data. For the sake of brevity, I quote these assumptions in full in Appendix A. I should emphasize that the assumptions essentially place value in the socially constructed nature of knowledge and identity, as individuals create, assign and, importantly, *revise* meanings through their actions and interactions with other individuals, concepts, and things. Again, this suggests that my actions and interactions with my participants, as well as the specific context of our interactions, are integral to any findings and conclusions I may make herein.

Yet I must note that this emphasis on contextuality does not diminish the value of this research by limiting generalizability or replicability of my results. I intended to make my approach to this study as replicable and rigorous as possible (Haswell, 2005). Rather, my emphasis on context merely reflects the complexities the questions involved. As Corbin and Strauss (2008) have explained,

> The world is very complex. There are no simple explanations for things. Rather, events are the result of multiple factors coming together and interacting in complex and often unanticipated ways. Therefore any methodology that attempts to understand experience and explain situations will have to be complex. We believe that it is important to capture as much of this complexity in our research as possible, at the same time knowing that capturing it all is virtually impossible. We try to obtain multiple perspectives on events and build variation into our analytic schemes. We realize that, to understand experience, that experience must be located within and can't be divorced from the larger events in a social, political, cultural, racial, gender-related, informational, and technological framework and therefore these are essential aspects of our analyses. (p. 7)

My research cannot be separated from its context because that context is essential to the research questions involved. As writing assessment scholars such as Huot (2002) have argued, such considerations of context are part and parcel of decisions about writing assessment. And the act of assessment within these contexts, itself, is a form of research. The fact that I acknowledge the situatedness of my study does not invalidate the results or prevent me from drawing abstract and more generalizable findings and conclusions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Evolved grounded theory effectively ties the theoretical foundations of my research philosophy with my actual research methods. The methodology recognizes the importance of context, action and interaction, and process in the creation of meaning. As such, it essentially supports my "fourth wave" (Yancey, 1999) emphasis on the importance of context, action and interaction, and process in designing standardized writing program assessment technologies. Yet as an actual practical research methodology, evolved grounded theory also allows me to collect and analyze my data as it relates to the complex questions at the heart of my study. My findings and conclusions as to those questions helped me find specific solutions to the problems I encountered. But this methodology also allowed me draw more abstract insights so that I can contribute to scholarly discourse.

I hope, then, that you will appreciate the exploration of my personal experience and research process throughout this dissertation. I feel that this exploration is necessary to fully understand and appreciate my findings and arguments.

II.   Background and Exigence (Pre-Fall 2015)

As previously mentioned, the primary data for this dissertation arises from a case study of the FYC program at UNM and its efforts to develop a standardized assignment prompt for the final portfolio assignment in its traditional first-year composition courses (excluding fully online courses). The participants in this study involved the students, writing instructors, and administrators of the FYC program at UNM. My study was limited to the main campus at UNM, in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

According to the UNM Fall 2016 Official Enrollment Report, UNM hosted 19,648 undergraduate students in 2016; 17,696 of these students were considered full-time and 3,423 were considered "New Beginning Freshmen." Undergraduate students took an average

of 13.51 credit hours per semester. Additionally, 42.1% of the student population at the main campus identified as Hispanic/Latinx, 36.7% identified as White, 5.2% as American Indian, 3.7% as Asian, and 2.3% as African American.

The FYC program at UNM consists of traditional face-to-face and hybrid courses and an online "eComp" program. eComp is administered and assessed separately and excluded from this study. FYC is a core curricular requirement consisting of a two- or three-semester sequence, with the sequence pending upon student placement. Beginning students must take either English 110 (Accelerated Composition), a two-semester sequence of English 111/112 (Stretch or Composition I and II), or English 113 (Studio or Enhanced Composition), with placement based on their ACT/SAT verbal scores. They must pass this first-semester course with a C+ or above before moving on to English 120 (Composition III). All first-year writing students complete two final portfolios: one at the end of English 110, 111/112, or 113, and the other at the end of English 120. These portfolios are worth a minimum of 35% of their final course grade. Consequently, students must pass the portfolio to pass the class and earn university core-curriculum credit. The writing portfolios are therefore the highest-stakes assignment of FYC.

The FYC program also asks instructors to de-identify and submit one student portfolio from each of their course sections for program assessment purposes. Portfolios are chosen randomly by the students' number on the course roster. The program then uses these portfolios to reflect on programmatic needs and prepare assessment reports, which are then submitted to the program's supervising and accrediting bodies.

I became an incoming PhD-student and Teaching Assistant to the FYC program in the fall semester of 2015. I was already well familiar with the graduate English and FYC programs at UNM by then: I worked towards my master's in English there from 2012-2014

and was hired as an adjunct for a year from 2014-2015 while I decided whether I wanted to pursue a PhD. I had enough of an experience as an adjunct in that single year to convince me that it was a good idea to get the PhD.

I was also given the opportunity to serve as a graduate-WPA to the FYC program from Fall 2015 to Spring 2017. Although first-semester PhD students are rarely asked to serve as graduate-WPAs, the WPA and assistant-WPAs felt that I was already familiar enough with the program and could serve in this capacity during my first semester. Graduate-WPAs generally assist the WPA and assistant-WPAs in administration of the FYC program and serve as mentors to other NTT and GTA instructors in the program. We attend regular "Taking Care of Business" or TCB meetings and hold weekly office hours for writing instructors to come and ask questions. Overall, it is a wonderful apprenticeship experience in writing program administration that comes with course credit in the fall semester and a course release in the spring.

One of the tasks of a graduate-WPA is to design and implement some sort of project to improve the FYC program, under supervision of the WPA. I began the position without really having any idea what to do for this project. But, ever the pragmatist, I decided to review the TCB meeting minutes to determine if I could identify a programmatic need to choose as my project.

Through my review, I learned that the FYC program had plans to develop a standardized prompt for the final portfolio assignment. During the previous semester, the WPA, assistant-WPAs, and graduate WPAs had expressed concerns about the current final portfolio assignment as it was being taught in the program. The instructors were being given only loose and inconsistent instruction as to portfolio structure or content: students were to submit two revised major writing assignments (MWAs), along with some sort of

introductory reflection on their course's student learning outcomes. The student portfolios submitted by instructors for assessment purposes thus varied significantly, with some portfolios containing a reflective essay, others a cover letter, and still others a narrative or memoir about the students' learning. The student writing samples, too, varied considerably, with some students including traditional revisions, some including creative revisions, and others including both. Some portfolios contained previous drafts of student work; others did not. And many instructors failed to even provide a copy of their assignment prompt for the final portfolio assignment, making it impossible for assessors to determine whether differences in student portfolios were due to instructor guidance or student response.

All these problems lead the FYC program administrators to doubt the reliability and validity of the portfolio as an assessment technology. The administrators were unable to tell whether differences in the portfolios were due to the differences in assignment prompts or to actual differences in students, instruction, and learning. They also felt that students' reflections were overall poorly composed, leading them to conclude that students needed further instruction and practice with critical reflection.

The WPA and assistant-WPAs thus had decided to develop a standardized or model assignment prompt as a solution to these perceived ills. This decision was also made in the context of a larger push to further standardize the FYC curriculum. Instructors were already required to use a required textbook across all courses. The program was also developing a custom book of supplementary materials to this textbook. Rumors were circulating amongst instructors that the program was going to require all instructors assign at least one paper about students' use of languages, dialects, and registers within the next year. And various faculty and administrators were also talking about moving towards a better alignment between the curriculum of traditional FYC courses and online eComp.

By the time that I came on as a graduate-WPA, the WPA, assistant-WPAs, and graduate-WPAs had already gathered example prompts for the standardized portfolio assignment, decided on the concepts and skills they wished to assess, and conducted a preliminary analysis about the values they would like to see expressed in the prompt's design. I decided to take over the task of developing the standardized assignment prompt as my graduate project. I submitted a research proposal to that effect on September 15, 2015, reproduced here in Appendix B. That project developed into this study.

III. Preliminary Assignment Prompt Design (Fall 2015)

With the WPA's permission to take on the project, I began by drafting a standardized, or, as I preferred to call it, a "model" assignment prompt. Using current research into portfolios, reflection, transfer, and the expressed wishes in the TCB meeting minutes as a guide, I prepared an early draft of the prompt (Appendix C). My reasoning for the features of the prompt were reflected in a memo I prepared to the WPAs (Appendix D). Essentially, I suggested that the portfolio assignment consist of two parts: (1) a reflective narrative that asked students to explore how their learning in the course would assist them in the future and relating their learning to the courses' learning outcomes and (2) a creative revision or repurposing of one of the students' major writing assignments with a preface in which students would reflect on the choices they made during the revision process. I was particularly inspired by Yancey's (1998) and Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak's (2014) scholarship on critical reflection and "writing about writing" curricula and used this scholarship to shape my approach to the draft. The WPA and assistant-WPAs expressed their approval of this draft, with some slight revision, in our next TCB meeting.

The WPA then suggested that I pilot the prompt, first in my own and the other graduate-WPA's courses, and then with a larger group of instructors. In addition, the WPA decided to require the incoming GTAs in the new writing instructor practicum to use the prompt in their own courses in the fall 2015 semester. I was also invited to lead a workshop in the practicum about the prompt and teaching critical reflection in November of 2015.

By this time, I had gained a larger scholarly interest in the project and, after reflecting on its importance and the amount of work that would be required, I decided to write my dissertation about the project. I thus decided to design a research study in which to pilot the prompt.

IV.   Initial Research Study Design (Spring 2016)

My initial research design had four aims:

1. To develop model portfolio prompts for the FYC program at UNM in collaboration with instructors and students

2. To determine whether the model prompts can serve as a valid and reliable tool for program assessment for the program

3. To investigate how the model prompts are being integrated across different course sections in the program

4. To evaluate the extent to which the model prompts fulfilled the goals of students, instructors, and the program

While "collaboration" with instructors was one of my stated aims, my actual methods with respect to instructors' participation were primarily isolated and observational. I originally planned to collect data by conducting a student survey, holding a single focus group with instructors at the start of the semester, collecting reflective teaching logs from

participating instructors throughout the semester, holding interviews with instructors at the end of the study, and by collecting student portfolios at the end of the semester. I did not plan to compensate any participants and even requested waiver of consent for students (who would submit anonymized portfolios and would only take an anonymous survey). I also planned to recruit instructors solely by posting an email on the FYC program's instructor listserv. The instructor recruitment email was of the traditional 'these-investigators-are-conducting-a-study' kind and listed everything instructors would be doing (focus group, teaching logs, and interviews) in a rather impersonal tone. I received a determination of exempt status from the IRB in March 2016 and distributed the instructor recruitment email at the end of April 2016.

I received only three responses to the email.

One response was from the English Department GA, a Medieval Literature PhD-Candidate, who requested to meet with me about using the English Department's new wiki in the study. When I finally met with him, the Department GA said that he could not participate in the study, as we he was teaching only literature courses, and even went so far to say that he would not want to participate, even if he could. His language was rather alienating and dismissive of the effort throughout our meeting. For example, he remarked that I, as a composition-studies student, "might like to reflect" on my teaching, but that he had "better things to do with [his] time" as a medievalist. He nevertheless was very excited about me potentially using his pet project, the new English Department wiki, in the study. And I continued to talk with him for over an hour about the prospect.

The other two responses to my recruitment email were from instructors interested in participating in the study. But the first one of these instructors indicated that she wanted to

know "how much time" would be involved before committing. And the other made a sarcastic quip that he only wanted to participate because he "love[d] to work for free."

I came to several important realizations through this failed recruitment experience. First, GTAs, like myself, are busy and feel overwhelmed and often pulled in different directions by the many aspects of our lives as we seek to become professionals (studies, scholarship, teaching, service, and life in general). Second, many of the literature or other non-composition studies GTAs failed to see any coherency between their studies and their teaching in the program, and thus did not feel motivated to participate. And, finally, the NTTs and GTAs were already being asked to dedicate enormous amounts of unpaid labor and time to service to the FYC program, and thus my study probably appeared to them as simply just another potentially unnecessary demand on their time.

I communicated these realizations to my dissertation chair in a final reflection paper for an independent study I was taking in preparation for this study. In that reflection, I was also asked to consider "what went well" and "what I would revise" about my research study. I felt that the draft assignment prompt was functioning well, with initial results from my preliminary study showing that it was well liked by students and instructors. But I also felt disappointed by my initial research design and recruitment experience and needed to revise my study. This reflection paper was so crucial in the development of my final research design that I have placed it in Appendix E. My argument in that reflection can be summarized by the following points:

- Critical reflection is essential to the development of writing instructors and my own self. Yet that reflection is best expressed, in the pragmatic and constructive tradition, through action and *interaction* with others.

- Although I had asked instructors to act on the prompt by teaching it in their courses, I had not asked them sufficiently to interact. My initial research design asked instructors to mostly interact with their own students and me as researcher, rather than asking them to interact with each other. I had planned for only one focus group meeting with instructors before the start of the semester to 'introduce' the prompt. I did not plan for instructors to gather at any other time to simply talk and reflect with each other about their actual experiences teaching the prompt. Instead, I had planned to gather their reflections individually through reflective teaching logs and interviews, effectively isolating them from other instructors and the community.

- By designing my research study in this way, I was continuing a tradition of top-down administration that I wanted to avoid and was ultimately doing a disservice to the assignment prompt, to instructors, and to myself;

- I thus needed to better collaborate with instructors;

- But there were numerous challenges and obstacles to collaborating with instructors. Most instructors were already overworked, underpaid, underappreciated, and unmotivated to participate in yet another work project. My own time and energy were also limited. I concluded that my research study design must therefore consider these challenges in selecting the extent and form of the community's and my own involvement in the project.

I realized that I had tried to create a prompt that valued instructors' time, resources, and energy. But I had failed to reflect those values in my own research design. I had similarly failed to value the importance of collaboration and community. As such, I decided that I needed to revise my research design, stating: "I would like to design a study which further engages the community. I also want to study *the process of the study itself…* What I have learned

from this experience so far is that we, as instructors, aren't much better at reflective practice than our students. And it would be interesting to see how engaging instructors in a reflective community about the pilot will affect the program itself" (Appendix E). After discussing my reflection with my dissertation chair and the WPA, I worked on an amendment to my IRB-packet and research design.

V. Final Research Design (Fall 2016)

My revised and final research design also took a mixed methods approach, with an emphasis on acquiring quantitative data. Data collection would now come from four primary methods:

- Three one-hour **focus groups** or reflection meetings with instructors, spread throughout the semester;

- Asking instructors to use **online collaborative tools** to share materials and reflections;

- an open-ended **instructor exit survey**;

- a **student satisfaction survey**; and

- a sampling of **student portfolios** and the **assessment scores** later given to them by another group of instructors through the normal course of program assessment.

I specifically made these changes to my research design to better foster community and collaboration with instructors, as I wanted to maximize instructors' interactions with each other while still reducing time and resource burdens of their participation in the study.

I will explore each of these avenues of data collection in greater detail below.

A. Instructor Recruitment and Participation

As mentioned above, my initial research design had sought input from instructors through the form of an exit interview and reflective teaching logs; but, through the process of reflecting on this design methodology, I realized the central importance of engaging instructors in a reflective and collaborative community and decided to revise my approach. My goal in this study redesign was thus to maximize instructor collaboration with each other and the prompt, without overburdening instructors' time and resources.

I thus decided to ask instructors to participate in three one-hour focus groups, spread throughout the Fall 2016 semester. I felt that this would give instructors multiple opportunities for feedback throughout the semester, while fostering a sense of community and collaboration as the semester progressed. I removed the teaching logs from my design methodology, as I felt this was too much of a burden on instructors' time and was too input focused. I instead asked instructors to share materials and insights with the group via the English Department's wiki and a private Facebook group. I also removed the instructor exit interview and transformed it into an open-ended exit survey. I felt that asking instructors to participate in an hour-long interview after the semester was over was too much of a burden on their time and was too input focused. An exit survey would also give instructors an opportunity to reflect on the prompt through writing, instead of through the oral reflections that were at the heart of our focus group meetings. It also gave the instructors a final opportunity provide input after they completed grading their students' portfolios.

Finally, I made two changes to my recruitment practices: (1) I decided to personally invite instructors to participate in the study through a short, 5-minute presentation at the annual FYC instructor pre-semester orientation, in addition to the regular recruitment email; and (2) I incentivized participation by offering a raffle for two $250 Amazon gift cards. The

FYC program agreed to fund this award. I believe that these differing recruitment practices gave me the opportunity to demonstrate to instructors that the project was a valuable endeavor and that their participation would be, in turn, valued by the program, the community, and myself, as the leader of the project. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) have emphasized that participation in communities-of-practice is more than an issue of facilitation; rather the project must also "be relevant and a priority to members," recognized as valuable by the organization, produce visible results, and give members "a sense that they are getting something out of it." I tried to emphasize these values in in my recruitment presentation.

I soon saw the effects of these changes on the instructors' interest in the study. After my presentation at orientation, 38 instructors expressed interest in participating. Several of these instructors eventually dropped out, some of them specifically mentioning concerns about the time (and potential travel) that would be involved in attending meetings. In the end, I was able to recruit 15 instructors. I also piloted the prompt in my own FYC course, resulting in a total of 16 participating instructors. Each of these 16 instructors taught between one and four sections of first-year composition, with each course typically engaging 22-25 students. Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) have explained that the size of a community can influence how it operates, with communities of between fifteen and fifty members allowing for some differentiation amongst the members of the group. As I had hoped to encourage debates and differentiation, I believe that this was an adequate sample size for my project.

The pseudonyms[1] and relevant qualifications of each of the participating instructors are as follows in Table 1:

Table 1: Instructor Participant List		
Name	**Background**	**Courses Taught (Courses Outside Pilot in *Italics*)**
Cass	Experienced NTT (Permanent Lecturer) with an MFA	English 120 English 120 *Expository Writing* *Creative Writing*
Lara	Experienced GTA, MA-student in Linguistics	English 110 English 120
Gal	New GTA, MA-student in Rhetoric and Writing	English 113
Helen	Experienced GTA, MFA-student in Creative Non-Fiction	English 111 *Expository Writing*
Callie	Experienced GTA, MA-student in British and Irish Literary Studies	English 120 English 120
Michael	Experienced GTA, MFA-student	English 110 English 110
Amy	Experienced GTA, MA-student in Rhetoric and Writing	English 110 English 110
Lydia	New GTA, MA-student in Rhetoric and Writing	English 110
Stephanie	Experienced GTA, MA-student in Rhetoric and Writing	English 113 English 120 *Graduate-WPA*
Millie	Experienced GTA, PhD-candidate in Rhetoric and Writing	English 110 English 110
Olivia	Experienced NTT (Temporary Faculty) with an MFA in Creative Non-Fiction	English 110 English 110 *Technical Writing* *(Two sections of FYC online for another university)*
Paul	Experienced GTA, PhD-Student in American Literature	English 110 English 120

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[1] I have assigned randomly generated names to ensure anonymity of the participants. I refer to 'experienced' instructors as those with at least one semester teaching in the FYC program at UNM.

Drew	Experienced GTA, MA-student in English Literature	English 110
Mark	Experienced GTA, PhD-student in British and Irish Literary Studies	English 120 English 120
Jessica	Experienced GTA, MFA-student in Fiction	English 110 *Creative Writing*
Soha (Researcher)	Experienced GTA, PhD-student in Rhetoric and Writing	English 113 *Technical Writing* *Graduate-WPA*

Each of these instructors taught the prompt in their English 110, 111/112, or 113 and/or English 120 courses. These instructors also attended each of the three focus groups, except for **Gal**, who missed the final focus group at the end of the semester but attended the first two. **Lara** and **Gal** also did not complete exit surveys at the end of the semester. Instructors' completion of the survey served as their entry into the raffle for the Amazon gift cards, so **Lara** and **Gal** were excluded from the raffle as a result.

1. Instructor Focus Groups.

I asked instructors to gather for one hour at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester to discuss their experiences and opinions regarding teaching and revising the prompt. I made sure to hold multiple meeting times for each of these three focus groups, ensuring that all instructors had at least one meeting time that worked with their schedule. For example, I often offered one meeting on Monday/Wednesday/Friday and another on Tuesday/Thursday to reflect the different class schedules at UNM. I used an online poll via Doodle.com before each meeting to determine the optimal time for the majority of instructors. As a result, I ended up hosting seven different meetings throughout the semester. The mix of instructors in each meeting was also slightly different each time, allowing for increased sharing of perspectives and opinions. I attended all the meetings, took

audio recordings and notes, and would often try to bring in the insights that had been previously discussed to later meetings. Thus, I served as a constant and liaison in all seven meetings.

By chance, I scheduled one meeting at which only one instructor (**Olivia**) attended. This was due to last-minute cancellations, as the other instructors were called away to attend to unanticipated student and personal needs. I participated in a one-on-one conversation with **Olivia** (so as not to waste her time) and made sure to share insights from our conversation with the rest of the group. **Olivia** remarked several times during our conversation that it was difficult to think about activities related to the prompt without the rest of the group present. But we nevertheless had a productive meeting.

The focus groups were loosely structured and open-ended, as I wanted to maximize instructors' agency in contributing to the prompt. Nevertheless, I used the protocol in Appendix F as a guide and tried to focus our discussions on the underlying values expressed in the prompt (explored further in Chapter 4). I tried to emphasize openness and collaboration throughout our meetings. My demeanor was warm, friendly, and engaging. I frequently emphasized that instructors should feel free to experiment with and revise the prompt as they saw fit for their own courses. I consciously tried to become friends with some of the instructors (many of whom I did not know) and encouraged expressions of friendship between instructors, especially before and after our one-hour sessions. I also tried to position myself as less of an expert, or as the one-in-control of the prompt, and more as a mentor and collaborator.

Similarly, I took care to design the most welcoming location for our meeting, ultimately choosing to hold the focus group sessions in the English Department's lounge, as it was a regularly used and convenient communal space. I also ensured that there were a

good variety of snacks and drinks at each meeting that would meet participants' dietary

restrictions (i.e. not limited to traditionally high-allergen choices, such as pizza or cookies).

While snacks may seem like a trivial issue, the refreshments nonetheless helped create the

warm and welcoming atmosphere that I was aiming for. Many instructors expressed

gratitude and joy about the snacks, with some even suggesting that they came to the meeting

for the food. For example, during one mid-semester meeting, **Callie** came into the meeting a

little late and visibly frustrated, having just turned in "**the third draft [of her] thesis**." She

was relieved, however, when I invited her to serve herself some food: "**Oh good!**" she said,

"**I was like 'what if she doesn't have any snacks?'**" This was said in jest, of course; but

the joke nevertheless reveals how important such small considerations can be in encouraging

instructor participation in programmatic change.

2. *Social Media and Online Collaborative Tools*

Instructors were also asked to share materials they developed via the English

Department's wiki and to participate in a private Facebook group. Communities of practice

can maintain regular contact through online means (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002),

and thus I hoped that these online tools would offer another avenue for instructors to

collaborate on the project. I also hoped that these tools would allow our group to create

materials that would help future instructors interact with the assignment prompt.

Unfortunately, these online tools were less effective than my other research avenues.

English Department Wiki: I asked the Department's GA to set up a private space

on the English Department's wiki for our group. I divided our wiki page into three main

areas: (1) Resources and Materials, (2) Insights, and (3) Student Examples (Figure 1). I had

hoped that instructors would use the wiki as a collaborative space in which to reflect and generate ideas in between meetings. I had also hoped that the space could be used to create a corpus of materials that future instructors could use in teaching the prompt. However, the space did not ultimately serve these two goals.
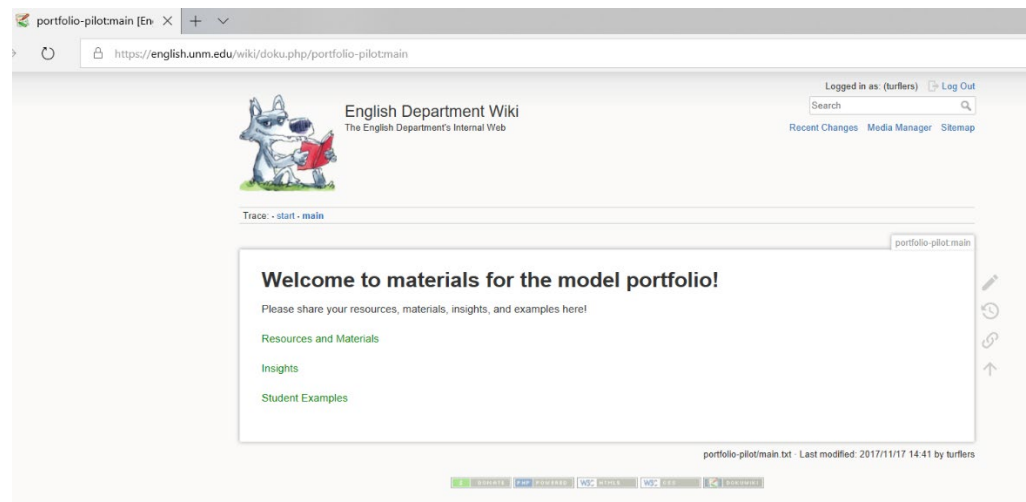
Figure 1: English Department Wiki, Study Landing Page

First, the wiki was never fully integrated into our design process. This was due to personal, practical, and technological obstacles. On a personal and practical level, instructors were simply busy and had to be constantly reminded to upload materials to the wiki. Moreover, our interactions in the focus groups were mostly in-person, and I believe it was difficult for instructors to transition between in-person and online participation. It was much easier for busy instructors to take an hour out of their day to come and socialize, reflect, and eat snacks at a meeting than it was for them to interact with a wiki on their own time. Instructors would often promise to upload or share documents to the wiki during meetings, but would often neglect to do so, despite my reminders. I recorded myself mentioning the wiki at least 27 times throughout our focus groups, frequently asking instructors to post their materials and thoughts. I also referred to the wiki in almost every email to the group and

post to our private Facebook group. Yet it seemed like instructors forgot that the wiki

existed. **Millie** even remarked in the exit survey that she "**had a hard time to remember**

the wiki."

As for technological obstacles, the wiki was also new and not very user-friendly. Like

all wikis, it was editable by anyone with user access. But the editing tools were complicated

and not intuitive. I attended an hour-long orientation with our Department's GA just to

learn how to edit and upload documents. I then created and shared a short instructional

video with the participating instructors about how to interact and upload documents based

on what I had learned. Several instructors thanked me for this video, with a few remarking

about how helpful it was in interacting with the wiki. But few instructors uploaded more

than just their own specific version of the assignment prompt. I believe that the

technological design issues with the wiki created too great of an obstacle to allow them to

fully use the space.

I ended up having to serve as a moderator and created much of the wiki content

based on my own teaching and our discussions in the focus groups. For example, I created

or uploaded all of the materials on our "Portfolio Pilot Resources" page (Figure 2). I was

also the only instructor to provide some sort of context or explanation of how to use the

materials. The remaining materials on this page were created by **Amy**, **Michael**, and **Mark** (I
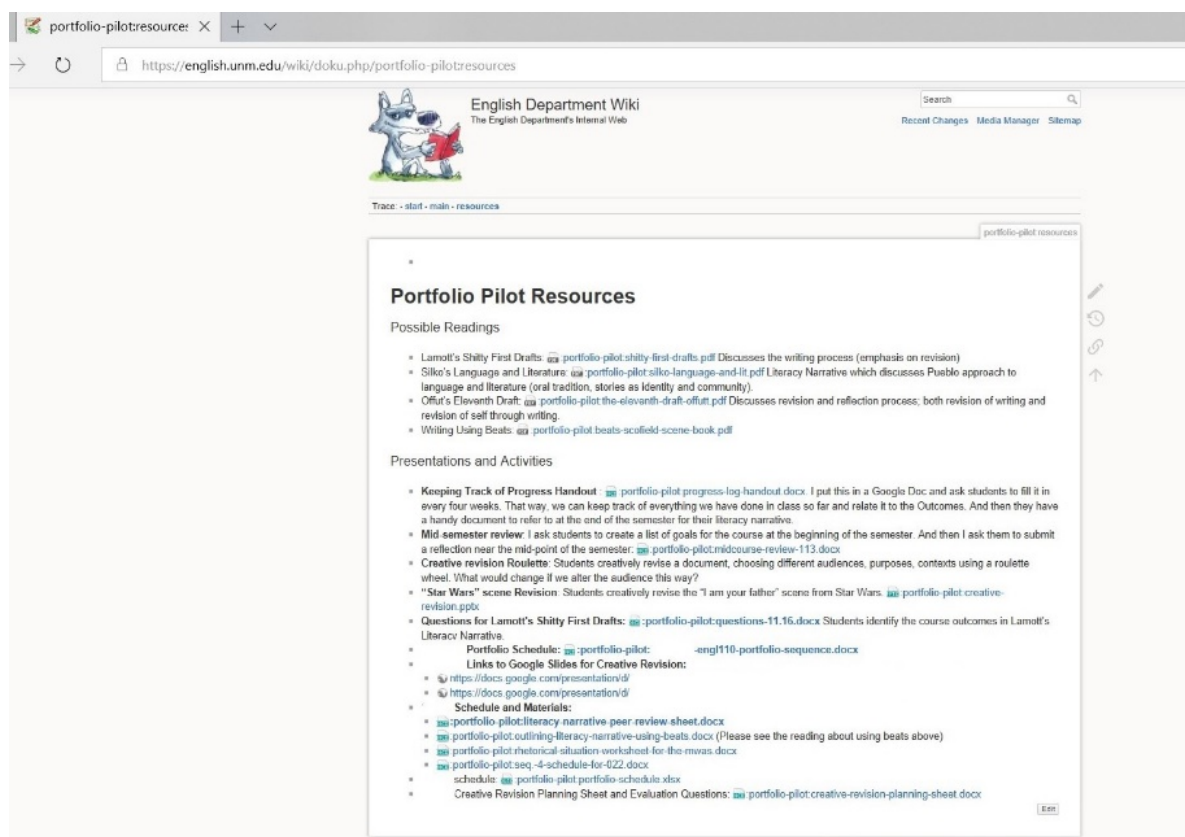
Figure 2: English Department Wiki, Portfolio Pilot Resources

have altered the image to redact their real names). But I had to upload **Michael's** materials

for him, as the English Department and IT Department at UNM could not even figure out

how to grant his UserID access to the wiki. This created numerous problems for the new

instructor as he tried to successfully navigate his first years teaching at UNM.

Similarly, I was the only one to contribute to the "Insights and Reflections" page (Figure 3). I had hoped instructors would feel welcome to share insights and reflections about teaching the prompt in between our focus groups. Ultimately, this page only contained notes about potential reflection questions instructors could use in teaching the prompt. This list of questions was later transferred to a cover page that would accompany the finalized model assignment prompt as instructions for its use by future FYC instructors. We came up with these questions during our focus groups, so the page does reflect collaboratively generated knowledge. But I was the one who moderated and posted the content.
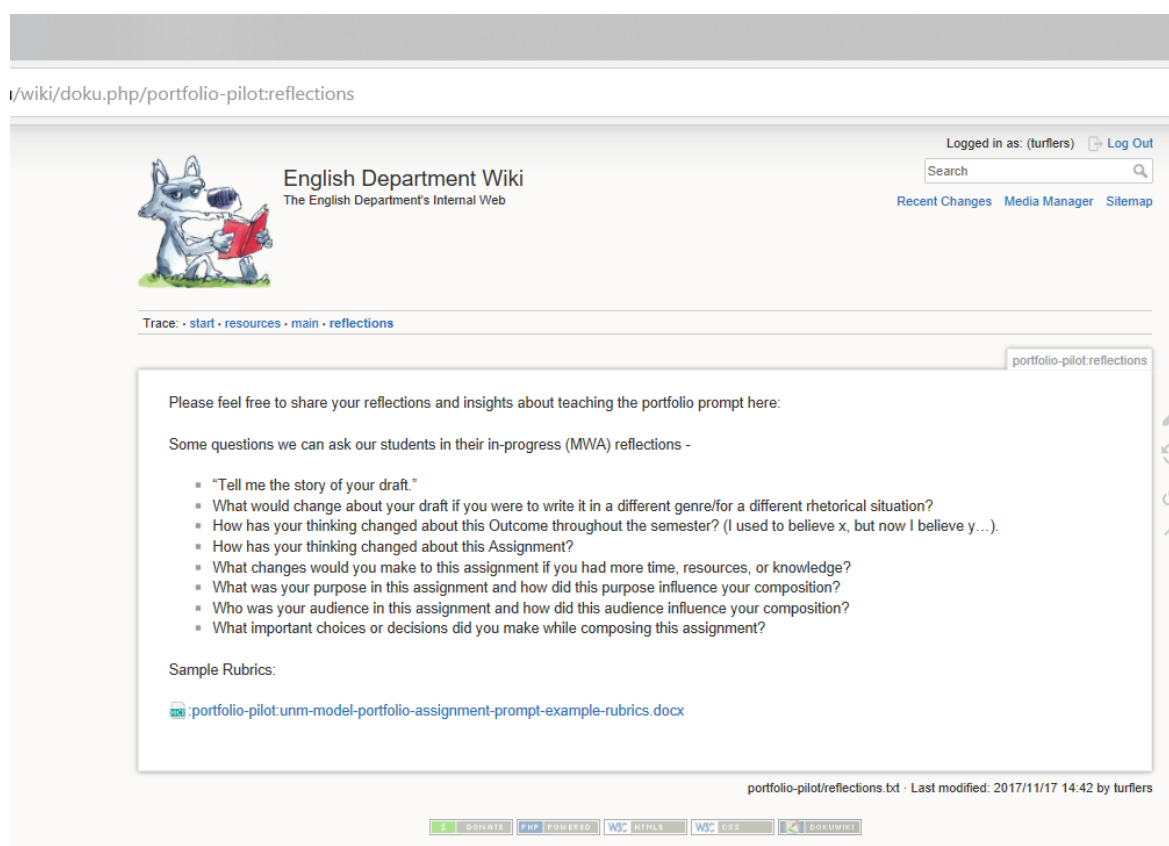
Figure 3: English Department Wiki, Portfolio Pilot Insights

Unfortunately, our materials on the wiki did not end up serving as a resource for future instructors, or they at least did not end up serving as an accessible resource. The Department's GA assured me that the private space he created on the wiki for the study could later be opened and transferred to the main wiki page for all instructors to use as a

resource after the prompt had been finalized. This transfer never fully occurred. This was partly due to a transition in personnel, as a new graduate student took over the Department GA role in 2017 and did not seem to understand how to fully complete this transfer. But this was more due to problems with the general design of the Department's wiki space. The wiki was designed very much like a 'dumping ground,' as files could not be deleted or revised once uploaded. This became a very frustrating design feature. For example, I could not easily delete old revisions of the prompt in order to make sure that instructors were using the most recent version. There ended up being just too many potentially irrelevant and outdated files for instructors to successfully navigate.

Users also had to specifically link to a file on a wiki page for the content to appear in the space. New pages also could be created by users to create links. This led to potentially multiple pages being created on the same topic. I believe the portfolio pilot materials were never linked or referred to from a relevant page, such as the homepage or even the FYC program's page on the wiki. As a result, the materials we created just got lost in the mess. I later received several email requests from later non-participating instructors, and even the WPA, asking me for materials (most notably, for sample rubrics). Apparently, no one could find our materials on the wiki, and many did not even know these materials existed.

The most successful use of the wiki turned out to be just simply using it as a file repository. I was able to collect most of the instructors' revisions of the assignment prompt and other materials through the wiki. I used these materials to help shape my revisions and redesign of the assignment prompt. But, in general, I felt that this purpose could have just as easily been served, if not even better served, by an online storage program, like Google Drive, Dropbox, or Microsoft OneDrive. I even switched to Google Drive when I sought further comments from the instructors on revised drafts of the prompts in January 2017.

Facebook Group: I also gave instructors the option of joining a private Facebook group devoted to the study. Participation in the Facebook group was optional, as I understood that social media participation involves many privacy issues and instructors might be reluctant to use Facebook. Only six instructor participants opted to join the Facebook group: **Stephanie**, **Amy**, **Lara**, **Helen**, **Drew**, and **Mark**. I generally used the Facebook group to send reminders and other information that I also sent by email to all the participating instructors.

One instructor, **Amy**, used the group to ask a question about the word count of the literacy narrative part of the portfolio. I quickly answered her, but no one else responded. Amy also posted one comment on a reminder I sent out regarding our final focus group and putting materials on the wiki. Her question was about the wiki: "**Would my Google slides on creative revision help? Should I just post the links under resources?**" My response: "**Yes and yes! I'm looking for anything and everything you've done to teach the portfolio**." Amy responded: "I'll put them up now and the schedule I'm using." I "liked" this last comment.

Stephanie also "liked" one of the reminder posts that I sent out mid-semester.

The Facebook group otherwise went unused. This may be due, in part, to my own lack of engagement with Facebook. I, myself, am a somewhat reluctant Facebook user. And I did not post interesting insights and reflections on the page; only announcements about meetings and other technical details. Our outcomes with social media might have been different if I had taken a more active role in developing the online community.

Email: Most of my online communication with instructors occurred over email. This may be because I used email as my primary means of communication with instructors, and the use of email (especially through various listservs) was a large part of the

communicative culture of the English Department. For example, I would send out reminders and other relevant information to the group using their internal email addresses. Most instructors would not respond to these emails. But some instructors would send me questions and their personal reflections over email. These questions and reflections were often about the prompt or the study, but they also spread out to general issues regarding teaching.

Helen, for example, sent me an email reflecting on the lack of motivation of her English 112 students, commenting, "**I don't know how great this group is going to do no matter what prompt I use. I'm pretty discouraged at present, frankly. Anyway, I liked your prompt and just adapted it for 112 by changing the literacy narrative to a learning narrative. I like drawing the lens out to help them remember 111 which probably seems like ancient history to them now.**" She also came to visit me in my office hours about this issue, and thus our work on this project encouraged her to seek me out as a mentor for larger teaching issues.

It is interesting to note, then, that even though I wanted our online tools to be used in a communal and collaborative way, our online communications often ended up being very input-focused, individual, and one-sided. Yet I was also able to do a large part of the communicative work of the study through email, and email allowed me to develop deeper relationships with some of its participants.

While these issues with online tools may seem irrelevant to the ultimate design of the standardized writing assignment prompt, I nevertheless believe it serves as an example of "what can go wrong" when educational technologies are designed or chosen without the input of instructors or other users. I hope also that these criticisms of the English Department wiki and Facebook group can offer WPAs and other assessment designers some

insight into how they should choose the tools that they use to collaborate with instructors. In particular, I recommend that assessment designers choose tools that are easily accessible, require little moderation, and are already or can be easily integrated into the existing practices of the community.

3. Instructor Exit Survey

After the end of the semester, instructors were asked to complete an exit survey. I designed the survey to offer instructors a final avenue for making comments and suggestions about the prompt, after they completed grading their students' portfolios. I believed the survey would offer instructors an opportunity to express concerns about the prompt that they might not want to say in front of the group or even to me in an interview. The survey also asked instructors to share their opinions about their participation in the design process itself, commenting on how the study affected them as teachers, scholars, and individuals. I also asked for their input on the 'most helpful and 'least helpful' parts of the design process. All the survey questions were open-ended. The survey questions are listed in Appendix G.

Ultimately, I received 13 responses to the survey. **Lara** and **Gal** did not submit responses. Much of the information and insights I gained through the survey merely confirmed what I had already learned from our focus group sessions. But the survey did highlight some issues with the prompt that I had not necessarily paid attention to before, such as the prompt being too long and detailed. I also received insights and confirmation on some of my hypotheses about the design process itself: many instructors commented on the joy and benefits of collaborating and participating in the study and noted that the process did not negatively affect them. I will discuss these findings in more detail in Chapter 5.

B. Student Recruitment and Participation

Unfortunately, student participation was limited to completing a survey and creating a portfolio. I also interacted with students in teaching the assignment in my own courses and heard about other instructors' student interactions in the instructor focus groups. My reflections on those interactions influenced the final design of the assignment prompt. While I ideally would have liked to invite more students to collaborate in focus groups and interviews, I was unable to do this because of personal time and resource constraints. I designed my study to focus on instructor participation in the design of standardized writing program assessment technologies; while student participation is also an essential component of that process, the limitations of this focus meant that their input took a lesser role in the study. Thus, I will present and analyze student data only insofar as it is relevant to my focus on instructor participation and the design process.

1. *Student Survey and Results*

I asked instructors to send their students a link to a survey about the assignment. Instructors shared the link to UNM eOpinio (esurvey.unm.edu) by sending students the link via email or by placing the link on their courses' page on UNM's learning management system (BlackBoard Learn). The survey asked students to rate their experiences with the assignment using a Likert-rating scale. The survey also asked students to rate how well the course and the final portfolio assignment fit in with their identity, goals, and values as a student and a writer. Finally, it asked them to identify obstacles and aids to their success on the assignment and to comment on the assignment itself. The student survey questions can be found in Appendix H.

I received 173 unique responses on the student survey. Not all students answered every question on the survey; as such, I conducted my analysis of this data by looking at the relative proportion of students answering each question (e.g., the number of students answering Question X/the total number of students answering Question X). Responses were mixed, but generally tended to support the content, appropriateness, accuracy and usefulness of the assignment prompt. Due to the focus of this study being on instructor participation, much of the student survey data will be excluded from my findings and discussion in this dissertation. But I will examine some of the results that are relevant to my focus in Chapter 5.

2. *Student Portfolio Collection.*

I also gained access to de-identified portfolios collected by the program for its assessment of English 110, 111/112, and 113 at the end of the Fall 2016 semester. The program collected 87 useable portfolios. Some portfolios had to be excluded due to missing or incomplete data. I reviewed a random selection of these portfolios over the 2016-2017 winter break and Spring 2017 semester to analyze how students were responding to the model assignment prompt, and particularly looked at whether students were expressing the values and goals that our instructor participants had expressed about the prompt during our discussions. I used this review to make some revisions to the model prompt.

I also gained access to the scores and comments given to the portfolios by assessors in the FYC's program assessment review in Spring 2017. This review did not occur until after the FYC program officially adopted the revised model assignment prompt for its courses. As such, I reviewed this data only retrospectively, and it did not otherwise shape revision of the prompt before it was adopted. My retrospective analysis, however, did

support my other findings about the benefits of engaging instructors in the design process. I will discuss some of this data in Chapter 5.

VI. Revision and Adoption of the Model Assignment Prompt (Spring 2017)

The pilot of the assignment prompt officially ended at the end of December 2016. I used the data I collected from the study to revise the model assignment prompt. In early February 2017, I placed this revised prompt on Google Drive and sent an email asking for comments from the group of instructors who participated in the study. Notable revisions to the draft of the prompt included:

1. The addition of a cover letter addressed to instructors using the prompt. The letter contained instructions for using the prompt and adapting it to their courses. It also contained a list of suggested reflection questions that the instructors could use in asking students to reflect on their progress throughout the semester.

2. The description or genre of students' reflection-in-presentation in the portfolio was changed from a "Literacy Narrative" to a "Learning Memoir" in English 110, 111/112, or 113 and from "Formal Reflective Text" to "Reflection" in English 120. The change in English 110, 111/112, or 113 was meant to better mirror the language of the textbook used in the FYC program, as the textbook had a chapter on the 'memoir' genre but not on narrative. The name changes also highlighted an emphasis on learning in the specific class, rather than the potentially loaded and confusing term literacy. The change in the English 120 name was simply for tone and style, making the assignment seem more approachable.

3. The central reflection question was changed from solely forwards-thinking ("How will English ___ help me learn how to write or compose?") to specifically

backwards- and forwards-thinking ("How have I grown or changed as a writer

through English ___?" and "How will this change or growth help me in the

future?").

4.   The audience of the learning memoir/reflection was changed from the discourse

community of the classroom to solely being instructor choice.

A few instructors provided comments on the revised draft. **Michael** made several

organizational comments and line edits via Google Docs and email. **Helen** wrote me an

email to say that she reviewed the prompt and had no feedback. I also spoke with **Jessica**,

Amy, and **Stephanie** in person, each of whom indicated that they did not have any

feedback. Based on this, I concluded that the group of instructors were either satisfied with

the prompt or too busy to care. I then proceeded forward with the process of getting the

model prompt officially adopted by the program.

I had been giving regular progress updates about the project to the WPA and

assistant-WPAs during our weekly TCB meetings. But I presented the February 2017 version

of the prompt for their review at the end of February. We discussed the prompt in the TCB

meetings that followed, and I made several edits to the prompt for clarity, organization, and

length based on the WPAs feedback and my own further review. A revised version with their

changes was finalized in early April 2017.

This revised prompt was shared with a larger Core Writing Committee for a vote and

discussion in its April 24, 2017 meeting. The Core Writing Committee is an advisory

committee comprised of any interested instructors, faculty, and administrators. I presented

the prompt to the committee and spoke briefly about the pilot study that I spearheaded with

the instructors. One tenure-track faculty member, who specializes in English as a Second

Language instruction, raised an issue about the need to include focus on languages and

dialects in the prompt. This also led to a side discussion about the wording and focus of the program's learning outcomes and the overall grading weight placed on the portfolio.

Admittedly, I was hesitant to widely alter the prompt as a result of this discussion, as I felt that the prompt was a product of a collaborative process that should not be subject to *post hoc* edits by a committee who had not participated in that pilot. But, again, I understood that the members of the committee also had interests and needs that needed to be reflected in the prompt. I thus attempted to politely engage in this discussion, while still voicing this hesitation and concern. The WPA eventually suggested a compromise by proposing a minor revision to the prompt: namely, the addition of a question about language to the list of suggested reflection questions in the prompt's instructor cover letter. The faculty member was amenable to this suggestion. The tangential questions about the learning outcomes and the weight of the portfolio were deferred to another day.

The faculty member who had wanted changes to the prompt drafted and emailed me a suggested question later that day. I responded with a rewording of his question, as I felt that his proposal did not reflect the context of the list of suggested questions and did not otherwise match the tone and style of the prompt. The faculty member responded with a further revision of my rewording (notably, he removed a reference to Standard American Edited English in my proposed revision to his question). I added this revised question to the cover page. The prompt was officially adopted, with this change, by unanimous vote of the Core Writing Committee on May 1, 2017.

The finalized, May 2017 prompt for English 110, 111/112, or 113 can be found in Appendix I.

While the May 2017 prompt superficially resembles the original draft that I prepared back in the Fall of 2015, there were numerous revisions to content, organization, and style

that significantly altered how it functioned. I believe that ultimately the prompt benefitted from the insights and practice of the instructors in the study and the modifications made by WPAs and other administrators. But the prompt also benefitted from the consistency I offered as the graduate-WPA, who was given the opportunity to spearhead the project.

As a post-script, I moved out of the graduate-WPA position at the end of May 2017. I also transitioned out of my assistantship with the FYC program and into an academic support position in another department at UNM during the Fall 2017 semester. This meant that I did not get to teach the model prompt after it was officially adopted. I even changed buildings as a result of my new position, so I did not come as regularly into contact with instructors. I would still receive questions about the prompt via email during the Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 semesters. Most of these emails contained requests for sample rubrics for the prompt or potential class activities, which I believe was reflective of the fact that the materials on the wiki did not get shared or transferred. But eventually even these questions stopped, as other materials began to be developed and the prompt began being regularly used in the program.

The FYC and graduate writing program continues to develop and change. As of my writing this in the Spring of 2020, multiple changes are being contemplated to the FYC program to better align the traditional and online curricula. These changes include potential revisions to the model prompt we developed. Similarly, the graduate writing program is also changing, as the Rhetoric and Writing faculty at UNM hope to reduce the number of practicum-style courses from four to two. Thus, my dissertation comes as an opportune time, as it may potentially influence how those changes come to fruition.

Chapter 3: Addressing Instructors' Needs, Interests, and Values

This chapter explores my arguments and findings as related to my first research question: *How can WPAs and other assessment designers successfully address the needs, interests, and values of the diverse participants in the design of writing program assessment technologies, with a specific focus on addressing the needs, interests, and values of writing instructors in the design of standardized writing assessment technologies?* Note that this question involves issues of assessment technologies, design, standardization, and the needs, interests, and values of instructors.

In exploring this question, I primarily take my cue from Neal (2010) and Inoue (2009, 2015), both of whom have identified Feenburg's (1995, 2002, 2006, 2010) **critical philosophy of technology** as relevant to the design of writing assessment technologies. I thus intend to answer this question by exploring how Feenburg's philosophy relates to the specific issue of instructor participation in design methodologies. In particular, I will argue that Feenburg's philosophy suggests that WPAs can address the interests, needs, and values of instructors in writing assessment technologies by effectively collaborating with instructors throughout the assessment design process, as the values expressed in a technology's design process will largely shape the values promoted by the technology's resultant form. I will explore one important need or value expressed by the instructors in my study, namely, the acknowledgement of their agency and professional autonomy. I will suggest that Feenburg's philosophy and Miller's (2007) concept of *kinetic energy* can provide overall framework for thinking about how to effectively negotiate with this important instructor need in relation to the design of standardized technologies. Finally, I briefly address potential criticisms against the social value of instructors' agency and autonomy by relating the issue to debates about academic freedom.

I. Instructors' Participation and the Critical Philosophy of Technology

Andrew Feenburg's (2002, 2010) critical philosophy of technology stands in direct opposition to the unhealthy instrumentalist and determinist perspectives that frequently govern writing program assessment technology design, as explored in Chapter 1. Feenburg's philosophy is heavily influenced by the work of Marcuse, Foucault, Marx, Gramsci and other leftist theorists, as, like these scholars, Feenburg primarily views questions of technological design as an issue of hegemonic control. Feenburg's critical philosophy of technology responds to these critical and sometimes fatalistic theorists, however, by arguing that humanity can reshape these hegemonic forces through democratic collaboration in the design of technologies. In particular, Feenburg has argued that the expression of different social interests in the design of technologies can influence how technologies operate. Feenburg's critical philosophy thus cautions against the sense of neutrality and fatalism of instrumentalist and deterministic theories of technology, instead presenting a hopeful view of technological design in which communities can shape technology's future influence and role.

A central concept of Feenburg's work is the "**technical code**," a term that he coined to describe the relationship between the technical/material aspects and the social/constructed aspects of technological design (Feenburg, 2002). "A technical code is the realization of an interest in a technically coherent solution to a problem… [it] is a criterion that selects between alternative feasible technical designs in terms of a social goal and realizes that goal in design" (Feenburg, 2010, p. 68). Feenburg has explained that design of a technology is essentially an interplay between the material realities of that technology and the social values that the technology was designed to reflect and promote. According to

Feenburg, this relationship is fluid and recursive. Values and design "communicate constantly through the realization of values in design and the impact of design on values" (Feenburg, 2010, p. 68). The technical code emphasizes that technologies are not entirely socially constructed; technical realities exist and shape design through affordances. And the technical code suggests that technical realities are shaped by social values, in turn.

To illustrate the relationship between these two realities within the technical code, Feenburg (2002) gives an example of a basic technology: the wood saw. Wood has certain affordances, like its ability to be cut and to be shaped. These affordances have given rise to a technology—the saw—that instrumentalizes that resource. The saw is a material object with concrete considerations, such as whether the saw "will cut on the push or the pull" (p. 176). But the reality of the saw is also socially constructed, and both shapes and is shaped by such considerations as "what becomes of persons whose lives are dedicated to working wood, how that activity will shape their hands, their reflexes, their language and personality so that it will make sense to call someone a carpenter" (p. 176). The intersection of these realities (the material and the social) produce the technical code.

Critical theory seeks to make the values invisibly embedded in the technical code more visible. But Feenburg's philosophy is not just geared towards critique; it is also productive. In particular, the aim of Feenburg's theory is to address problematic technological designs by democratizing the design process, allowing for the expression and realization of devalued interests in the technical code. "Only a democratically constituted alliance of actors, embracing all those affected, is sufficiently exposed to the consequences [of] its own actions to resist harmful projects and designs at the outset" (Feenburg, 2010, p. 80). His philosophy of technology thus can be summarized with the following quote:

What human beings are and will become is decided in the shape of our tools no less

than in the action of statesmen and political movements. The design of technology is

thus an ontological decision fraught with political consequences. The exclusion of

the vast majority from participation in this decision is profoundly undemocratic.

(Feenburg, 2002, p. 3)

Feenburg's critical philosophy can thus be understood as advocating for a democratic

exploration of the values inherent within and promoted by technological design. This means,

then, that technologies created under Feenburg's philosophy must be democratic in both the

process of their design and their ultimate structure or form. A critical philosophy of

technology thus supports the CCCC Committee on Assessment's (2014) position that

instructors must be involved in writing assessment design processes. After all, their

involvement ensures that instructors' needs interests, and values are reflected by the

assessment technology's design.

Thus, Feenburg's theories suggest a simple and direct answer to my first research

question: WPAs and assessment designers can address the interests, needs, and values of

instructors by collaborating with instructors in the process of designing writing program

assessment technologies.

The CCCC's best practices scholarship and critical philosophies would thus seem to

solidify the importance of the involving instructors in writing assessment technological

design. But I fear that the frequent reminders in the scholarship to involve instructors

reflects the reality that, in practice, instructors are not being so involved. The instructors in

my study, for example, would frequently thank me for giving them an opportunity to

collaborate on the prompt. Their expressions of gratitude for being involved, I think,

reflected a basic fear of being disempowered and left out of the discussion. I thus sadly

assume that my efforts to engage these instructors were the exception, rather than the rule, in these instructors' experience. As such, I once again echo this concern for instructor participation in the design of writing assessment technologies.

II. Standardization and the threat of Instructor Instrumentalization

One essential need, interest, or value that the instructors in my study frequently expressed was that of acknowledgement of their agency and professional autonomy as writing instructors. Often these needs were expressed by voicing concerns about the loss of agency or autonomy they had already experienced through the FYC program's adoption of other standardized assessment technologies. For example, the instructors would often complain about the standardized student learning outcomes (SLOs) the FYC program had adopted in 2012, in a design process that many of the instructors saw as lacking meaningful instructor input (at least, insofar as current instructors could identify). Instructors would frequently 'other' the SLOs in their speech, characterizing the SLOs as too technical and not relatable to students. They would similarly characterize themselves as mediators between students and the SLOs and discuss ways that they could present the outcomes so that students could comprehend them. Instructors would also frequently complain about the mandatory 35% grading weight that the program placed on the portfolio, as they felt their own assignments were devalued as a result.

I generally responded to these concerns by emphasizing that questions about the SLOs and grading weight were outside of the scope of our current project. Thus, I did my best not to let the group become distracted by the loss of agency and autonomy that did not specifically relate to the task at hand. But I did not just dismiss these concerns about

standardized elements in the program's assessment practices as irrelevant to our design efforts. Rather, I interpreted these complaints as a way that instructors were expressing their anxieties related to standardization of the final portfolio assignment prompt. Moreover, I understood these concerns as reflective of their need for the program's acknowledgement of their agency and professional autonomy in the prompt. Thus, whenever confronted with these fears, I would emphasize that I acknowledged and valued this need in the design of the prompt.

For example, one instructor in my study, **Millie**, directly asked me during our first focus group whether I was expecting the instructors in the program to "**come to a point of agreement where we don't vary from the prompt**" as a result of the study. Her words conveyed an anxious and accusatory tone. Rather than directly responding to this accusation, however, I shifted the discussion to an exploration of the purpose of our meetings. I emphasized that the point of our collaboration was to revise the prompt in a meaningful way. I further emphasized that the prompt was in a state of transition and that I hoped that it would become a "**living document**" that would continue to be revised through a collaborative process in the future. I also admitted that it was probably impossible for a single document to capture everyone's individual interests and needs, and thus we should not expect to create a perfect, all-inclusive prompt. She and some of the other instructors seemed relieved by this response.

I believe that my response to **Millie** and these other instructors about their potential loss of agency and autonomy is an example of Feenburg's (2002, 2010) critical philosophy in action. I understood that these instructors were probably associating the concept of standardization with the negative forces and narratives regarding the term that I identified in Chapter 1. Through Feenburg's philosophy, I likewise understood that the concept of

standardization has been often associated with the potential for instructors' loss of autonomy through the automation of the educational experience. But I similarly understood that this link equating standardization with automation was neither natural nor inevitable. Rather, I understood that this perceived link was simply reflective of the unhealthy instrumentalist and deterministic philosophies that Feenburg's and my own philosophy of technology were meant to counter. Thus, my response to these instructors was specifically calculated to discourage these unhealthy narratives from clouding our work.

Feenburg (2002, 2010) has articulated his collaborative and critical design philosophy as a means of resisting against the dehumanizing hegemonic forces that arise through expression of capitalistic values in technological design. For example, Feenburg has argued that capitalism can transform human agents into automatons, stripping them of their agency and autonomy by treating them as simply cogs serving a systemic machine. Feenburg explained that the first step of any instrumentalization of a resource consists of **decontextualization**, whereby the resource is removed from its context, as wood is removed from a tree. But under capitalism, humans have been decontextualized and instrumentalized, as they are completely cut off from their community and dispossessed of control over the details of their work. Feenburg has explained:

> The construct of abstract labor power under capitalism is unique in achieving a properly technical decontextualization of human capacities. All earlier societies employed human labor in the context of the social conditions of its reproduction, such as the family and community. The creative powers of labor were developed through vocations such as crafts transmitted from one generation to the next. Thus, however impoverished and exploited, the worker always remained the organizer of technical action, not its object. (Feenburg, 2002, p. 179)

Capitalism, however, "split off [workers] from institutions such as community and family and reduced [them] to pure instrumentalities" (p. 179). Such human instrumentalization transformed human labor into a resource, like wood, that could be commodified and exploited. Instrumentalized humans were likewise transformed from craftsmen into assembly line workers: "not essentially members of a community, nor … merely a source of muscle power as a slave might be; insofar as possible, [assembly workers] are components of the machinery" (p. 179).

Feenburg has explored these problems with human instrumentalization in the specific context of online education. Instrumentalist-inspired automated models of online education, for example, view educational technologies as primarily delivery systems. As such, these models devalue professional expertise and human interaction in favor of capitalistic values, such as efficiency and cost-savings. This view of education as delivery feeds directly into the GTA and NTT crisis explored in the introduction, as:

> [t]he key to automation is to separate informational 'content' from 'process.' A small number of well-paid 'context experts' will work as 'star' performers, while the delivery process is deskilled so that inexpensive tutors can handle interaction with students. In a really low-cost solution, discussion can be replaced by automated exercises. Eventually it will be possible to dispense with campuses altogether. Students will pick out courses at an educational equivalent of Blockbuster and 'do' college at home without ever meeting a faculty member or fellow student. (p. 121)

Automated models of education threaten the traditional relationship between teacher and student. These models limit communication in the classroom to the delivery of data and substitute devices for social interaction. And they devalue the development and expression

of expertise and professional values in the name of finding low-cost solutions to the attainment of outcomes.

Efforts to standardize writing assessment technologies necessarily involve the decontextualization of instructors' labor, as standardization essentially removes an aspect of their labor from their individual control. Standardization also includes systematization, whereby decisions and processes are subject to external measures and controls designed to minimize or eliminate what is perceived as undesirable or non-productive qualities of that labor. Standardization, then, could be perceived as the first step in the possible instrumentalization of writing instructors and automation of the educational experience. Automation could likewise turn instructors into automatons, as instructors are recharacterized simply as resources or as cogs serving a larger machine of higher education, with neither professional autonomy nor agency over their work.

Composition scholarship has touched on the threats posed by automation and concomitant encroachment on instructors' agency and autonomy in the development of standardized educational technologies, such as those for machine scoring of student writing (Eliot, et al, 2013). A major stated theme of this research has been whether machines *can* do this job as well as humans; a lesser unstated theme has been whether machines *should*. Herrington and Moran (2001), for example, have expressed concerns about allowing machines to grade student writing, noting that "the replacement of the teacher as a reader threatens not just our jobs—a real consideration—but seems likely to change our students' sense of what it means to write in school and college. More fundamentally, it defines writing as an act of formal display, not a rhetorical interaction between a writer and readers" (p. 480). Herrington and Moran thus argued that the prospect of machine grading threatened

the basic values of the composition studies field, including the foundational belief that writing is essentially a rhetorical act, as it treats writing as a formalist display.

I also believe that machine scoring threatens the basic foundations of education as human interaction, and I would extend Harrington and Moran's argument to say that automated models of education also treat the learning process as acts of formalist display. Under instrumentalist-inspired automated models of education, learning becomes the acquisition or attainment of outcomes, rather than an essentially constructive act shaped by the interaction between the student, teacher, program, and overall community. In this sense, technology itself seems to exercise agency over human actors in the educational process (Feenburg, 2002). Instructors likewise have a limited role in education and assessment: instructors become more like technicians or automatons, attending to the needs of an assessment instrument, rather than knowledgeable professionals who possess agentive capacity and who serve a larger purpose through a commitment to a professional service ethic.

There are numerous real-world examples to support these unhealthy instrumentalist narratives of standardization and give credence to the fears expressed by the instructors in my study. Au (2011), for example, has argued that the high-stakes standardized testing (such as those commonly associated with such national policies as NCLB) "disempowers and deskills teachers," turning them essentially into factory workers on an "educational assembly line." Newkirk (1991) has similarly criticized the "devaluation" of writing instructors' experience under the industrial-like approach to university management that has frequently come to dominate so many FYC programs. Instructors, under this industrial approach, are cast as workers to "specifications [that] are set by a special class of technocrats or planners who oversee the work of teachers" (p. 121).This devaluation of professional autonomy and

expertise is especially keen with regards to assessment practices: "[b]ecause the teacher is often deemed unqualified to judge student progress, a 50-minute reading test is taken as more definitive than observations made over 180 school days" (p. 121).

Instrumentalist philosophies of technologies thus view teachers "as unreliable and inconvenient" (Herrington & Moran, 2001, p. 486). These philosophies reflect the belief that instructors "and especially part-time instructors and graduate students, are often not trusted to make educational decisions, because they are 'particularly human' and prone to subjectivity in their decision-making processes" (Huot & Neal, 2005). Huot and Neal have further noted that an over emphasis on objectivity in assessment practices is reminiscent of this distrust of subjectivity, and hence, distrust of human instructors.

Seen in this light, the concerns that the instructors in my study expressed about the loss of agency or autonomy through the adoption of standardized elements of the curriculum were reflective of more than a simple, selfish desire of continuing their careers (Herrington & Moran, 2001; Huot & Neal, 2005). Instead, these concerns reflected more serious fears stemming from unhealthy instrumentalist narratives of technology that might shape UNM's FYC program and contribute to their loss of agency and professional autonomy. This loss could likewise be linked to a potential lack of commitment by the program to their professional values, which might hinder their ability to exercise their professional judgment in the heavy work of educating their students.

Standardization thus presented more than just a threat to the instructors' grading weight, learning outcomes, or calendars. It potentially threatened the freedom of their action and interaction in their classrooms. It threatened the very basis of what made these writing instructors, and the educational experience, human.

The instructors might lose their jobs to machines, yes. But they might also lose their professional souls.

The instructors in my study debated and explored these themes as it related to the changes in UNM's FYC program. At the two focus groups held at the beginning of the semester, I asked the instructors to comment about how they generally felt "**about the program adopting a standard prompt for this assignment**." The two groups responded very differently to this question.

At one meeting, the instructors seemed to welcome the efforts to develop a standardized prompt, emphasizing the benefits of consistency for the students in the program and the novel approach to reflection and revision taken by the model prompt. However, when I inquired further, it appeared that the instructors were more willing to accept the potential loss of agency and professional autonomy because they already thought that the program was using a standardized prompt. Upon further questioning, it became apparent that many instructors (and GTAs in particular) felt like the 'example' prompts that faculty had provided them during their respective practicum courses were mandatory. To these instructors, the ability to participate in the development of the assignment prompt was an opportunity to gain some agency and autonomy that they had previously lost.

Instructors at the other beginning-of-the-semester meeting also initially welcomed our efforts to develop a prompt in response to my query about standardization, emphasizing the benefits of consistency and the relief they felt in being given an opportunity to help shape the prompt's future. But our conversation at this second meeting turned to more directly discuss the problems raised by standardization because I encouraged one instructor, **Millie**, to voice her concerns. **Millie** was a PhD-candidate in Rhetoric and Writing who had taught in the program for several years. She had previously raised concerns about

standardization (as recounted above). And I noticed she seemed discontent with the other instructors' statements in favor of adopting a standardized prompt in response to my query. So, I asked her to speak about her concerns:

> **Millie:** **Well I think there's a movement standardizing curriculum and I think possibly in the long run it is setting up a situation where it will be a little difficult to defend grad students and lecturers as faculty members or enjoying some of the rights of faculty members because we're not; it might ultimately evolve into this situation where we are all teaching the same curriculum and standardized, we would have a hard time defending the purpose of these individual teachers, because we're not creating and developing our own responses to the way we understand the literature and the way we understand the program guidelines and requirements… I mean, we're already sort of hanging close to the edge in terms of our status, grad students and lecturers and adjuncts…. The more we standardize it the more you wouldn't need me to do it. I just think it would make it difficult to defend my, the right for me to be here as an individual instructor, so that's kind of like the potential evolution of it. I think it's; I like [the prompt] and I think [the prompt's] great but I think institutionally there might be some implications further down the line.**

Millie's concerns touch on a loss of professional status through standardization, in terms of enjoying the "**rights of faculty**," a loss of independent judgement in terms of creating her

own teaching philosophy, and even a loss of professional identity and humanity (her "**right for me to be here as an individual instructor**"). **Millie** even later connects this fear to the rise of automated educational technologies when prompted further by another participant, identifying the movement with a potential take-over by "**computers**" and "**active programs to teach**."

Millie seemed passionate, yet also somewhat embarrassed, by her speech. She might not have shared her thoughts without my prompting. After talking about computers potentially taking over our jobs, **Millie's** face turned red. She raised her palms to her cheeks and said: "**I'm just blushed!**" My immediate response was to reassure and validate her concerns, responding: "**No, I hear you. I hear you**." Her attempt at negative dialectical discourse is exactly the type of discussion I wished to foster through our discussions.

A few other instructors responded to **Millie** by emphasizing the flexibility of the prompt in question, essentially reassuring her by reframing the concept of autonomy as a negotiation and emphasizing the choice given to her within the prompt. **Drew**, for example, argued that it was necessary for the program to have standard policies and thus standardized language on the prompt, but that it was also "**good**" that the prompt had "**spaces on here where you can choose the direction you want them to take, what kind of creative revision you want them to do**." **Michael** echoed this sentiment: "**Yeah, like on a syllabus, too. There are certain things that are required language and then there's a lot of room to make it your own**."

Helen then chimed in with her own take, framing standardization as a necessary for providing instructors with direction, but only when properly limited in scope:

Helen: For me, it's because we're on a core, [a standardized portfolio prompt] sets some sort of 'okay' this is something you tell the

university, we've all done this. It's basically just a map, for me, or it's a destination. This is Denver. Okay. We all have to get to Denver. It doesn't matter what route we all take but we are all going to Denver, right? You got sixteen weeks, go. And that's where we get all sorts of flexibility. Some of us are going to hike along the crest, and some people, you know what I mean, some people are going to get a plane ticket or whatever, right? Everybody's getting to Denver, though. Because this is the [unintelligible] that is supposedly our contract or understanding with the university. Everybody's going to be on the same page when they leave English 110 or 120, or whatever. Um, but the rest of the time, I mean, pedagogically, this is our opportunity, this is the contract that the university has with us. We're going to give you an opportunity to design your own coursework, assignment, activities, pedagogy, philosophy. So, there's reciprocity in it, through it, and, uh, I like it because it says to every other instructor when they come into your class to teach or you teach your 120 'they all did this.' This is the starting point with each other and talking points.

Helen's response accommodates the potential loss of professional autonomy by redefining the concept of autonomy into a negotiation and performance. Instructors are understood as serving a common goal or purpose: "**[G]etting to Denver.**" And the program and university have the right to set the ultimate destination of its courses as part of a negotiation between their needs and the needs of individual instructors. But this loss of autonomy is

acceptable because instructors have agency in deciding to work for the program and ultimately got to choose the details of their work. **Helen's** response similarly reframes any loss of autonomy through this negotiation as a learning experience and an opportunity for professional development as a GTA.

Interestingly, **Helen's** theme of reframing her loss of autonomy as a negotiation and a learning experience was later mimicked by **Olivia**, a NTT, during my interview with her as a result of the failed middle-of-the-semester focus group session. Notably, **Olivia** attended the first meeting for the beginning-of-the-semester focus group, and thus did not hear the exchange between **Millie**, **Drew, Michael,** and **Helen** recounted above. Yet her exploration of her own experience of professional autonomy in the context of a standardized instrument mirrors similar themes.

During our meeting, **Olivia** and I chatted about how her workload was affecting her personal and professional life. She revealed that she was pregnant and expecting to give birth in four months. She was also teaching five courses as an adjunct at UNM and as an online writing instructor for a university in a neighboring state. **Olivia** stated that she needed to continue working so that she could "**pay off student loans,**" but that her work as an online instructor for the other university was "**harder than I, harder than I necessarily expected**" because of a shorter semester and diverse student body with online students participating from all over the country. It was obvious that **Olivia** was tired throughout our meeting, and our discussions often touched on our mutual exhaustion as educators and mothers.

Later in our conversation, as we discussed a variety of options that instructors could use to introduce the portfolio assignment to our students, **Olivia** compared the portfolio assignment at UNM to the portfolio program at the neighboring university. She noted that

there was "**no flexibility in what you teach**" at the other university: "**you do the**

[neighboring university's] program." I asked her: "**How do you feel about that?**" Her

response:

Olivia:	I understand why they do it when they're hiring teachers to teach online from all over. Uh, it's interesting. Uh, I, I always think it's cool to look at other people's curriculum, though, I don't mind that. And I'm not there. But if I was there, I would think I would get frustrated with it pretty quick. Being far away, uh, I get the need to be teaching consistent things. I can't go to department meetings, like, it's, it's fine. And with the assignment of courses, like they're telling adjuncts they're teaching classes like three days before the semester starts, like, I would not have had time to put together an online course together in like three days. It takes like three weeks you know.
Soha:	Yeah
Olivia:	Yeah. It is interesting what they do with reflection. They do reflections. The length of their reflections comes to be like 12 to 15 pages.
Soha:	Wow.
Olivia:	It's a lot.
Soha:	That is a lot. Do they reflect with each assignment?
Olivia:	They have all the WPA Outcomes. And they have the seven habits of mind. So, you're doing like 30 different points of

reflection in your final end of the semester reflection, for your

semester reflection

Soha: Wow. And it's a traditional memo?

Olivia: [Nodding]. They [the students] go "eeek!" They're doing a

page for each one, for each group. So, you have a group of four,

another group of four, another group of four. And you're just

traditionally reflecting, like, here's what I learned, here's

evidence of my learning. Um, I think that, I think that hurts

when you're doing online reflection. I think it's hard to, to do

this good when you're in class, to explain things like that. It is a

really difficult part of the curriculum because students don't get

that without coaching, reflection, of all the genres of writing.

So, definitely, I mean maybe by the time they get 30 different

ones [trailing off]

Soha: They can get it?

Olivia: Yeah

Soha: They have all semester to work on it, too, right?

Olivia: Yeah

Soha: That's seven weeks, right?

Olivia: Yeah.

Soha: Not that long.

Olivia: No, it's not. It's interesting. Like, I'm learning about it. I really

am learning a lot, so yeah, that's cool. [laughing]. I'm tired.

[laughing].

Olivia describes here a significant loss of professional autonomy by being required to teach a fully standardized online course. Yet she eases the tension created by this loss by emphasizing the needs of the program in the context of a diverse online program: "**I understand why they do it.**" She similarly devalues her own needs by disassociating herself from the experience and emphasizing her separateness from the community: "**I'm not there,**" "**I can't go to department meetings.**" Yet she quickly qualifies the statement: "**But if I was there, I would think I would get frustrated with it pretty quick.**" She expressed frustration and doubts about the effectiveness of the standardized curriculum, particularly in its ability to teach students how to effectively produce reflective writing. But then she reassures herself about these frustrations by reframing her loss of autonomy as necessary and welcome due to overwork. Finally, **Olivia** settled on labeling her loss of autonomy as a learning experience, indicating that she was willing to defer to the expertise of the program in order to better her own teaching practices.

I believe that these conversations with **Olivia** and the other instructors recounted above can provide useful insights into the approach that WPAs can take to address some of the interests and needs of these instructors in designing standardized assessment technologies. I believe that WPAs can address instructors' concerns about standardization and the potential loss of autonomy and agency by characterizing the needs for standardization and for autonomy as being in negotiation in both the design methodology and design form of writing assessment technologies. I will explore this further in the next section.

III.   Negotiation as a Framework for Addressing Instructors' Needs for Agency and Autonomy

As recounted in the previous section, instructors' fears about a potential loss of agency and autonomy through standardization of the assignment prompt seemed to haunt our interactions. For example, our discussions would become anxious whenever it appeared that the prompt was making a rhetorical choice that would control their interaction with their students. But the tension was typically relieved by someone in the group emphasizing the revisability and flexibility of the prompt and/or by reminding the instructors that they were being given an opportunity to help shape the prompt through their participation in the study.

Consider, for example, this hypothetical raised by **Paul** regarding the choice of genre made in the reflective portion of the English 110, 111/112, or 113 prompt:

Paul: **I am just thinking that if I were an instructor and I were to say, I refuse to teach narrative, like what would I teach instead?**

Callie: **Reflection?**

Paul: **Reflection? But even then, there's, there's, there's… probably, probably you're going to teach some element of narrative, I think**

Callie: **Yeah**

Paul: **So [brief pause]. I, I don't think this is too restrictive**

Stephanie: **Yeah, no I don't either. I mean, I think the question of how will English 110 help me learn to write or compose, I mean, you can really emphasize the narrative aspects of that if you want, like tell me what you learned at various [unintelligible] and that sort**

of thing, or you can make it more formal and like English 110 will help me in these ways, you know, if you, if you haven't taught narrative or you don't want to teach it or even if refuse to teach it or whatever, so, yeah.

Paul raises here a hypothetical threat to professional autonomy by problematizing the most basic of rhetorical choices in the prompt: genre. But this threat is averted by **Callie** and **Stephanie** emphasizing the flexibility of the prompt, as both instructors suggest options that **Paul's** hypothetical instructor could choose to fit the prompt within the instructors' existing philosophy and practice. Note, also, that **Stephanie's** response touches on the essentially constructive and negotiated nature of reading and teaching. The hypothetical instructor in her response seems to exercise agency and choice even when such choice was not explicitly intended within the structure of the prompt.

This theme of choice and negotiability was used to diffuse even the slightest tensions raised about the standardization of instructors' work. For example, whenever I asked instructors what they liked about the prompt, instructors invariably identified that they liked how the prompt could be shaped one way or another to fit in with their existing philosophy and practices. Negotiability thus seemed like an essential design choice in addressing instructors' needs for agency and professional autonomy.

In this respect, I was frequently reminded of Miller's (2007) article, "What Can Automation Tell Us About Agency?" in our discussions about standardization of the model portfolio prompt. In this article, Miller explored some of the complicated questions about human agency and autonomy that arise when students are asked to compose for completely automated readers, such as in the context of machine grading of student writing. Miller asked: What happens when the feedback of human instructors is replaced by the output of a

machine? To answer this question, Miller articulated a new conception of agency as being essentially interactive or *kinetic* as opposed to static or *potential*. Agency, for her, was not some inherent quality that lies latent within a human subjectivity. Rather, Miller located human agency within action and interaction with another agentive being. Under this *kinetic* formulation, then, agency is understood as a property of a discrete interaction between mutually agentive entities, rather than as a property of a single entity or self:

> Interaction is necessary for agency because it is what creates the kinetic energy of performance and puts it to rhetorical use. Agency, then, is not only the property of an event, it is the property of a relationship between rhetor and audience. There are at least two subjects within a rhetorical situation, and it is their interaction, through attributions they make about each other and understand each other to be making, that we constitute as agency…. The interactive process of mutual attribution generates the kinetic energy of performance. (Miller, 2007, p. 150)

This means, then, that in order to have agency, and particularly agency in rhetorical action (rhetorical agency), students must have an audience that also possesses agentive capacity. Students must interact with "an Other, someone who may resist, disagree, disapprove, humiliate—or approve, appreciate, empathize, and applaud" in rhetorical action such as writing (p. 149).

Agency is thus a mutual enterprise. It is interactive and negotiated. Fully automated educational technologies have thus far lacked the capacity to interact on this level. Thus, Miller concludes that these technologies stripped the writing experience of the *kinetic energy* of performance, and thus stripped the interaction of human agency. But Miller also left room for the potential development of technologies that may possess this capacity to interact on this level.

The instructors in my study spoke about their agency and autonomy in the context of standardized technologies as primarily *kinetic*. Most of the instructors seemed to locate their freedom within the context of an interaction between themselves and the other participants in the assessment, including students, the program, other instructors, the university, and other interested parties. They likewise framed their own agency as negotiated, as they saw their own interests and needs as a developing and/or practicing writing instructor being necessarily balanced between the interests and needs of the other participants in the assessment. Miller's (2007) articulation of agency thus offers a useful framework for thinking about how to address the interests and needs of these participants in the design of standardized writing program assessment technologies.

The instructors characterized the FYC program and the university as agents with needs and interests and as audiences with the capacity to negotiate and interact. Instructors such as **Helen**, **Drew**, and **Michael** were willing to tolerate a loss of freedom when they were able to frame their experience as a part of that negotiation. They were willing to balance their need for agency and autonomy in their teaching practice against the program's needs for assessment and accountability, curricular improvement, promoting best teaching practices. They even were willing to frame a loss of agency and autonomy as a "learning experience," demonstrating that they were willing to negotiate this loss with the program's needs to prepare GTAs. Similarly, most instructors felt that their needs for agency and autonomy were met in the context of the standardized prompt because they were being given an opportunity to contribute to the process of designing of the prompt and were likewise afforded aspects of choice within the structure of the prompt itself.

Indeed, **Olivia** justified a substantial loss of autonomy by emphasizing the needs of the neighboring university in the context of its fully standardized online curriculum,

suggesting that the neighboring writing program's needs for standardization were more important than her own as an individual instructor. But **Olivia** was clearly exhausted and troubled by this loss. She emphasized the difficulty of her situation and complained about the problems she had seen with student learning in the curriculum. She stated that it was her disconnect from the community of the neighboring university that made this loss somewhat tolerable. This disconnect seemed both physical (in her practical inability to really interact and thus negotiate with this audience due to the online teaching context) and emotional (in her ability to feel connected with the goals and methods of the program). Alienation, then, seemed both the injury and the bandage that she placed upon the wound.

Millie similarly expressed fears about the very situation that **Olivia** was experiencing. Her hypothetical loss of autonomy through automation of the educational experience was characterized as a loss of ability to negotiate her needs or interact with students or a program. She equated the movement towards standardizing the curriculum as a loss of the ability to "**creat[e] and develop[]our own responses to the way we understand the literature and the way we understand the program guidelines and requirements**." Standardization, to **Millie,** was a potential step towards automation of the educational experience. It was a step towards the total loss of her agency and autonomy as a professional writing instructor and instrumentalization in favor of an assessment technology.

These conversations with instructors support a finding that the designs of standardized assessment technologies can influence instructor's attitudes towards those technologies. Instructors felt hypothetically- or actually- instrumentalized when they thought they could not negotiate with a standardized technology, as such inflexibility stripped the *kinetic energy* from the instructors' experience. It was almost as if, as Feenburg (2002) has

argued, the technology itself was exercising agency over the instructor. And instructors felt dehumanized as a result.

Of course, I realize an assignment prompt or curriculum cannot really exercise agency; it is simply a part of an assessment technology that is designed by the program, university, other assessment designers. But my conversations with instructors suggested that there was a point at which the prompt would become too inflexible for instructors to feel like the program was recognizing their agentive capacity through the assessment. The fact that we were having these conversations, too, seemed to alleviate their concerns about any perceived loss. Since the instructors felt like they could negotiate with the program by collaborating in the design process, and were likewise given elements of choice in the form of the assignment prompt, they were more willing to accept the curricular changes and characterized their experience as if they were in a mutual agentive negotiation with the program and the technology.

My data thus suggests that assessment designers can alleviate instructors' concerns about standardization by allowing room for negotiation in the design of standardized assessment technologies. This potential for negotiation must be present in both the design process and in the technology's technical code or form.

Feenburg's (2002, 2010) critical philosophy of technology does not understand technological progress and standardization as necessarily exploitative. Standardization can provide positive benefits, such as the benefits the instructors in my study identified as accruing to students through consistency between courses. Nor is the process of decontextualization inherently negative, as all materials are decontextualized in order to turn them into useable resources. A critical theory of technology simply suggests that technologies can be "recontextualized" in such a way as to avert negative values and

consequences (Feenburg, 2009). For example, Feenburg (2002) has imagined a different approach to online education, one that places value on the interaction between students and professional teachers who exercise control over the design of their courses and the design of educational technologies. Online technologies in this formulation serve as supplements or mediators to the primary interaction between instructors and students, like a blackboard or lectern which simply facilitates classroom communication. Feenburg argued that educational technologies will not determine whether teachers become automatons or agents: "[o]n the contrary, the politics of the educational community interacting with national political trends will steer the future development of the technology. And this is precisely why it is so very important for a wide range of actors to be included in technological design" (Feenburg, 2002, p. 128).

We likewise need to reimagine our approach to instructors' participation in the design of standardized writing program assessment technologies, and we can do this by approaching the design of these technologies through Feenburg's (2002, 2010) critical philosophy and Miller's (2007) *kinetic* agency. Feenburg's critical philosophy understands technology as within human control, as counter to deterministic understandings of a technological imperative. This philosophy also understands that technologies are essentially shaped by human values, as counter to an assumption of technological neutrality. This philosophy instead suggests that these technologies can and should be designed to serve human interests and needs stemming from sources other than dominant rationales of efficiency, reliability, or even mere accountability. And this philosophy suggests that the best way to accomplish this is through "public participation in technical decisions, workers' control, and requalification of the labor force" (Feenburg, 2002, p. 12).

WPAs need to approach instructors' participation in design of standardized assessment technologies with a framework of negotiation. After all, if our aim is to design assessment technologies that will evoke a human, *kinetic* response in student writing and learning, we need to recognize instructors as human and an essential part of that interaction. Standardization need not mean automation and dehumanization. We can and should acknowledge the needs of instructors as human agents and professionals who should possess agency and autonomy in their interactions with students (Landsman & Gorski, 2007). And we can ensure that instructors' agency and autonomy is understood as an important value that must be built into the design of standardized writing program assessment technologies. And Miller's (2007) *kinetic* agency and Feenburg's (2002, 2010) critical philosophy of technology suggest that the acknowledgement of instructors' needs and interests rests upon instructors' participation in the design process and their ability to negotiate with the technology's design process and form.

I realize that my argument about the need to engage with instructors in the design of writing assessment technologies is not all that groundbreaking or new. After all, Neal's (2010) main recommendation in his exploration of assessment *with* and *as technology* was to encourage writing faculty and administrators to become involved in design, "finding a place at the table" with technological developers or psychometric experts who push innovations and who may have different notions of literacy. Madaus (1993), too, has emphasized the importance of educator involvement in the design of assessment technologies, arguing that the push to standardize tests displays a lack of trust of educators on behalf of policymakers, who "have lost sight of the basic fact that 'the teacher is a mediator between the knower and the known, between the learner and the subject to be learned. A teacher, not some test or performance assessment, 'is the living link in the epistemological chain'" (1993, p. 11). Even

Huot's (2002) local-based assessment methodology is also articulated as a way to resist against what he terms *technocentrism*.

But this sentiment of everyone having a "seat at the table" in the design of assessment instruments is so important that it bears confirmation and repeating here. Instructor freedom and autonomy in the design of assessment technologies rests on their participation in that design process and the acknowledgement of their agency and autonomy in the design. They need to have a seat at the table—both figuratively and literally—in order to lend *kinetic energy* to their potential interactions with the technology. Instructors need to feel like they are in negotiation with another entity with agentive capacity, such as a composition program, that also attributes agency to *them*. Otherwise, instructors will feel dehumanized, like they are instruments or automatons administering to the needs of some disconnected assessment overlord. Or they will adopt Marcuse's (1964) "Happy Consciousness," and assume that resistance against the assessment technology is irrational, thereby limiting their ability to innovate and contribute to the future development of the program and the composition studies field.

The former possibility—instrumentalization and dehumanization—seems perhaps more likely than the latter. Numerous studies have shown that standardization of the educational experience without instructor participation leads to instructors' feelings of alienation and lack of agency, psychological disturbances, a narrowing and flattening of the curriculum, a weakening of professional development and values, higher rates of teacher drop out, lower rates of new teachers entering into the profession, and poor-quality or inappropriate classroom practices (Smith, 1991; Porter, 1989; Gipps, 1994; Beyer, 2002; Hillocks, 2002; Hargreaves, 2003; Law, 2003; Marshik, Ashton & Algina, 2016; Murphy, 2003; Ricci, 2004; Rubin, 2011; Skerrett & Hargreaves, 2008; Wills & Sandholtz, 2009;

Slomp, 2008). **Olivia**, the instructor in my study who taught in a fully standardized online program, similarly expressed feelings of alienation and exhaustion. She tried to reason that she "**understood why**" the online program had stripped her of her freedom to contribute to the design of the curriculum, yet at the same time she also offered specific critiques of its approach and later explored how she exercised this freedom in her direct contact with students.

Instructors are likely to resist against highly standardized assessment technologies by showing resistance in their interactions with students. Hammond and Garcia (2017), for example, have shown how high school English Language Arts teachers use "micropolitics" to adapt highly standardized Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for use in their own classroom. These teachers taught the common core differently from their peers by, for example, choosing what standards to emphasize or by negotiating how to define and assess the standards in their classrooms. The researchers thus concluded:

> Teacher beliefs, assumptions, and aims regarding writing, assessment, and education informed the ways our participants performed and instantiated the CCSS—with different participants instantiating the CCSS in different ways. Our findings suggest that even among a small number of closely-connected teachers and teacher educators, the CCSS and its related assessments took on a multiplicity of meanings. This heterogeneity worked beneath the surface—and sometimes under the cover— of implied standardization; it was articulated through the common language of the standards. In this way, even a supposedly "common core" of standards can be as uncommon, as plural as the local actors articulating them. (Hammond & Garcia, 2017, p. 8).

Instructors will still serve as mediators between students and the curriculum, regardless of external constraints imposed upon them. Standardization can force this essentially human capacity for mediation and interaction underground. It can deny the value of instructor agency and autonomy in the educational experience; but as long as there are human participants in writing instruction and assessment, it cannot eradicate their desire and tendency towards that freedom.

IV.   Instructors' Need for Agency and Autonomy and the Debates about Academic Freedom

My research suggests that of the important interests and needs of instructors includes a need for instructor agency and professional autonomy. Thus, instructor agency and autonomy should be valued in both the technological design process and form. And in the previous section I suggest that WPAs and other assessment designers can rely on Miller's (2007) *kinetic* conception of mutual agency when thinking about how to address this need against other needs and interests in the assessment.

There are benefits to such negotiation beyond those accruing to the instructors themselves. For example, instructors' participation in the design process allows assessment designers to understand the values and practices of the instructors in their programs and consequences that assessment technologies may have on these potentially vulnerable, yet essential stakeholders before putting those assessments in place. Their participation also gives assessment designers an opportunity to gather data in support of a validity argument (Kane, 2006, 2013) and to understand some of the consequences of their assessments. After all, the potential maze of consequences of an assessment technology are better navigable

when the navigators include all those whose needs and interests and are affected by its design.

But I understand that this argument in favor of the value of instructor agency and professional autonomy in the context of standardized assessment technologies might not be acceptable to all audiences in all situations. Isaacs and Keohane (2012), for example, have concluded simply that instructor "individualization is not desirable" in the context of developing and administering their directed self-placement assessment instrument (p. 76). Instructor autonomy in post-secondary education is essentially tied to the concept of academic freedom, the role of which has been a topic of debate in American universities for at least a century. For example, Aby and Kuhn's (2000) selected annotated bibliography reviewing the literature of academic freedom lists approximately 500 sources. These scholars tie the inception of the debate about academic freedom to industrialization:

> Early American colleges and universities were primarily training grounds for clerics, and faculty were the means by which various religious beliefs were transmitted. They were not free to teach what they liked or to challenge the predominant orthodoxies of their institutions. It was not until the onset of industrialization that the role of the university, and therefore its academics, began to change to a new model. Universities and their faculty were required to train the intellectuals and skilled employees of a burgeoning economy. With this new role came a growing freedom and responsibility to push back the boundaries of knowledge and to transmit this to students. (Aby & Kuhn, 2000, p vii)

Academic freedom was characterized here as a hard-won right by scholars and teachers which allows them to resist against hegemonic rationales, such as religious dogma. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) was founded in 1915 much in

response to various academics' expression of unpopular opinions, criticism against the governance of universities, and resistance to World War I. Academic freedom was thus one of the professoriate's founding values, as it protected the profession's ability to push boundaries and express unpopular opinions.

Carter-Tod (2007) has authored an essay about the value of instructor agency and autonomy the development of standardized writing curricula. In this essay, Carter-Tod recounted how her university decided to create a standardized curriculum for their FYC program in response to students' complaints about some "extreme" pedagogical approaches taken by writing instructors. These extremes included instructors who asked students to write about culturally and socially sensitive topics, including topics related to vampires and cyber-sex. But these perceived extremes also included instructors who focused on personal writing in their courses. While personal writing was generally acceptable and valued in Carter-Tod's department, it was deemed worthless by some of the more well-funded departments at her university because they did not understand how personal writing could translate to economic productivity or technical expertise.

Carter-Tod noted that her university's initial steps towards developing its standardized FYC curriculum had largely elided instructor participation. She went to numerous "lively" meetings of administrators and faculty from other departments about the curriculum. But the writing instructors were largely absent from these meetings. This absence bothered her. She realized that these instructors were being left out due to budgetary pressures (the program was largely responding to demands from the more well-funded departments). Yet she also realized that writing instructors' participation was essential to the development of the standardized curriculum. Literacy education is a political and ideological process (Trimbur, 1991), and the instructors' absence meant that their

interests and needs were likewise being excluded from that process. Their absence also suggested that their input did not matter, and furthermore, that their professional status and expertise in literacy education did not matter. Thus, the very "idea of writing courses as having distinct intrinsic value came into question" through writing instructors being left out of the conversation (Carter-Tod, 2007, p. 81).

Carter-Tod's solution to this problem was to shift the design process and involve instructors in the development and revision of the standardized curriculum through existing faculty development avenues. She thus shifted the culture from exclusion to inclusion, allowing her and the other instructors to explore "the freedom and autonomy we have as individual university teachers working collectively to define and shape the writing program" (p. 84). Thus, Carter-Tod came to the same conclusion that I echo here: WPAs and other assessment designers should value academic freedom as an important interest and need when designing standardized assessment technologies. And instructors must participate in the design of standardized educational technologies to ensure that that those interests and needs are expressed in both the design methodology and technical code of the assessment technology.

I understand and appreciate the value of systematizing pedagogies. Programs and universities need to set a destination for the program through outcomes. As **Helen** stated, they need everyone in the program to "**[get] to Denver.**" These programs likewise need to educate and train their workforce, especially GTAs, who I acknowledge are often more in an apprenticeship role. After all, some paths to Denver are more efficient than others. For example, "**hike[ing] along the [mountain] crest**" is probably not the most accessible or efficient way to travel from Albuquerque to central Colorado and should probably be discouraged so that everyone can arrive safely and in time. Similarly, we know from

composition research that some pedagogical approaches work better than others, and university administrators have an interest in promoting best practices in their writing programs and ensuring attainment of student outcomes.

But critical and democratic values demand that writing assessment scholars and designers make room for the negative and the oppositional in the pursuit of knowledge. Allowing instructors some flexibility to teach unpopular opinions and pedagogies gives instructors the ability to resist against hegemonic and dehumanizing forces, such as the push towards automation of the educational experience. It further encourages them to innovate and contribute meaningfully to composition research and pedagogy. But more than this, affording instructors some academic freedom and valuing their input also ensures the continued viability and status of the composition studies field. I thus simply disagree with those who would argue against the value of instructor agency and professional autonomy in designing standardized assessments. Instructor agency and professional autonomy should be valued and acknowledged in writing program assessment design.

Chapter 4: Design Methodologies and Theories of Instructor Participation

I.   Writing Assessment Design Methodologies and Instructor Participation

In Chapter 3, I argued for the importance of negotiating with instructors to address their interests and needs in writing assessment technology design, including the need for instructors' agency and professional autonomy. I have also emphasized the need to view assessment design as both methodology and form, and, in particular, to approach design methodologies as an exploration of participants' values, interests, and needs. My conclusions in the previous chapters thus largely support the CCCC Committee on Assessment's (2014) position on writing program assessment, which states that:

> Programs and departments should see themselves as communities of professionals whose assessment activities reveal common values, provide opportunities for inquiry and debate about unsettled issues, and communicate measures of effectiveness to those inside and outside the program. Members of the community are in the best position to guide decisions about what assessments will best inform that community.

My research questions in this chapter again turn to the essentially pragmatic: *How can WPAs and other assessment designers effectively collaborate with the program's writing instructors in the process of designing writing program assessment technologies*?

This chapter seeks to articulate a design methodology that will effectively engage instructors based on the findings of my case study. But before turning to my findings regarding instructor participation, I believe that it would be helpful to articulate an overall approach to writing assessment technology design based on the existing literature. Moreover, I will explore how these approaches informed my own methodology, as I believe this

literature and analysis may provide useful insights into working with instructors in the design process.

Of course, questions about effective assessment practices presents a perplexing problem which has dominated much of writing assessment scholarship since Yancey (1999), Haswell (2001), Huot (1996; 2002) and others made the call to move towards rhetorical approaches to assessment. It does not suit my purposes to adequately survey this scholarship here (other than to point you to a series of annotated bibliographies about writing assessment in the *Journal of Writing Assessment* prepared by O'Neill, Neal, Schendel, and Huot (2003, 2005)). My research questions are focused more specifically about design methodologies for writing assessment technologies, and more particularly, methods for collaborating with instructors in the design process. The following review is limited to sources that specifically inform that question.

Ruth and Murphy's (1984; 1988; 1993) work is a notable entry in the literature about technological design and seems like an appropriate place to begin. Ruth and Murphy have conducted extensive research and review into the scholarship of designing topics for writing assessments. Their work is thus an essential contribution to the field. Yet I would characterize their work as transitional and not fully "fourth wave" in the context of assessment scholarship, as it sits at an interesting intersection of both instrumentalist and critical philosophies. For example, Ruth and Murphy (1998) have reviewed instrumentalist literature about writing topics and make specific suggestions about topic structure. But they also attempted to situate those topics within a larger assessment framework and articulated a process for designing those tasks as a part of a methodological design process they term a "writing assessment episode."

Ruth and Murphy's (1988) writing topic design methodology is divided into three stages: planning, development, and evaluation.

(1) In the **planning stage**, designers set the purpose and use of the assessment, define its audience, determine its subject, and consider constraints. This includes a consideration of the construct being assessed, the context of assessment, and a sensitivity to developing theories of assessment.

(2) In the **development stage**, the designers select the content of the topic, draft the language of the prompt, and analyze its language. This phase seems to focus most strongly on the language of the instrument, considering how the linguistic elements will influence students' responses. This phase, then, seems particularly focused on structure, and Ruth and Murphy offer several concrete suggestions for proposed language based on the instrumentalist literature they review throughout the book.

(3) The assessment topic is then reviewed, revised, and field tested in the **evaluation stage**. The designers gather information through user interviews, outputs, and observations. The designers then revise and edit the topic in response to this feedback, and ideally continue to evaluate and research the prompt as it is put into use, so that the evaluation stage becomes continuous.

This design methodology of planning, development, and evaluation seems common throughout the literature, albeit with variation in precise detail and articulation due to differences in schemata, philosophy, or focus (Banta, Jones & Black, 2016; Banta & Palomba, 2014; Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 2009; Haswell & Wyche-Smith, 1994; Huot, 1990, 2002; Huot, O'Neill & Moore, 2009; Johnson, Penny & Gordon, 2008; Kroll & Reid, 1994; McNamara, 1996; Mislevy, 2007; Mislevy, Steinberg & Almond, 2002, 2003;

Mislevy, Almond & Lukas, 2003; Shaw and Weir, 2007, 2008; van Dyk & Weideman, 2004; Weideman, 2011; Weideman & van Dyk, 2004, Weir, 2005; White, 1994; White, Eliot & Peckham, 2015; Wolf & Gitomer, 2001). Psychometric research has generally come to stress the importance of clearly defining the construct domain in the planning stages. Mislevy (2007) and Mislevy, Steinberg and Almond's (2002, 2003) *Evidence-Centered Design* (ECD) requires assessment designers to become more anticipatory and reflexive in their approach, "carrying out design activities structured in such a way that validity evidence emerges" (2007, p. 467). It essentially asks assessment designers to structure "the pieces of machinery" of the assessment to support the validity arguments that designers intend to make as a result (Mislevy, Steinberg & Almond, 2003). The structure of the validity argument itself is loosely based on Toulmin's (1958) argumentative structure of *claims*, *warrants*, and *data*. But ECD adds an overarching concern for predictability, thus emphasizing the need for designers to define and mimic the domain to be assessed (such as writing ability), and even going so far as to suggest *design patterns* for tests. The design methodology itself follows five stages or activities, which I briefly describe here:

1. **Domain Analysis**: Evidence is gathered about the domain (or construct) to be assessed, usually by talking with content experts

2. **Domain Modeling:** The designer creates a narrative or representation of the domain to be assessed by putting the evidence into various paradigms

3. **Conceptual Assessment Framework**: The designer creates a blueprint or specifications for the assessment framework based on considerations of different elements or pieces of the framework called *models*

4. **Assessment Implementation**: The assessment designer essentially pilots and evaluates the assessment framework

5. **Assessment Delivery**: The assessment designer administers the assessment and evaluates the data received in response.

Thus, current psychometric practices have seemed to shift towards placing more emphasis on the planning stages, such as defining the construct or domain to be assessed through evidence gathering and modeling it through various representations.

Nevertheless, Ruth and Murphy's (1988) overarching tri-part process seems like a practical standard for instrument design methodologies, as it almost mimics the writing process itself: plan, draft, peer review, reflect and revise. What is often left out of Ruth and Murphy's (and others) design methodologies is a critical examination of *who* should get involved, particularly in the planning and development phases. Ruth and Murphy's (1988) design framework is almost presented as the work of one test designer who merely interacts with instructors and students in order to extract data about the assessment's validity. Indeed, in most of these frameworks, instructors seem to have a role in the evaluation or field-testing phase, or even after implementation of the technology (commonly presented in the name of professional development). But instructors seem left out of earlier design stages where the purposes and structure of the assessment are set. And there is no discussion about having instructors work with *each other*, or notably, a theoretical framework of what to do when the assessment designers try to collaborate with instructors in the design.

The issue of instructor participation in the design process seems somewhat like a sticky question in the assessment literature. While instructor participation is frequently expressed as an important value, actual interactions with instructors are often portrayed in a negative light. Instructors are frequently characterized as being apathetic or resistant to assessment practices or curricular changes. Their participation is therefore portrayed as almost some sort of obstacle to successful instrument design. Johnson (2014), for example,

argued in an *Inside Higher Ed* opinion article that, during one discussion at a conference of assessment professionals:

> [i]t was disturbingly clear [that] assessment professionals have identified "The Faculty" (beyond the lip service to #notallfaculty, always as a collective body) as the chief obstacle to successful implementation of campus wide assessment of student learning. Faculty are recalcitrant. They are resistant to change for the sake of being resistant to change. They don't care about student learning, only about protecting their jobs. They don't understand the importance of assessment. They need to be guided toward the Gospel with incentives, and, if those fail, consequences.

Yet Johnson suggested, "at risk of offending the choir… that the faculty-as-enemy trope may well be a problem of the assessment field's own making" due to a "blindness" caused by their assumptions about the neutrality of assessment practices and subordination of faculty expertise. He thus suggested that "[a]ssessment professionals need to approach faculty members as equal partners than as counterrevolutionaries in need of reeducation. That's common courtesy, to be sure. But it is also essential if assessment is to actually improve student learning."

These negative characterizations of faculty or instructor involvement have, unfortunately, at times even extended into the composition community. Huot, Moore, and O'Neill (2009), for example, have discussed faculty interaction as an important part of their college writing assessment design framework. They suggested, specifically, that assessment designers engage with faculty through direct conversations, various forums, and classroom observations, as such participation is necessary to avoid a "WPA-centric" assessment and a dictatorial administrative style (p. 71). But they also explored, at length, about how those efforts can be complicated by power struggles and faculty politics. Huot, Moore, and

O'Neill's main suggestion to address the potential minefield of faculty participation seems quite simple: to research the faculty and the community to figure out what to do. While I agree that this is very good advice, their specific emphasis on dealing with power struggles still paints instructors' resistance as something that must be overcome. And their advice to research the community, while helpful, lacks elaboration or detail.

Scholarship into faculty participation in assessment and other curricular changes has focused on finding methods to overcome this perceived resistance, which is primarily accomplished by articulating factors that influence faculty acceptance or motivation (Banta & Palomba, 2014; Culver & Phipps, 2019; Gayle, et al, 2013; Grunwald & Peterson, 2003, Hutchings, 2010; Katz, 2010; Kezar, 2013; Kuh & Banta, 2000; Marrs, 2009; Morse & Santiago, 2000; Muffo, 2001; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Peterson & Einarson, 2000; Peterson, et al, 2002; Schilling & Schilling, 1998; Wang & Hurley, 2012; Welsh & Metcalf, 2003a, 2003b). I appreciate the insight and concern of this body of research, as its emphasis on the importance of involving instructors in assessment practices mirrors my own (although they often seem to leave out consideration of the core of the teaching workforce, the NTTs and the GTAs, in their emphasis on faculty). The institutional and social factors that these scholars identify as affecting faculty motivation also often reflect issues relating to the *kinetic energy* or agency afforded instructors in their interactions with their institutions. I similarly agree that it is important to promote a healthy workplace culture that motivates instructors, which this research primarily suggests happens when institutions value instructors' expertise and input (and, importantly, support that value through tangible means).

But I would criticize any suggestion that the "success" of assessment practices depends upon instructors' lack of resistance. Disagreements between and among instructors about the design of writing program assessments are not some obstacle that WPAs and

other assessment designers need to overcome. Rather, I believe that resistance should be embraced as ultimately productive and essential to learning (Ebest, 2002, 2005). After all, the goal should be to create an assessment technology that can withstand challenges and accommodate differences in values and perspectives, and not simply to create something that will pass through instructors' approval simply because of their general workplace satisfaction or an unqualified acceptance that whatever is presented by the assessment experts is value-neutral and must be true.

I thus discourage any narrative that devalues the expertise of instructors, including those that suggest that instructors resist because they cling to "outdated" ideas or practices. I believe that such narratives demotivate instructors, as they suggest that the learning offered by assessment practices are largely one-sided: that assessment has something to *teach instructors*, and not the other way around. Such narratives strip the interaction with a necessary measure of Miller's (2007) *kinetic energy*, which demands mutuality. Even resistance stemming from instructors' own self-interests, such as those motivations characterized as "politics" by other scholars, may bear some useful insights into the context and culture of the program and what is being valued and taught in the classroom.

Osborne and Walker (2014), for example, have argued that writing assessment designers should privilege disagreement in assessment practices, as even the construct of "writing and its evaluation and assessment are rich, complex, and dynamic processes" (p. 40). Despite appearances of uniformity in current paradigmatic trends, there can be and should be wide differences in value and perspectives in literacy education. Writing program assessment design methodologies should likewise embrace these differences in order to reflect the complexity of values and perspectives.

For example, I have identified myself as a pragmatist and a constructivist who sought to design an assignment prompt to promote a "writing about writing" curriculum (Yancey, Robertson, Taczak, 2014). But I did not believe that this was the only perspective or curriculum that should be valued and accepted in the FYC model final portfolio assignment prompt. Many of the instructors in this study pursued curricula focused more on the writing process, genre studies, language and dialect studies, cultural activism, argumentation, or expressivism. Indeed, I sometimes seemed to be surrounded by a room full of expressivists and writing process enthusiasts. **Callie** even remarked at one point that she preferred to focus on the program's student learning outcome (SLO) about the writing process because "**it's like the gateway SLO. Like the one that leads to all the other SLOs.**" I tried to embrace these differences (even though they did not match my own) and hoped to make room for a variety of approaches in the design of the assignment prompt, for I believe that those differences in perspective could only enrich the prompt and the program at UNM.

WPAs and other assessment designers should similarly avoid being overly paradigmatic and encourage instructors to negotiate with differing educational paradigms or philosophies in the design of writing program assessment technologies. Bishop (1999, 2001), for example, has advocated for subjective/expressivist philosophies in literacy education. She explained that her expressivist philosophies have often made her feel excluded from the larger composition community. She argued that the fear of expressivism and the construction of narrow constructivist paradigms in composition studies can be tied to the influence of capitalism, as the discipline tries to justify its existence in a hostile academic market by framing writing as a valued subject. Thus, she encouraged compositionists to make room for expressivist pedagogies and practices; to "not to toss out the unified text with the academic bath water, but to offer options. To explore for ourselves, and to allow

for our students to do so also, how a deeper understanding of the connections between thought, words, and life, may occur when we re-read our own writing" (Bishop, 1999, p. 17).

Goldblatt (2017) has similarly called attention to the "subtle legacies of expressivism" in current composition studies practices, noting how the "insights from this movement are integrated into our research and our teaching" (p. 442, 460). He likewise criticized current pedagogies, such as the "writing about writing" movement, as "elevat[ing] the study of writing over the experience of writing" in the hopes of simultaneously elevating the status of the discipline (p. 461). He argued, however, that making room for the subjective/expressive within current practices would enrich the discipline: "Recognizing that expressivism is not gone but woven into our present ways of understanding writers and writing will add to our core strength as a discipline faced with daunting social, administrative, and intellectual challenges in the American and global literacy scene" (p. 442). He argued that expressivism allows for greater creativity and for the fostering of voice and agency as students learn to enjoy writing for his/her own interests: "Without an urgency that is felt as personal, a writer will always be looking to the teacher, the boss, the arbiter for both permission to begin and approval to desist… they must learn how to find the motive spark, the intention to speak, within whatever subject they take up" (p. 24). I agree that such focus on the individual voice, that "spark" underlying student agency, might be lost in more constructivist or positivist paradigms. Yet we would lose other, equally as important insights, if we were to take a narrow focus on expressivist pedagogies, as well.

Writing education and assessment is a field that should be characterized by respectful dissension, resistance, and debate. Such debate should likewise be embraced in the writing program assessment technology design process, as it is essential to the development of

critical and democratic assessment technologies. By characterizing instructor resistance as some problem that must be overcome, rather than as something that can be embraced as a productive part of the design of assessment technologies, WPAs and other assessment designers devalue a democratic design process and further unhealthy instrumentalist narratives that place the needs and expertise of an assessment technology over the needs and expertise of the community the assessment should be designed to serve. On the other hand, "[p]rivileging such disagreement and difference places value on the expertise of each writing instructor, and in turn, the collective expertise of [an] entire writing program" (Osborne & Walker, 2014, p. 41). Rather than characterizing instructors' practices as "outmoded" and their desire to act from those experiences and their own interests as resistant, assessment designers should instead value those experiences and allow their assessments to benefit from the insights that those practices and interests have to offer.

Of course, I understand individual participants' attitudes will vary and not everyone will get along. But, barring a bullying working culture (which should be addressed separately and directly (Elder & Davila, 2019; CWPA, 2019)), I believe that there should be ways to strategically foster a productive and respectful exploration into the philosophies and values that should inform an assessment technology's design. What is needed, then, for the question of instructor participation is a theory-driven methodological practice towards instructor participation that respects instructors' expertise and embraces resistance, dissension, and debate. This practice must also acknowledge the material and social aspects of technology and must be deeply *kinetic* in both its design methodology and form (Chapter 2). The remaining sections of this chapter will attempt to present and analyze a methodology and theory of instructor participation in the writing assessment technology design process to meet these needs.

II. An Analysis of my Design Methodology: Negotiating our Values

One collaborative design methodology that I, and others (Osborne & Walker, 2014), have relied upon in designing writing assessments is Broad's (2003; 2009) Dynamic Criteria Mapping (DCM). Broad first articulated DCM as a methodology for developing rubric-free writing assessments by exploring the community's values. Essentially, DCM requires assessment designers to generate an assessment technology by reflecting with various participants in assessment. This is done through grounded theory research methods, including interviews, focus groups, observations, critical data analyses, etc. The precise details of the methodology will vary with context, but assessment designers using DCM generally ask participants to explore what they value in the writing construct, often by asking these participants to tell stories. The designer then codes and analyzes this data, identifies the values about writing expressed within the research, and then creates a concept map of evaluative criteria that reflects those values. This map is then shared with the community and used to guide assessment practices.

Broad (2010) has explained that DCM is "organic" and "grounded" because it responds to Haswell's (2001) and Huot's (2002) call to develop localized assessment technologies. This also means that DCM will vary in its precise details based on local exigences. Broad et al (2010) have edited a book of methodological models presenting how DCM has been used at different institutions to create various writing assessment technologies. Adler-Kassner and Estrem, for example, have a chapter in that collection about creating an assessment rubric using DCM at Eastern Michigan University. They describe their methodology with insightful detail. Adler-Kassner and Estrem began by thinking about the "qualities associated with good writing" in their community by convening three focus groups of students, faculty, staff, and administrators from around campus and an

additional focus group consisting of eight FYC instructors. These groups were asked to narrativize their experiences by telling a story about specific kinds of reading and writing, thereby encouraging participants to connect their notions of good writing to specific contexts.

Adler-Kassner and Estrem then took the transcripts from these focus groups and created concept maps from the discussions. They then created an assessment rubric from those maps. They presented the maps and rubric to the focus groups and then revised the maps and rubric over a process of months. In doing so, they noted the tension in values between the writing instructor focus groups (who generally saw writing as a performance) and the outside groups (who saw writing as a product). Rather than creating a binary and attempting to reach a compromise between these two perspectives, however, Adler-Kassner and Estrem revised their approach to the maps, looking for points of coherence in the key qualities of good writing that spanned across groups. They felt that they were able to design an assessment rubric that asked readers to identify and discuss these common qualities. They also found that the assessment process and rubric they designed both responded to the values of the community and provided them with the information and insights needed to support their administrative work.

DCM's values analysis provides a good model for a methodological approach to exploring the differing interests, values, and needs of participants in the process of designing the model assignment prompt. While the methodology was articulated as a way to create assessment rubrics, I believe that its process can be adapted to all forms of writing program assessment technology design. Walker and Osborne (2014), for example, have described a DCM-inspired approach to writing program assessment that values the expertise and input of writing instructors and embraces disagreement and a diversity of perspectives.

DCM proposes that assessment designers approach the design of assessment technologies (or, in the context of DCM, rubric-free criteria maps) as research study into what a community values in writing by embracing difference. Such a methodological approach to values-exploration is exactly the kind of democratic exploration of technological instrumentalizations that I believed Feenburg's (2002, 2010) critical philosophy calls for. My methodology in this study thus took much of its inspiration from DCM, albeit with some adjustments made to reflect the evolution of Corbin and Strauss' (2003) grounded theory and the specific context of the model portfolio assignment prompt. My process also generally followed Ruth and Murphy's (1988) tri-part methodology for designing assessment topics (planning, drafting, and evaluation) but with more post-process flexibility and recursivity (Kastman-Breuch, 2002).

The WPA, assistant WPAs, and graduate WPAs in my study had already conducted a preliminary values analysis before I came on to the project. They had gathered sample assignment prompts and student portfolios and discussed what they liked and did not like in the samples. I reviewed the notes of their discussion, sought guidance and advice on any points of confusion, and then created a memorandum that reflected and commented on the proposed assignment structure. I received feedback from the WPA, assistant WPA, and other graduate WPA, and then created a draft assignment prompt. After gaining preliminary feedback and approval on this draft, I then field tested the draft in my own courses and with a small number of instructors (including the other graduate WPA, **Stephanie**, the incoming TAs taking the teaching practicum, and some other experienced instructors who were eager to teach the prompt). I then revised the prompt in response to data gathered in response to this preliminary field test and received approval to officially pilot the prompt. Finally, I

sought to revise the prompt and field test it again with a larger group of instructors and students in the pilot study that underlies this dissertation.

During our pilot focus groups, I asked instructors to help revise the draft assignment prompt by exploring what they valued in a final portfolio assignment and in their FYC teaching philosophies and practices. I promoted this exploration of values in several ways:

(1) by asking instructors to directly reflect about what they valued in a final portfolio assignment and in student writing;

(2) by asking them to tell stories about teaching and evaluating the portfolio (including both the past and the current draft versions of the assignment) and FYC in general;

(3) by asking them to provide specific critiques on how the current draft of the assignment aligned or diverged from their teaching practice and philosophy;

(4) by asking them to suggest how the draft prompt could be revised to better fit within that practice and philosophy; and,

(5) finally, and importantly, by asking them to reflect on how they could revise their own teaching practice and philosophy to teach the prompt.

Yes, this means I asked instructors to question their own current practices and philosophy to accommodate the needs of an assessment instrument. I primarily accomplished this by emphasizing writing assessment as an important value, following in the spirit of White, Eliot, and Peckham (2015). However, I asserted this value in such a way as to avoid the appearance of the prompt being forced upon them and tried to avoid placing the needs of the assessment over their own whenever possible.

I used my notes and transcripts of our meetings to identify both points of commonality in the prompt and points of divergence. I similarly reviewed the materials

created by instructors, student survey data, and the student portfolios to help me understand how the prompt was being used.

For example, some of the values we discussed in the instructor focus groups included:

- Student reflection and self-evaluation (including the values of encouraging student authenticity/voice in reflection and avoiding rigid or mechanical reflection)

- Rhetorical situation (including students' comprehension of the concept and ability to write for different situations)

- Creative revision/repurposing (the ability to revise work for different situations, genres, and modalities/mediums)

- Transfer/Transformation of knowledge and skills (from those gained through the course to future situations)

- Multimodality and new literacies (including work with material or sensory modes, and not just limited to digital media)

- Genre (students' ability to understand, identify, and use genres)

- Writing as a Process (including students' comprehension of the concept, ability to work on the portfolio throughout the semester, and ability to demonstrate their facility with the writing process)

- Student learning outcome attainment

Notably, all the above listed values were already reflected in our program's learning outcomes and explicitly reflected in the prompt. However, instructors also identified values outside of these outcomes, including values not specifically associated with a writing course:

- Students' agency, authorship, and creative control

- Encouraging students to provide evidence in support of their claims

- Student engagement and ownership over their writing and learning process

- Student comprehension of the final portfolio assignment project

- Instructor agency and professional autonomy

- Increased student confidence or self-efficacy

- Avoiding recycling or plagiarism in student writing

- Ability for instructors to assign collaborative writing/group projects

- Ability for students to express emotional or non-rational learning in the portfolios

- Ability for instructors to teach personal narrative/storytelling through the portfolio

- Ease of instructors' teaching and grading

- Instructor motivation or engagement in teaching and grading (avoiding monotony or boredom because of highly repetitive or recycled assignments)

Of course, not all instructors held or agreed on the significance of these values. I tried to revise the prompt to reflect both points of agreement and disagreement among participants. When instructors and students seemed to agree on a value or specific structural element, or when a structural element seemed to be particularly useful or demanded by the nature of the assessment, I gave a more rigid structure to the prompt, providing more 'mandatory' requirements or suggested language. But when the participants seemed to disagree on a structural element or value, I used much more flexible requirements or suggestive language, allowing the element to be defined by instructor choice.

For example, an important value that we frequently discussed was multimodality and new literacies. The UNM graduate writing training program offered a graduate course on multimodal composition and online teaching. Many of the GTAs and NTT instructors

involved in the pilot were taking or had completed the course. A few of the Rhetoric and Writing GTAs were even writing their theses or dissertations on multimodal and new literacies topics. These participants would frequently talk about the importance of students gaining a facility with new literacies and multimodal composition. For example, the very first comment I received during the focus groups was about the prompt's multimodality. Specifically, **Helen,** a creative writing GTA, said that she was very happy that the creative revision part of the prompt required students to "**revise [their previous writing assignments] with deeply multimodal elements.**"

But not everyone agreed with this value. While the first praise I received about the prompt was about its multimodality, multimodality was also its first criticism. Shortly after **Helen** praised the multimodal elements of the draft prompt, **Jessica** expressed concerns about the prompt requiring multimodal compositions. She apparently liked to have students give oral presentations as part of their portfolio assignment and felt that the prompt did not allow that practice.

I would argue that this was an incorrect interpretation of the prompt, as I believe **Jessica** was wrongly associating multimodality with digitality. I also personally believed that we should give students an opportunity to develop their communication skills using a wide variety of sensory modes and agency to choose the appropriate modes and medium for their message (a point that Selfe (2009) and Shipka (2005, 2009) have made and which influenced my draft of the prompt). Thus, I felt like oral presentations were acceptable and could be worked into the assignment prompt as it was currently written.

Yet I avoided arguing the point and defending the draft prompt, as I felt that this would set the wrong tone and allow the instrument to dominate our conversations. We probably could have spent our entire focus group debating about what was or was not

included in the draft or how it should be interpreted. I deliberately made the choice not to focus on the structure of the prompt. Instead, I responded to her criticism by emphasizing that the whole point of our focus groups was to explore our interests, values, and needs.

So, I simply said in response to her criticism of the prompt's multimodality: "**Well that is one of my questions is what do you want to see in the prompt?**"

Jessica pushed back against this attempt to shift the conversation, however, by pointing to the language of the draft prompt, "**well it does say you have to have a multimodal.**" I again attempted to move the conversation away from the instrument and more towards an exploration of values by emphasizing that the prompt was in draft stage and open to revision:

Soha:	**I mean, I wrote this a little while ago, like almost a year ago, right, and even then, the way that I do assignment prompts has completely changed. So, I mean this is just a draft at this point and the whole point of this group is like what can we change about this to make it something we all want to use?**
Jessica:	**So, you can even change that**
Soha:	**[nodding] Mmm-hmm**
Helen:	**I like that this has options. So, you have options, you have the option that puts the responsibility on the student to really think about that extra choice, rather than saying you will do X. We were talking about it [pointing to researcher].**
Soha:	**[nodding] Mmm-hmm**
Amy:	**I've also had students who don't, who don't want to do, because I've used this prompt before and some students don't want to**

> **do multimodal creative revisions, just want to do traditional writing. I've seen people who write for both [referring to the reflective portion and the creative revision portion of the assignment].**

Soha: **I mean you can do multimodal for the literacy narrative and the creative revision**

Jessica: **Oh**

Amy: **So, they could go either way or both**

Soha: **Mm-hmm. I mean, I had one student turn in her literacy narrative, and it was just her and the camera, her talking to the camera. It was really awesome, actually.**

Note that my attempt to steer the conversation towards an exploration of values was greatly aided by **Amy** and **Helen**, who had already participated in the preliminary field trial of the prompt and thus had some experience teaching the prompt already. These instructors again emphasized the negotiability of the prompt's structure as a method to alleviate **Jessica's** concerns about a loss of autonomy through mandated multimodality. I similarly tried to hint at a way that **Jessica** could shift her existing practice and understanding of the meaning of multimodality to fit within the prompt by giving an example of my own experience, thus subtly suggesting that students could record their presentations. And, ultimately, she did shift her practice of having students do oral presentations to accommodate the structure of the prompt, without having been directly told that her understanding was incorrect or that she needed to change her practice.

Our conversations would often follow this pattern. Someone would raise a concern or a question about their practice or philosophy in relation to the structure of the prompt.

Either I or others would subtly attempt to identify and discuss the values underlying that practice or philosophy. We did this mostly by telling stories about our own practices and experiences, often as a method of gauging whether the value was acceptable to the group. We would then try to think about whether the value could or should fit within the prompt. Our discussions would generally follow one or more patterns, which I refer to as our Values Exploration Cycle. I present this model here primarily in the hopes that it may assist assessment designers in thinking about how to approach their negotiations and discussions with instructors:

(1) **Value Inside Draft Prompt:** If the value seemed to be already adopted by the prompt, and was acceptable to the group, then the group would discuss pragmatic ways that the instructor could promote the value with respect to teaching the portfolio (such as by assigning small writing assignments or activities associated with the portfolio, or by revising one of the optional sections of the prompt). We would also think of ways that competing values could be balanced within the context of teaching the prompt. Most of our conversations fit within this pattern. This may be because I would often ask instructors to think about how we could pragmatically promote needs, interests, or values already expressed within the prompt, and instructors would share their own past practices and explore how those practices could be adapted within the context of teaching the prompt.

(2) **Value Outside Draft Prompt**: If the value did not seem to be expressed within the structure of the prompt, the group would then attempt to come to some sort of consensus about whether the practice or value should be adopted. This

required the group to negotiate whether the value was (1) acceptable by the group and (2) significant enough to be included within the prompt.

a. **Acceptable and Significant:** If the value was acceptable and seemed significant and practical enough to include in the prompt, the group would adopt the value. We would think of ways that the prompt's structure could be revised to include that value, as balanced against any competing values.

b. **Acceptable but not Significant:** If the value was deemed acceptable, but not significant enough or practical to include in the structure of the prompt, then the group would indicate that it was acceptable but would not result in revisions to the prompt. The group would then acknowledge that the instructor could continue to express the value in their teaching practice and would often try to think of pragmatic ways that the instructor could promote the value in their other practice.

c. **Unacceptable:** In some rare cases, the value was deemed unacceptable to the group and generally discouraged. The group would think of pragmatic ways that the instructor could revise their practice to fall within acceptable limits.

The Values Exploration Cycle can also be visualized through the following flowchart. Note that steps in the discussion are characterized by rectangles; results or conclusions made through our discussions are represented by circles (Figure 4):
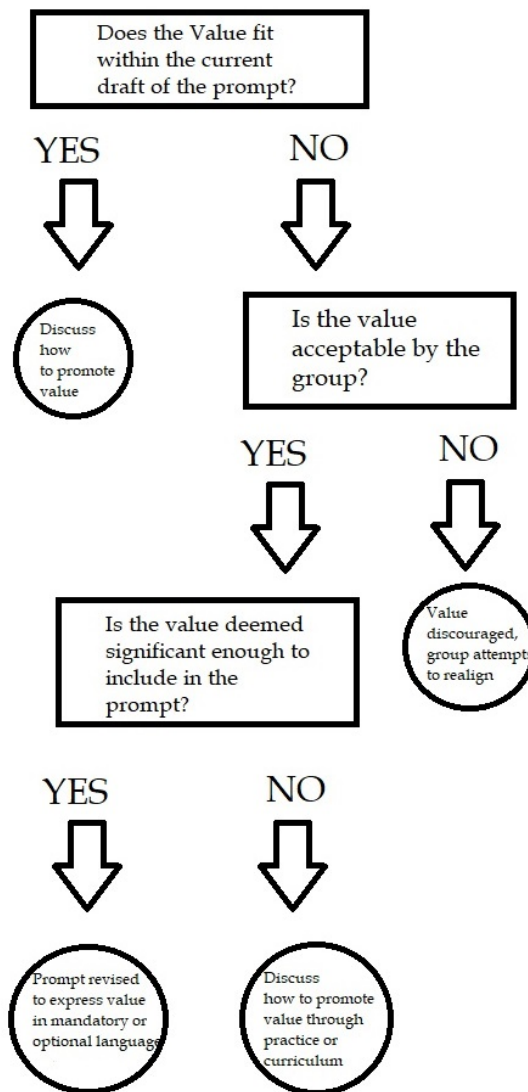
Our Values Exploration Cycle

Figure 4: Our Values Exploration Cycle

I will provide examples of the first pattern/step (Value Inside Prompt) in my discussions

about validity in Chapter 5. I wish to speak here instead about the second pattern/step

(Value Outside of the Prompt), as I think these moments of divergence can illuminate the

negotiated and discursive process that occurred during our discussions and provide some

insight on what to do when disagreements arise. Note that the above patterns were never

explicitly stated or acknowledged by the group, yet they often characterized the flow of our discussions.

The first example I wish to share touches on a debate between the instructors about the amount of time, resources, and emotional energy students should devote to the final portfolio assignment. It began when one instructor, **Drew** raised a concern about the way that creative revision was presented in the prompt. In his experience, students would approach him after presenting the creative revision and complain about the workload of the assignment. He said that his students would "**be like we're writing a completely different paper**" and would become frustrated because they felt that the assignment was asking too much of them during last few weeks of the semester. He explained that he tried to discourage students from looking at creative revision like it was a new project: "**I would be like, no, you're taking the same material and, and, you're simply like retailoring it so that you're presenting the other side.**" He said that this confusion between whether students were writing a new paper or not led to "**this really awkward interaction**" between him and his students. He further expressed the belief that students still were not understanding the concept of creative revision after these discussions, leading to poor quality student work.

Drew here expressed an interpretation of the creative revision requirement of the prompt: namely, that creative revision is simply a retooling and not a remaking of existing material. **Drew** had expressed this interpretation at one of the beginning-of-the-semester focus groups, among a different group of instructors. His proposed meaning at that meeting was not challenged or even much noticed, as the conversation touched on another idea he had raised in his speech. However, **Drew** later re-expressed the proposed meaning (using almost the same words) again, at a middle-of-the-semester focus group, among a different

mix of instructors. The group at this second meeting immediately pushed back against Drew's proposed meaning of the assignment prompt, however, with Michael specifically challenging **Drew**'s response to his potentially confused and frustrated students:

Michael: In my opinion, it is a whole another paper, though. Because you can't just take the same material, you have to rethink all that material, and that in some ways is more work than just starting with a whole new paper. So, I mean I can see that too, because when you change your audience, when you change the context, medium, like you have to rethink everything. So, in many ways you are rewriting the paper, you, you just might be more familiar with some of the concepts, some of the materials

Helen: Some of the specific angle, or, yeah.

Soha: Well that's what revision is, right?

Sam: It is, and it's useful.

Soha: It is rewriting something.

Helen: Writing is revising.

Michael: And my students would say it's writing a whole new paper, and it is.

Millie: Yeah, like highball it instead of lowball it.

Drew: Yeah, I mean, I guess whenever I think about writing a completely new paper, I'm personally thinking about, you know, using completely new material and a completely different topic, maybe, for example

Helen: That's what it sounds like to me.

Drew: But, you know, in this, in this case it was the same topic and they were using very much the same like sources they had before or drawing from them, anyway, and they were just kind of leaning in a different direction, they were over here on this side of the dial and now they're over here, like, so you know, so that just kind of was my reasoning on it, but I do understand what you're saying how that could be thought of a completely new one.

Michael: Yeah.

Drew: I could understand why it would be thought about it in this way. But it was just still kind of this awkward interaction, because I also had to try my best to have them not think of it like that, you know, because I didn't want them to, you know, be overwhelmed for this, oh my goodness we're writing a whole new assignment for this portfolio at the end of the semester. And yeah, I mean, and uh, talking about it now, I don't know how much this is actually adding to our discussion of the new prompt. But, I mean, I think overall it's, um, I think this is going to be good to have, because I think the idea of the traditional revision kind of lead to issues like that. And the traditional revision as it was defined before is not in here and that's what I think from a personal perspective it's going to be useful.

Note how the group here worked together to correct what was deemed to be an unacceptable meaning or interpretation of the prompt, and furthermore, what was deemed to be an incorrect value about the writing process itself. Interestingly, **Drew** was a literature and linguistics student, while **Michael, Helen, Millie** and I were all writing scholars. The beginning-of-the-semester focus group in which **Drew**'s interpretation remained unchallenged, however, was primarily attended by literature scholars. This is an example of how content experts can and will influence the design and use of an assessment instrument.

This example also illustrates our group's dynamics in addressing what was deemed to be an unacceptable meaning proposed about to the prompt. **Drew**'s speech at the end of the exchange seems nervous, which is understandable as he was corrected by the group. But he admits to being corrected and now accepting the group's meaning. I also finally picked up on the values that **Drew** was expressing in his final quoted speech: he was concerned that students might feel "**overwhelmed**" by the creative revision, as students might think "**oh my goodness we're writing a whole new assignment for this portfolio at the end of the semester.**" **Drew** thus raised a value regarding the amount of students' time, resources, and emotional energies in relation to the prompt. His efforts to manage students' energies by portraying the prompt in a more palatable, easier way suggested that he placed value on keeping students calm and focused by limiting the time they had to devote to the project. The meaning he proposed about the prompt also reflected this value: he had tried to interpret the concept of creative revision in a much less energy-intensive way. **Michael** and the rest of the group expressed an opposite value and meaning, instead suggesting that students should be expected to devote significant time, resources, and energy to the project because such devotion placed value on the writing process itself. This ultimately, then, could be characterized as a debate about the weight and significance that should be given to the

portfolio and the importance of writing education in the context of students' other courses at the university.

Finally clued into the values underlying our discussion, I immediately turned the discussion to an exploration of those values. Picking up immediately from the above quoted exchange, I then placed the value of student's time and resources directly into debate:

> **Soha:** **Mmhmm. Do you guys think that you're going to get this pushback though for the creative revision? I mean, talking about creating something new, that is, you know, creative revision, you have to change the medium possibly, even, that can be huge—[interrupted]**

Helen then interrupted my question with multiple suggestions to easing students' workload, without changing the nature of the prompt, including introducing the assignment early and scaffolding, such as by "**lead[ing] into that creative revision with a particular sequence that lends itself more easily to a creative revision.**" She described a rhetorical analysis sequence that she had tried during the preliminary field trial where students had to analyze rhetoric from the 2016 presidential campaign. She then helped students creatively revise that rhetorical analysis into a political satire, political advertisement, or a letter to an editor.

The value of student resources and time, which touched on values regarding the importance placed on the portfolio, and indeed, upon writing education itself, thus seemed to be laid to rest. **Helen's** response seemed to settle any debate by instead suggesting other ways that the value of student time could be expressed. The other instructors in the group also seemed to accept this bargain. I thus allowed the discussion to move in this productive direction, sharing some of my own practices as suggestions for introducing the portfolio early and incorporating reflection and creative revision activities throughout the semester.

Other members of the group began to share their own practices in scaffolding and teaching the portfolio.

In this way, **Drew**'s unacceptable meaning was corrected by the group. Note also that my question about the portfolio being "**huge**" was an attempt to acknowledge the potential importance of **Drew's** expressed value about students' time, resources, and emotional energies, and also an effort to alleviate any feelings of marginality that might have arisen as a result of him being corrected by the group. The group then immediately turned to discussing ways to acknowledge that value outside of the context of the prompt, however, suggesting that the group did not feel like the value of student time and resources was significant enough to include within the structure of the prompt. This is thus an example of a 2(b) pattern (acceptable but insignificant value) with regard to the value expressed about students' time and resources and 2(c) (unacceptable value) pattern with regard to the meaning **Drew** expressed about the writing process and creative revision, as detailed above.

Another example from an end of semester focus group will also help illustrate our discussion pattern. This example involves the balance between values of collaborative learning and education, individual attainment, and educational assessment. It begins with a question by **Cass**, an experienced NTT and creative writer, about the possibility for group assignments in the English 120 version of the assignment:

Cass: **Uh, I had a question, though. One of the things I'll do differently is allow a little more time to work on the portfolio. I allowed the same amount of time that I normally do, as opposed to the, I think another week would have helped. But I had one of my 120 class this semester, so many of the students were friends and were working together outside the class, and a**

young woman who did a video had a friend in there and said, "Can we do the video together?" And I thought about it, and it sounded fun. And I knew that they would both work on it and stuff. But I wonder would there be anything against of having a group project coming up?

Amy: A group creative revision?

Cass: Well, a group learning narrative.

Paul: I actually had my 120, when I was telling them about audience and stuff, they wanted to do some group work. So, I let them, or I let a couple of them, or well, it was more than a couple of them. I let them decide. I got a portfolio from fifteen people.

Lydia: From how many?

Paul: Fifteen.

Lydia: Wow.

Cass: I might keep it down to three.

Helen: Yeah.

Paul: It's the only one I've looked at yet. And it's been really interesting. They use first person in the literacy narrative.

Mark: First person singular?

Paul: Uh-huh. So, I just, I thought I'd give it a try. It was kind of a spur of the moment discussion.

Soha: I actually like that. You know, in our western society we're so individualized we don't really, I mean that's very kind of collective

Helen:	Especially when they're all resistant to group projects, and they actually say to you, we want to do this, I would probably say yes, too.
Paul:	I have no idea how they coordinated it [laughing].
Cass:	Yeah, I just couldn't figure it out on the spot. So, I was like let's talk about it, and they didn't come and meet with me.
Olivia:	I might do creative revision together. I've got five groups do it, but they write separate cover letters.
Helen:	Okay.
Stephanie:	I never thought of that.
Olivia:	They'd been working in groups on an assignment before, for a PowerPoint, so, it makes no difference if they want to.
Soha:	If they're going to do a group assignment, then they have to individually do a reflection on a group assignment, yeah?
Olivia:	Yeah. Sure.
Helen:	Absolutely. Was that for online or when you were here?
Olivia:	Here. 110. For this portfolio, but they had to do their separate reflections.
Helen:	Right.
Soha:	I think that's pretty cool, for 120, a group option.
Cass:	Small?
Soha:	Yeah, small group option.
Callie:	Yeah, I would probably only do two or three.
Drew:	I did wonder about that.

> **Paul:** It was an extra big group.
>
> **Soha:** One class. Final portfolio. We did it all together. Grading was a snap! [laughing]

Note how **Cass** here described a potential nightmare from an educational assessment perspective: group outcome reflections. After all, how is one to assess individual attainment through a group project? **Paul**, however, admits to having tried out the idea. The group thus seemed willing to admit the value of group reflection. But the group also immediately tried to set the limits of acceptable practice, balancing the value of collaborative learning against the value of individual educational attainment and assessment: small groups are okay, larger groups are not; individual reflective letters are a necessary component to facilitate the assessment of individual learning.

Our discussion then inspired **Lara** to propose doing a class-wide documentary in which all the students in her class would contribute their reflections about their learning experience in English 120. She based the idea on a literary analysis sequence that she had previously taught, in which all the students in the course collaboratively composed an hour-long documentary analysis of an urban legend. She felt that students could mirror this process to create a documentary about the learning outcomes. **Lara** seemed very excited and spoke quickly as she explored why it might be a good idea:

> **Lara:** …It would make grading a lot easier, that would be great for weeks like this. And they would still do revisions on their own, or whatever, but to have a reflection that way, number one watching videos is far easier than reading stuff, especially when we're all writing 30 page papers and stuff this week, right, but also because also I think students get really excited about the

idea of doing the videos, because they really love doing the documentaries. They end up being, they have to be 5 minutes because they have to cover all of these things, and they usually end up being twice as long, they usually end up being 10 minutes long. And every semester I have at least one group want to do reenactments and they come up with this amazing product. And I think that could be transferred into, I mean of course I would have to cut the documentary sequence then and do something else with it, but they could do that with the class reflection anyway.

Lara touches on many values here, including student engagement and creativity, ease of grading, instructor time and engagement, and multimodality. These values are similar to those that the group had explored earlier in relation to other practices. Her idea, then, was not too out of line of acceptable practice; but it still seemed somewhat extreme from assessment and instructional viewpoint.

But the other members of the group sought to temper her excitement by posing pragmatic obstacles to her idea. **Amy** expressed that a class-wide documentary might be too big of an endeavor and suggested that **Lara** split the project into small groups. I inferred that the project needed to be made into more manageable steps and suggested that **Lara** could have students do in-progress reflective video blogs throughout the semester, thus allowing for better assessment of individual students' progress and growth. I further emphasized that she would need to have each student include reflective cover letters for the documentary in the final portfolio, hoping thereby to ease programmatic assessment processes. **Stephanie** raised an issue of how to design a prompt that could possibly fit the assignment, due to

differing class dynamics and often-transitory student attendance. And **Drew** asked a pragmatic question about how **Lara** would have students turn in the documentary to be assessed. And through these pragmatic questions and mention of potential hurdles, the group subtly discouraged and tempered **Lara**'s potentially unacceptable proposition.

Ultimately, I ended the conversation by suggesting that we include an option for small group assignments in the English 120 assignment prompt. This discussion thus fell somewhere within the "2. Value Outside Prompt" range. The value of collaborative learning was deemed acceptable and significant enough to revise the prompt to include an option for group projects. But the value was not significant enough as against other competing values as to make for mandatory language, and the details would need to be determined by the instructors' own practice. Furthermore, some meanings or practices were specifically discouraged through the emphasis of pragmatic hurdles, although not forbidden.

I cite this example discussion because it shows that our conversations did not always fit neatly into my theoretical outline in Figure 4 above. But it also shows how the conversations in our group centered around negotiations of values, practices, and meanings, and how the group tried to balance the needs of the community and the assessment with the interests, needs, and values of individual instructors. We did this primarily through storytelling about our own experiences, by reflecting on our practices, by debating about our interpretations, and even by using humor. And, through our discussions, we designed a prompt that reified our shared values, gave instructors and the program a workable standardized prompt, and still had room for instructor agency, autonomy, and choice when instructors' differences and freedom seemed to matter.

III.   Informing Design Methodologies with Theories of Participation

An evolved grounded theory inspired analysis can provide a thoughtful methodology for exploring what instructors value in assessment technology design. I sought to focus on exploring what instructors and other participants valued, rather than on what the instrument said or required. I believe that this properly focused the project on the humans involved in the design process, and not on the technologies of the design. As Neal (2010) has noted: "DCM's strengths are exactly what mechanization is not: human based, time consuming, labor intensive, rewarding, knowledge generating, tolerant of multiple ways to demonstrate competencies, and faculty development-oriented" (p. 63). DCM can provide a workable method for exploring and negotiating values, especially when there are important distinctions or competition among those values.

Nevertheless, DCM could be further strengthened through a theoretical understanding of the collaborative process itself. DCM does not explain *why* our conversations worked in this way or provide insights into our group dynamics so that our successful interaction can be fostered or replicated in other contexts. White (2004) and Johnson (2004) have also criticized DCM as initially presented by Broad as too theoretical, impractical, overly labor-intensive, and potentially unsustainable. I would agree with these criticisms. The methodology can demand quite a lot from its facilitator. Broad's (2003) own methodology included an analysis of "more than seven hundred pages of observational notes, transcripts of group discussions and interviews, and program documents" (p. 24). It is unlikely that busy WPAs or other assessment designers could sustain that level of activity year after year. Moreover, the DCM process seems to contemplate an ending to the data gathering and analysis cycle. After all, the point of DCM is to create an artifact, the criteria-map. And, once that is done, the process seems over (although the map can and should be

revised in the future). DCM may be "organic" in that it is home grown and respond to local needs, but it is not "natural" in the sense that it could grow and become a part of the day-to-day functioning of a program with only a little cultivation.

I do not mean to suggest that DCM does not have important consequences for a program. The values articulated through the methodology *do* become a part of the program, as those values are reified in assessment technology generated through the process (such as the criteria map, or, in my case, the model assignment prompt). But rather I mean that the *process* of exploring those values, the methodology of generating the technology itself, does not appear to become an integral and sustainable part of the community's rhythm.

Of course, I could also make such "unnatural" and "unsustainable" criticisms about my own design process. I initially took a very WPA-centered approach to the design methodology, coming up with a draft primarily with the input of the administrators and then seeking only to field-test it with instructors and students through isolated interviews and other individually focused data gathering methods. I further conceived of this field-test as a limited, one-semester project to create a useable artifact and not as a sustainable practice that would outlive my own term as a graduate-WPA. And, considering that the FYC program may be considering moving on from the model prompt we created (and rightly so, as all programs must change), the prompt does seem to have a fast approaching expiration date.

Fortunately, however, I realized that I needed to collaborate with instructors by asking them to interact more fully with me and, notably, with *each other*. I sought, then, to deliberately foster a sense of community with instructors in the design process while seeking to examine our values. And I decided specifically to study the design process so that I could share replicable insights into how to cultivate a community with instructors in the design of writing assessment technologies. I, admittedly, failed in this due to the limited scope of my

study. I worked to create a community but did not have the authority or capacity to sustain these efforts in my limited tenure as a graduate-WPA. I also had no authority to implement programmatic changes. Yet I believe that I was successful in cultivating this community in the scope of the project, within the constraints that I was given.

Thus, I believe DCM is a good methodology for exploring what instructors' value in writing assessment technological design. But DCM does not presently provide insights into how to foster the community needed for such value exploration on a consistent and sustainable basis. Indeed, DCM seems to assume that a community is already established via the existence of a group, an assumption that Wenger (1998) has specifically disavowed. The existence of a group of people does not equal the existence of a community. And while DCM promotes the work of "listening" and "feeling heard" (Broad, 2010, p. 157) and thus greatly assists in the creation of community, it does not explain why such listening does create a community or how it could be designed to more systematically do so.

Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth (2001), for example, have argued that the concept of "community" has often been thrown around or overlooked by educational researchers, meaning that researchers may often presuppose the existence of a community where there is none. They argued that educational researchers needed to formulate theories of community to make the concept both meaningful and replicable. To Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth, the concept of a "community" reflected a sense of group identity and communal responsibility, negotiation of differences, and a shared sense of purpose and responsibility. These senses, dispositions, and practices are difficult to foster if they do not already exist. Moreover, they found that merely providing avenues for teachers to meet also did not necessarily foster community, as such meetings often provided venues for teachers to reenact existing departmental politics and conflicts. They instead argued that

administrators needed to find ways of fostering true community, turning differences and conflict into a productive resource. Their argument thus mirrors my own in this respect.

The focus of this section, then, can be understood as seeking to inform a DCM-inspired methodology with theoretical models that could help both explain and guide the creation of a "community" sufficient enough to sustain and allow meaningful instructor participation in the design of writing assessment technologies. Note, however, that by fostering community, I do not necessarily mean strategies of management or workplace organization (although such organizational strategies are certainly an important aspect). The limited scope of my study did not delve into how WPAs could structure various committees, task forces, or other institutional organizations to best shape instructors' participation. After all, I was merely a graduate-WPA who lacked any real authority to make institutional changes and had to work within the structures that I was given. I anticipate that many assessment designers, too, will operate under such constraints regarding workplace organization.

Thus, in reflecting upon this study, I searched for theoretical models that could provide insight into how community and participation works, so that assessment designers could cultivate this community within existing institutional and assessment frameworks. What I primarily seek to present here, then, is a theory of instructor participation in the design of writing assessment technologies (Reilly & Literat, 2012).

From my review, two theories of professional participation stand out as potential approaches to fostering sustainable and effective collaboration with instructors: **professional learning communities** (Dufour, 2004; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 2004) and **communities of practice** (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). Both models stem generally from pragmatic constructivist philosophies of education and thus share similar values and features in an emphasis on learning through

action and interaction. Each of these models seem to acknowledge that communities (1) possess some sense of a shared mission and values, (2) engage in processes of collective inquiry and action, and (3) share learning, practices, and tools as a result. But subtle and significant differences exist between each. For purposes of time and focus, I cannot provide a comprehensive and nuanced review of each of these frameworks. Instead, I will discuss and analyze a single framework—communities of practice—in greater detail, as I felt that Wenger's (1998) framework offered a useful theoretical lens for making sense of my data within my researcher orientation and philosophy.

Yet, before I discuss communities of practice, I do want to emphasize the value of professional learning communities and/or teaching-as-research as potential methodologies for fostering and theorizing instructor participation in the design of writing assessment technologies. The program described by Broad (2003) in his first exploration of DCM seemed to follow professional learning community patterns, as the instructors in his study were members of various institutionally organized teams who met regularly throughout the semester. But I cannot confirm whether or which learning community model was specifically intended.

Banta, Jones and Black (2016) have shown that professional learning communities can offer avenues for sustained faculty collaboration and development and detailed a few programs who effectively use the approach in their assessment processes. Denecke, Michaels, and Stone (2017) also have identified learning communities and communities of practice as organizational strategies that graduate training programs have successfully used to prepare GTAs to participate in assessment practices as future faculty. They also identified teaching-as-research programs as potential avenues for encouraging GTAs. Allen et al (2015) have similarly described a teaching-as-research program in the FYC at Oakland University

that has successfully engaged NTT instructors. Professional learning communities and teaching-as-research thus seem like viable methodologies for sustainable and collaborative assessment instrument design; however, these organizational models seem to be more leader-oriented and/or needing of institutional sanction than I was able to provide. I can only point to them as a potential method for framing instructors' participation in the assessment technologies design process. But I can provide little insight into the effectiveness of these organizational strategies due to my study's limitations.

Instead, I focus here on communities of practice. I believe that this framework presents a methodology that is both organic (in that it can grow naturally out of interaction) and sustainable through strategic cultivation. While I was not able to fully develop an ideal learning community in my own study due to its limitations, I believe that the social and learning theories underlying the communities of practice model can help make sense of my interaction with the instructors in my study and offer insights about how WPAs and other assessment designers can theorize and approach instructor participation in the design of writing program assessment technologies.

IV.   Communities of Practice as a Framework for Instructor Participation

A.   The Theory and Its Relevance to this Study

The concept of a community of practice was first developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) in their *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. In that work, Lave and Wenger articulated a theory of situated learning based on their observational research into the lives of practitioners, such as midwives or tailors. They saw how new practitioners were trained and assimilated into the community through essentially an apprenticeship model of

participation that they termed "legitimate peripheral participation." Lave and Wenger saw learning as being generated through a method of sustained interaction. Learning under their theory thus became emergent, situated, social, constructive, and pragmatic. Lave and Wenger referred to these communities of learning and interaction as "communities of practice."

Wenger (1998) later developed the concept into a theory of learning, identity, and participation in his *Communities of Practice: Learning as a Social System*. He based this theory primarily on a case study into the working lives of health insurance claims processors. He observed that these claims processors made sense of their work and potentially marginalized daily existence by sustained interaction and learning. He defined a community of practice as a group of practitioners who were (1) in **mutual engagemen**t (2) to a **joint enterprise** (3) with a **shared repertoire**. These three elements are essential to Wenger's theory, so I will briefly review each one in turn.

First, **mutual engagement** refers to a process of sustained action and interaction. Engagement is not just being around or belonging; instead it involves "dense relations of mutual engagement organized around what [participants] are there to do" and requires that participants "be[] included in what matters" (Wenger, 1998, p. 73-4). Note also that conflict and disagreement is anticipated and, arguably, a necessary part of mutual engagement. Indeed, Wenger argues that "[a]s a form of participation, rebellion often reveals a greater commitment than does passive conformity" (p. 77). What is required is that participants interact together within their specified domain through essentially a process of deep negotiation about what matters in their work.

Second, the community must be devoted to a **joint enterprise**. This joint enterprise is the negotiated goal or purpose of the community. Communities of practice are focused on action within a specific domain or field, a "practice" that gives meaning to and orients the

participants and the community. This enterprise "is defined by the participants in the very process of pursuing it" and "is not just a stated goal, but creates among participants relations of mutual accountability that become an integral part of the practice" (p. 77). These "relations of mutual accountability" establish acceptable values, motivations, and behavior among the participants in the community as they act and interact in the context of their community and domain. Thus, a community negotiates values and meanings in their work towards a purpose that is also negotiated through their interactions.

Third, and finally, the community of practice possesses a **shared repertoire.** This repertoire is both material and social; it "includes the routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice" (p. 82). This includes a repertoire that is created, adopted, or even imposed (such as through standardized forms). This means, of course, that the technologies created and used by these communities, such as assessment technologies, also fall within this element. But the concept of shared repertoire also includes simply ways of interacting and being.

This element of shared repertoire would therefore best align with and be informed by Feenburg's (2002, 2010) critical philosophy of technology. But, of course, it is not a perfect fit as the two theories are geared towards different concerns. Yet both Feenberg and Wenger (1998) seem to have acknowledged (or at least assumed) that technologies are essentially social and shaped by values. Wenger argued, for example, that differing communities of insurance claims processors interpreted and used standardized forms in different ways during their work and attributed different meanings to those forms. Yet these standardized forms also shaped the community in its interaction and sense of purpose. This shows that Wenger's three elements—mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared

repertoire—also influence one another. And this also mirrors Feenburg's (2002; 2010) argument about the interaction and mutual influence of the social and material aspects of technology.

Wenger (1998) conceived of communities of practice as a unique sort of organizational entity, as distinct from other groups or communities. You can have, for example, communities of identity or communities of interest; what distinguishes communities of practice is that they are *of practice* or devoted to the pursuit of a shared domain, such as writing instruction. Wenger, McDermott & Snyder (2002) further developed the concept into a model for workplace and educational organization in *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge.* This guide, and Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2015) [accompanying website](), serve as resources for structuring workplaces and other institutions using the community of practice organizational model.

While a "community of practice" refers to a specific organizational entity or model, the theories underlying the framework have wider implications. Essentially, Wenger (1998) has articulated an accessible theory of participation to undergird his model of workplace organization. This theory not only explores the concept of what constitutes a community, but also explores how communities operate, and notably, what can be done to cultivate communities among a group of practitioners.

I like Wenger's theoretical framework because it is essentially a product of the pragmatic constructivist tradition. As such, it fits nicely within my own researcher orientation. Indeed, I could even argue that this framework is both demanded by and the embodiment of the tradition. Wenger frequently emphasized that his framework is based on essentially pragmatic constructivist assumptions, even listing these assumptions among the first pages of his work:

- o "We are social beings,

- o knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to valued enterprises,

- o knowing is a matter of participating in the pursuit of such enterprises, that is, of active engagement with the world

- o meaning—our ability to experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful—is ultimately what learning is to produce" (1998, p. 3).

Throughout Wenger's work, he assumes that truth, meaning, knowledge, learning, and identity are constructed through action and interaction. These assumptions about the active and interactive construction of meaning are at the heart of what it means to be pragmatic constructivist. Wenger's framework is particularly helpful, however, in that it emphasizes the *inter*active element of pragmatic constructivism. After all, pragmatic constructivism can give rise to more individually focused research and theories. But my purpose here in this study is to explore how to foster instructors' participation through their interactions with each other. As such, the theory suits my purpose. Similarly, as I will argue below, I believe that this framework can provide important insights for the concept of validity in writing program assessment technology design. Thus, the following review of this theory will lead directly to my findings and arguments about instructor participation and validity in Chapter 5.

Moreover, I believe that Wenger himself would approve this use of his theoretical framework. My review of his framework is presented here from an essentially pragmatic perspective: I present and use his theories insofar as they are useful in making sense of my data. I also inform and discuss Wenger's theories in the context of other theorists whenever I see potential connections within them. Like a true pragmatic constructivist, Wenger (2013) has argued that the purpose of social theories is simply to assist researchers to make sense of the world. For example, he argued that "[t]he usefulness of technical language depends"

upon whether the theory is (1) "generative" in that it "enables the creation of interesting stories, suggests probing questions, and generates good insights," (2) "evocative" in that it "expands our perspective," (3) "recognizable" in that it "resonates with our experience in ways that make it easy to appropriate," and (4) "systematic" in that "[t]he system of concepts is rigorously constructed, with an economy of technical terms" (p. 3). He thus advocated for a "plug and play" approach to research methodologies, where researchers rely on and combine theoretical frameworks insofar as they are useful. He suggested that researchers "make their own assemblage" of theorists, as long as they "do justice to the DNA of each theory: its purpose, its stance, its language" (p. 9). I obviously mirror this own playful and pragmatic approach in my own work. I aim to present Wenger's theories below in a way that I hope is just, useful, and appropriate to my purposes in this dissertation. And I will inform this framework with the work of other theorists whenever I see appropriate connections between them.

B. Instructor Participation and The Negotiation of Meaning

As stemming from a pragmatic constructivist tradition, Wenger's (1998) theory assumes, at its core, that knowledge and learning are constructed through action and/or interaction. Wenger has defined the process of knowledge construction as **the negotiation of meaning**. This is an apt term, as it emphasizes interactivity through the interplay of participants' diverse needs, interests, and values. This means, also, that truth, knowledge, identity, and the overall meaning that humans ascribe to phenomena are all generated through practice. The concept thus mirrors some elements of Miller's (2007) *kinetic* conception of agency, as agency exists between the interaction of two entities who mutually recognize each other's agentive capacity. Wenger's (1998) work contributes to this *kinetic*

conception of agency, however, by identifying the mechanisms or processes of meaning-making: **participation** and **reification**. Each of these mechanisms is recursive, generative, and essential to practice.

Participation refers to interaction within the context of the community. It "refers to a process of taking part and also to the relations with others that reflect this process. It suggests both action and connection" (p. 55). Importantly, participation requires a mutual recognition among participants of each other's ability to negotiate meaning. It requires Miller's (2007) *kinetic* agency with respect to the interaction.

Importantly, "mutuality does not, however, entail equality or respect" (p. 56). Participation can have political aspects to it, such as through "influence, personal authority, nepotism, rampant discrimination, charisma, trust, friendship, ambition" (p. 91). After all, negotiation can be weighed heavily to one side. But Wenger has explained that effective designs for community functioning seek to strike a balance between what meanings can be negotiated through autonomy and innovation (which he defined as **negotiability**) and what meanings are standardized or established by the community (which he defined as **identification**). Effective community design thus involves striking an appropriate balance between negotiability (autonomy) and identification (standardization) in the participatory aspects of meaning-making. The group must have a sense of cohesion through identification with a shared understanding of the community's enterprise and repertoire; but this sense of identification must be balanced against the need for individual agency and autonomy through negotiability. Thus, negotiability is once again essential to instructor's participation, as it is tied essentially to instructors' motivation or ownership over meanings.

Reification is the second process of meaning making and "refer[s] to the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience [of

participation] into 'thingness.' In doing so, we create points of focus around which the negotiation of meaning becomes oriented" (Wenger, 1998, p. 58). For example, the processes of creating laws, procedures, instruments, or tools are all part of reification. Assessment instruments are thus reifications of teaching, learning, and assessment practices. And the reification "form then becomes a focus for the negotiation of meaning, as people use the law to argue a point, use the procedure to know what to do, or use the tool to perform an action" (p. 58).

Notably, the process of making reified tools and technologies are also considered a part of reification: "With the term reification I mean to cover a wide range of processes that include making, designing, representing, naming, encoding, and describing, as well as perceiving, interpreting, using, reusing, decoding, and recasting" (p. 58). Both the methodology and form of an assessment technology would thus fall within the meaning-making process of reification. Note also that, because reification is a part of the overall negotiation process, the meanings of any assessment technology under this framework would also be negotiated. This again supports the argument that assessment technologies cannot be interpreted or used out of context.

Indeed, Wenger has explained that **participation** and **reification** are a "duality," in that they are conceptually unique, but must operate in tandem with one another. Problems with a community's functioning often arise when one meaning-making process dominates the other. Participation without reification often causes participants to feel like their efforts are aimless, presented as almost an endless succession of meetings. Reification gives direction to a community by offering points of identification, thereby allowing existing knowledge and values to be transmitted to newcomers and maintained over transitions

within the community of practitioners. On the other hand, too much reification can stifle innovation and learning and oversimplify the complexities of practice. Wenger cautioned,

> Reifying knowledge for educational purposes offers something visible and fixed for newcomers to vie for in their quest for full membership, but it does not guarantee access to the relevant forms of participation. In fact, by reducing knowing to reified items, the codification of knowledge may create the illusion of a simple, direct, unproblematic relation between individual learners and elements of a subject matter. Reification may seem to lift knowledge out of practice, and thus to obviate the need for (and complexities of) participation. And yet, what the subject matter comes to mean in the lives of learners still depends on the forms of participation available to them. (Wenger, 1998, p. 264)

Thus, Wenger argued, "educational design is not primarily about such reification, but more fundamentally about pondering when to reify and when to rely on participation. It is about balancing the production of reificative material with the design of forms of participation that provide entry into practice and let the practice itself be its own curriculum" (Wenger, 1998, p. 265). Effective educational community design thus relies on the balance of reification with participation, and again, in the context of participation, the balance between negotiability (autonomy) and identification (standardization).

As an example to help illustrate these concepts, I refer you to Chapter 3, where I described how some of the instructors of my study characterized their experiences and feelings about developing a standardized assignment prompt as negotiation between their own needs and the needs of the other participants in the assessment. Indeed, **Drew** and **Michael** in our first focus group meeting described the importance of balance between identification and negotiability in their characterizations of the assignment prompt, as the

prompt offered both mandatory and optional language: "**There are certain things that are required language and then there's a lot of room to make it your own.**" **Helen**'s "**get[ting] to Denver**" metaphor, too, is an excellent example of such negotiation and identification, demonstrating how a community can have a common goal in mind while still respecting an individual participant's autonomy. **Olivia**'s experience, on the other hand, describes a situation where participation and negotiability in the creation of assessment technologies has been seriously curtailed, and she speaks at length about the consequences that that had for her own motivation and identification with the community.

I similarly refer you to the examples used to illustrate the Values Exploration Cycle I described in the previous section (Figure 4), where you can see the participants in my study negotiating values and meanings with respect to the prompt and deciding as a group what values and practice the prompt should reify. These examples demonstrate that an effective balance between negotiability and identification is essential to both the methodology and form of assessment technology design. Communities can benefit from standardized writing assessment technologies. But Wenger's theory confirms that those technologies must strike an effective balance between elements of instructors' choice and elements of standardization. Wenger's theory thus confirms the arguments I made in Chapter 3 regarding instructor autonomy and the design of standardized writing program assessment technologies.

C. Instructor Participation and Promoting Ownership of Meaning

The examples referred to immediately above are also good illustrations of what Wenger termed the **economy of meaning**, an essential concept to his theory. The economy of meaning embodies a sense of the exchange of meanings that occurs through the

mechanisms of participation and reification. The economy of meaning also reflects the idea

that meanings that are produced by participants through their practice can have relative

worth and influence within the community. This is not to suggest that meanings are

commodifiable, but instead, to simply suggest that meanings can compete and that

individuals can gain **ownership of meaning** or adopt certain meanings as part of their

identity as practitioners. Ownership of meaning is central to participants' identifying with a

community and for ensuring community cohesiveness and sustainability. WPAs and

assessment designers thus would do well to focus on balancing the economy of meaning and

fostering ownership of meanings, as it is through this economy that acceptable meanings will

be negotiated and the participants in the assessment will come to hold certain values or

determine acceptable ways to participate.

Wenger further explained that community members participate in this economy of

meaning through three methods: **engagement**, **imagination,** and **alignment.** These three

forms of participation can describe almost a negotiator's 'toolkit' that assessment designers

can use to theorize and plan their interactions with instructors. These three forms of

participation also encourage instructors' ownership of meaning and thus identification with

the community and its acceptable meanings and practices. Thus, these three concepts

provide specific insights into how to negotiate with instructors, and so I will go through each

one in some detail below.

1. **Negotiation through Engagement**

First, **engagement** refers to participants' production and adoption of meanings

through practice. Participants ideally should both produce and adopt meanings in order to

attain a balanced economy. Communities in which some participants always produce

meanings for others to adopt "yields very uneven ownership of meaning," which "results in a mutually reinforcing condition of both marginality and inability to learn" (p. 203). A significant purpose of my engaging instructors in the focus groups, online, and through the creation of materials was to encourage them to participate in the economy of meaning through engagement. This does not mean, however, that all their ideas had to be adopted by the program or the community. Rather, the purpose of the groups was simply to give an opportunity for the members of the group to both produce and adopt meanings by sharing their values and their practice.

I describe a good example of participation through engagement in my illustrations of our group's Values Exploration Cycle (Figure 4) above. There, I describe how **Drew** attempted to produce a meaning regarding the concept of creative revision and the writing process. This meaning was ultimately not accepted by the group. Such a rejection or failure of adoption might have created a distance between **Drew** and the community, and if persistent, might have led to feelings of alienation, marginalization, or non-participation. Fortunately, however, this was an isolated episode, and as **Drew**'s other ideas continued to be encouraged and listened to, he continued to enthusiastically participate.

2. Negotiation through Imagination

Ownership of meaning can also occur through **imagination**, which essentially refers to participation through use of community members' creative faculties. This creative participation often happens through the sharing of stories. Wenger (1998) explains that "[s]tories can transport our experience into the situations they relate and involve us in producing the meanings of those events as though we were participants. As a result, they can be integrated into our identities and remembered as personal experience, rather than as mere

reification" (p. 203). Our values-exchange discussions in the focus groups often did take the form of telling stories. We would tell stories about challenges and successes we had encountered in teaching the final portfolio assignment in the past. We would also tell stories about activities and assignments we had used before, and the group would explore how those activities and assignments could be used to teach the current draft prompt. These stories about our past practices helped experienced instructors see how the prompt could fit within their existing identity as a practitioner, thus encouraging ownership over the meanings we ascribed to the draft prompt. These past stories likewise helped instructors imagine what it would be to teach the draft assignment prompt in the future, thereby encouraging them to revise their future identities to accommodate the prompt.

A good example of the role that imagination can play in the negotiation of meaning comes from one of our very first focus groups. Towards the end one meeting, we experienced a lull in the conversation and the participants seemed shy or reluctant to speak. So, in order to encourage discussion, I posed a question to the group designed to get them to start sharing stories. You'll notice that this led to some small amount of feedback. But the tone in the group changed once the stories began engaging their imagination, and the instructors began to participate more enthusiastically:

Soha: **What time is it? Okay, so we have a little bit of time. Okay, so for the rest of it then, we've been getting into this already, I was thinking we could think of ways we could incorporate this assignment into our classes already, activities you guys have done that you want to share, I mean we've already been doing that already, so that's good. [lull in conversation]. Or if you don't want to talk about that we don't have to.**

[lull in conversation].

Callie: For me it's mostly the reflections. I wish there was ways to think about the revision process throughout, but I'm not sure how to teach that until the end.

Soha: The creative revision?

Callie: Yeah, creative, or tradition, or well the traditional would be the one to go for me, but yeah, been thinking about that.

Soha: Um, I don't know, [noticing that Cass wants to speak], Were you going to say something?

Cass: That's what, I've always had. Okay, I'm coming from old school, too, so I've always wanted that revision at the end of the semester to just be solid and teaching big revision has been difficult. And there's a part of me that's always been resistant to the creative revision, and it has to do with some of the things I've seen other instructors choose to do that, for me I, I don't see the value of. And I also have not been in class and have never had to sit down with the instructor, so I don't want to like diss instructors or anything like that. But for me, it's because I can't attach the value to it [the practice of creative revision]. When you talked in orientation [for the study recruitment pitch], I was suddenly able to do, I had the whole attachment of value. Because in [English] 120, I spend the first half of the semester in visual rhetoric. Second half of the semester, I have them write a research paper that they choose the topic of, with

some limitations. And I approve. And then we work on that so that they can get very formal research skills in place. But because of the visual rhetoric element, I saw a way to take that research paper and combine it with that and make a visual presentation and analysis of where they imagine their research paper and why to bring in rhetorical situation and all of that. So, I haven't written or even begun to instruct that assignment, but it's up here in my head and it looks good now.

[Another lull in conversation]

Soha: Um, just one way that I teach creative revision is um, I just, you know, do you guys know Pinterest, right? It's very popular to, people like to put picture of things they have repurposed, like, they put a piano and they make it into a garden, and there's like one it used to be a microwave and now it's a dog beg [group laughing]. So, I make that analogy to them, I show them pictures, you still have the same elements, the same materials the same, but you're repurposing it. So that's the way I present it, and then I have them do that throughout the semester. We will repurpose like videos, like we will watch an ad, and then ask: what if you repurposed this to another audience or another situation? Right, and then have them do that. And what would change, what would we change about it, to repurpose it? So that's one way that I've taught that.

> **Lydia:** **Can you guys give me some examples of how your students have done exactly that? Like, I mean, you know, maybe literally, what I am wondering is have you had students who like you know took a narrative and treated like a whole PowerPoint presentation, you know, how have you seen like the best students repurpose for their final portfolio, how have they started with and what have they ended with?**

Lydia's question soliciting more stories led to several of the experienced teachers in the group sharing stories about their past experiences teaching creative revision. **Callie** told a story about her students composing screenplays for a *Sparknotes* or *Cliffnotes* inspired analysis of a text using a parody persona, such as those of *[Thug Notes](#)*. I shared another story of a student who repurposed a literacy narrative into a *[Draw My Life](#)* video meme, using her written text as a screenplay. **Cass** shared a story about a literacy narrative sequence she taught in her English 110 that asked students to turn their written narrative into a graphic novel. **Olivia** then shared a story of her own experiences teaching the graphic novel, explaining then she gave her students several rhetorical situations to choose from and then required them to reflect on their choices.

There were numerous examples throughout our focus groups that I could have pulled from to illustrate the power of imagination in promoting ownership of meaning. Indeed, a significant part of our discussions were devoted to sharing stories about teaching the final portfolio assignment. But I quote the example above because **Cass** and **Lydia** here provide an interesting contrast and insights into how imagination can be used to influence participation and ownership of meaning among a variety of instructors.

Cass was an experienced NTT lecturer in the program who had many competing responsibilities. She was the only full-time instructor who agreed to participate in the project. You'll note here, however, that she chose to participate in the portfolio pilot study because imagination sparked feelings of ownership over the prompt and our design efforts. She stated that she did not previously see the value in teaching creative revision. But, because of my recruitment pitch for the study at the instructors' pre-semester orientation, she began to imagine how the prompt might be adopted into her existing practice and thus "**had the whole attachment of value**" to the prompt. **Cass** frequently mentioned in our discussions that she felt "**reinvigorated**" in her teaching because of her participation in the study. In the instructor exit survey, she commented that her participation and the prompt "**kept me invigorated and interested. For perhaps the first time (in approximately 35 semesters of teaching for the core), grading final portfolios kept me engaged and energetic. In the past, it's been much more of a chore—an important one, but still a chore….**" She even directly emailed the WPA to thank the Core Writing Program for hosting the study, writing:

> **I just wanted to let you know how much I'm enjoying my participation in Soha's pilot study for the freshman comp final portfolio. During orientation for the fall semester, I was excited by the possibilities that such a change to the final portfolio could entail. Having the opportunity to talk and work through plans for implementing such changes remains exciting.**

> **Today, Soha kindly made herself available for a make-up meeting with those of us participants who had been unable to attend last week's session. The conversation that the half-dozen of us in attendance had sent me away with fresh and inspiring ideas. In short, this is the most I've ever looked**

> **forward to seeing what my comp students produce at the end of the semester.**
>
> **I briefly described the new portfolio plan to my classes today, and they lit up.**
>
> **Some of the students in my afternoon class said they could already see how**
>
> **their end-of-semester revision project would take shape.**
>
> **Anyway, I just wanted to thank Core Writing and particularly Soha for**
>
> **making this opportunity possible.**

I quote this email here in full because **Cass** touches on both engagement and imagination in her comments. She emphasizes how the process of negotiation generated feelings of excitement and ownership over the focus groups and the prompt. Specifically, her mention of "[**h**]**aving the opportunity to talk and work through plans for implementing such changes,**" and her reference to the community's **"conversation"** sending her "**away with fresh and inspiring ideas,**" demonstrate the interplay between engagement and imagination in creating her feelings of ownership over the prompt and design process. She also subtly refers to the engagement and imagination of her students as they were introduced to the assignment, noting how her students "**lit up**" based on her description, and how some "**said they could already see how their end-of-semester revision project would take shape**." The students she described here seemed to already be negotiating their rhetorical response to the assignment, which I hope reflects our attempts to structure negotiability and *kinetic energy* into the form of the assignment. But, of course, such structural questions are outside the scope of this dissertation.

Lydia, on the other hand, was a new MA student in Rhetoric and Writing and a new GTA who had never taught college composition. She obviously felt underprepared and overwhelmed teaching her first semester. After the end of our meeting, and before I turned off the recorder, she came up to me and admitted, "**I just hope I can provide some**

constructive feedback as a participant because I haven't gone through a whole semester yet." I immediately reassured her, stating that I valued her participation because she was "**a fresh set of eyes**" and would provide new insights. **Callie** was still in the room and also reassured **Lydia**, mentioning that we especially needed help rethinking the portfolio because instructors are "**just tired**" at the end of the semester, when the portfolio was usually introduced, and that this meant that needed revisions to the portfolio would not happen.

Throughout the semester, **Lydia** did offer some good feedback on the prompt. She particularly asked several very insightful questions about teaching the prompt that led to needed structural changes. Her participation in the group, too, encouraged her ownership over the prompt and, as I will discuss more fully under the section on the consequential aspects of validity in Chapter 5, even her ownership over her identity as a composition scholar. In her exit survey, **Lydia** specifically commented that the "**most helpful or useful**" part of her participation in the study was "**[h]earing other grad students' talk and share their approaches to teaching the portfolio assignment**." These approaches, told primarily in the form of stories, thus encouraged **Lydia**'s ownership over the portfolio assignment through imagination. Thus, imagination contributed to the reinvigoration of experienced instructors, like **Cass**, and to the training and the development of the professional identity of new instructors, like **Lydia**.

3. Negotiation through Alignment

Finally, Wenger (1998) has explained that participants negotiate meaning through **alignment.** Alignment is perhaps most closely associated with standardization, as it encompasses a coordination or agreement of meanings. A standardized assessment

technology would thus be an example of the negotiation of meaning through alignment. This means, also, that standardized assessment technologies can lead to ownership of meaning and the resultant identification with the values of the group. Alignment can create a point of identification, giving something for community members to orient their activities to. But Wenger also recognizes that alignment can have a stifling effect on innovation if the reified elements of alignment become stagnant or nonnegotiable.

Wenger explained that alignment can occur through two methods: one essentially through negotiation or rhetoric, and the other essentially through domination, submission, and force. Alignment, then, does not need to be imposed from above; the community can and should arrive at aligned meanings through negotiation. Alignment through negotiation is "a two-way process of coordinating perspectives, interpretations, actions, and contexts so that action has the effects we expect" (Wenger, 2012, p. 5).

Lydia, again, offers a good example of ownership through alignment. During her first focus group meeting, **Lydia** introduced herself as a "**brand new, first year grad student**" who "**came to this [meeting] hoping to understand more about what a reflection should be, uh, since I haven't written very many myself, um, and a portfolio.**" She saw her participation in our study as a way, then, to better understand the meanings behind her role as a GTA. She likewise admitted to struggling to align with the standardized student learning outcomes (SLOs) adopted by the program. Like the proposed final portfolio assignment prompt, the SLOs were a standardized assessment technology used by UNM's FYC program as an integral part of its assessment framework. Instructors were expected to teach toward attainment of the SLOs, and the reflective portion of the portfolio assignment itself asked students to write about their attainment of the SLOs.

Lydia mentioned that, during the first week of classes, she had asked her students to write a reflection on the SLO regarding the rhetorical situation. She felt like the activity failed because both she and her students were confused by the SLO. She also felt that the SLO was not yet relevant to the students at the start of the semester. She admitted to telling her students that the language of the outcome was "**completely useless, and I just told them right off the bat, don't even look at that one [laughing]**." She then questioned whether it was appropriate to even ask students to write reflections "**until towards the end of the semester**." She thus expressed a distance or lack of alignment with the SLOs, and this lack of alignment directly impacted her teaching and even made her doubt the value of critical reflection.

Mark, an experienced GTA, responded to Lydia's question and comments by emphasizing that, while he mirrored her hesitation about the language of the outcomes, the practice of student reflection still had value: "**Well, I wouldn't say that I wouldn't have them write any reflections. But asking them to specifically write a reflection on the SLO, on *those* SLOs, I, I would totally agree. I, I do think that, I think that you can just ask a much simpler reflective question and, you know, get them used to doing that.**"

This led to the group discussing their general dislike for the language of the SLOs. Many of the instructors expressed the belief that the language of the SLOs was administrative- or bureaucratic-speech that was too technical and inflexible for everyday teaching and learning. They thus expressed a lack of alignment with the *language* of the SLOs; however, many instructors clarified that they generally valued the values expressed by the SLOs and thus were aligned with the course concepts or meanings reified within them. Thus, they discussed how to teach these concepts and values without relying on the language

of the SLOs. **Cass,** for example, shared that she had an "**odd relationship**" with the SLOs and would often ignore the language because if "**I read them, I get snagged on them, and I know I will if I'm trying to teach them.**" She would teach the concepts and only introduce the language of the SLOs at the end of the semester, after students already had a strong grasp of the concepts. Other instructors shared ways they had mirrored this approach of ignoring the SLOs until they were needed for students' reflections in the final portfolio assignment. In this way, the instructors portrayed themselves almost as mediators between their students and the SLOs, and as mediators between the university or writing program and students.

In fact, so many instructors began to complain about the SLOs during this session that I felt that I needed to refocus our discussion and promote some alignment with the SLOs, lest the assignment prompt be similarly distanced by the group. I thus stated:

> **Soha:** **If I could just, in defense of the SLOs, right, I think what you've all said is totally valid. But the SLOs are there also for, um, performing a function for the program itself, right, for the university in responding to the demand for assessment and accountability, as the university's response to the State. So, I think in that sense they reflect that need, and when we're asking students to reflect on their work in a portfolio, we have to keep that need in mind, too, when we're asking. And that can be difficult, too. So, trying to find the balance between students' pedagogical needs and your instructor's freedom and pedagogical needs, versus the assessment needs, I guess, is a really interesting thing. And what we need to do, I guess what**

I'm looking for, is how can we create a balance here, right, something that feels flexible enough that, if you know, you want to start by teaching the SLOs and doing that traditional reflection, you can, but if you want to try to take a narrative approach or just write about your process you can, and then relate it later, so that's something.

Notice the work of alignment through negotiation that I am doing in this speech. I first adopt the instructor's criticism about the language of the SLOs by acknowledging the difficulty of teaching those outcomes. But then I give a reason for the language by emphasizing that the SLOs, themselves, are negotiated and serve important needs and values in the assessment framework. I thus promote alignment with the SLOs, insofar as I hope instructors can come to recognize that the SLOs promote a meaning that they can align with (namely, the promotion and development of the writing program and student attainment). I align the portfolio prompt, too, with that overall purpose and meaning. But I also emphasize that the purpose of our meetings is to negotiate that prompt, and thus, in a way, to negotiate the meaning of the SLOs as expressed in that prompt and in our teaching.

My speech was somewhat successful. **Cass** simply responded that she was "**always incorporating the language from [the SLOs], so that they're getting familiar with hearing it, and then teaching to it, but if I just look right there at that list it starts out being daunting actually, so.**" We then moved on in the discussion to focus more about the values we should adopt in the prompt.

I cannot say that our focus groups successfully promoted instructor's alignment with the SLOs. Instructors continued to complain about the language of the SLOs throughout the study and portray themselves as mediators between the SLOs and the students. But

Lydia, at least, explained that she felt a stronger alignment with the meanings reified in the

SLOs because of her participation in the study. In her exit survey, she stated that her

participation in "**[t]his study greatly aided my own understanding of the department's**

student outcomes and how the portfolio works supports those goals. I feel I was

better able to guide my students toward what I feel are successful revisions and

deeper reflections on their own work as writers." She specifically referred here to her

participation in this study as aiding her ownership of the meaning through alignment to the

standardized assessment technology of the SLOs. She likewise connected the SLOs to her

own practice and goals as an instructor, the proximity suggesting that her ownership of these

aligned meanings led improvements in her teaching practice. Alignment thus had a strong

influence on **Lydia**'s training and professional development, and Wenger (1998) has

specifically stated that alignment through standardized elements can assist new members to

better identify with a community's meanings.

V.   Practical Insights for Design Methodologies

Wenger's (1998) framework suggests that negotiation is essential to instructors'

participation in the design of writing program assessment technologies. It likewise supports

the argument that standardization of some elements of practice can be helpful for a

community's functioning as a reification and point of identification. But such reification is

only helpful if coupled with practice. The communities of practice framework can also offer

several pragmatic insights into how to approach faculty and instructor participation in the

design of standardized assessment technologies. Wenger (1998), Wenger, McDermott and

Snyder (2002), and Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015, 2019) have developed

numerous resources to help educators and other administrators to cultivate communities of

practice in their own institutions, including workshops, presentations, and other materials. I refer any interested reader to those materials for further study.

But the organizational resources and insights offered by the communities of practice framework are vast, and I do not wish to repeat them all here, lest I end up poorly summarizing the complexities and wealth of this body of work. I similarly do not wish to instrumentalize the framework by diluting its theoretical richness, as Vann and Bowker (2001), Hughes (2007), and even Wenger (2010) have cautioned. Conut and Wilmott (2003), for example, have emphasized the need to recognize power relations in Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory, cautioning specifically against the "dilution" and "selective adoption" of the framework by operationalizing it into dominant managerial rationales. Using this framework to generate a 'list' or even heuristic for assessment designers to follow when working with instructors will, I fear, create a tendency to diminish and instrumentalize instructors' participation in the design process itself. Therefore, I am intentionally avoiding the creation of such a heuristic in order to avoid instrumentalizing what should be a dynamic and human interaction. I am also reluctant to provide specific recommendations or even a list of "best practices" for WPAs to follow when interacting with instructors in designing writing program assessment technologies.

Furthermore, the framework was useful only insofar as it helped me think about the context of my own study. I suggest my reader reflect on my context when thinking about how my findings here can be used to approach instructor participation in their own design methodology. You can see how the insights I gained from this perspective shaped my design methodology by reviewing Chapter 2 and the sections analyzing my methodology above. You'll notice that, throughout, I specifically tried to make instructors understand that their time and contributions were valued, that their expertise was respected, that their differences

in perspective were welcome, and that their efforts would yield tangible and meaningful results. I respected instructors' time, energy, and physical resources throughout by embedding their participation within the existing rhythms of community life. I offered multiple meetings times to embrace the instructors' different schedules and was respectful of the duration of the meeting. I chose a physical location, too, that embraced and reflected our department's community life. I also gave instructors alternative ways to participate online and incentivized their participation through food and a potential monetary award.

I similarly focused on promoting instructors' interactions with each other, rather than on their interactions with me as a researcher and graduate-WPA. Wenger (1998) cautions against "training scheme[s] that [are] purely *extractive* in nature," meaning "schemes that 'extract' requirements, descriptions, artifacts, and other elements out of practice, transform them into institutional artifacts (courses, manuals, procedures, and the like), and then redeploy them in reified form, as if they could be uprooted from the specificities and meaningfulness of practice" (p 248). Such extractive schemes create an imbalance in the negotiation of meaning, emphasizing reification over participation.

You'll notice also that I attempted to frame the methodology as a negotiation as much as possible. I frequently emphasized that their needs as instructors were valued by the program and within the prompt itself. When necessary, however, I reminded instructors that those needs, interests, and values sometimes had to be balanced against other participant's needs, interests, and values, including the need to support the accountability and assessment of the program. I tried to reflect this emphasis on negotiation in both the methodology and the form of the design. I likewise tried to show instructors how the prompt that we were creating embodied those values in its design process and structure. I did this by being mindful of the economy of meaning and by encouraging instructors' ownership over the

prompt by asking them to participate through engagement, imagination, and alignment. In this way, the design process both revised the prompt and, importantly, *revised the community of instructors* so that the meanings we created and shared about the prompt could become a part of our community's practice.

The above analysis also suggests that my design methodology, which emphasized a deep exploration of communal values, as suggested by Broad (2003) and Broad, et al (2010), did help promote community in that it encouraged the instructors in our program to interact with each other as we worked to reify our values in an assessment technology, negotiating with each other in mutual engagement towards this joint enterprise. Our design process also created a shared repertoire and point of identification in the assessment instrument we produced as a result.

But I would add that my design methodology, and the technology that it produced, only fostered community insofar as it was ongoing. The community of instructors we fostered in our meetings was limited in duration. While many of the participants remained instructors in the program, we ceased to meet regularly to talk about our practices in relation to the prompt. I thus have no way of knowing how instructors continued to relate to and teach the prompt. And, other than by viewing student portfolios, I have no way of truly knowing how the prompt is now being interpreted and used in classroom practice. I likewise no longer have an opportunity to help shape the meanings that instructors ascribe to the prompt. I also think that the instructors and the program could have benefited from continuing the community that we started to create. A few of the instructors expressed disappointment that our project task was coming to an end, and **Amy** and **Helen** approached me in the following semester to share that they missed our meetings.

I thus do not believe that I succeeded in fostering the 'ideal' type of learning community that Wenger (1998) envisioned as arising through the result of the communities of practice model. Wenger described a **learning community** as a site of social reconfiguration, a "privileged locus of the acquisition of knowledge" and for the "creation of knowledge" through the interaction between new and experienced members (p. 214). Learning communities also strengthen members' identity and ownership over the practice and meanings. This is accomplished by both "incorporating [the community] members' pasts into its history—that is, by letting what they have been, what they have done, and what they know contribute to the constitution of its practice" and "by opening trajectories of participation that place engagement in its practice in the context of a valued future" (p. 215). It is through this interaction between the experienced and the new that learning, innovation, and transformation of professional identities occurs. And research has shown that participation in community learning and design practices can help teachers resist some of the negative effects of standardization (Hargreaves, 2003; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Skerrett & Hargreaves, 2008).

Assessment designers should thus embed the design methodology as much as possible into the practices of their community and view the design structure of the technology as simply a reification of that practice. Skerrett (2010), for example, has studied the efforts by a group of secondary English teachers to develop as a learning community and thereby achieve their administrator's stated goals of fostering community and collective learning. Skerrett found that one of the obstacles to the development of the group into a learning community, however, was the group's adoption of a standardized assessment technology without adapting the technology to their local context. The teachers had simply

adopted a generic, standardized definition of literacy for their program's mission statement. She concluded that:

> [B]y selecting an externally and pre-developed tool to reify its practice, the department denied itself a learning opportunity to negotiate amongst its members' varied perspectives on teaching and learning. The power of such negotiations is that they allow members to arrive at points of mutual agreement which then guide the design of an environment that fosters learning about, and realization of, those ideals. (Skerrett, 2010, p. 650)

She likewise noted that the standardized rubrics designed and imposed by the school's governing bodies had failed to create the unified understanding and point of identification that the administrator had hoped for. These potential points of identification instead simply constrained teachers' and students' agency and autonomy, as the teachers and students participated in such a way as to pass the test. She noted that teacher interaction, too, often became limited to overly scripted and constrained professional development meetings. She thus advocated for a more flexible approach to teacher interaction and argued against the decontextualization of teaching and assessment technologies.

I therefore mirror this approach and recommend that assessment designers attempt to embed their design methodologies within the rhythms of community life. If no community life exists, or is unhealthy, the assessment designers will have to work towards fostering a healthy rhythm and dynamic by designing opportunities for participation and balancing the economy of meaning. Similarly, the assessment technology designed as a result of this methodology should be understood as simply one element of the shared repertoire of the community; a reification that must be tied with participation in order to remain a part of a community. After all, the meanings and values a community ties with an assessment

technology only continue to be relevant and shared to the extent that its meanings continued

to be negotiated by the community. Such negotiation, of course, will occur as a part of

everyday engagement with the technology. Instructors will continue to negotiate meanings

with the technology, reading and construing the technology according to their own

meanings, regardless of whether such negotiation is recognized by the assessment designers.

But, as I will argue further in Chapter 5, forcing this negotiation 'underground' by ignoring

its existence will adversely affect the data obtained as a result of the assessment and thus

weaken any validity argument about the assessment.

This also suggests that writing assessment technology design methodologies must be

ongoing. The assessment technology should be in a state of constant revision, being

designed in response to practice. This means, also, that the assessment designers should

ideally be participants in the community who both designs and engages with the technology.

This should not be hard to accomplish, if the assessment designers are the assessment

participants themselves (such as faculty and students). WPAs and assessment designers

might consider embedding design processes into their overall assessment technological

framework. After all, I believe that the assessment reading "norming" and "debriefing"

sessions provide perfect opportunities for instructors to reexamine their values and make

needed changes to a standardized assignment prompt.

Moreover, I hope my own experience establishes that WPAs and assessment

designers might consider delegating leadership of the design process and facilitation of the

groups to a NTT, GTA, or graduate-WPA with an interest in writing assessment or writing

program administration. I strongly believe that the instructors in our groups felt more open

to sharing their concerns with me because I was on their "level." I would often commiserate

with the GTA and NTT instructors about their workload and experiences. Some of the

GTAs and NTT instructors would even mildly criticize the program, faculty, or administrators in my presence. I am certain that my role as a GTA and graduate-WPA influenced the power dynamics of the community and focus groups.

I am also certain that delegation of the task likewise freed up the WPA's and assistant-WPA's time and resources, allowing them to focus on the many other initiatives in the program while still maintaining supervision of the task through my frequent reports. And the opportunity to design and conduct this study led to my own personal and professional development. After all, I decided to transform this project into my dissertation, which gave my path of studies a clear direction and purpose (something that, I have observed, some of the other PhD-students in UNM's graduate program have lacked). I thus suggest that assessment designers consider placing primary responsibility for facilitating and conducting the assessment technology design methodology in the hands of GTAs, and especially graduate-WPAs.

Chapter 5: Validity and Instructor Participation in the Design of Assessment Technologies

I.   Instructor Participation and the Meaning of Validity

In Chapter 3, I argued that writing instructors need to participate in the design of writing program assessment technologies to ensure that those instructors' needs, interests, and values are addressed, including that of agency and professional autonomy. In Chapter 4, I articulated a design methodology and framework for working with instructors in the design process. In this chapter, I turn to my final research question: *Can instructor participation in the design of writing program assessment technologies be considered a part of or as influencing the validity of the technology?*

As initially contemplated, my final research question about validity was meant to serve as a culmination of the previous two. And, as a naïve first-year PhD student designing this research project, I had no idea of the pandora's box of research that I had opened by asking a question about "validity." Since first taking on this project, I have read enough diverse and nuanced research as to make my head spin. Neal (2010) has argued that writing assessment scholars have generally avoided dealing with validity theory because these discussions seem like "an abstract or meaningless debate within a subdiscipline rather than linked to something useful for classes and programmatic purposes" (p. 111). Neal also attributed writing assessment scholar's reluctance to engage with validity theory to their general focus on the practical "implications" of this research. He similarly argued that writing assessment scholars have been reluctant to ask questions about validity because of the "steep learning curve" required to enter the psychometric community's discourse about validity, as membership in this community requires a "technical language, ability to read and interpret statistics, and sociological epistemologies" (p. 111).

As a graduate student who is currently experiencing this learning curve, I heartily agree with Neal's insights. Even after obtaining some fluency in psychometric language, passing a graduate-level statistical analysis course, and gaining some familiarity with sociological theory, I still struggle to make sense of validity research. But I think that the barriers that Neal identified are compounded because both the psychometric and writing assessment communities have created narratives around validity theory and practice that portray validity as either so complex and localized as to be unapproachable to writing instructors or so reductive and instrumentalized as to lose its usefulness and meaning for teaching practice. These narratives shape my approach to validity theory as it relates to instructor participation in the design process, and so I will briefly review them here before suggesting an approach that assessment designers could use to counter these unhealthy narratives.

A. Barriers to Instructor's Participation in Assessment Practices: The Perceived Inaccessibility of Validity Theory

First, I agree with Neal's (2010) suggestion that writing instructors have been reluctant to engage in questions about validity because the theory has been portrayed as complex and localized debate within an inaccessible and separate psychometric assessment community. Wenger's (1998) social theory can once again be used to explain this phenomenon. Validity is essentially a concept constructed by the psychometric community to address pragmatic problems arising from the practice of psychological and educational testing (Newton & Shaw, 2014; Lauer & Sullivan, 1993). As such, the meanings around the validity concept are constantly being negotiated within this community through their assessment practices. Similarly, this community constructs its own meanings about validity

through its practice, and these meanings and practices might seem to be pointless, obscure, or nonsensical to non-community members such as writing instructors.

The negotiations around validity in the psychometric community can become quite heated. Indeed, validity has been called "one of the major deities in the pantheon of the psychometrician" (Ebel, 1961, p. 640), and, as such, debates can take on the flavor of religious zeal. This deification of validity theory further deters writing instructors who might otherwise be willing to participate in the negotiation around the concept.

For example, the American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA), and National Council on Measurement in Education's (NCME) (2014) *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* currently define validity as "the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretations of test scores for proposed uses of tests" (p. 11). This definition largely reflects the concept of validity as developed by leading psychometric theorists Crohnbach and Meehl (1955), Messick (1980, 1989a), Bachman (1990), Bachman and Palmer (1996), Mislevy, Steinberg and Almond (2003), and Kane (2006, 2013). Messick's (1989) *unified construct validity* framework is a major influence on current thinking. Under current psychometric formulation, the validity of an assessment is understood as an argument about what assessment designers want to understand or do with the assessment. Assessments are not valid; the interpretations and uses made of those assessments are (or, at least, could be). Thus, validity is only spoken about in connection to specific purposes. Validity thus has become an evidentiary process of validation, and assessment designers are expected to make an argument about those purposes (Goodwin & Leech, 2003).

The AERA, APA, and NMCE (2014) identify five sources of evidence for a validity argument, again based primarily on Messick's (1989) *unified construct validity* framework. These sources include:

(1) **Content**: This includes evidence based on test content, which is primarily a structural argument based on the "themes, wording, and format" of a test (AERA, APA & NCME, 2014, p. 14). Examples of validation evidence under this category include "logical analyses and experts' reviews" of the test content (Goodwin & Leech, 2003);

(2) **Substantive**: This includes evidence based on response processes, which is an argument based on an inquiry into how test takers form their answers to the test (AERA, APA & NCME, 2014). This category is focused on whether "individuals either perform or respond in a manner that corresponds to the construct being measured" (Whiston, 2009). Evidence can come from interviews, comparisons between responses, and studies of how assessors collect and interpret responses (Goodwin & Leech, 2003);

(3) **Structural**: This includes evidence based on internal structure, which is, again, a structural argument about the content of the test. But this category differs from the first in that it looks at the relationships between different parts of the instrument (AERA, APA & NCME, 2014). This category seems to rely mostly on statistical analyses (Goodwin & Leech, 2003);

(4) **Generalizability**: This includes evidence based on relations to other variables and basically asks the assessment designer to prove validity through correlations with other uses of the construct, such as by comparison to workplace or 'real world' examples (AERA, APA & NCME, 2014; Goodwin & Leech, 2003).

(5) **External**: This includes evidence about the consequences of the test, including intended (or desirable) and unintended (or undesirable) consequences (AERA, APA &

NMCE, 2014). This last form of evidence is also sometimes known as consequential validity. Messick (1998) and Goodwin and Leech (2003) caution against talking about consequential validity as its own category, however, suggesting that consequences should be understood as also influencing the evidentiary aspects of validity.

This seemingly direct definition and unified framework to validity theory, however, belies a complex web of scholarly debate about the concept (Murphy & Yancey, 2008; Crohnbach, 1988). Delve deeper into validity research, and one would find dissension among the ranks. For example, the *Social Indicators Research* journal published a special issue in 1998 with articles from leading validity theorists debating the underlying epistemology of Messick's (1989a) *unified construct validity*, and, in particular, Messick's argument that validity (1) could be unified as a single concept or framework and (2) should encompass social values and consequences of an assessment. Reading the journal is like listening to a heated conversation among highly intelligent people who sometimes have no idea what the other people are saying. Their disagreements largely stem from differences in underlying theoretical perspective: with positivists (Reckase, 1998) arguing against the infusion of values in the validity concept, the philosophers (Markus, 1998a, 1998b) questioning the possibility of positivists and constructivists reaching consensus about the validity concept and thus questioning the viability of a unified framework, and the constructivists (Messick, 1998; Moss, 1998) essentially defending the choices in the *unified construct validity* framework as not ideal or as seeking consensus but simply as trying to find dialectical and/or pragmatic solutions to assessment problems.

The debate about validity continues, despite the current psychometric paradigmatic trend towards Messick's *unified construct validity*. Borsboom, Mellenbergh, and Heerden (2004), for example, have argued specifically against *unified construct validity*, criticizing the concept as

too all-encompassing ("validity theory has gradually come to treat every important test-related issue as relevant to the validity concept and aims to integrate all these issues"), and, as a result, both theoretically and pragmatically unworkable (p. 1061). They advocated for a return to what they deem to be the classical or Ruch's (1924) definition of validity, namely, whether a test measures what it purports to measure. Similarly, Weideman (2012) has argued that Messick's *unified construct validity* has been interpreted in at least two ways, with different scholars emphasizing different aspects and values and making different modifications to the framework. He then made a case for his own, third reading of the framework.

Debates about *unified construct validity* have frequently centered around the propriety of considering social consequences within the validity concept. Lees-Haley (1996), for example, has argued that asking the assessment community to consider social consequences of assessments would subject what should be an objective process to subjective values. He described this phenomenon as "Alice in Validityland" and argued that Messick's framework improperly conflated politics with science. Cizek, Bowen, and Church (2010) have similarly argued for a modification to *uniform construct validity* that would separate arguments about evidence from arguments about values, as they suggest that the consequences of a test do not logically flow into an argument about the test's interpretations and uses. They suggested that the community redefine validity to exclude these consequences, moving this exploration of values to a separate argument about the justification of the assessment.

With such a complex and heated debate about validity concepts in the psychometric community, it is no wonder that writing instructors, who have their own meanings to negotiate, are reluctant to engage with the concept. Indeed, a significant debate within the writing assessment community itself has been whether and to what extent compositionists should participate in the psychometric community's negotiations about assessment concepts.

Several prominent writing assessment scholars have characterized the history between the writing assessment and psychometric communities as one of conflict (Adler-Kassner, 2008; Adler-Kassner & O'Neill, 2010; Huot, 1996; Yancey, 1999). The differences between the two groups are seemingly profound, reflecting a basic divide in values and philosophies. Huot (1996), for example, has argued that the differences between the two communities are essentially theoretical, with the composition community associated with socio-constructivism and the psychometric community associated with positivism. Similarly, Adler-Kassner (2008) has explored how the two communities embody basic philosophical differences in pursuing what she terms the "American progressive pragmatic jeremiad" in education. This jeremiad—based on what West (1989) refers to as American pragmatism, a philosophy "rooted in optimistic faith in the power of change by the right individuals"—has led to two distinct approaches for promoting intelligence through education. The writing assessment community sees learning as an inductive, nurturing cultivation of creative intelligence; the psychometric community sees learning as almost imposed from above as a sort of conditioning (p. 39-40). This has led to basic differences in how the two groups understand writing, education, and assessment, and has likewise created tension in the purposes and narratives surrounding assessment (Adler-Kassner & O'Neill, 2010). Indeed, White (1990) has characterized the differences between the psychometric and writing assessment communities as two alien worlds.

Some attempts have been made by the writing assessment community to claim ownership over the debate and fully separate from the psychometric community's negotiations. Lynne (2004), for example, has criticized compositionists' reliance on psychometric concepts in their discussions about writing assessment. She proposed two new terms to replace the psychometric concepts of reliability and validity: meaningfulness and

ethics. Both terms focus more on the values underlying the assessment. Lynne's new terms have not been largely accepted by the composition community as replacements to validity theory but rather commonly seen as supplements (Moore, 2012; Gallagher, 2009).

Despite the emphasis placed on the differences between compositionists and psychometricians, most writing assessment scholars have suggested that compositionists need to learn how to negotiate with psychometricians and adopt and adapt validity for the purposes of writing assessment (Adler-Kassner & O'Neill, 2010; Lederman, 2018; Neal, 2010; White, 1990, 1996; White, Eliot & Peckham, 2015). White, Eliot and Peckham (2015), for example, have criticized the composition community's attempts to separate itself from the psychometric community's negotiations as stemming from an incorrect sense of "disciplinary hegemony conducted in a cultural context of isolationism" (p. 80). Neal (2010) has likewise argued that writing assessment scholars should engage with the concept of validity because he believes that *unified construct validity* "can provide a framework that can help at a most fundamental level in determining which digital assessment technologies to include in our writing classes, curriculum, and pedagogy" (p. 112). Similarly, Adler-Kassner and O'Neill (2010) have argued that compositionists need to communicate with psychometricians and the larger public about writing assessment in order to promote healthy narratives in the debates about writing assessment and literacy education.

I appreciate Lynne's (2004) attempt to claim ownership over the debate and believe that her terms emphasize values that might otherwise be ignored. Yet I agree with Moore (2012) that validity and reliability are useful and flexible enough terms to encompass these concerns. I also believe that it is important that administrators be able to speak the "same language" as psychometric experts, as we need to collaborate with this community and the

public if we are to reframe narratives about assessment, as Adler-Kassner and O'Neill (2010) have emphasized.

But participating in this debate with psychometricians requires becoming familiar with psychometric terms. Gaining a facility with psychometric language requires some devotion. And, on top of this, compositionists have their own scholarship on writing assessment and potentially relevant terms to learn.

But we are still left with the same problem that we began with: Validity research is seen as inaccessible, irrelevant, and localized within the assessment community. The concept of validity is often portrayed as something that would be difficult for lay writing instructors to understand and negotiate with without a serious commitment to the study of the field. I believe that this sentiment is particularly damaging because it sets up assessment practices as its own sort of separate expertise or profession, which discourages writing instructors from engaging in those practices. In other words, the tendency by both the psychometric and the composition communities to treat validity theory like an inaccessible concept creates an unnecessary divide that discourages writing instructors from participating in potentially productive assessment practices. Moreover, the tendency to deify validity theory fosters unhealthy narratives that suggest that instructors *can be excluded* from participating because they lack the necessary expertise. This is a vicious cycle. But it is one that I hope we can break if assessment designers and instructors learn to work together to negotiate meanings around validity and other assessment practices.

B. Barriers to Instructors' Participation in Assessment Practices: The Instrumentalization of Validity Theory

Additionally, and perhaps because of this perceived inaccessibility, the concept of validity has often been reduced and instrumentalized in practice. Thus, while validity has been frequently deified, "the good works done in its name are remarkably few" (Ebel, 1961, p. 640). The *unified construct validity* framework attempts, I believe, to encourage assessment designers to engage in a complex consideration of both the facts and values of an assessment in its design process, form, and eventual use. For example, Messick (1989) defined validity as "an integrated evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the *adequacy* and *appropriateness* of inferences and actions based on test scores or other modes of assessment" (p. 13). Bachman (1990) argued that validation is thus a "complex process that must involve the examination of both the *evidence* that supports that interpretation or use and the *ethical values* that provide the basis or justification for that interpretation or use" (p. 229). Moss (1998) has similarly argued that *unified construct validity* essentially requires a dialectical process and provides a framework that assessment designers should use to learn about the assessment and make the "best judgments" about the assessment that they can.

I thus read the *unified construct validity* framework as meaning to articulate a framework and method for inquiry into the judgments made by and effects of an assessment. The framework is therefore supposed to be generative, evocative, recognizable, and systematic (Wenger, 2013). It is, essentially, a research methodology, and its purpose is to help assessment designers to examine important values that we may hold about assessments— such as truthfulness, authenticity, relevance, accuracy, appropriateness, ethics, efficiency, and responsibility—in assessment technology design and use.

In practice, however, assessment designers might be tempted to focus less on the learning capabilities of the framework, and more on validity as an instrument to justify the use of tests. Validation can be overly instrumentalized to merely provide a means for accountability and control of learning programs. The AERA, APA, and NCME's (2014) five sources of validity evidence, for example, can be approached as almost a formulaic checklist, something that must be proven in the name of accountability, rather than as guidelines for assessment designers to use when learning about their assessment practices. Such instrumentalization of validity theory can vitiate its richness and usefulness.

Instrumentalization of validity also causes the theory to lose much of its meaning for writing instructors, as assessment practices do not ask them to engage with the meanings behind the validity concept. Validity inquiries and assessment practices are thus presented as a bureaucratic burden or imposed tool; something that instructors are somehow meant to identify and align with, but without negotiation. This demotivates instructors (Haviland, Shin & Turley, 2010). Culver and Phipps (2019), for example, recently conducted a survey of faculty beliefs and attitudes towards assessment practices at their institution. They asked faculty to rate fifteen touted "reasons for doing assessment" using a 4-point Likert-scale (omitting the "neutral" category, and thus requiring them to opine on what they felt were the purposes of assessment). Those fifteen reasons, which they derived from the assessment literature, are as follows:

1. Improve student learning

2. Document student achievements

3. Strengthen courses, curricula, and/or program

4. Gather information for planning

5. Gather information to use limited resources more wisely

6. Strengthen decision-making processes

7. Create a track record of program growth and development

8. Encourage faculty conversation and dialogue

9. Help faculty see how course[s] link together

10. Demonstrate faculty achievement

11. Demonstrate quality as an [institution]

12. Collect information to attract potential students

13. Respond to external accountability [with a monitoring body]

14. Respond to disciplinary specialized accreditation

15. Document internal accountability (Culver & Phipps, 2019, p. 5-6) (internal citations omitted).

The surveys were administered anonymously during professional development workshops with faculty from science, psychology, environmental design, communications, and business departments after a nearly hour-long presentation on the assessment process. Thus, the faculty in each group "had at least minimal information about each of the fifteen reasons, though no guidance from assessment personnel in terms of ranking them" (p. 7). In addition, the researchers conducted some unplanned "discussions" with faculty who approached them after the workshops.

Culver and Phipps found that the participating faculty tended to see assessment as a means for internal improvement ("improving student learning," "strengthening courses, curricula, and/or programs," "gathering information for planning") and responding to external accountability demands ("external accountability," "disciplinary specialized accreditation"). But the faculty did not see interactions with each other as an important assessment purpose, rating "helps faculty see how courses link together" and "encourages

faculty conversation and dialogue" as mid- to low on the list. This data thus suggested that faculty did not understand conversations about the assessment data as an important part of assessment practice. Culver and Phipps suggested that faculty's lack of appreciation for the conversational or collaborative aspects of assessment was likely due to the divide between assessment community and faculty, arguing:

> It probably does not help that assessment professionals emphasize an assessment process that facilitates the collection of data that documents assessment [as] being done, but do[es] not facilitate faculty discussions about the data as they relate to specific curricular or programmatic improvements. This may be no surprise since those directing campus-wide assessment are more likely to be social scientists and not curriculum developers (p. 13).

Culver and Phipps similarly noted that faculty did not see assessment as either "attract[ing] potential students," "gather[ing] information to use limited resources more wisely," or "demonstrat[ing] quality as an [institution]." They suggested that this lower ranking of assessment and the appearance or management of the institution might be due to faculty's reluctance to see themselves as marketing their institution or unwillingness to define the educational process in terms of assessment data. "Some faculty see assessment as being a reductionistic process that provides only a limited picture of the education students receive" (p. 13). They also noted a lack of resources and value placed on assessment as hindering faculty engagement.

C. Overcoming Barriers to Instructors' Participation in Assessment Practices: Negotiating the Meaning of Validity in Practice

The divide between the assessment and instructional communities is potentially wide. The negative narratives about instructors' involvement in assessment design and practices that I discussed in Chapter 4 demonstrate, at the very least, that there has historically been a conflict or resentment between the communities. These resentments often mar attempts at conversation about instructor participation in assessment design practices. Weiner (2009), for example, once argued on the AAUP assessment blog that the assessment community's goal to establish a "culture of assessment" would require the community to promote the "common use of assessment-related terms" among faculty and encourage "faculty ownership" by "having a faculty-led team… who plan the program [of assessment], develop tools for and implement it, and use the data obtained." These seemingly non-divisive recommendations about faculty collaboration led to sharp criticisms in the comments section. Many commenters suggested that they did not believe in the sincerity of her desire to collaborate. And other responses argued that collaboration between the assessment and instructional communities would not be possible, as assessment was perceived as focused on external accountability and decontextualized control.

I believe that this is an unhealthy dynamic in the conversations about assessment, in that it ultimately demotivates instructors from participating in assessment practices. But this dynamic has its roots in existing narratives, as assessment practices are often approached with an emphasis on accountability and efficiency, and with less emphasis on learning, collaboration, and collegiality.

In Chapter 4, I argued that Wenger's (1998) communities of practice framework provides a potential solution to the problem inspiring instructor participation in assessment

practices, at least in the context of writing program assessment technology design. But I also believe that the framework can help alleviate some of the tensions arising from these narratives around assessment.

In particular, I believe that Wenger's framework suggests that writing instructors will be more motivated to participate with assessment practices when they are encouraged to own the meanings behind them. The meanings that WPAs and other assessment designers give to the validity concept should be tied with practice and thus situated within specific programs and contexts. Instructors will be more willing to engage in assessment practices when those practices become both valued and meaningful (Haviland, Shin & Turley, 2010). This engagement demands one primary thing: negotiation. We can foster greater understanding and collaboration between the assessment and instructional communities by encouraging both communities to negotiate *with the concept of validity itself* in the process of designing and otherwise working with assessment technologies and processes. Thus far, this negotiation has been largely one-sided, as the assessment community has claimed ownership over the concept and rejected the instructional community's proposed meanings. In order to better balance this process, then, instructors need to be given the opportunity to own the meanings regarding validity theory.

Wenger's (1998) theories about the negotiation of meaning through mutual engagement, imagination, and alignment can help shape instructor participation in this regard. We can encourage instructors to engage with the concept of validity in their everyday practice, thinking about how their teaching can both draw from and help inform validity theory. We can ask instructors to imagine what validity might mean in terms of assessment practices and their own teaching by sharing stories and relating them to validation practices. And we can ask instructors to negotiate the meaning of validity as it relates to specific

assessment technologies in their discussions with assessment designers and each other, so that both their values and their community's values can become better aligned about the meanings produced around the concept.

Again, these practices will need to be embedded as much as possible into the rhythms of community life. And, again, the concept of validity and the narratives we construct around assessment will need to be carefully cultivated in order to encourage instructors to negotiate with the concept. WPAs and other assessment designers must clearly communicate that instructors will be given the opportunity to produce meanings about the validity of their assessments. But they should also give instructors opportunities to adopt meanings produced by others, including those produced by the assessment community. Perhaps, in this way, the instructional community will begin to own and understand important assessment concepts, such as validity, and adapt and adopt these values into their teaching practices.

Validity need not be relegated to the inaccessible realm of only initiated converts. Validity, rather, can become a part of instructional practice, if only we are willing to bring it down from the heavens and let it be defined on earth.

I attempted to accomplish this negotiation in my own study by asking instructors to think about validity in terms of the values and needs underlying the concept, such as those of relevance, accuracy, accountability, meaningfulness, ethics, appropriateness, usefulness, and responsibility. For example, we frequently explored how we should design the prompt to solicit responses that would accurately reflect students' learning in the course. One major concern that arose through our discussions was the similarity between the English 110, 111/112, or 113 and the English 120 prompts. The learning outcomes between the first and second semester FYC courses were very similar, as the second-semester English 120 learning

outcomes were meant to build on the first-semester outcomes. Some of the instructors

teaching English 120 observed that students "recycled" their reflective narratives from their

first-semester course. A few instructors even mentioned that students were referring to

activities and assignments in their narratives that the instructors had not facilitated during

the semester. This potential for plagiarism or recycling would, of course, adversely influence

the validity of the assessment.

Rather than talking about this concern in terms of validity, however, the instructors

in our group approached the question as a problem of values. Indeed, all of the instructors in

the group seemed to acknowledge, without being told, that such recycling would be a

problem for the validity of the assessment. These validity-based values rang true, even

though other parts of the assignment (such as the creative revision) arguably encouraged

students to recycle by repurposing their work. Instructional values, then, might seem to

encourage recycling; validity values would most definitely not. The two values might then

have been in deep conflict. Yet the group was able to easily negotiate between those values

in our discussion, and, indeed, used the unique interplay of those values to find a solution to

this problem. Here is our exchange:

Callie:	**I had a student in 110 and 120, this was like a year ago, and she did this to me. I think she was just misunderstanding the concept, but she regurgitated a lot of the formatting and like general language from her 110 reflection into her 120, and just changed the examples. I had to have a long talk with her where, I was like, "you have to rewrite this." Like during finals week. One of my best students, she just hadn't understood.**
Helen:	**Mmhmm [agreeing].**

Callie:	I'm just thinking like later classes, the SLOs themselves are like formulaic, so students are like "why can't I just plug in different components to this formula now?"
Helen:	Different examples.
Callie:	Exactly.
Amy:	That's what my students think. I had this one student who was like, "this almost feels repetitive in a sense," because he was lumping it together with all his reflections for his major writing assignments. So that's how they're thinking of it, like "I actually have to hit each one [learning outcome] and just give you like a pinpoint example."
Soha:	The thing is, though, sorry, I don't want to dominate conversation. But we don't really, well at least me, I am not looking for them to tell me what the SLOs mean. I already know what they mean. They shouldn't be regurgitating anything about the SLOs or even trying to define them.
Callie:	Yeah.
Soha:	They should be instead, I tell my students, tell me what you've learned.
Helen:	Yeah.
Soha:	And then relate that learning somehow to the SLOs afterwards. Right? Just like put "SLO A" where "I learned about my audience," you know.
Helen:	Yeah.

Soha: Yeah. Drew?

Drew: In our class discussions before, uh you know, when I was introducing the portfolio to them and we were kind of brainstorming things, the language, I made sure to use, when I was explaining to them, was that I was interested in learning what the SLOs meant to them. You know, how they were relevant to them. "Now that you've done all these assignments," you know, "these assignments where you had to be conscious of them [the learning outcomes]." Now, obviously this is coming back to what the portfolio prompt says. You know, "now that [the outcomes] mean something to you, how are they going to help you? How are you going to carry this forward? How do you apply these later?" So, I just want to make clear that when they're talking about or when they're reflecting on the outcomes, and they're interested in the relevance, you know, to them, to their experience. So, I have to agree with you that it's not just about what the SLOs say. It's not just about "tell me in your own words what the definition of this SLO is." It's about "how is this going to continue to be meaningful to you," you know. So, I think that's just one thing to say about it.

Soha: Okay. Any ideas in like how we can address this in the prompt? Or is this something that you can't address in a prompt? Like encouraging originality, avoiding recycling.

Lara:	Hm. One thing, or it probably encourages recycling, so maybe I shouldn't bring this up. But I'm teaching 120 this semester and I had a student who came to me when he was working on his portfolio and said, "here's what I did in my 113, and here's I how I used that in this class, can I include that in my reflection?" And I said, "yeah, you can include that in your reflection!" And I actually really loved the idea for his 120 class, that he was bringing it in from his 113, that he was looking back at what he accomplished in that class or what he started with in that class and how he used it here and how he is going to use that in the future. Because he was talking about how he wants to go on to a PhD now, and you know, and so it's this, I felt like that was really helpful in our situation because he was looking back, he was reflecting not just for this semester, which is what we want them to do, but he was looking back even further, too. Because the outcomes are mostly the same between the two classes, why not look back at those? You know, that kind of encourages some recycling in terms of, "oh this is what we did in this other class," but as long as they are bringing it into the reflection for what we did in 120, whatever we did in the 110 sequence, you know.
Soha:	I guess from one perspective it is just another creative revision, right?
Lara:	That's true.

Soha: **To take what they did in 110 and put it in 120.**

Mark: **I bet that could be incorporated in the 120 prompt. You're going to trace your own development with SLO A from where you were before you got to college to what happened in your 110 or 113 through what, where you are now, at the end of 120. I feel like that would bring a lot of it together. It would probably encourage them to tell more coherent story instead of, some of them are really tempted to be like, "for [Major Writing Assignment] one I had to analyze an argument." I think if they had to pick out the different levels they were at, at different times, they might be, it might be more articulate, anyway.**

Soha: **Well, it kind of influences the ground situation, right? If you think about it. You're telling a story, right? That's you're, what's the other way of calling it? Exposition, ground situation. I think that's a great idea.**

The group continued to discuss this validity problem of plagiarism as balanced against instructional goals, such as teaching creative revision and/or narrative. Ultimately, the instructors decided to address this problem by revising the central reflection question in the assignment prompt from being fully forward-focused to being both backward- and forward-focused. The previous draft asked students to reflect on one central question: "How will English ___ help me learn to write or compose?" The revised draft asked students to answer two questions, more focused on their change or growth: "How have I grown or changed as a writer through English ___?" and "How will this change or growth help me in the future?"

Note that this significant structural change effectively promoted both validity and instructional values and goals. The prompt takes the potential problem of student recycling (which was itself identified through instructors' practice) and instead requires students to use their past writing and experiences to contribute to their reflections about their current and future learning. Note, also, that this change would not have occurred without the insight and imagination offered by **Lara**. We likewise owe inspiration for the idea to the student she describes in the interaction. It was this story about her practice ("**I had a student who came to me when he was working on his portfolio and said, "here's what I did in my 113, and here's I how I used that in this class, can I include that in my reflection?" And I said, "yeah, you can include that in your reflection!"**") that inspired the group to come up with an innovative solution to a potential validity problem.

The concept of validity was first designed to address problems arising from the practices of assessment (Newton & Shaw, 2014). We need to allow that concept to evolve in response to evolving practices (Moss, Girard & Haniford, 2006). We need to find workable solutions for the problems that we encounter in both teaching and assessment practices (I would even argue that teaching and assessment practices are inextricably tied together, akin to what Wenger (1998) terms a "duality"). And when those solutions do not serve those purposes, we need to be willing and ready to change them to suit the new needs and demands. And, as my study shows, we can best find those solutions through a collaborative exploration and negotiation of values.

Once again, then, this is an argument for Neal's (2010) and Danley-Scott & Scott's (2017) "seat at the table," where writing instructors work with assessment experts to find solutions to our assessment technology problems. I will even go so far and borrow from Wenger's (1998) concepts of **multimembership**, or membership in several related

communities, and **constellations of practice**, related to the interaction between different groups, and suggest that some of the GTA writing instructors in the design group could branch out, as I did, and attempt to attain a specialization or interest in writing assessment research. Of course, there will be a bit of a learning curve, as can be seen in my own memorandums and growth throughout the process of this research study. But my own experience shows that encouraging GTAs to take on assessment design projects are an excellent way to prepare future composition GTAs for the essential work of writing program assessment and administration.

Moreover, instructor groups will benefit from collaboration with assessment practitioners and scholarship. After all, I am not suggesting that instructors entirely co-opt the design process without regard for the important insights and values of the psychometric assessment community. Validation practices are vital to assessment technology design methodologies, if only so that validity inquiries go beyond the "facial validity" of an assessment. And writing instructors should learn from past assessment practices and scholarship. But those practices and scholarship should not be touted as some inaccessible doctrine that cannot be tested and negotiated without years of study about validity as a decontextualized concept.

Note that I am not arguing against the need for a separate community of assessment professionals. Nor am I trying to idealize the process of working with instructors by suggesting that these conversations about validity will be free from politics and hierarchy. A study by Broad (1997) into the politics of communal writing assessment demonstrates assessment conversations will likely be characterized by potentially competing claims to authority, even when administrators attempt to value instructors' contributions. Rather, I am simply arguing that assessment designers need to conceive of validity as a value and a

practice that is also accessible to writing instructors (Haswell & Wyche-Smith, 1994; Gareis & Grant, 2015; Moss, Girard & Haniford, 2006; Osborne & Walker, 2014). As Moss, Girard, and Haniford (2006) have argued, the concept of validity can benefit from differing perspectives, including the perspective of writing instructors.

D. Instructor Participation and the Meaning of Validity

In this light, I will not attempt to redefine validity or attempt to come up with a new validity framework in this dissertation. I will not argue that instructor participation is a part of validity as some sort of decontextualized, value-free, and abstract concept. Rather, I will make an argument that, whatever the meanings assessment designers attribute to validity, there are good reasons to consider instructor participation in the technological design process to be an integral part of the validity concept.

I again must emphasize that my findings and arguments are limited to the focus of my study: the design of writing assessment technologies for the purposes of teaching, learning, and writing program assessment. Different assessment contexts and purposes will necessarily have different considerations, and the arguments I make here about validity and instructor participation may not necessarily apply to other situations. And again, I make no claim that the "reasons" I will proffer below are value-free or objective. I have made my pragmatic constructivist researcher orientation as clear as possible throughout my dissertation. The findings and arguments I make about instructor participation and validity below are likewise presented from within that perspective. As Markus (1998b) has stated: "The truths I have to tell are also local truths" (p. 74).

For the same reasons, I am also reluctant to choose a specific validity framework in support of my argument for instructor participation in writing program assessment

technology design. I appreciate the importance of attempts to define the validity concept, as

definitions do matter. But I do not wish to make a case for a favored definition of validity or

to claim exclusive ownership over the concept. Emphasizing the professionalism or isolation

of an assessment community through claims of exclusive ownership over assessment terms

(such as validity) only widens the divide between assessors and instructors and prevents

communication and the progress of assessment and learning practices. Validity should be a

value and a meaning that we all share as educators.

But for pragmatic purposes, I need to choose a definition or framework that is both

approachable and generative so that I can present my data and relate it to validity concepts.

After all, I am attempting to appeal to both the assessment and instructional communities,

and thus I need to present my data in terms that hopefully will be understandable and

relatable to both. I thus have chosen to organize my data using Messick's (1989) general

division of the validity concept into a four-part framework, which he described as the

"Facets of Test Validity" matrix (Table 2):

Table 2: Messick's (1989a) Facets of Test Validity

	Test Interpretation	Test Use
Evidential Basis	Construct validity	Construct validity + Relevance/Utility
Consequential Basis	Value Implications	Social Consequences

Once again, I emphasize that this matrix reflects an incomplete divide, as facts cannot be

fully separated from values. McNamara (2006) has argued that Messick's legacy was to

challenge psychometric assumptions of a value-free science, and certainly all of us are

struggling to rise to that legacy. Feenburg's (2002, 2010) and Wenger's (1998) theories

likewise caution against the separation of the social from the material or practice from

reification, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. Yet I find Messick's Facets of Test Validity

matrix to satisfy Wenger's (2013) advice to "plug and play" with frameworks that are generative, evocative, recognizable, and systematic; so, I will generally rely on these facets to structure my argument below.

II.   Instructor Participation and the Evidential Facets of Validity

The first two facets of Messick's (1989) validity framework combine the evidential aspects of the validation process with a consideration of the purposes of the assessment (i.e., the "inferences and uses" assessment designers intend to make and do). For pragmatic purposes, I will present this section by first discussing inferences and then use, although the two are clearly dependent and interrelated.

A. Test Inferences and Instructor Participation: Construct Validity

Messick most closely associated the first facet of his validity matrix with the concept of *construct validity*, the meaning of which is currently influenced by Messick's work and the work of Crohnberg and Meehl (1955), Bachman (1990), Bachman and Palmer (1996), and Kane (2006, 2013). Essentially, *construct validity* serves as a bridge between positivist and constructivist philosophies of validity. It represents a bargain and pragmatic solution to the problems of assessing the social aspects of reality, offering a way for assessment designers to measure the validity of their assessments "whenever a test is to be interpreted as a measure of some attribute or quality which is not 'operationally defined'" (Crohnberg & Meehl, 1955, p. 282). The concept was thus articulated as a means to curtail possibly endless debate about the meaning or essence of constructed domains, such as writing, by asking assessment designers to focus validity inquiries on the purposes of assessments. Thus, the "construct" in *construct validity* is essentially defined as whatever the assessment designers are attempting to

measure: "A construct is some postulated attribute of people, assumed to be reflected in test performance" (p. 283). And the "validity" of *construct validity* asks assessment designers to defend, through evidence and reasoning, the decisions and uses they intend to make as a result of the measure (Kane, 2006. 2013).

Kane's (2006, 2013) Interpretation and Use Argument (IUA) framework, for example, offers a precise and pragmatic argumentative structure for making validity arguments and thus justifying the interpretations and uses of assessments. *Construct validity* under IUA is a method, as Kane (2013) argued, for designers to "check[] inferences and assumptions" about a proposed use of a test. Accordingly, "[t]o claim that a proposed interpretation or use is valid is to claim that the IUA is clear, coherent, and complete, that its inferences are reasonable, and that its assumptions are plausible." (p. 10). Thus, the IUA framework asks assessment designers to engage in two steps: first, to articulate the inferences and uses that the assessment designer intends to make of the assessment, and then to validate those inferences and uses by making a highly structured and evidence-based argument linking the assessment to those purposes.

I thus interpret *construct validity* as reflecting a pragmatic purpose-driven sense of validity, similar to what Gipps (1994) or what Moss, Girard, and Haniford (2006) have argued. Rather than being stymied by the difficulty of defining the construct or domain to be assessed, assessment designers should focus instead on the decisions and uses that will be made of the assessment and use validity theory as a methodological lodestone to test the soundness, appropriateness, adequacy, etc. of those decisions.

In this light, instructors' participation in the writing program assessment technology design process would be an essential component of any argument about the *construct validity* of an assessment. If, for example, the purpose of the assessment technology would be for

any one of the fifteen reasons Culver and Phipps (2019) identified for program assessment, as listed in the section above (which includes, for example, student learning, curricular planning and improvements, documentation of achievements, accountability and accreditation, decision-making purposes, increasing collegiality and cooperation, and increasing student enrollment, retention, and success), then instructor involvement is integral to inferences about those purposes. After all, which one of these purposes does not require some sort of inference or assumption about what instructors' value, believe, and/or do?

Wenger's (1998) social theory suggests that instructors will play a significant role in the construction of meaning around an assessment. Reified elements, such as an assignment prompt, can appear to codify and decontextualize pedagogical knowledge, giving a group of instructors a point of identification and an artifact to which they can orient their practice. But Wenger (1998) has suggested that the meaning that instructors will ascribe to those reified elements will be negotiated through their practice. By ignoring this essential negotiation, assessment designers risk basing their arguments on false assumptions of consistency in the assessments' interpretation and use and potentially reduce the instruments' ability to support inferences about their program. They also lose out on the learning provided by practice that would further support those inferences (Newkirk, 1991).

Moss, Girard, and Haniford (2006) have largely made this argument for me. Through an extensive review of validity and educational measurement research, Moss, Girard, and Haniford argued that educational assessment researchers should inform validity theory with theories of sociocultural and situated learning. They suggested that the interplay of these theories showed that the meanings ascribed to standardized assessments will largely be shaped through local practice:

[I]t is important to remember that externally mandated tests are always interpreted

and used in particular local contexts, which shape and are shaped by them.

Depending on how they are implemented by the central authority—that is, what

practices are required/expected to accompany them—and how they are taken up in

the local context, they may involve more or less incentive to conform to their

particular vision of learning…. Furthermore, when individuals use the tools in

particular settings, both the tools and the setting… are transformed…. As we have

seen, the same tools can be taken up in different ways in different environments, to

different effects. To the extent that externally mandated assessments are used across

many local contexts, they can have a powerful and widespread effect, for better or

worse. Understanding this effect is an important element of validity inquiry, in no

small part, because it shapes the learning that assessments are intended to document.

(p. 145, internal references omitted)

Moss, Girard, and Haniford concluded that assessment designers needed to investigate how

the meanings of their assessments were being mediated or transformed in local contexts, as

such investigation would influence the validity of an assessment.

My data largely supports this argument about the local meanings that students and

instructors will ascribe to writing assessments. The meanings that students and instructors

produce and adopt regarding a technology will largely be shaped by practice. The results of

the student survey in my study, for example, show that the instructors played a significant

role in mediating students' interactions with the model portfolio assignment prompt.

For example, Question 5 of the student survey asked students to comment on the

content or structure of the assignment prompt: "Agree or Disagree: 'I understood what was

expected of me in the portfolio assignment, in particular." A total of 173 students responded

to this question (Figure 5). An overwhelming majority agreed with the statement: 61 students

"Strongly Agreed" (35.3% approximate relative frequency) and 85 students "Agreed"

(49.1%) with this statement, while only 11 "Disagreed" (6.4%) and 2 "Strongly Disagreed"

(1.2%). Fourteen students (8.1%) were "Not Sure."

Question 5
Agree or Disagree: "I understood what was expected of me in the portfolio assignment, in particular."
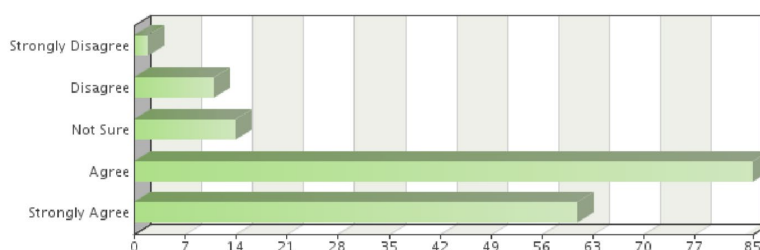
Figure 5: Student Survey Data, Question 5, Student Understanding

While this generally positive feedback supports a finding that students were able to

understand the expectations of the assignment, the negative responses suggest that there is

room for improvement. However, Question 5 only asked about students' understanding of

the assignment, in general, and not as to the source of their understanding. I thus read this

response in conjunction with other qualitative data from the survey.

Question 13 of the student survey asked students to select from a list of sources that

"helped you prepare your final portfolio" (Figure 6). Students could select as many sources

as they wished from this list, and there was even an open-ended "other" option, allowing

them to identify additional sources of assistance. I gathered 167 student responses to

Question 13. An overwhelming majority of these responses, 135 (80.9%) students, identified

the "Final Portfolio Assignment Prompt" as a helpful resource. But this was followed almost

immediately by "Instructor Explanation or Feedback," with 133 (79.7%) students directly

identifying their instructor as a resource that helped them prepare their portfolio. The third

and fourth most identified resources were also indirectly tied with instructor participation: "In-Class Activities" (108 students, 64.7%) and "Class Assignments" (101 students, 64.7%). Finally, students identified other students as sources of help, with "Peer Feedback" (96 students, 57.5%) and "Viewing Sample Portfolios from Past Students" (47 students, 28.1%) as the fifth and sixth most identified resources.

Question 13
Which of the following helped you prepare your final portfolio? (Select all that apply):
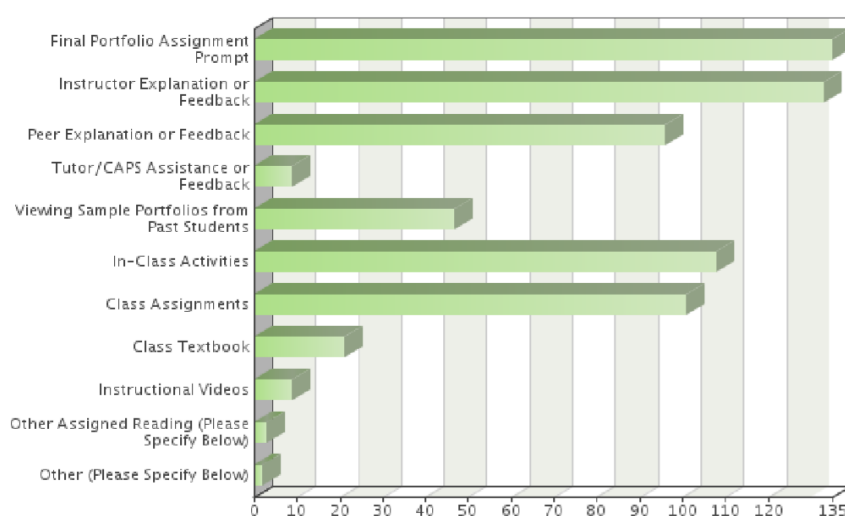
Figure 6: Student Survey Data, Question 13, Resources that Helped Students

Providing further insight, Question 14 asked the following: "Of the resources identified in Question 13 above, which do you feel was most helpful to you in preparing the portfolio?" This was a fill-in-the-blank question, so students had to write-in their responses. I received 157 student responses to Question 14. Many of these responses identified more than one "most helpful" resource. A clear majority of respondents, 102 students (65%), described a resource directly or indirectly related to their instructor (i.e., instructor explanation, feedback, in-class activities, or assignments) as being "most helpful," either alone or in addition to other resources. The responses to this question were dominated by positive comments associated with students' instructors, such as,

- **"Within this project I found, the instructor explanation or feedback was the most helpful to me."**

- **"The portfolio prompt and the instructors explanations and feedback were both equally helpful."**

- **"When our instructor explained it and gave ideas."**

- **"The most helpful resource was instructor feedback."**

- **"A clear explanation of the portfolio assignment was good enough to help me prepare and have an understanding of what was being expected of me."**

- **"The most helpful resource was my instructor. She explained in detail what she expected from us, also it was helpful that she showed us examples of students' previous work."**

- **"Instructor feedback was most helpful in preparing my portfolio. I was able to run all my ideas by my instructor to get ideas on how to improve them or to help point me in the right direction."**

- **"Just being able to look for peer feedback whether it be from the instructor or classmates. They helped me dig deeper into my topic and develop a better understanding and how I need to be clear in getting to my audience."**

The assignment prompt was also frequently identified (32 responses, or 20%) as being "most helpful," either alone or in conjunction with other resources. Students also identified their peers as being helpful resources (34 responses, 21.7%), acknowledging the assistance of other students either by participating in peer review, by receiving explanations from their friends, or by viewing student examples. One student commented that she found other student samples most helpful, "**[v]iewing samples from other students because I got to**

see how other people interpreted this assignment and how they formed their ideas."
Conversely, another student commented, **"I personally thought it was difficult
completing the portfolio without examples. I was questioning if I was following the
prompt correctly and had everything I needed in it."** Thus, students' peers also helped
them make sense of the assignment. But help from peers was often tied to instructor
involvement, as instructors likely would have provided opportunities for peer review and
presented students with the examples.

A few students used the space in Question 14 to complain about their instructor,
noting a lack of explanation and feedback as impediments to their success. For example, one
student responded, "**we hardly talked about the portfolio. I literally don't know what to
do.**" Another mirrored this comment, "**I am not sure, there was no instructor feedback,
so I am unable to say for certain which was most helpful. There were also no sample
portfolios.**" And yet another student commented, "**none of these we're actually helpful
they're were just the only things I received. My instructor didn't know what we we're
doing and didn't post a rubric or guidelines to go off of until the second to last
week.**" And yet another student emphasized the importance of the prompt because of the
absence of instructor presentation: "**The prompt is really the only thing given to us
besides a slight explanation by the instructor.**" These negative comments were the
exception, however, and many students used this space to praise and express gratitude for
their instructors.

Students also criticized their instructors in Question 17, which asked students to
describe "obstacles or challenges [they] encounter[ed] in preparing [their] portfolio." But
these criticisms were not a major theme. For example, I received 154 write-in responses, and,
of these, only 9 responses (5.9%) mentioned lack of instructor feedback, instruction, or

planning as an obstacle or challenge. Four responses (2.6%) specifically mentioned understanding the prompt as an obstacle or challenge, either because of its length or its wording. But the vast majority of these responses described what I identify as normal and desired challenges of the assignment, such as the challenges of being asked to reflect on their experience, connect that experience to learning outcomes, creatively revise an assignment, organize and present information, or even manage their time and resources in relation to their other coursework. Students tied many of the comments about the workload to instructor planning, as well, with some students even providing suggestions about how the instructor could allow more time to work on the portfolio or otherwise better integrate the assignment into the course.

From this survey data, I conclude that the portfolio prompt often helped students understand the expectations of the assignment and prepare their portfolios, although there is room for improvement in the structure of the text. But I also conclude that instructor participation and presentation strongly influenced how the prompt was read and received by students. Whether positive or negative, students frequently identified instructor involvement as an important resource for preparing their portfolios. I thus infer that students' interpretations of and responses to the assignment prompt were strongly influenced by how their instructor presented and integrated the assignment into the course.

Instructors play an important intermediary role in students' interpretations of assessment technologies. The instructions given by a teacher can influence students' reading of the constructs presented in the assignment and shape their performances to the task. It makes sense, then, to involve instructors in the design of these technologies. My efforts to collaborate with the instructors in my study gave me crucial evidence about the meanings that instructors were making about the assignment. This evidence was relevant to many

curricular and other inferences that might made as a result of the assessment. And, importantly, my efforts with these instructors also gave an opportunity for the community to negotiate with those meanings. In other words, the meetings gave the program an opportunity to "norm" or revise instructors' meanings, so that they could better reflect those intended by the program and the model portfolio assignment prompt. And the meetings also offered opportunity to "norm" or revise the prompt by exploring how instructors were interpreting it, so that the instrument could better reflect and respond to instructors' potential interpretations.

As an example of this dynamic, I point you to the section in Chapter 4 describing **Jessica**'s potentially incorrect interpretation of the prompt and the concept of multimodality. I likewise point you to **Drew**'s potentially problematic understanding of creative revision. These instructors would have ascribed undesired or unintended meanings to the constructs of multimodality or the writing process, which they would have then communicated to their students. Our focus group discussions allowed the community to negotiate with these meanings, allowing these instructors to become better aligned with the meanings and values desired by the program. Conversely, these discussions also allowed room for instructors to innovate and contribute to the program's understanding of the writing construct as reflected in the assignment prompt.

I acknowledge that an assessment designer might be able to design an effective writing assessment technology without negotiating with instructors, by, for example, investigating those practices through observation and then attempting to promote alignment to a text through later training and moderation. I first intended to take this type of isolated and observational approach in my initial research design. But I realized that collaboration with instructors in the design process itself would offer a unique and important source of

data that would test assumptions and strengthen the inferences that administrators might make as a result of the assessment. Moreover, as I argued in Chapters 3 and 4, and will explore further below, such collaboration would likewise provide an efficient and effective opportunity to strengthen the community, the program, and the assessment technology itself by informing the design process with instructors' practice. I thus sought to shift my design methodology to better promote collaboration among instructors, and I believe that these shifts in methodology strengthened both the assessment technology and the arguments that the program could make as a result of the data acquired through the assessment.

B. Test Use and Instructor Participation: Relevance/Utility

The second facet focuses on the intersection between the evidential and use aspects of test validity, which Messick (1989) suggested relates to *construct validity* and the relevance or utility of a test. I assume that the primary use of a writing assessment is for the purposes of teaching or learning (CCCC, 2014), and that this use has privilege over but is not necessarily incompatible with other purposes of the assessment, such as accountability (Adler-Kassner & O'Neill, 2010). The previous section discussed *construct validity*, demonstrating that instructors will likely serve as a mediator in students' reading of an assessment and thus instructors' participation in the design process provides an important source of validity evidence. I also suggested that collaborating with instructors would give assessment designers an opportunity to revise their technologies to better accommodate this mediation. And I argued that collaboration revised the meanings adopted by the community of instructors so that they would better communicate desired meanings about the assessment. These last two findings—related to the fitness or appropriateness of the technology and

improvements in student attainment—relate more closely to the relevance/utility of the assessment, and thus I will expand upon these findings here.

1. *Fitness of the Assessment Technology for Teaching Practice*

First, instructors' participation in the design process allowed the program to better understand the meanings that instructors were producing and adopting about the final portfolio assignment prompt in their courses. This allowed the program to make needed changes to the prompt's structure, so that the structure could better adapt to those meanings and instructors' diverse practices. For example, the first major revision to the prompt made as a result of instructors' participation was the addition of an introductory cover letter to the prompt. This cover letter, addressed to future instructors who would be using the prompt, explained how to adapt, present, and incorporate the prompt in their courses. This cover letter also included a list of reflection questions that instructors could ask students to write about during the semester and provided other suggestions about how the instructor could adapt the prompt to fit their practice. This revision reflected a basic compromise between the program and the instructors' needs and interests and would not have occurred without the learning generated through instructors' participation.

One of the main goals the program wanted for the portfolio assignment was for the portfolio to be a "multi-draft portfolio," meaning that students would work on the portfolio throughout the semester. But, in first drafting the model assignment prompt, I found that this was one of the hardest programmatic goals to accomplish, as requiring a multi-draft portfolio would require instructors to make accommodations to their course schedule throughout the semester. I thus struggled with finding a way to promote this programmatic

goal while still respecting the agency and autonomy of instructors. The instructors eventually came up with an innovative solution to this problem:

Soha: **Okay. One thing we were talking about when we were designing this prompt is that, I don't know if you have noticed is that, online, the online eComp, they build their portfolio throughout the semester**

Millie: **[The eComp WPA] told us about that**

Soha: **Right, they have, a reflection that's due with every assignment, and then they just put their reflections in their portfolio, and they don't really do anything at the end of semester with it, it's kind of just already there. So, they don't really reflect back holistically, that's my problem with that. But at the same time, I really like how they're building it [the portfolio] throughout the semester. So, does anybody have any ideas of how to maybe adjust this prompt so that they are doing something throughout the semester to build it, but still holistically reflecting back?**

Helen: **I will say, I don't think that this prompt is really the tool for that. Because I think it's something you have to consider, I mean, that's a one assignment at a time kind of thing. I mean you have to, the instructor would have to make a decision, am I going to have an ePortfolio, or am I going to have them submit word documents and links to YouTube, you know whatever, like that instead of. And I've wrestled with that four or five**

semesters, how do I want to do a final portfolio, and I keep saying no I don't want them to do a website.

Soha: Well, they don't have to do a website, but they could still be building the portfolio, do you know what I am saying? At least with the literacy narrative, like, this semester what I've tried is every major writing assignment they have to provide a letter, and one of the questions of the letter is "what important choices did you make in composing this document?" Right, and then of course I ask them about the SLOs, so ideally, they can take what they've written that letter and cut and paste it into their reflection, right, because they've already talked about their choices.

Helen: Yeah, I encourage them to.

Michael: One of the things I always ask in a reflection is, "how are you going to apply in this assignment to future situations?"

Soha: Oh, that's good.

Helen: Yeah.

Millie: Oh, I like that.

Michael: And then I want to have them with this next sequence, I was just thinking, it might be good to have a question, saying, "okay, you've already reflected on some of these assignments, how has your opinion changed on what you learned?" You know, "eight weeks ago you thought you learned this thing, or maybe you didn't think you learned very much, uh, but how has

your thinking changed since then?" as they look at the whole spectrum of the class.

Soha: That's good.

Amy: Reflection seems like a good place to kind of, I mean you can't really have them build a website from that, but start asking them those questions, or even maybe dropping a question, "what would happen if you changed the audience? what would happen if you changed this? how do you see this assignment changing, developing?"

Michael: That's good.

Amy: So, when you get to that final portfolio and you ask them to change the audience, change the genre [in the creative revision part of the portfolio], it's not a brand-new concept for them. You have them reflecting about it all along.

Helen: I love that. For the reflection.

Michael: Yeah, that's good.

Amy: And it could even have some creative suggestions, like subtly, of maybe saying like, "Okay, in major writing assignment 1 you reflected," like I had my students say, "I could do a rap about my discourse community." It became one of these things in one of my classes, and I was like "maybe you can tell me about that [idea to do a rap] in your reflection." And now when they, we were, I was just talking [to this student] in this conference, you know how "you've been saying this all along. That's why I

didn't shut you down." I said, "keep that [idea] in the back of your head." But if they're like writing like that all the way throughout, towards the end when you get to introduce [the portfolio assignment], you could just have them bring all their reflections, read over what they wrote, and then have them do a pre-reflection on what [idea] they feel is the best to pursue.

Soha: **So maybe what we need in supplement to this final portfolio prompt is like a list of suggested questions that you can put for reflections throughout the semester?**

[Crosstalk, general agreement: "that's a good idea," "that would be great"]

Soha: **Okay. And maybe you guys can help me think of those questions by putting them on the wiki, too? Because you guys just came up with really good questions. Maybe you can put them on the wiki. I mean, I can write them down.**

We then ended up brainstorming a list of reflection questions that instructors could use to help prepare students for the reflective and creative revision parts of the final portfolio assignment, without encroaching too much on the individual instructors' practices. This exchange was an example of the 2(a) pattern of conversation that I identified in Chapter 4, in which we identified a value that was acceptable and significant enough to include within the structure of prompt.

Note how we collaboratively came up with this solution to the potential conflict between standardization and the autonomy of instructors by relating the issue to our practice. I present the goal or value of the program for the portfolio, based on best practices for writing instruction. I ask instructors to think about how to promote the value in the

prompt by providing an example of the online FYC's program's practice, thus appealing to instructors through alignment and imagination. **Helen** then complicates this value by introducing her potentially competing value of instructor agency and professional autonomy, even going so far as to suggest that she did not think that "**this prompt is really the tool for that**." Rather than accepting her suggestion that this was an irreconcilable conflict, however, I ask instructors to continue to negotiate between these values by engaging their imagination and connecting the discussion to my current practice of requiring students to write reflections throughout the semester. **Michael** and **Amy** then respond to this practice by discussing their own practices, suggesting a way that we could better tailor the prompt by asking students to write in-progress reflections that would more directly build into the tasks required in the portfolio. **Amy** suggests that "**[r]eflection seems like a good place**" to encourage the value of a multi-draft portfolio. And through this negotiation, we are able to come up with the innovation of the cover letter as solution to this potential conflict between the needs of the instructors and the program.

Another major revision to the draft of the assignment prompt regarded the audience of the reflective portion of the portfolio. The original draft had asked students to address their reflection to the discourse community of their classroom, including their teacher, peers, the program, and university administrators. During our discussions, however, the instructors posited a wide variety of potential audiences for the reflective portion of the portfolio. For example, a few instructors asked their students to address their reflections to future students of the instructors' course, telling those future students what they might expect to learn and do in the class. Other instructors asked students to address their reflections to university administrators or even government officials, making an argument about the relevance or importance of their educational experience. Another group of instructors asked students to

address a respected family member or friend, appealing to their community ties and reputation. And yet other instructors asked students to address their reflections to their past or future selves, as a form of self-analysis and inner reflection. Each of these instructors was able to explain their pedagogical reasons for their choice. Due to the variety of practice and seeing no compelling reason for standardization of this element, we decided to shift this portion of the portfolio prompt from a defined audience to an audience chosen by the instructor.

In this way, my negotiations with instructors gave increased insight into what elements of the prompt or construct needed to be standardized and what elements could be left up to individualization. Our negotiations thus permitted the prompt to better respond to the differing contexts and practices of instructors, while still serving the needs of consistency and reliability of the program and the institution.

2. *Improvements in Student Attainment*

There is also evidence to support an inference that instructors' participation contributed to gains in student attainment. I base this claim largely on the program's later assessment scores of student work. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the FYC program collected one anonymous student final portfolio from each of the sections of English 110, 111/112, or 113 taught during the fall 2016 semester, including sections taught by instructors who participated in this study. Overall, the program collected 87 useable student portfolios. A separate group of program assessment readers then reviewed and scored the sample portfolios on two student learning outcomes (SLOs)—SLO A, the rhetorical situation, and SLO F, critical reflection—using an analytic rubric designed for program assessment and normed through a collaborative process. The SLOs and the scoring rubric are appended in Appendix J and K.

The pool of readers was drawn from current instructors in the program, including full time faculty, GTAs, NTTs, the WPA, the assistant-WPAs, and the graduate-WPAs. Instructors were not allowed to review their own student samples. Each sample was reviewed by two readers, who scored each portfolio blindly and separately by inputting their scores into a Google Docs form. In addition, samples were reviewed by a third reader if the scores between the two readers displayed a variance of greater than 2 points on either SLO, with the outlying score then discarded.

I had access to these reader scores and analyzed the data for purposes of this dissertation. Using the portfolio's assigned course section number, I identified the portfolios from students whose instructors participated in the design of the portfolio assignment prompt and isolated their students' portfolio scores from the rest of the data. My analysis of this data thus encompassed two samples: (1) assessment scores of portfolios from students whose instructors participated in the study (n=16), and (2) assessment scores of portfolios from students whose instructors did not participate in the study (n=71). The mean averages of the scoring data were as follows (Table 3):

Table 3		
Measure (on a scale of 0 to 8)	Portfolios from Students with Participating Instructors (n=16)	Portfolios from Students with Non-Participating Instructors (n=71)
SLO A		
Mean Score	5.7	4.82
Standard Deviation	1.8	2.27
SLO F		
Mean Score	5.4	4.42
Standard Deviation	1.88	2.06

The frequency distribution of scores of these two populations can be visualized in the following histograms (Figures 7 and 8):
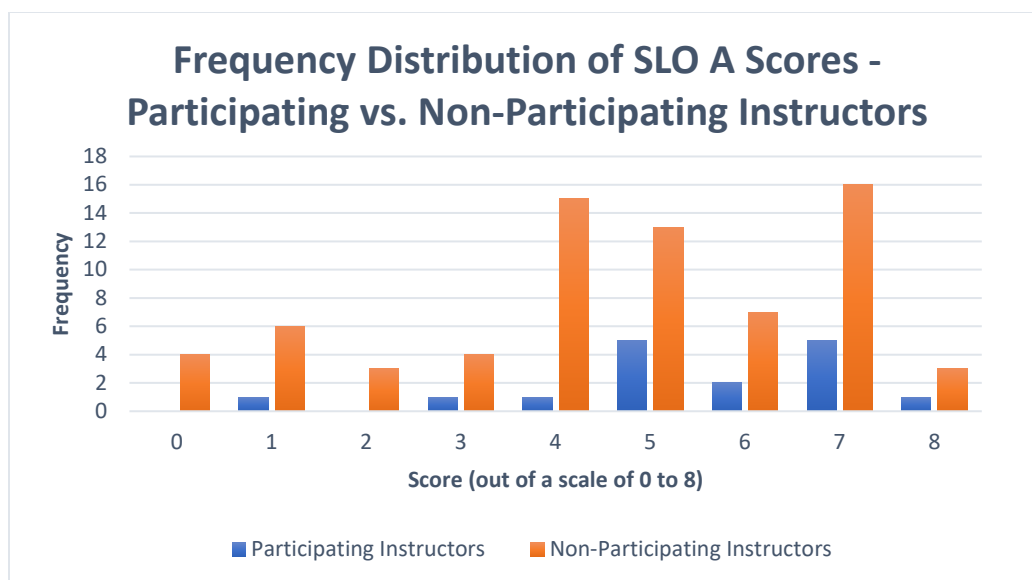

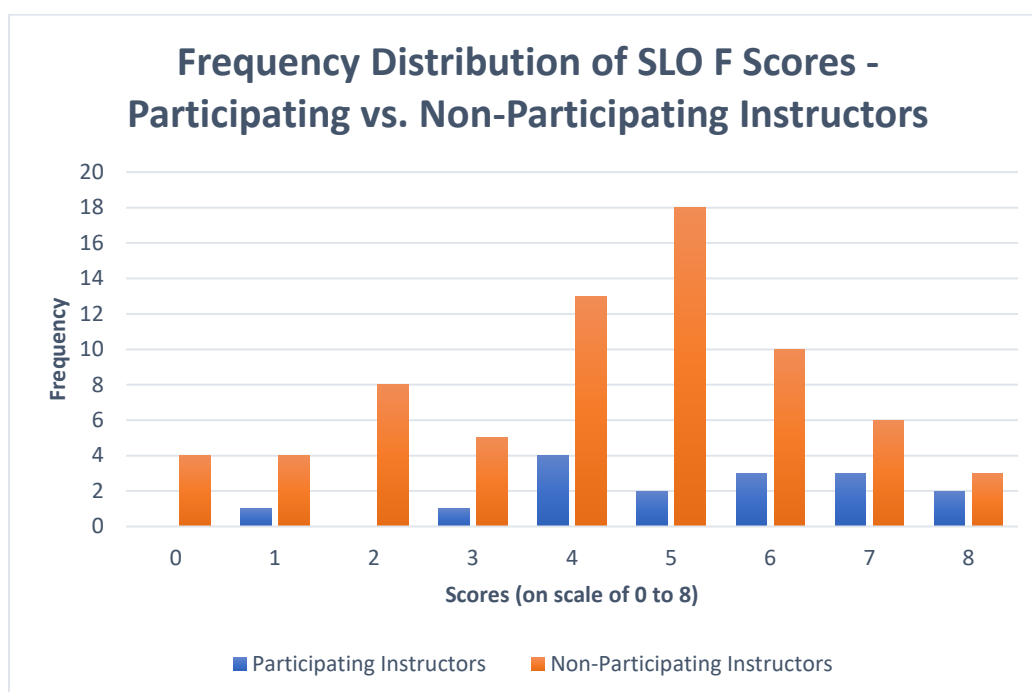*Figure 7: Comparative Histogram of SLO A Scores – Participating vs. Non-Participating Instructors*

Figure 8: Comparative Histograms of SLO F Scores - Participating vs. Non-Participating Instructors

Note that the mean scores for portfolios from students whose instructors participated in the study were higher for both SLOs measured. Students whose instructors participated in the model assignment prompt design process received an average score of 5.7 for SLO A and 5.4 for SLO F. Students whose instructors did not participate in the study received an average score of 4.82 for SLO A and 4.42 for SLO F. The observed difference between these two averages was thus .88 for SLO A (in favor of student portfolios from participating instructors) and .98 for SLO F (again, in favor of portfolios from participating instructors). It thus appears that the portfolios from students whose instructors participated in the study were accorded, on average, higher scores during later program assessment readings.

In order to test the statistical significance of this finding, I compared the means of the two samples using a one-sided two-sample t-test. My null hypothesis was that the means of the two samples were equal. My alternative hypothesis was that the scores from students with participating instructors was greater than those with non-participating instructors. Thus:

μ_1: mean scores of student portfolios from instructors who participated in the study,

μ_2: mean scores of student portfolios from instructors who did not participate,

H_0: $\mu_1 = \mu_2$; H_1: $\mu_1 > \mu_2$.

A Shapiro-Wilk test for normality revealed that the scores for student portfolios with non-participating instructors (μ_2) were not normally distributed for either SLO A (p-value .032) or SLO F (p-value .025). I thus relied on Welch's t-test to compare means, as this test does not rely on an assumption of normal distribution or equal variances.

My analysis gave the following results (Table 4):

Table 4: Comparison of Mean Scores of Students with Participating with Non-Participating Instructors	
SLO A	
Test statistic	1.86
p-value	.037
SLO F	
Test statistic	1.85
p-value	.038

The p-values of each of these tests suggested that I should reject the null hypothesis at α=.05 and accept the alternative hypothesis that the average scores of portfolios from students whose instructors participated in the were greater than the average scores from students whose instructors did not participate. This was true for each SLO measured by the program. This supports an inference that instructors' participation in the design of the model portfolio assignment prompt correlated with higher student scores on the portfolio assignment during later program assessment.

Of course, this data only shows a correlation between higher student scores and instructors' participation. It does not account for other possible reasons that could have influenced those scores, including the very real possibility that the instructors who would be willing to participate in this kind of study are simply more motivated and better-quality instructors. Moreover, the power for each of these tests fell outside of the 95% critical range (t.crit 1.71), limiting the potential statistical significance of these findings.

I also did not successfully identify a control group for this data. For example, the higher scores could have simply reflected the curricular improvements made through the influence of the new portfolio prompt itself. The writing instructors in the FYC program were not yet required to use the model final portfolio prompt that we were piloting through the study. Yet several non-participating instructors in the program decided to become 'early adopters' of the draft assignment prompt and apparently used the prompt in their courses

without officially participating in our focus groups. Several student portfolios also seemed to follow the draft prompt's patterns of a literacy narrative with a creative revision. Unfortunately, however, most of these 'early adopters' did not submit a copy of the assignment prompt that they used, and so I could not reliably and consistently identify which of these instructors used the draft prompt. As such, I did not feel like I could successfully isolate this group from my overall data set, and these 'early adopters' were simply added to the non-participating instructors' group. The issue of whether instructors' participation in the assessment technology design process influences student attainment thus remains a relevant and compelling area for future research.

III.   Instructor Participation and the Consequential Facets of Validity

I next turn to considerations of the social value of instructor participation in the assessment technology design process and the concept of validity.

A. Test Inferences and Instructor Participation: Value Implications

The third facet of Messick's (1989) validity matrix combines test inferences with the consequential aspects of validity. Messick associated this facet with the value implications of the assessment. Hubley and Zumbo (2011) have explained that:

> Value implications challenge us to reflect upon (a) the personal or social values suggested by our interest in the construct and the name/label selected to represent that construct, (b) the personal or social values reflected by the theory underlying the construct and its measurement, and (c) the values reflected by the broader social ideologies that impacted the development of the identified theory. There are evaluative overtones to any construct label or name of a measure…. It is important

to reflect upon and understand the values that underlie our constructs, measures, and measurement because they impact the meaning of the test scores, the relevance and utility of inferences made with different samples, contexts, and time periods, and the consequences of test use. (p. 222-223)

McNamara and Roever (2006) have interpreted this facet to essentially ask the following question: "What social and cultural values and assumptions underlie test constructs and the sense we make of test scores?" Weideman (2012) has suggested that McNamara and Roever's reading emphasizes the "fairness" and "meaningfulness" of an assessment. But he also suggested that this facet could be interpreted to relate to the social consequences and even political acceptance of a test.

Psychometric literature seems to view this facet as asking assessment designers to consider the values behind the constructs as expressed in an assessment technology's form and potential ramifications of those values. The facet as currently defined seems to limit consideration of potential "value implications" mostly to the values that the structure of the assessment implies about the construct itself. But I hope that my argument in Chapter 3 establishes, at least, that the design methodologies taken to arrive at the form of an assessment technology effectively shape the values promoted by the form of the technology itself. I believe, then, that this facet should rightly extend to the "value implications" of the assessment technology design process, as well.

My arguments in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 emphasize that instructors need to participate in the assessment technology design process for their interests, needs, and values to be addressed within the structure of the technology. I likewise show how instructors need to be able to negotiate within the methodology and structure of the design in order to promote the important value of instructor agency and professional autonomy. Such

negotiation is also vital for encouraging a collaborative design process and increasing

instructors' ownership and identification with the assessment technology. I believe that

promoting instructors' alignment and identification with an assessment technology through

negotiation, rather than force or imposition, are also important values. Thus, I largely refer

you to those chapters as informing this facet, as I believe I strongly make a case in those

chapters for the value of instructors' participation in the design process.

B. Test Use and Instructor Participation: Social Consequences

The fourth and final facet of Messick's (1989) validity matrix combines the

consequential aspects of validity with test use. This facet is associated with the social

consequences of the assessment. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, this facet

seems to be the most controversial part of the *unified construct validity* framework, with some

researchers suggesting that the consequences of an assessment should not be considered a

part of the validity concept. Rather than engage in this debate, however, I will again just

assume that my audience regards social consequences of assessments to be a pragmatic and

ethical issue in writing program assessment design, whether such consequences are

considered to be rightly a part of validity theory or not.

For those that are interested in relating this issue to validity theory, however, I refer

you to Slomp, Corrigan, and Sugimoto (2014), who have articulated an extensive framework

for considering consequential validity in writing assessments. Essentially, they argue that

"decisions at every step of the assessment process carry both intended and unintended

consequences…[and that] those who design and use tests have an obligation to examine

both the intended and unintended consequences that accrue as a result of their decision-

making process and, where warranted, to remedy negative unintended consequences" (p.

279). Slomp, Corrigan, and Sugimoto based their model on Kane's (2006, 2013) IUA and White, Eliot and Peckham's (2015) Design for Assessment (DFA) frameworks, coming up with consequential validity questions that assessment designers can ask during each step of the assessment validation process. Their question for the design process, for example, is: "Does the assessment design contribute to potential adverse impacts, impact on population demonstrated to be at-risk, and educational systems serving those students? (*sic*)" (Slomp, Corrigan & Sugimoto, 2014, p. 281). They suggested that assessment designers can answer these questions in the design process by engaging with stakeholders. They noted that the Canadian educational system had been generally successful in engaging with instructors in standardized writing assessment design. But they also identified potential negative consequences from these standardized assessments, including those that impacted on teachers, such as narrowing the curriculum, "limit[ing] pedagogical diversity," and "disempower[ing] teachers while undermining their professional judgment" (p. 296).

I appreciate Slomp, Corrigan, and Sugimoto's attempts to articulate an extensive consequential validity framework and to include consequences on instructors within its purview. But, in some ways, I believe that their framework is too narrow in its consideration of the effects on instructors. Indeed, this is a criticism that I often have of validity research. Assessment literature has often spoken about consequences on instructors' interests, values, and needs in terms "**washback**," a concept that broadly refers to the consequences that assessments can have on teaching and the curriculum (Messick 1995). Washback can be potentially both positive and negative, in that it can shape the curriculum in either positive and/or negative ways (in which case it is sometimes referred to as washforward). Personally, I find the entire narrative frame of washback to be off-putting, as I most strongly associate it with assessment designers' "backwash," and am immediately led to question whether writing

instructors are the ones assumed to be drinking it. But I also think that the term is somewhat limited in its scope, as it suggests that instructors' interests, values, and needs are relevant only insofar as they are directly tied to effects on their teaching. Little consideration is given to the effects on instructors themselves, as human beings with diverse social interests, values, and needs that go beyond the confines of the classroom. Some of the literature that I reviewed in Chapter 3 shows that standardized assessments can have wide-reaching effects on teachers' overall well-being. And I hope that my argument in that chapter has established the importance of considering these wider interests, values, and needs, which include but are not limited to those of mutual agency and professional autonomy.

I would therefore argue that the consequences that assessment designers should consider as part of consequential validity include effects on instructors themselves. I do not want, however, to add to an already overly complicated concept and process by articulating specific steps or questions that the assessment designer needs to ask with regards to their teaching workforce. Rather, I think that most of these consequences will be identified and can be addressed through collaboration with instructors in the assessment design process. I thus present the design methodology that I articulate in Chapter 4 as a potential framework for considering consequential validity and remedying potential adverse effects on instructors.

Finally, I wish to conclude by emphasizing the positive consequences that were generated through my interactions with instructors in this study. There are benefits, of course, that arise simply through the process of fostering community and collaboration among instructors. Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth (2001), for example, have found that fostering community among a group of teachers can lead to intellectual renewal and training, innovation, improved leadership, and a school culture that values and mirrors collaborative learning. Collaboration among instructors also strengthens instructors'

preparation and professionalism (Fecho, Graham & Hudson-Ross, 2005; Leverenz & Goodbum, 1998; Long, Holberg & Taylor, 1996; Sleeter & Flores Carmona, 2017). Penrose (2012), for example, has argued that instructors' participation in a community as both a learner and producer of knowledge contributes to the formation of their professional identity, as professionalism is, in a sense, participation in a practicing community.

There are benefits to instructor preparation that specifically come from asking instructors to think about the design of assessment technologies. Parr, Glasswell & Aikman (2007) have reported that their attempts to engage instructors in the design of an assessment tool led to better appreciation among instructors of the purposes of assessment and its relationship to teaching, gave opportunities for the instructors to reflect on and improve their own practices, and reportedly increased instructors' understanding of the writing construct. They likewise suggested that these discussions increased community and collaboration.

I observed these kinds of positive consequences in my study. Instructor participation led to increases in instructor preparation, motivation, and professionalism. As examples of this, I refer you to my discussion of imagination in Chapter 4 and the case of new instructor **Lydia** and experienced instructor **Cass**. Both instructors referred specifically to increases in understanding and/or motivation as a result of their participation. In her exit survey, **Lydia** commented that she was particularly "**influenced**" by a discussion during our groups about "**how to grade student reflections**." She mentioned that she was "**still wrestling with my pedagogy and approach to this.**" And, indeed, my later interactions with **Lydia** demonstrated her continued interest in this topic of formative assessment. I met with her after the conclusion of this study to discuss rubric creation and grading reflections. And I even attended a later local conference at which she presented on a related topic. Her

participation thus contributed to her development as a future writing instructor and composition scholar.

The benefits of participation also extended to instructors who did not necessarily intend to teach writing, such as those with a focus on literary studies. Questions 6, 7, 8, and 9 of the instructors exit survey asked instructors to comment on their participation in the study in relation to their teaching of the assignment, their teaching generally, their studies/scholarship, and their personal life. While some of the instructors in my study saw their participation as an extension of their studies, others identified tangential benefits to their understanding and appreciation for the teaching of writing and betterment as teachers and individuals. **Helen**, for example, argued that her participation had positive benefits for her personal and professional development: "**Anything that challenges me as an instructor, challenges me as a writer and that invariabl[y] affects my personal life.**"

Of course, not everyone associated their participation with such wide-ranging effects. Some instructors simply saw value in their participation as functional training for the job and for teaching the assignment. But, whatever the reason, each of the instructors could justify their participation under different philosophies or perspectives of writing instructor and/or GTA preparation (Ebest, 2002, 2005; Fulkerson, 1998; Gebhardt, 1977; Haring-Smith, 1985; Hesse, 1993; Hillocks, 1999; Ormrod, 1998; Pytlik & Liggett, 2002; Reistano, 2012; Roen, Goggin & Clary-Lemon, 2009; Tremmel, 2001). I particularly note this study provided a means to support decentralized preparation of GTAs, responding to Latterell's (1996) call to develop communities where GTAs "are immersed in multiple forums and conversations about teaching… [and] to develop an atmosphere where teaching or pedagogy is not viewed as the lowly concern of one administrator or one group of brand-new teachers" (p. 21).

Irrespective of their philosophy and reason for participating in the study, many instructors identified the opportunity to collaborate with other instructors as a positive consequence of their participation. For example, I received some of the following comments from instructors in their exit surveys:

> **Drew:** **Getting to meet at the focus groups was stellar. Hearing ideas from several instructors, and then adding my own input, was just an excellent opportunity that I am very grateful for.**
>
> **Olivia:** **I liked hearing other ideas of how to teach the prompt, who to appeal to as an audience, and the types of activities instructors use… I love sharing ideas and getting new ideas from other instructors to implement in my courses. I am not in graduate school at the moment, but I love rhetoric and composition and should have gone for a PhD instead of an MFA. This is fun!**
>
> **Amy:** **I felt more confident teaching the portfolio assignment as I could discuss it with the focus group and evaluate challenges and successes. It helped me find new techniques from other instructors and see their own experience with teaching in general. I feel that I have been able to meet some wonderful people in the pilot and develop friendships with those people. Having the guidance of several instructors with their knowledge and experience that they could share with others [was the most helpful or useful part of my participation].**
>
> **Michael:** **It was helpful being a part of a group with more experienced instructors and colleagues in a brainstorming environment. I**

> **wrote down and used several ideas that came up in the pilot group discussions.**
>
> **Stephanie:**   **[I]t felt comforting and inspirational to have a group of teachers to discuss and work through ideas with… Comfort in colleagues! Nice to get together and snack and laugh :)**

My study thus suggests that asking writing instructors, including NTT and GTA instructors, to collaborate in the design of assessment technology has positive consequences for individual instructors, in that they saw benefits from interacting with their peers. **Olivia**'s response also suggests that such participation can have positive consequences for even the profession of writing education itself, in that her participation improved her perception of the field and desire to join the composition community. This is the same instructor who identified feelings of alienation from a FYC program that she worked for as an online NTT, as described in Chapter 3.

Notably, none of the instructors identified any negative consequences arising from their participation in the study. For example, I received the following comments in the instructor exit survey:

> **Drew:**   **I can't think of anything that wasn't useful about this process. Thank you for the food and the great conversations.**
>
> **Paul:**   **[In response to a question about how participation affected his personal life]: Well, if I hadn't come to some of the pilot meetings, I probably would have spent that time with my cats. But I don't think they noticed.**
>
> **Amy:**   **I felt that everything was helpful! It was a wonderful experience.**

In this light, both assessment designers and instructors seem to have nothing to lose[2] from interacting with each other in the design of standardized assessment technologies, at least when approached using the collaborative and sustainable methodological framework that I have attempted to articulate in this study. I thus see no downside to encouraging instructor participation in the design of writing program assessment technologies. And I see no downside to considering instructor participation as a part of the validity concept. I thus suggest that assessment designers avail themselves of the positive consequences that such participation can bring and seek to provide opportunities for instructors to collaborate in the design process.

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[2] Notwithstanding the loneliness of Paul's cats, for which I apologize.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

My research study confirms the benefits of instructor participation in the design of writing program assessment technologies. Instructor participation ensures that their needs, interests, and values are negotiated within the design of the assessment technology. These needs and values include essential needs for the acknowledgement of instructors' mutual agency and professional autonomy in work. But instructors' participation also ensures that the design of the assessment technology is informed by the learning provided by their practice, and gives WPAs and assessment designers an opportunity to prepare instructors to use the technology as a teaching and assessment tool.

While I understand that collaboration with instructors can be challenging, I believe that WPAs and other assessment designers owe an ethical responsibility to both the participants and an evidentiary responsibility to the inferences and uses that will be made of the assessment to try to foster a collaborative design process. I have attempted to articulate an effective methodology and theoretical framework for fostering such a process. While I have avoided articulating a list of best practices, I nevertheless believe that my study offers some important insights into instructor participation in the design of writing program assessment technologies. To summarize, these insights include:

Chapter 3:

- All assessment is a technology. The technology will reflect both the material realities and the social values and practices within and surrounding that technology. The values built into the design of a technology will largely reflect the values expressed in the design process.

- Instructors have important needs, interests, and values that should be addressed within the design of standardized writing assessment technologies.

- Some important needs expressed by the instructors in my study were the needs for an acknowledgement of their mutual agency and professional autonomy. However, instructors were willing to negotiate those needs in relation to the needs of other participants in the assessment, including the program's needs for standardization, accountability, and the preparation of GTAs. They seemed appreciative that the program gave them an opportunity to negotiate by involving them in the design process and by providing choices in some elements in the structure of the design prompt.

- As such, WPAs and assessment designers should value and encourage writing instructors' participation in the design of writing program assessment technologies. They should also clearly communicate that they value instructors' participation and are willing to negotiate with instructors' needs, interests, and values in the design of the technology.

- Instructors ideally should be included through all stages of the design process. But, at the very least, they should have a say in important design decisions that may influence the inferences and uses of the assessment. Note that I am <u>not</u> suggesting that WPAs and assessment completely delegate the design process to instructors. Rather, I am suggesting that instructors must be given a "seat at the table" in important discussions about the technology.

Chapter 4:

- WPAs and assessment designers should frame discussions with instructors as an exploration into the values that instructors want to see expressed in the technology. They should avoid framing discussions as simply informational, purely investigative, or otherwise extractive in nature.

- Social theories of participation behind Wenger's (1998) communities of practice framework can offer a useful methodology for theorizing about instructors' participation and fostering a collaborative approach. A community of practice is a community of practitioners who practice in mutual engagement to a joint enterprise and who develop a shared repertoire.

- Practice is shaped through the dual processes of participation and reification. Writing program assessment technologies can be understood as reifications of teaching and assessment practices. These technologies will shape instructors' practices. And instructors' practices will shape the technology as it is used.

- WPAs should seek to effectively balance elements of negotiability (or autonomy) with elements of identification (or standardization) in instructors' practice in relation to writing program assessment technologies. Again, this balance between negotiation and identification should be present in both the process and form of the technology's design.

- WPAs and assessment designers can further think about this negotiation as shaping instructors' participation in the economy of meaning about the assessment and teaching practices as related to the technology. Instructors

should be permitted to both produce and adopt meanings that will shape these practices and the technology.

- WPAs and assessment designers can further encourage instructor's ownership of desired meanings about these practices and the technology by asking them to engage with the technology, to imagine how their existing and potential future practices might relate to the technology, and to explore how their needs, interests, and values align or can be negotiated within the needs, interests, and values expressed within the technology.

Chapter 5:

- Instructors should also be encouraged to produce and adopt meanings about assessment practices and meanings/concepts as related to the assessment technology, such as the meaning of validity or validation.

- Validation practices are strengthened through instructors' participation in the design of writing program assessment technologies.

- Instructor participation provides essential data about and insight into the meanings being produced by instructors about the technology, thus offering an avenue to strengthen the inferences that will be made from the technology and to strengthen the technology's fitness for use as a teaching and assessment tool.

- Moreover, instructor participation promotes important social values, such as: (1) improving narratives about the design and use of standardized assessment technologies, (2) valuing and developing instructors' agency, practical

expertise, and professional autonomy, and (3) promoting collaboration and community in writing programs.

- Finally, instructor participation led to positive consequences for the preparation, motivation, and professionalism of instructors. And, notably, no significant negative consequences were identified as arising from instructors' participation in the design of the technology.

Again, my findings and arguments here are limited to the issue of writing instructor participation in the design of writing program assessment technologies for a FYC writing program, and particularly to the specific case study at the heart of this dissertation. But I hope that researchers find some of the insights I have shared here helpful in their efforts to collaborate with instructors in other contexts. I look forward to future developments in this regard.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Evolved Grounded Theory Assumptions

1. The external world is a symbolic representation, a 'symbolic universe.' Both this and the interior worlds are created and recreated through interaction. In effect, there is no divide between external or interior world (Blumer, 1969).
2. Meanings (symbols) are aspects of interaction and are related to others within systems of meanings (symbols). Interactions generate new meanings… as well as alter and maintain old ones (Mead, 1934).
3. Actions are embedded in interactions--past, present and imagined future. Thus, actions also carry meanings and are locatable within systems of meanings. Actions may generate further meanings, both with regard to further actions and the interactions in which they are embedded (Mead, 1934).
4. Contingencies are likely to arise during a course of action. These can bring about change in its duration, pace, and even intent, which may alter the structure and process of interaction (Dewey, 1929).
5. Actions are accompanied by temporality, for they constitute courses of action of varying duration. Various actors' interpretations of the temporal aspects of an action may differ according to the actors' respective perspectives; these interpretations may also change as the action proceeds (Mead, 1959).
6. Courses of interaction arise out of shared perspective, and when not shared, if action/interaction is to proceed, perspectives must be negotiated (Blumer, 1969).
7. During early childhood and continuing all through life, humans develop selves that enter into virtually all their actions and in a variety of ways (Mead, 1959).
8. Actions (overt and covert) may be preceded, accompanied, and/or succeeded by reflective interactions (feeding back onto each other). These actions maybe one's own or those of other actors. Especially important is that in many actions the future is included in the actions (Dewey, 1929).
9. Interactions may be followed by reviews of actions, one's own and those of others, as well as projections of future ones. The reviews and evaluations made along the action/interaction course may affect a partial or even complete recasting of it (Dewey, 1929).
10. Actions are not necessarily rational. Many are nonrational or, in common parlance, "irrational." Yet rational actions can be mistakenly perceived as not so by other actors (Dewey, 1929).
11. Action has emotional aspects: To conceive of emotion as distinguishable from action, as entities accompanying action, is to reify those aspects of action. For us, there is no dualism. One can't separate emotion from action; they are part of the same flow of events, one leading into the other (Dewey, 1929).
12. Means-end analytic schemes are usually not appropriate to understanding action and interaction. These commonsense and unexamined social science schemes are much too simple for interpreting human conduct (Strauss, 1993).
13. The embeddedness in interaction of an action implies and intersection of actions. The intersection entails possible, or even probable, differences among the perspectives of actors (Strauss, 1993).

14. The several or many participants in an interactional course necessitate the 'alignment' (or articulation) of their respective actions (Blumer, 1969).

15. A major set of conditions for actors' perspective, and thus their interactions, is their memberships in social worlds and subworlds. In contemporary societies, these memberships are often complex, overlapping, contrasting, conflicting, and not always apparent to other interactants (Strauss, 1993).

16. A useful fundamental distinction between classes or interactions is between the routine and the problematic. Problematic interactions involve "thought," or when more than one interactant is involved then also "discussion." An important aspect of problematic action can also be "debate" --disagreement over issues or their resolution. That is, an arena has been formed that will affect the future course of action (Dewey, 1929; Strauss, 1993).

From Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 6-8.

Appendix B: September 15, 2015 Initial Project Memorandum

To: [REDACTED, WPAs]
From: Soha Turfler
Date: September 15, 2015
Re: Core Writing Coordinator Project – Developing a Core Writing Portfolio Reflective Prompt

This memorandum serves as the formal proposal for my graduate student research project during the 2015-2016 year.

I. Object of Study

My plan is to develop and pilot a standard or model prompt for the reflective portion of the first year writing final portfolio assignment.

My hope is that this project will help: (1) ensure greater consistency in instruction and instructor evaluation among first year writing courses, (2) encourage first-year instructors to incorporate more reflective exercises into their curriculum, and (3) facilitate the administration and assessment of the first year writing program. Moreover, as I will be seeking Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the pilot and assessment of the assignment prompt, I hope that this project will contribute to the scholarly discourse about reflection, transfer, and writing program administration.

II. Description of Problem

The importance of reflection in writing instruction is already well accepted in the field; it is considered "a critical component of learning and of writing specifically" (Yancey 7). In *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*, Kathleen Blake Yancey defines reflection as "the dialectical process by which we develop and achieve, first, specific goals for learning; second, strategies for reaching those goals; and third, means of determining whether or not we have met those goals or other goals" (6). The benefits of this process are not just limited to students; instructors and program administrators can likewise achieve their own learning goals by evaluating student learning and performance through reflective writing (7). In short, reflection makes the hidden process of learning apparent, allowing students and educators to identify future learning needs and to recognize current growth.

As writing program administrators, we should find ways to encourage students to better engage with this critical process. More than this, though, we should encourage instructors in the program to use student reflection as a means to improve their own teaching methods. And we should ensure that these reflections fully support our ability to assess whether students are achieving our own program goals. Indeed, reflection is such an important part of the first year-writing curriculum that it is specifically listed as a Student Learning Outcome (SLO) in all courses (Outcome F).

As you know, first-year writing at the University of New Mexico encompasses several different initiatives: The Accelerated English 110/120 Sequence, the Stretch and Studio initiatives, and the online eComp initiative. The final assignment in each of these

courses consists of a writing portfolio with at least one reflective component. Generally, students are asked to create either a reflective cover letter or essay which introduces and accompanies a revised Major Writing Assignment. By departmental policy, the final portfolio must be worth at least 35% of a student's final grade. Students must pass the portfolio in order to pass the course, with a 74% (C) or above.

The exact requirements of the final portfolio assignment differ amongst initiatives and even amongst individual classes. For example, students in the Stretch initiative are asked to prepare a learning plan in addition to a reflective essay in which they reflect on their overall progress and set goals for the upcoming semester. Students in the Accelerated Sequence and Studio initiatives may or may not be required to write about some or even all of the SLOs and are even more infrequently asked to reflect about their learning experience as a whole.

To my knowledge, only eComp requires its instructors to use a standard prompt (which is attached in Appendix A) [Dissertation Note: Memorandum Appendix Redacted]. Moreover, eComp students are asked to work on their portfolio throughout the semester; in the other initiatives, the final assignment is often introduced two or three weeks before it is due. Students may or may not receive instruction about how to prepare reflective documents throughout the semester, again depending upon instructor preference.

All this may result in hurried, overly mechanistic, and poor-quality student responses to the reflective component. For example, of the English 120 student portfolios assessed for the Spring 2015 semester, arguably only 13% of the portfolios assessed (6 out of 45) received good marks from both readers, which I define as at least a score of 3 out of 4 on the two SLOs assessed by the two different readers. On the other hand, 17% of the portfolios (8 out of 45) received poor marks, which I define as a score of 1 or 2 using the same measures. And 33% of the portfolios assessed (15 out of 45) received at least one failing mark, which I define as a score of 1 on at least one SLO by at least one reader.

Table 1: English 120 Portfolios Assessed in Spring 2015. Portfolios were assessed by at least two readers. Readers evaluated each portfolio for its reflection on two of the SLOs. Readers assigned a score to each reflection between 1 and 4 depending upon performance, with 4 described as an excellent reflection on the SLO.

Portfolio Measure	Definition of Measure	# Meeting Measure	% Meeting Measure
Good Marks	At least 3 on both SLOs by both Readers	6 out of 45	13%
Poor Marks	Below 2 on both SLOs by both Readers	8 out of 45	17%
Failing Mark	Score of 1 on any SLO by at least one reader	15 out of 45	33%
Incomplete Reflection	Did not address both SLOs	15 out of 45	33%
Missing Reflection	No reflective component	3 out of 45	6.6%

Moreover, 33% of the portfolios (15 out of 45) did not explicitly address one or both of the SLOs identified for assessment. Three portfolios did not have a reflective component at all. These three missing reflections may be due to instructor error in submitting materials for assessment. Whatever the reason, these missing and incomplete reflections interfered with the assessment process.

During the Spring 2015 semester, the Core Writing Directors and Coordinators discussed developing a standard portfolio prompt as a possible solution to these issues. For my project, I will test this hypothesis by developing and piloting a model prompt for the reflective component of the portfolio. However, because of the independent nature of the eComp and Stretch/Studio initiatives, I will limit the prompt to the standard English 110/120 Accelerated Composition Sequence.

III.   Working Research Questions

In general, I intend to research whether a standard portfolio prompt will resolve the problems discussed above, and if so, what kind of prompt will best accomplish this end.

1. What is the current state of research into reflection and transfer in writing curriculum design and writing program assessment?
2. What are the identified best practices in the field with respect to designing successful reflective writing prompts?
3. How can we design a prompt that meets these best practices, while still considering the unique needs of the University of New Mexico's first year writing program?
4. Finally, with respect to testing the prompt: How will a standard writing portfolio prompt affect student performance, instructor evaluation and development, and program assessment in English 110/120?

IV.   Proposed Timeline

In consultation with Dr. Elder, I have developed the following timeline:

October 15, 2015: Complete literature review of reflection, transfer, and writing portfolio best practices. I will submit this review to [the Director of FYC] and Dr. Elder.

November 1, 2015: Submit first draft of final portfolio reflective prompt for comments and approval from the Core Writing Directors, Coordinators, and Dr. Elder.

November 15, 2015: Circulate revised and approved draft to English 110/120 instructors for comments. Instructors may "unofficially" use the draft in their courses if they so desire; however, we will not ask any instructors to pilot the prompt at this time.

January 18, 2015: Revise draft in light of instructor comments. Circulate revised draft among Core Writing Directors, Coordinators, and Dr. Elder for comments and approval.

February 1, 2015: Submit request for research study approval to the Institutional Review Board.

TBD: Upon IRB approval, solicit participants for research study and pilot of model reflective portfolio prompt.

May/June 2015: Conduct portfolio and project assessment. Conduct interviews with instructor or student focus groups as appropriate. The exact methodology for this assessment will be determined in consultation with Dr. Elder at a later date.

V.   Conclusion

I sincerely hope that this project will strengthen the first-year writing program by offering some consistency in reflective practices among courses. The final portfolio is the most significant assignment that students complete in the first-year writing program. It makes up the majority of student's final grades and is meant to embody the work that students and instructors have done throughout the semester. The final portfolio also serves an important program assessment purpose.

Accordingly, the Core Writing program should offer sufficient guidance and support to permit students and instructors to succeed on this assignment. We have hypothesized that a standard or model reflective prompt may greatly assist in this end. I hope that the project that I have proposed above will help us determine whether a standard prompt will indeed help and improve the program as is hoped.

[References and Appendix to the September 15, 2015 Memorandum redacted]

Appendix C: Fall 2016 Draft Prompt

THE UNIVERSITY *of*
NEW MEXICO

To: English 110 Students
From: [Instructor Name]
Re: Final Portfolio Assignment Prompt

This memorandum discusses the requirements for your final assignment of the semester: the final portfolio. Your final portfolio is due on [insert due date].

The portfolio is worth [insert points/percentage] of your final grade. **You must submit a passing portfolio to pass English 110, with a 74% (C) or above.**

The portfolio consists of two elements: (1) a reflective literacy narrative, and (2) a creative revision of one of your Major Writing Assignments (MWAs). The specific requirements for each of these two elements is discussed below.

PART ONE: LITERACY NARRATIVE

Rhetorical Situation: As an introduction to your portfolio, you are asked to create a literacy narrative about your experience in English 110. Your narrative should explore the question: **"How will English 110 help me learn to write or compose?"**

- **Topic:** Your topic is the above question: "How will English 110 help me learn to write or compose?" Notice that the question asks you to consider how this class *will help you learn.* In other words, you are being asked to tell a story that explores how the knowledge, insights, and skills you gained in English 110 will help you understand how to write for future situations.
- **Angle:** Focus on telling the story of your learning. Use the above question as the problem or central conflict that you explore through your story. Be sure to discuss the concepts we have covered in English 110, as discussed in the SLOs. You must specifically discuss SLO A (Rhetorical Situation and Genre) and SLO F (Reflection) but incorporate the rest of the SLOs as you see fit. Try to use the SLOs as a sort of vocabulary or central theme in your narrative. Please include a short parenthetical citation whenever you refer to or rely on a SLO.
- **Purpose:** Your purpose in this narrative will be to: (1) reflect on and tell the story of your learning in English 110, (2) explore how you have developed and will continue to develop as a writer in the future, and (3) show off what you have learned about writing in light of the SLOs.
- **Audience:** Your audience is the discourse community of your English 110 classroom. This community includes yourself, your classmates, and me, your

instructor. But the community also includes other writing instructors at UNM, the Core Writing Program, the Department of English Language and Literature, and the University itself.

- **Context**: You are being asked to create this narrative as a way to help you reflect on your learning in English 110. Thus, you are primarily writing this narrative for yourself. But realize also that other members of your discourse community will read, evaluate, and try to learn from your narrative as well. This assignment also counts as a large portion of your final course grade. So please treat this as a formal and significant writing assignment.

Writing Assignment Details: Create a literacy narrative that responds to the rhetorical situation described above. At a minimum, your narrative should:

- Tell a story that explores the question: "How will English 110 help me learn to write or compose?" Many students find it helpful to organize their narrative around an overall metaphor or analogy that responds to this question.
- As you explore this question, refer to and rely upon the concepts discussed in the SLOs. You must specifically discuss SLO A (Rhetorical Situation and Genre) and SLO F (Reflection), but you should also discuss the other SLOs that contributed to your learning.
- Please include an in-text parenthetical citation whenever you refer to or rely upon a SLO in your paper. For example, when discussing the concept of writing as a social act, end your sentence with a reference to (SLO B) or (Outcome B).
- Incorporate evidence to help illustrate your story and your learning. Realize that the primary and best evidence of your learning will be the documents you will present in your portfolio. Try to show how these documents demonstrate your learning in this class. But you should also include other evidence of your learning, from either inside or outside the class. For example, you may want to include anecdotes, examples, quotes from outside sources, references to your other work, etc.

[OPTIONAL: Insert Additional Instructions, Questions, or Requirements]

Description of Genre: You are being asked to create a literacy narrative as an introduction to your portfolio. The literacy narrative is a micro-genre of the memoir genre. Please refer to the chapter on memoirs in your *Writing Today* textbook for information about this genre and a few examples of literacy narratives.

Choice of modes and medium: You are [encouraged/required] to include multimodal elements—such as alphabetic text, speech, moving and still images, sound, or color—in your literacy narrative. You also have the option to compose in an alternative medium for this assignment, creating a non-traditional text such as a blog post, website, video, podcast, game, comic, or interactive presentation.

PART TWO: CREATIVE REVISION

Rhetorical Situation: In addition to your literacy narrative, you will include a creative revision of one of your MWAs as evidence of your learning in English 110. Unlike a traditional revision, which requires you to improve your composition for the same audience, purpose, and context, your goal in this creative revision is to repurpose and alter your MWA for an entirely new rhetorical situation, genre, and medium.

You will select and identify a new audience, purpose, and context for your MWA in a preface to your creative revision, explaining how and why you made specific changes to your MWA to fit this new rhetorical situation. You will also explain how your new rhetorical situation influenced your choices for the genre and medium of your revised MWA.

Finally, you will include prior drafts of your MWA and other supporting documentation to show the development of your MWA throughout the writing process.

Writing Assignment Details: First, choose one of your MWAs to creatively revise for this assignment. Collect all of the different versions of your MWA, your peer and instructor feedback, and any other documents that helped create your MWA. Organize this documentation in a professional manner and include it at the end of your portfolio.

Next, design a new rhetorical situation for your MWA. For example, you could choose a different audience or a different purpose from the original assignment. Then revise your MWA to fit this new rhetorical situation, making changes to the genre and medium as appropriate. Include this creatively revised MWA as the centerpiece in your portfolio.

Finally, create a 1-2-page preface for your creative revision that identifies:

1. Your new rhetorical situation (audience, purpose, and context) and how this differs from the rhetorical situation for the original MWA.
2. What changes you made to the MWA for the creative revision, including changes to the genre and medium of the composition.
3. How and why you made those changes.

Include this preface before your revised MWA as an introduction to the composition.

Portfolio Checklist: Use this checklist to make sure that you are including all of the required elements in your portfolio, in order:

- Literacy Narrative
- Creative Revision:

- o Preface to the Creative Revision
- o Creative Revision of your MWA
- o All prior drafts of your MWA, including your final, graded draft
- o Other documents that went into your MWA draft, such as peer review comments, instructor feedback, Short Writing Assignments, or other prewriting exercises.

The requirements for each of these elements are discussed above.

Grading Rubric: [insert grading rubric]

Appendix D: Early Memorandum on Portfolio Prompt

To: [REDACTED, WPAs]
From: Soha Turfler
Date: October 14, 2015
Re: Final Portfolio Prompt Project - Reflection, Transfer, and Assessment

This memorandum follows my earlier project proposal of September 15, 2015 re: Core Writing Coordinator Project—Developing a Core Writing Portfolio Reflective Prompt.

Over the past month, I sought to identify and review recent scholarship on reflection, transfer, and assessment in writing instruction. This memorandum serves to set forth my findings and recommendations with respect to the development of a model assignment for the First-year Composition (FYC) final portfolio.

But I feel compelled to note, at the outset, that the field of reflection, transfer, and assessment is vast. And I am, for most purposes, a novice. Given my time constraints, it was simply impossible for me to identify and consider all of the literature relevant to this task. I would therefore ask that you consider this review as a work-in-progress. I hope to continue my research into and expertise in this field as this project progresses.

I.   Update on Project Background

I already spoke about some of the exigencies and constraints relevant to the FYC final portfolio project in my memorandum of September 15, and I would like to expressly reference and incorporate that discussion here. Since then, the Core Writing Committee has further consulted about what it envisions for the final portfolio project and has recommended the following features:

- The portfolio should be a multi-draft portfolio, in that students build the portfolio throughout the semester.
- Students should be asked to repurpose at least one Major Writing Assignment (MWA) into either a new genre, or new rhetorical situation, or both.
- The reflective portion should be written to a fictional, but realistic audience such as an administrator, former teacher, or high school student;
- The reflection should also describe "how people learn to write" through a narrative discussion of the student's rhetorical choices.

I have therefore used these features as a way to guide my research, analysis, and recommendations. In particular, I have sought to understand how a portfolio with the above features can implement the best pedagogical practices in the field, while still serving the unique needs of FYC at UNM.

I am aware that my audience is already well familiar with much of the scholarship in this field. This is evident from the very fact that the Committee's recommendations for the final portfolio project do already embody, insofar as I can tell, many of the best practices of the field. Therefore, in the interest of time, I will be brief. I will direct my review in Section

II only to the scholarship which specifically explains my current thinking and recommendations about the portfolio in Section III. Nevertheless, I have provided a full list of the literature I have reviewed and found relevant thus far in Section IV.

II.   Review of Relevant Scholarship

The three issues of reflection, transfer, and assessment appear to cross all fields in adult education. And, to a large extent, the three pedagogical issues are linked together. But, as with all things that are linked, there is both mutual dependence and inevitable tension. This, of course, makes it challenging to design a successful curriculum, as a balance must be struck between them.

For example, when speaking of "reflection" in pursuit of pedagogical goals, most scholars mean to speak of Critical Reflection, which might be thought of Reflection + Transfer. Teachers ask students to reflect on experiences so that students might transfer or *transform* that experience to other situations.

Some background might help clarify what I mean. In "Critical Reflection as a Rationalistic Ideal," Marianne van Woerkom traces the ideological origins of critical reflective practice in adult education to four intellectual traditions: ideology critique, psychotherapeutically inclined traditions, analytic philosophy and logic, and pragmatist constructivism (341). It is into this last tradition—pragmatist constructivism—that most of the scholarship on reflective practice in writing instruction falls. As van Woerkom explains:

> The tradition of pragmatist constructivism emphasizes the role people play in constructing their own experiences and meanings. In this tradition, critical reflection helps people to understand their experience and to reject universal and generalizable truths….Reflective thought is an 'active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends.' Many authors have defined *reflection* or related concepts inspired by Dewey in a phase model that goes from problem analysis to the testing of possible solutions and finally the selection and implementation of a solution. The epistemology of pragmatist constructivism is subjectivist, understanding knowledge as individually, culturally, and socially framed (343).

The pragmatist constructivist tradition therefore emphasizes experimentation, *trying* as opposed to just *doing*, as a way to transform or construct student's understanding of the world (ibid).

This tradition clearly informs all the current best practices in critical reflection and writing instruction, all of which focus on the construction of writing knowledge through experimentation. For example, in her seminal work, *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*, noted scholar Kathleen Blake Yancey identifies three reflective processes that should be incorporated in writing pedagogy:

1.   Reflection-in-action: "the process of reviewing and projecting and revising, which takes place within a composing event, and the associated texts".

2. Constructive reflection: "the process of developing a cumulative, multi-selved, multi-voiced identity, which takes place between and among composing events, and the associated texts"; and

3. Reflection-in-Presentation: "the process of articulating the relationships between and among the multiple variable of writing and the writer in a specific context for a specific audience, and the associated texts" (13-14).

These reflective processes not only construct a student's understanding of writing, but of the student's own understanding of his- or her- self as a writer. And, as Yancey further explains: "Any self we see within text, particularly autobiography but reflection-in-presentation as well, is multiple, is *shaped*, is constructed; is necessarily contingent, transitory, filled with tension" (73).

Like any pedagogical framework, pragmatic constructivism privileges certain epistemologies over others: for example, rationality is favored over other ways of knowing, such as emotion or intuition (van Woerkom 345-349). This also creates a tension which many scholars have criticized: the conception of writing and of self that students construct often conforms to the very construct privileged by the student's teachers (see, for example, Huot & Williamson or Jung). Once you throw the needs of the institution into the mix through assessment, problems of conformance and the bureaucratic cooption of the student's authenticity and agency become even further exacerbated (see Scott).

This may be why students struggle to "transfer" the specific writing knowledges and identities that they have constructed in FYC or other collegiate writing courses to the actual workplace. Under pragmatic constructivism, knowledge is situational. And, as we know, so is 'good' writing. The writing identity that students have constructed for themselves in FYC might not fit other situations. And if students do not understand that good writing is itself situational, they may not have the rhetorical ability to transform that identity or their writing practices.

In "Transfer, Transformation, and Rhetorical Knowledge: Insights from Transfer Theory," Doug Brent thus proposes, and to some extent provides evidence for, the supposition that students only transfer general rhetorical concepts—rhetorical situation, genre, process, etc.—rather than specific writing skills. Brent explains that this is true even if the class tries to 'simulate' a workplace environment, as simulations simply cannot predict what students will come up against in the future.

This is perhaps also why, in *Writing Across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing*, Yancey and her cohort propose a successful course model where students specifically study rhetorical concepts as content. If students understand that good writing is situational, they may be encouraged to 'transfer' their knowledge of writing simply by using the skills they have developed to understand the situation and what kind(s) of writing and identities might best fit.

Thus, the best way to encourage transfer in writing is to encourage students to understand writing as situational. And the best way to encourage students to understand that writing is situational is to encourage them to understand and apply rhetorical concepts.

While doing this, however, we must be careful not to inadvertently encourage students to simply conform to institutional needs or the oppressive practices of the community. Thus, we are placed in the odd balance of having to encourage students to understand that good writing is situational, but also to encourage them to understand that that situation is constructed and that they, too, can and should participate in its construction.

III.   Recommendations

In light of this, I believe our task thus becomes to devise a model portfolio assignment which emphasizes process, which permits sufficient flexibility for students to explore varied constructions of writing and the self, and which focuses student's exploration of rhetorical concepts. This, of course, must be balanced against the program's needs for assessment, as well as the program's tradition of respect for the autonomy and agency of Core Writing instructors. Fortunately, since we already have developed SLOs which emphasize the essentially situational nature of writing and allow instructors to design matching curriculum as they see fit, it may be easier to find an acceptable balance amongst the needs of reflection, transfer, and assessment.

I therefore make the following suggestions in response to the Core Writing Committee's already expressed wishes:

· *The portfolio should be a multi-draft portfolio, in that students build the portfolio throughout the semester.* I agree with this completely. However, in order to adequately implement this requirement, and to encourage students to take the end of semester reflection and revision seriously, I believe that we will need to develop two prompts for the final portfolio assignment. One prompt should be introduced at the beginning of the semester and instruct students how to set up their portfolio and perform reflections-in-action. The second prompt should come near the end of the semester and provide instructions for the creative repurposing and final reflective assignment.

· Students should be asked to repurpose at least one Major Writing Assignment (MWA) into either a new genre, or new rhetorical situation, or both: In order to encourage students to understand that good writing is situational, and that genres are just typified responses to situations, students should be asked to do a creative repurposing of an assignment for a different rhetorical situation and genre at the end of the semester. I suggest that students be asked to do just one revision so that they have sufficient time to devote to the portfolio. Students should also be allowed to choose the rhetorical situation and genre for their creative repurposing.

· The reflective portion should be written to a fictional, but realistic audience such as an administrator, former teacher, or high-school student: I disagree with this recommendation. Simulations do not encourage transfer. In order to encourage students to understand that writing is situational, I suggest that the audience for the portfolio be the community of the classroom, itself. This will reinforce the notion that students must understand the goals, values, and expectations of their discourse communities in order to create fitting texts. Writing to a fictional or simulated audience may create a disconnect between the real audience (teacher, university, peers) and the fictionalized audience. FYC

students also may become confused between the concept of "rhetorical" situation and "hypothetical" situation.

· The reflection should also describe "how people learn to write" through a narrative discussion of the student's rhetorical choices: I agree that students reflect well through the use of narrative and must be asked to discuss their rhetorical choices. I also agree with the orienting question, "how people learn to write." To this, I might add "how people learn to write for different situations" or "for different contexts, purposes, and audiences." Moreover, I want to emphasize that the question should be how people learn and not what the student learned in the class. "Learned" suggests that the student's writing education is final, rather than constantly being constructed. In this light, we may want to ask the eComp administrators to consider changing the orienting question on their own mandatory final portfolio prompt. Currently, the question asks students to think about what they learned in the course.

In addition, I make the following recommendations:

· The English 110 reflective prompt should ask students to create a literacy narrative or a personal essay; the English 120 prompt should allow students to choose their own genre for the reflective portion: Yancey talks about the relative merits of different reflective genres in Reflection in the Writing Classroom. Traditionally, the reflection takes the form of either a letter or an essay. Both genres have their benefits and drawbacks. In order to encourage students to focus on exploration through narrative, I suggest that we make English 110 students create a literacy narrative (memoir) or a personal essay with an emphasis on exploration. This will also hopefully allow students to rely on emotive, intuitive, or other non-critical ways of knowing in their reflections. And in order to acknowledge and encourage English 120 student's greater mastery over genre, I suggest that students be allowed to choose the genre of their reflection. We can, however, provide some suggested genres, such as a Review or Rhetorical Analysis of their own work.

· The model reflective prompt should not contain suggested reflective questions, but should permit teachers to add specific questions as they see fit: This is to discourage students from viewing reflection as recipe following, but to instead see reflection as an exploration of their constructs of writing and the self. I also hope that this will discourage the 'bureaucratic voice' from dominating this process too much. However, teachers should be permitted to identify specific questions to fit their unique curricular needs.

· Students should be asked to use the SLOs as vocabulary for their reflection and to identify references to the SLOs in parenthetical citations. However, they should not be asked to define or write specifically about what they "learned about the SLOs" or "what the SLOs mean": Again, this is to encourage students to see reflection as an explorative process rather than an exercise in recipe-making. I believe that this also discourages students from viewing the SLOs as concepts that they have mastered, rather than are continually learning about. By asking students to specifically use the vocabulary of the SLOs (e.g. rhetorical situation, discourse communities, Standardized American English) we can encourage transfer of these general rhetorical concepts. Moreover, we can ease assessment by asking students to identify the SLOs in parenthetical citations. Their progress towards the SLOs should be evident through their use in the reflective prompt and the quality of the accompanying

materials. Students also can be asked to define the meaning of the SLOs through other evaluative methods.

· *Students should be encouraged/required to include multimodal elements into their reflective piece:* This is, once again, to allow students to be able to express other ways of 'knowing' in their portfolio. However, I understand that not all FYC writing instructors feel comfortable with multimodal instruction yet. As such, we should allow teachers to express a preference here.

· *The portfolio prompt should <u>not</u> include a suggested rubric*: This is to allow students and teachers to determine what they value as a community and would like to emphasize in the portfolio. Including even a suggested rubric would place too much power in the hands of a disconnected central authority.

I understand that some of these recommendations complicate the timeline for the portfolio project that I set forth in my September 15 memorandum (such as creating two separate prompts). Thus, I would like advice on how to proceed. I also invite your feedback and criticism on any and all of the above recommendations. My goal here is to create a prompt that is useful for both the FYC program and its students. As such, I hope to benefit from the entire community's input.

[References Redacted]

Appendix E: Reflection on Initial Research Design

Independent Study Final Reflection: A Failure of Form

You asked me to reflect on "what went well/what [I would] revise" as a final assignment.

Let me begin by thanking you for offering to guide me in this Independent Study. This was one of the most challenging semesters I have ever experienced. Between giving birth to my son and losing my father over the winter break, I started off the semester feeling dizzy, disoriented, and in truth, disconnected from my studies. All I wanted to do was to sit at home, curled up in a little ball, cradling my newborn, Kian. I am so grateful for the flexibility that this independent study afforded me; because of it, I was able to cuddle Kian in one hand while reading about reflection, assessment, and research design in the other. What is more, I was able to focus on what I wanted to focus on in the readings, to search for answers to the questions I had defined, instead of trying to prepare for the questions defined by another. I do not know how I would have made it through these past sixteen weeks without this study. I am so grateful for your help.

But I must admit that I always seem to say that the current semester I am in is the most challenging. Last semester, it was my pregnancy which created new challenges; the years before, it was taking care of my ailing father, getting to know my now-husband, wedding planning, learning to be a newlywed, moving to a new home, etc. It seems that there are so many things to do; so many different parts of my life drawing my attention away from my studies. I honestly feel pulled apart sometimes.

Modern society seems to demand that you separate your career from your personal life; forget who you are and "be a professional." But I don't want to segment myself into parts. I don't want to have to say here, now I'll be mother, wife, and daughter; now I'll be teacher and scholar. I want to live a coherent life. I want to believe that I can move as a fully integrated self. And this is why I appreciate the moments in my life in which I am given time to pull myself together and reflect on how I want my experiences to shape my future.

This is why I believe that this portfolio project is so important: I know how central reflection is to learning, and I know how very vital having independence to express and explore an integrated self is to that reflection. I thus sought to design the portfolio pilot around two central questions: (1) are the portfolio assignment prompts specific enough to encourage students to reflect in ways that their instructors and the program want them to reflect?; and, (2) are the assignment prompts flexible enough to allow students to express and explore their learning in relationship to their own integrated selves?

In formulating these questions, I was in large part influenced by the behavioral psychologist and pragmatist George Herbert Meade's theories of the "I" and the "me." Meade explains that the mind develops through reflexiveness, the "turning-back of experience of the individual upon himself" (62). This reflexiveness is necessary but not sufficient for the development of an integrated self. What is required is a reflective process: The mind becomes self-conscious by understanding the responses that the mind arouses in a "generalized other," an abstracted community of other minds. Through reflection and

interaction with this generalized other, two functional aspects of the self-develop: the "me," which is the self's internalization of the generalized other, and the "I," which is the self's response to that other. As Meade explains, "[b]oth aspects of the 'I' and 'me' are essential to the self in its full expression" (91). And both are in constant conversation with and adjustment to one another.

Reflective practice seeks to develop the "me" of the student's selves. This is necessarily so, as Meade explains that the "me" is the only "self [the individual] is aware of" and thus is automatically the object of any reflection (80). We ask students to think about their actions so that they may become better aware of the attitudes that their actions will arouse in some abstracted understanding of their communities. But in asking students to reflect on their selves as "myself," we also hope to modify their response to future situations. Thus, reflective practice is targeted towards development of the "I" as well as the "me" in our students. But in doing so, we must ensure that there is sufficient flexibility for the expression of this "I"; otherwise, we will inhibit the student's development of an integrated self (118-119). Thus, there must be a balance between the needs of the community (e.g. university, Core Writing program) and the needs of the individual students.

I am proud to say that the portfolio prompt and the research project I have designed seems to be heading in the right direction. The initial data that I have received as a result of the "pre-pilot" supports this understanding: From the final portfolios I graded this semester, students seem to be understanding the assignment and creating more coherent, explorative reflections. [Redacted], who I asked to test this pilot with me, also remarked on the generally high quality of her student's reflections. Students seem to be focused much more on how their personal experiences relate to themselves, rather than on defining the SLOs for assessment purposes.

The initial survey data I received also generally supports that students are finding that the portfolio assignment reflects who they are as a writer (50% Agree, 16% Strongly Agree), reflects their learning in the class (67% Agree, 11% Strongly Agree), gave them valuable experience (39% Agree, 11% Strongly Agree), and helped them achieve their own goals (39% Agree, 11% Strongly Agree). Most of the respondents identified the portfolio prompt as helping them understand what was expected of them in the assignment, although the majority of respondents stated that it was their instructor's explanation of the prompt which most helped. This confirmed an earlier suspicion that I had about the assignment: the prompt is only as good as the instructor's familiarity with it. And this is why it is vital that we design a prompt that instructors like and know how to teach.

But I must admit that, perhaps because of my own struggles in connecting to my studies this semester, I neglected something very important in the design of my research project: the community. Yes, I designed a pilot which solicits instructor's input into the prompt and asks them to help create a corpus of activities. But I have not asked these instructors to collaborate with each other in any way, or to even interact with me throughout the semester. Nor have I really solicited student's participation; a short survey does not really generate true collaboration and feedback. I have focused too much on ensuring the "I" in the pilot that I neglected the "me." It is only in the past two weeks that I have realized (or perhaps remembered) that this ongoing collaboration and sense of community is essential to successful reflection, learning, and progress. And this revelation has made me rethink my

entire approach to the research project, as well as my feelings of success in terms of completing this Independent Study.

Now, I read Linda Adler-Kassner's *The Activist WPA* before I submitted my draft research design to you. I had studied community organization models in the past and had even taken part in a few community projects myself. But while I found her discussion of activism compelling and insightful into the role of a Writing Program Administrator, I did not see how it necessarily fit in with what I was trying to do. She seemed focused on WPA activism with respect to outside communities; ensuring that a program can survive and prosper by fostering a connection to university administrators and the public. I already understood how this project would improve the image of the Core Writing program, and her other discussion of activism seemed larger than the scope of anything I could do as a mere grad student.

So, I took what I could from *The Activist WPA* and ignored the rest. I concentrated more on the other assigned reading by Adler-Kassner, *Reframing Writing Assessment*, and tried to model my research design on many of the points she makes in that text about the power-dynamics of reflection and assessment instead. I thus created a very traditional research project; using the usual researchers toolkit (focus groups, interviews, and surveys) that I studied in our other readings to solicit various kinds of input about that power dynamic.

But asking for input is not the same as discussion. And if I had read *The Activist WPA* in a class or even discussed it with you, I might of realized earlier that, by failing to create a radical research project which would truly engage the instructors and students in a collaborative effort about the prompt, I am continuing the tradition of top-down administration. But since I did not have that experience of the community of the classroom and was given the independence to feel disconnected with my studies (the "I"), rather than forced to be confronted with and connect to other perspectives (the "me"), I forgot that the *form* of my research project should also support its *content*. I cannot expect to create a research project which investigates how the prompt is being used in the community of the Core Writing program without first engaging that community. I need to foster a sense of community, of belonging in the pilot in order to create a prompt which succeeds at everything I want it to. At this moment, I'm not exactly sure how I can best do that.

The problem is that most of the instructors and students that I know are just as busy (and perhaps disconnected) as me. Most of them do not want to take on the extra "work" that would be required to commit to a truly collaborative pilot. In fact, it was a discussion with one of these grad students about the reasons why he did not want to participate that led me to realize that I failed to engage the community in the first place. Further interactions that I have had this semester with students, instructors, and even English Department staff have made me realize that the community might be reluctant to engage in the pilot, even if I had truly asked them to.

As you probably know, I sent the recruitment email for the pilot a few weeks ago; I waited until the end of the semester because I wanted to give instructors time to know what they were teaching in the fall. (On a side note, I still do not know what I am going to teach; I just didn't want to wait any longer, so I sent it anyway). I got only three responses: One was from the English Department GA, who wanted to meet with me to discuss how the new

department wiki could be used for the pilot; the other two responses were from interested instructors, but one of these instructors wanted to know "how much time" would be involved before committing and the other made a sarcastic comment about "lov[ing] to work for free."

When I met with the Department GA, he explained that he could not participate (he was teaching only literature courses) even if he wanted to (which he didn't, remarking that us compositionists "might like to reflect" on our teaching but that he had "better things to do"). I then sat with the Department GA for over an hour, trying to understand why he (as probably representative of other TAs in the community) could be so dismissive of the importance of reflecting on his work. What I came to understand is that many of these grad students feel just as pulled apart as I do; and what is more, many of the literature students do not see any coherency between their studies and their teaching for the Core Writing program.

However, I will not go so far as to say that teaching for these grad students is just a way to pay for grad school. I honestly believe that these literature students are just as capable of instructors as their compositionist counterparts (and if they truly understood the literature job market, they might be more interested in the composition studies part of their work). What I think is lacking here, as with the students in the Core Writing program, is a failure to appreciate the integrated self and its relationship to the community, which ultimately relates to a failure in reflective practice. These instructors do not see any link between reading (what "they" do) and writing (what "we" do); between interpreting (what "they" do) and persuading (what "we" do). They do not understand how their studies (the "I") and their participation in the larger community (the "me") are one. But I have to believe that these seemingly disparate activities are not so disparate after all.

How do I get instructors to consider how their experiences in the classroom connect with their studies and their home life? How do I get these instructors to reflect on how they can pull the seemingly unrelated parts of their lives together into a fully integrated self? And how do I get them to appreciate participation in the community as a way to develop that self?

Obviously, I am just starting to grapple with these questions. I know that I need to amend my IRB submission. I would like to design a study which further engages the community. I also want to study *the process of the study itself* as a means to explore the questions in the paragraph above. What I have learned from this experience so far is that we, as instructors, aren't much better at reflective practice than our students. And it would be interesting to see how engaging instructors in a reflective community about the pilot will affect the program itself.

But right now, I have no idea how to do this. And I again run into the problem that I discussed at the start: my own limited time, attention, and resources. I am only one, lonely PhD student with a now 5-month old demanding son. What can I do to find balance and coherency between my studies, the pilot, and my home life?

I would like to speak with you about a redesign of the pilot, if at all possible. This is something that I would like to do over the summer; but I need some direction before I

start. Please let me know if you have any time to meet. As always, I appreciate your guidance and support.

[References Redacted]

Appendix F: Instructor Focus Group Questions

Beginning of the Semester Focus Group Questions:
- How have you introduced the portfolio assignment to your students in the past?
- How might we introduce the new model prompt to our students?
- What kind of reflective activities do you generally incorporate in your classes?
- What kinds of reflective activities might we use to introduce this prompt, in particular?
- How do you feel about the idea of the program adopting a standard prompt for the portfolio assignment? Why do you feel this way?
- What are your thoughts and feelings about this assignment prompt, in particular?
- What revisions or additions would you make to the assignment prompt for your class? Why?
- What are your goals for the portfolio assignment, in general?
- How might this prompt be used or adapted to fit those goals?
- What are some ideas for materials or activities that we could use to help students prepare the portfolio?
- Do you feel any hesitancy or reservations about assigning the new prompt? Why?
- Is there anything else you want to add?

Middle of the Semester Focus Group Questions:
- Tell me a story about your experiences teaching the model portfolio prompt so far.
- What problems or questions have you encountered in teaching the model portfolio prompt?
- What revisions or alterations would you make to the prompt at this point and why?
- What kinds of activities have you done so far to teach the model portfolio prompt?
- Do you have any more ideas for materials or activities that we could use to help students prepare this assignment?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

End of the Semester Focus Group Questions:
- Tell me a story about your experiences teaching the model portfolio prompt.
- What problems or challenges did you encounter in teaching the prompt?
- What revisions for alterations did you make to the prompt and why?
- What kinds of questions did your students have about the prompt?
  How did you answer those questions?
- How did your approach to the new portfolio prompt compare to your approach to the portfolio assignment in years past?
- Evaluate the quality of reflection and understanding you observed in the work students created in response to the model portfolio.
- Evaluate the relative convenience or ease of grading the students' portfolios.

- What kinds of materials did you consult or create for the prompt?
- What kinds of activities did you use to teach the prompt?
- What will you "take away" from your experiences teaching portfolio assignment this semester?
- How do you feel about the idea of the program adopting a standard prompt for the portfolio assignment? Have your feelings changed in any way? Why?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Probing Questions:
- Detail probes: who, when, where, how
- Encouragement probes: tell me more about…
- Clarification probes: did you say….

Appendix G: Instructor Survey

- What are you looking for in a portfolio assignment? Or in other words, what are your pedagogical goals for a portfolio?
- Did you feel as if you were able to use the new model prompt towards these goals? Why or why not?
- Were you able to integrate the model portfolio prompt to your own curriculum, and if so, how?
- How do you feel about teaching the model portfolio prompt going forward?
- What specific suggestions or revisions would you make about the model portfolio prompt?
- Comment about your experience participating in this pilot study.
- How did your experiences participating in this pilot affect how you taught the portfolio assignment?
- How did your experiences in this pilot influence your teaching, generally?
- How did your experiences participating in this pilot influence your studies/scholarship (if at all)?
- How did your experiences participating in this pilot affect your personal life (if at all)?
- What do you feel was most helpful or useful about your participation in this pilot?
- What do you feel was least helpful or useful about your participation in this pilot?
- Is there anything else you want to add?

Appendix H: Student Survey

1. In order to keep track of your responses, please write your course section and number (example, English 110.001): _____. Your responses will be kept anonymous.

Directions: In the table below, please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following comments by selecting the number that corresponds with your answer.

	5. Strongly Agree	4. Agree	. Not Sure	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
2. In general, I like writing	5	4		2	1
3. In general, I am proud of the work that I do in writing classes.	5	4		2	1
4. In general, I understood what was expected of me from this class.	5	4		2	1
5. I understood what was expected of me in the portfolio assignment, in particular	5	4		2	1
6. My portfolio reflects my best work.	5	4		2	1
7. My portfolio reflects who I am as a writer.	5	4		2	1
8. My portfolio reflects my learning in this class.	5	4		2	1
9. I gained valuable experience from this class.	5	4		2	1
10. I gained valuable experience from the portfolio assignment, in particular.	5	4		2	1

	5	4		2	1
11. Working on this portfolio helped me achieve my own goals.	5	4		2	1
12. Working on this portfolio has helped contribute to or shape my writing in the future.	5	4		2	1

13. Which of the following helped you prepare your final portfolio? (Check all that apply):

Final Portfolio Assignment Prompt   Instructor Explanation or Feedback

Peer Explanation or Feedback   Tutor/CAPS Assistance or Feedback

Viewing Sample Portfolios from Past Students   In-Class Activities

Class Assignments   Class Textbook

Instructional Videos

Other Assigned Reading (Please List}: _____

Other (Please Specify): _____

14. Of the above, which do you feel was most helpful to you in preparing your portfolio?

15. Approximately how many hours did you spend preparing your portfolio?

16. What grade do you expect you will earn in this class?

17. What obstacles or challenges did you encounter in preparing your portfolio? (Use the space provided below):

18. What additional comments do you have about the portfolio assignment? (Use the space provided below):

Appendix I: May 2017 English 110 Portfolio Prompt

English 110 Final Portfolio Model Assignment Prompt

Dear Instructors:

The following contains a model assignment prompt for use in all English 110 courses. The Core Writing Program developed this prompt in collaboration with several Core Writing instructors and students who participated in a pilot study during the Fall 2016 semester. We hope that we have created a prompt which will be useful to students and instructors alike and which reflects the curricular goals of our Program.

Using the Prompt: Please note that is designed to be a 'model' or 'template' prompt. You should review and revise this prompt before giving it to your students. For example, you will note several places in the prompt which ask you to "fill in the blank" or choose from suggested options (highlighted in red). You will also note that the prompt does not contain a rubric; nevertheless, you are very much encouraged to include a detailed rubric which reflects the goals and focus of your class.

Revising the Prompt: You are also welcomed to revise the prompt beyond the changes suggested below. This model prompt was designed to be a living document, adapting to the evolving needs of our students, instructors, and the Program. Please feel free to suggest official revisions to the template as you work with the prompt.

At a minimum, however, we ask that all students complete the basic assignments listed in the prompt (Memoir, Preface, Creative Revision), explore the central questions ("How have I grown or changed as a writer in English 110?" and "How will this change or growth help me in the future?"), and reflect on the SLOs identified by the Program (currently SLOs A and F). This will ensure greater consistency among English 110 courses and facilitate assessment of the program.

Scaffolding: The portfolio is meant to be the culmination of a semester of work. We encourage you to give students many opportunities throughout the semester to reflect on course concepts and contribute to their portfolio. For example, many instructors ask students to explore two or three reflection questions in a cover letter which students submit along with their Major Writing Assignments. As such, we have developed the following list of sample questions that you might ask students to reflect upon at various points in the semester:

- What was your purpose in this assignment and how did this purpose influence your composition?
- Who was your audience in this assignment and how did this audience influence your composition?
- Tell me the story of your draft.
- Tell me what you learned in this assignment.
- What would change about your draft if you were to write it in a different genre/for a different rhetorical situation? Why would you make those changes?
- How did your assignment change throughout the composition process? What experiences contributed to these changes? What did you learn from those changes?
- What important choices or decisions did you make while composing this assignment? Why did you make those choices? What did you learn from making those choices/decisions?
- What changes would you make to this assignment if you had more time, resources, or knowledge? Why would you make those changes?
- Choose one Student Learning Outcome (SLO). How has your thinking changed about this

SLO? What experiences contributed to this change?
- What important insights or skills did you develop through this assignment? What experiences gave you those insights or helped you develop those skills? How will these insights/skills help you in the future? Which SLOs might reflect or apply to these insights/skills?
- How did you use different languages, dialects, or registers in your text (such as your home languages or languages other English)? Why did you use these different languages?

Please feel free to contact the Core Writing Directors with any questions or feedback about the model prompt below.

To: English 110 Students
From: [Instructor Name]
Re: Final Portfolio Assignment Prompt

This prompt discusses the requirements for your final assignment of the semester: the final portfolio. Your final portfolio is due on [insert due date].

The portfolio is worth [insert points/percentage—minimum of 35%] of your final grade.
You must submit a passing portfolio to pass English 110, with a 74% (C) or above.

_____

Portfolio Checklist: Your portfolio should include the following:

- Learning Memoir
- Preface to your Creative Revision
- Creative Revision of your MWA
- All prior drafts of your MWA, including your final, graded draft
- [Instructor: Identify additional documents you would like students to include in their portfolio. You may also need to alter this checklist if students are creating an ePortfolio]

The requirements for each of these elements are discussed below.

_____

LEARNING MEMOIR

Your Rhetorical Situation: As an introduction to your portfolio, you are asked to create a memoir that reflects on your learning and experiences in English 110. Your memoir should explore the following two questions: **"How have I grown or changed as a writer through English 110?" and "How will this change or growth help me in the future?"**

- *Topic*: Your learning and experience in English 110. Notice that the questions above ask you to look both backwards, to your past experiences as a writer, and forwards, to the writer you are becoming. In other words, you are being asked to tell a story about how English 110 *transformed or added to* your knowledge or identity as a writer and how this knowledge or identity may apply to future situations.
- *Angle*: Focus on exploring on the two questions above. Be sure to connect your discussion to the concepts we have covered in English 110, as reflected in the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). **You must specifically discuss SLO A (Rhetorical Situation and Genre) and SLO F (Reflection), but incorporate the rest of the SLOs as they relate to your learning experience.**
- *Purpose*: Your purpose is to: (1) reflect on your learning in English 110, (2) explore how you have developed and will continue to develop as a writer

in the future, and (3) show off what you have learned about writing.
- *Audience***:** [Instructor: Select an audience for the text or allow students to choose their own audience. Some suggested audiences: future English 110 students; the other students in class; the instructor; the student him/herself]
- *Context*: You are creating this memoir to help you reflect on your learning. As such, you are primarily writing this memoir for yourself. But realize also that others will read your text as well. Since this assignment also counts as a large portion of your final course grade, treat it as a formal and significant writing assignment.

Description of Genre: You are being asked to write a memoir or literacy narrative. As such, you should rely on the patterns of the memoir genre (plot/conflict, characters, scene, dialogue, etc.) to help you create your text. Please refer to the Chapter on Memoirs in your *Writing Today* textbook for further details and tips.

Choice of modes and medium: You are [encouraged/required] to include multimodal elements—such as alphabetic text, speech, moving and still images, sound, or color—in your text. You also have the option to compose in an alternative medium for this assignment, creating a new media text such as a blog post, website, video, podcast, game, comic, or interactive presentation.

Tips & Tricks:

- Focus on exploring the two central questions by telling the story of your experiences and learning in English 110. Note that you **do not** need to definitively answer the questions or "prove" anything through your memoir. Instead, try to genuinely reflect on what you learned in this class and consider how this learning might help you in the future.
- Remember to relate your learning to the concepts in the SLOs. You must specifically refer to SLO A (Rhetorical Situation and Genre) and SLO F (Reflection), but you should also discuss the other SLOs that reflect your learning. Cite the SLO that you are discussing.
- To cite SLOs: Please just include a short parenthetical citation whenever you refer to or rely on any SLOs. For example, when exploring writing as a social act, end your sentence with a reference to (SLO B). Or when discussing your writing process, end your sentence with a reference to (SLO C).
- Incorporate evidence to help illustrate your learning and experiences. Realize that the primary and best evidence of your learning will be the documents you will present in your portfolio. Explain how these documents show your learning in this class. You can even quote yourself as an authority on your own learning.
- You should also include other evidence of your learning to help illustrate your learning and experience. This evidence can come from either inside or outside the class. For example, you may want to include definitions, anecdotes, examples, quotes from your assignments and/or outside sources, references to your work in other classes, etc., to help illustrate your experiences

and learning.
[Instructor: Add instructions, questions, or tips]

_____

CREATIVE REVISION

Your Rhetorical Situation: In addition to your reflection, you will include a creative revision of **one** of your Major Writing Assignments as evidence of your learning in English 110.

Unlike a traditional revision, which requires you to improve your composition for the same audience, purpose, and context, your goal in this creative revision is to repurpose and alter your MWA for an entirely new rhetorical situation. You will choose a new audience, purpose, and context for your MWA and then make changes to your MWA to fit this new situation.

You will identify your new rhetorical situation in this preface to your creative revision, explaining how and why you made these changes.

As such, this section of your portfolio consists of two parts (1) a preface to your creative revision and (2) the creative revision itself.

Preface: Create a preface or cover letter to your creative revision which reflects on the following questions. Be as detailed and concrete as possible, referring to specific elements of your work to support your responses.

1. What is your new rhetorical situation (audience, purpose, context)?
2. How does your new rhetorical situation differ from the rhetorical situation of the original draft?
3. Why did you choose this new rhetorical situation for your creative revision?
4. What changes did you make to the MWA for the creative revision?
5. Why did you make these changes? You may also discuss any changes that you considered making, but decided not to; in that case, please explain why you decided not to make those changes.
6. [Instructor: Include additional questions as you see fit]

Creative Revision: Revise one of your MWAs for a new rhetorical situation (audience, purpose, and context).

The point of this creative revision is not to get you to do "yet another" major writing assignment. Instead, you are asked to creatively revise one assignment to demonstrate your learning in the course.

As such, you should focus on *repurposing* what you already have created. Think about what changes you would need to make to respond to a different audience, purpose, and/or

context. These changes usually involve some revisions to content, but generally focus on revisions to the *form* of the composition, including changes to the genre and the modes and medium of the document.

Tips & Tricks:

- I suggest that you begin by collecting the different versions of your MWA, your peer and instructor feedback, and any other documents that helped create your MWA. Review this material to help you reflect on the progress and process of your draft.
- Next, come up with a new rhetorical situation for your MWA. For example, you could choose a different audience or a different purpose from the original assignment. Think about what other audiences might be interested in your MWA, or how your MWA might respond to other purposes and contexts.
- Make sure to fully explain this new rhetorical situation, along with your reasons for choosing this new situation, in your preface.
- Finally, revise your MWA to fit this new rhetorical situation, including changes to the genre, modes and medium as appropriate. Again, focus primarily on *revising* what you already have created, rather than on creating something entirely new.
- [Instructor: Add additional instructions, questions, or tips]

Grading Rubric: [Instructor: Add grading rubric]

Appendix J: Fall 2016 Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

English 110, 111/112, or 113 SLOs:

Rhetorical Situation and Genre
    A. analyze, compose, and reflect on arguments in a variety of genres, considering the strategies, claims, evidence, and various mediums and technologies that are appropriate to the rhetorical situation

Writing as a Social Act
    B. describe the social nature of composing, particularly the role of discourse communities at the local, national, and international level

Writing as a Process
    C. use multiple approaches for planning, researching, prewriting, composing, assessing, revising, editing, proofreading, collaborating, and incorporating feedback in order to make your compositions stronger in various mediums and using multiple technologies

Grammar and Usage
    D. improve your fluency in the dialect of Standardized Written American English at the level of the sentence, paragraph, and document
    E. analyze and describe the value of incorporating various languages, dialects, and registers in your own and others' texts

Reflection
    F. evaluate your development as a writer over the course of the semester and describe how composing in multiple genres and mediums using various technologies can be applied in other contexts to advance your goals

Research
    G. use writing and research as a means of discovery to examine your personal beliefs in the context of multiple perspectives and to explore focused research questions through various mediums and technologies
    H. integrate others' positions and perspectives into your writing ethically, appropriately, and effectively in various mediums and technologies

English 120 SLOs:

Rhetorical Situation and Genre

    A. analyze, compose, and reflect on arguments in a variety of genres, considering the strategies, claims, evidence, and various mediums and technologies that are appropriate to the rhetorical situation

Writing as a Social Act

    B. describe the social nature of composing, particularly the role of discourse communities at the local, national, and international level

Writing as a Process

    C. use multiple approaches for planning, researching, prewriting, composing, assessing, revising, editing, proofreading, collaborating, and incorporating feedback in order to make your compositions stronger in various mediums and using multiple technologies

Grammar and Usage

    D. improve your fluency in the dialect of Standardized Written American English at the level of the sentence, paragraph, and document

    E. analyze and describe the value of incorporating various languages, dialects and registers in your own and others' texts

Reflection

    F. evaluate your development as a writer over the course of the semester and describe how composing in multiple genres and mediums using various technologies can be applied in other contexts to advance your goals

Research

    G. use writing and research as a means of discovery, to examine your personal beliefs in the context of multiple perspectives and to explore focused research questions through various mediums and technologies

    H. integrate others' positions and perspectives into your writing ethically, appropriately, and effectively in various mediums and technologies

    I. compose a research-based academic argument in one of various mediums and technologies by identifying, analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing sources, which must include secondary sources

    J. analyze and describe the writing and research conventions of an academic field in order to understand the different ways of creating and communicating knowledge

Appendix K: Spring 2017 Program Assessment Rubric

Directions: The following rubric is used to evaluate how well students articulate an understanding of two ENGL 110/112/113 SLOs. The assessor should read the entire portfolio holistically. This means that a student may demonstrate competence or proficiency in SLO A or F in any part of the portfolio, and not just in his/her reflection on the SLO. Holistic reading is necessary because writing is a holistic process, not a set of discrete processes (and thus any set of SLOs, if they are authentic, are by necessity not "watertight").

_____

SLO A: Analyze, compose, and reflect on arguments in a variety of genres, considering the strategies, claims, evidence, and various mediums and technologies that are appropriate to the rhetorical situation

> 1. **Writing Skills**: The student applies the skills described in this Outcome (by, for example, demonstrating rhetorical awareness in the documents of the portfolio) *
>
> > Not present   0   1   2   Strongly Present

> 2. **Conceptual Understanding**: The student understands the concepts in the Outcome (students can demonstrate their understanding through reflecting on their experiences or by providing definitions, explanations, analogies, or examples) *
>
> > Not present   0   1   2   Strongly Present

> 3. **Application and Awareness**: The student discusses choices they made in their texts in light of genre and/or rhetorical situation *
> > Not present   0   1   2   Strongly Present

> 4. **Learning Meta-awareness**: The student explicitly reflects on their learning about this Outcome (by, for example, explicitly discussing the processes of their learning, exploring the usefulness of their learning in other contexts, and/or explicitly connecting their learning to the Outcome) *
> > Not present   0   1   2   Strongly Present

SLO F: Evaluate your development as a writer over the course of the semester and describe how composing in multiple genres and mediums using various technologies can be applied in other contexts to advance your goals

> 1. **Writing Skills**: The student applies the skills described in this Outcome (by, for example, demonstrating thoughtful revision of the documents in the portfolio) *
> > Not present   0   1   2   Strongly Present

> 2. **Conceptual Understanding**: The student understands the concepts in the Outcome (students can demonstrate their understanding through reflecting on their experiences or by providing definitions, explanations, analogies, or examples) *
> > Not present   0   1   2   Strongly Present

3. **Application and Awareness**: The student discusses the process or importance of reflecting on their development as a writer and/or how their learning can be used to advance their own goals *

<div align="center">Not present   0   1   2   Strongly Present</div>

4. **Learning Meta-awareness**: The student explicitly reflects on their learning about this Outcome (by, for example, explicitly discussing the processes of their learning, exploring the usefulness of their learning in other contexts, and/or explicitly connecting their learning to the Outcome) *

<div align="center">Not present   0   1   2   Strongly Present</div>