

2 COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING THEORY

"INTELLIGENT CONFUSION"

Learning theory can help us define precisely what is at stake here for our students. This is work that can also help us make good choices about assignment design, the writing we ask students to do in our classrooms, and the values we privilege in our pedagogy and curriculum. This is work that all compositionists should be familiar with. If this body of work is familiar to you, please forgive me for briefly reviewing it at this time. It is essential for our purposes as we map the cognitive landscape of the composition classroom and develop recommendations for redesigning our curriculum.

As many compositionists know, our discipline has had a long and fruitful engagement with learning theory, cognitive research, and theories of student development (Berlin 1987, 159–65; Berlin 2005; Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito 1998, 3–30; Faigley 1986; Fulkerson 2005; Harris 1997; Pascarella and Terenzini 2005, 19–61; see also Ambrose et al. 2010). I would like to suggest here that a pedagogy focused on listening, empathy, and reflection has the potential to help students move toward thinking in more cognitively sophisticated ways about the world, their place in it, and the production of meaning and value.

Perhaps the best place to begin our examination of learning theory is with a brief discussion of King and Kitchener's three cognitive stages of development: "pre-reflective," "quasi-reflective," and "reflective." Along this continuum, King and Kitchener identify "seven distinct sets of assumptions about knowledge and how knowledge is acquired" (King and Kitchener 1994, 13) within these cognitive stages. These positions are theorized as part of a developmental progression (as they are for Perry, Kegan, and Baxter Magolda) that moves from a simplistic, absolutist orientation ("Knowledge is assumed to exist absolutely and concretely . . . It can be obtained with certainty by direct observation." [141]) to one that requires individuals to "hold the epistemic assumptions that

allow them to understand and accept real uncertainty" (17). For King and Kitchener, the way students engage complexity and uncertainty is a key variable in terms of developing more sophisticated cognitive orientations:

Recall that at Stage 4 [which is where King and Kitchener find many college seniors in their study (165–71)] comes the acknowledgement that uncertainty is not just a temporary condition of knowing. It is at this state, too, that students begin to use evidence systematically to support their judgment, a development of no small consequence. As Barry Knoll has described this type of development, students are abandoning "ignorant certainty" (characteristic of earlier stage reasoning) in favor of "intelligent confusion." While promoting student confusion is not a goal typically published in college mission statements, Knoll's observation serves to remind us that intelligent confusion is a developmental advance over ignorant, dogmatic certainty and that it paves the way for more thoughtful, reasoned judgments that may follow. (King and Kitchener 1994, 166–67)

A key marker for King and Kitchener in the process of developing more sophisticated cognitive orientations is how we employ evidence to support our judgments. Once students begin "to accept the concept that uncertainty may be an ongoing characteristic of the knowing process" (166), the use of evidence becomes crucial. This takes us to the heart of the problem with simplistic argumentative assignments like those we have surveyed. Many college students

are at a loss when asked to defend their answers to ill-structured problems, for Stage 4 [reasoning] has as a major characteristic the assumption that, because there are many possible answers to every question and no absolutely certain way to adjudicate between competing answers, knowledge claims are simply idiosyncratic to the individual. In other words, an answer to an ill-structured problem is seen as merely an opinion. Further, many college students are not demonstrating an ability to articulate the role of evidence in making interpretations (Stage 5) or to defensibly critique their own judgments or explanations as being in some way better than or preferable to alternative explanations (Stage 7). (King and Kitchener 1994, 167)

Underlying all this is the assumption that "answers are contingent and knowledge is contextual" (168). An early report (1991) from the Association of American Colleges, "The Challenge of Connecting Learning," gets at precisely what's at stake here—and does so with noteworthy and memorable language:

In the final analysis, the challenge of college, for students and faculty members alike, is empowering individuals to know that the world is far more complex than it first appears, and that they must make interpretive arguments and decisions—judgments that entail real consequences for

which they must take responsibility and from which they may not flee by disclaiming expertise (Association 1991, 16–17).

This is something that simplistic argumentative writing actively subverts. Such writing, unfortunately, typically rewards “ignorant certainty” at the expense of “intelligent confusion.”

At the heart of King and Kitchener’s pedagogical recommendations for promoting reflective judgment is the ill-structured problem. The type of problem we ask students to engage is obviously a key variable in any kind of writing pedagogy, so this distinction is vitally important for our discussion. Cognitive scientists typically identify two different types of problems: “well-structured” and “ill-structured.” Well-structured problems, as King and Kitchener note, “have single correct answers that are ultimately available” and the “task for the problem solver is to find and apply a decision-making procedure to find, compute, or remember the solutions” (King and Kitchener 1994, 100). Ill-structured problems “cannot be resolved with a high degree of certainty” and “experts often disagree about the best solution, even when the problem can be considered solved” (11). In their recommendations for educators, King and Kitchener suggest that ill-structured problems have much to offer students:

Familiarize students with ill-structured problems within your own discipline or areas of expertise. Do this even early in their educational experience. Such problems should not be viewed as the exclusive domain of seniors, senior seminars, or graduate courses. Students are usually attracted to a discipline because it promises a way of better understanding contemporary problems in a particular field, yet they are often asked to “cover the basics” for three or four years before they are permitted to wrestle with the compelling, unresolved issues of the day. Ill-structured problems should be viewed as essential aspects of undergraduate education. When the aim is to help students develop a more complex epistemological framework, opportunities to help students examine the evolution of knowledge itself are especially relevant. (King and Kitchener 1994, 233, 236)

The pedagogy I am theorizing here, which links a variety of activities, dispositions, and pedagogical strategies under the umbrella term “listening,” seeks to bring the ill-structured problem and the idea that “uncertainty is not just a temporary condition of knowing” to the center of our curriculum.

Just a quick additional note about “ill-structured problems”: Recent research on teaching and curriculum design also supports a focus on “ill-structured problems.” Such problems are much more likely, following Ken Bain’s (2004) formulation in *What the Best College Teachers Do*,

to accomplish what excellent assignments do: “confront students with intriguing, beautiful, or important problems, authentic tasks that will challenge them to grapple with ideas, rethink their assumptions, and examine their mental models of reality” (18). A focus on “ill-structured problems” is also congruent with McTighe and Wiggins’s (2005) call for a curricular focus on “essential questions”—that is, questions that are “open-ended,” “thought-provoking” and “intellectually engaging,” that call for “higher order thinking,” point toward “important, transferable ideas,” raise “additional questions,” require “support and justification,” and “recur over time” (the question can and should be revisited) (3). “Essential questions” are, in many ways, simply a different way to describe “ill-structured problems,” as they also focus student attention on complex questions that cannot be easily resolved. As McTighe and Wiggins note, “essential questions”

are not answerable with finality in a single lesson or a brief sentence—and that’s the point. Their aim is to stimulate thought, to provoke inquiry, and to spark more questions, including thoughtful student questions, not just pat answers. They are provocative and generative. By tackling such questions, learners are engaged in *uncovering* the depth and richness of a topic that might otherwise be obscured by simply *covering* it. (McTighe and Wiggins 2005, 3)

A focus on “ill-structured problems” is also congruent with John Bean’s work on integrating writing, critical thinking, and active learning in the classroom. Bean speaks eloquently in *Engaging Ideas* about the power of well-designed problems to “awaken and stimulate” even the “passive and unmotivated student” (Bean 2011, 3). The “problem-based” assignment—very similar to the kind of “ill-structured” problems we are discussing here—is at the heart of his pedagogy (89–145). Bean is following Joanne Kurfuss here, an important scholar of critical thinking, for whom “the prototypical academic problem is ‘ill-structured’” (Bean 2011, 4). Kurfuss suggests, in fact, that “in critical thinking, all assumptions are open to question, divergent views are aggressively sought, and the inquiry is not biased in favor of a particular outcome” (Kurfuss 1988, 2). Critical thinking itself, suggests Kurfuss, is “a rational response to questions that cannot be answered definitively and for which all the relevant information may not be available” (Kurfuss 1988, 2). Specific and pragmatic curricular recommendations as well as what forms ill-structured problems might take in a writing classroom are provided in subsequent chapters.

William Perry’s (1999) classic book, *Forms of Ethical and Intellectual Development in the College Years*, offers us additional clarity about devel-

opmental stages and what is at stake for our students in the writing classroom. King and Kirchner's research, like other studies on learning theory since Perry, draws on and updates the work Perry reports on in this important book. Perry identifies nine cognitive stages or "positions" in his scheme. The key positions for our purposes here are Positions 3, 4, 5, and 6:

Position 3: The student accepts diversity and uncertainty as legitimate but still temporary in areas where Authority "hasn't found The Answer yet." He supposes Authority grades him in these areas on "good expression" but remains puzzled as to standards.

Position 4: (a) The student perceives legitimate uncertainty (and therefore diversity of opinion) to be extensive and raises it to the status of an unstructured epistemological realm of its own in which "anyone has a right to his own opinion," a realm which he sets over against Authority's realm where right-wrong still prevails, or (b) the student discovers qualitative contextual relativistic reasoning as a special case of "what They want" within Authority's realm.

Position 5: The student perceives all knowledge and values (including authority's) as contextual and relativistic and subordinates dualistic right-wrong functions to the status of a special case, in context.

Position 6: The student apprehends the necessity of orienting himself in a relativistic world through some form of personal Commitment (as distinct from unquestioned or unconsidered commitment to simple belief in certainty). (Perry 1999, 10–11)

The significant qualitative difference between the 3rd and 5th positions in Perry's scheme—which is precisely where much of our work as writing teachers in high school, basic writing, and FYC classes should be focused—is the difference between simplistic, self-centered, absolutist ways of knowing the world and more contingent, situational, contextual ways of knowing the world and defining our relationship to knowledge and authority. Simplistic thesis and support argumentative writing, unfortunately, reinforces lower-order orientations, especially the idea that "anyone has a right to his own opinion" (Position 4). High school, basic writing, and FYC teachers should be actively engaged in helping students move *away* from this kind of simplistic thinking and *toward* the more cognitively sophisticated positions in Perry's scheme. Our focus should be less on certainty and closure, and more on exploration and reflection. Unfortunately, much simplistic argumentative writing actually *requires* premature, unearned, and in some cases even arbitrary certainty and closure. The key transition point at Position 5—"contextual relativism"—deserves careful attention from our discipline because it is a crucial developmental threshold for Perry, and it is associated in his work with the beginnings of mature adult thinking. Position 6 is also a

crucial stage because it introduces students to Perry's important concept of "commitment" within a context in which there are few certainties or absolutes.

COGNITIVE CHALLENGES OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Robert Kegan's work helps clarify an important point here about the broad value of helping students move toward the more advanced positions in King and Kirchner's and Perry's developmental trajectories. Kegan's book, *In Over Our Heads*, systematically examines the imposing cognitive challenges adults encounter in daily life *outside the classroom*, including the domains of parenting, partnering, working, dealing with difference, and living as a citizen in the world. Most of the time, Kegan suggests, we are facing cognitive challenges that put us "in over our heads." One primary goal of Kegan's that has important implications for our discussion here is moving students beyond "an ultimate or absolute relationship" to one's own point of view (Kegan 1994, 24) and nurturing, instead, the ability to "internalize another's point of view in what becomes the co-construction of personal experience, thus creating a new capacity for empathy" (31). Kegan's book offers us compelling rationale for turning our attention as educators to student cognitive development. As Bizzell notes, it seems clear that "the kind of cultural literacy whose development is both chronicled and advocated in Perry's scheme [and I would add, in King and Kirchner's, Kegan's, and Baxter Magolda's work as well] is desirable for all students" (162). Following Kegan, it seems clear that there are broad applications here that could be of great value to students beyond the classroom and beyond the specialized discourse communities of the academy.

Kegan's example of the B' teacher (Kegan 1994, 48–56) provides a useful way of conceptualizing what can be gained by students from a pedagogical focus on learning theory and listening. Kegan compares two different pedagogical approaches, embodied by teachers B and B', responding to a common classroom problem: students in class are not listening to each other during discussions. Kegan is very specific about the nature of the problem he wishes to examine: students frequently "interrupt each other" and "even when they take turns, they seem to ignore completely or distort what the previous speaker has said in order to return to a point they favor" (53). Teacher B responds by establishing rules for class conduct and interrupting class to give a "sincere, eloquent, hortatory speech about the need for the students to treat each other better" (54). Teacher B', however, responds in a very different

way—one designed to provide a bridge to more sophisticated cognitive orientations. Teacher B' lets the conversation/debate proceed, but he institutes one new requirement: before any speaker may make her point, she must restate the preceding speaker's point with sufficient accuracy that the preceding speaker agrees it has been adequately restated" (Kegan 1994, 54).

This pedagogical strategy produces a number of positive outcomes, but perhaps foremost among these is the way that this new classroom protocol creates opportunities for the development of more sophisticated cognitive orientations. Teacher B' engages students "where they are," but he also invites them to "step beyond that limit":

How? The rule that Teacher B' adds to the "game" of class conversation ingeniously transcends mere classroom management and joins the students' natural consciousness curriculum. Their categorical capacity to take another's perspective allows them to stand in a classmate's shoes and restate the classmate's position; but their incapacity either to hold multiple points of view simultaneously or integrate them means that when the student does stand in his classmate's shoes he experiences the temporary surrender of his own preferred view. . . . The trick is that this unwellcome route, first seen as a mere means to an end, has the promise of becoming an end in itself, since the continuous consideration of another's view in an uncooptive fashion, which requires a continuous stepping outside of one's own view, is a definitive move toward making one's own view object rather than subject and toward considering its relation to other views. (Kegan 1994, 55)

It is important to note here that at the heart of this strategy—the stepping-stone that makes progress toward more sophisticated cognitive orientations possible—is listening.

Marcia Baxter Magolda's (2001) important book, *Making Their Own Way: Narratives for Transforming Higher Education to Promote Self-Development*, which builds on King and Kitchener's, Perry's, and Kegan's research, supports this kind of pedagogical focus on listening, empathy, and reflection as well (see also Baxter Magolda 1992). Following conclusions drawn by Perry, Kegan, King and Kitchener, and others, Baxter Magolda has suggested here that real adult thinking becomes possible only when students embrace the idea that "knowledge is complex, ambiguous, and socially constructed in a context" (Baxter Magolda 2001, 195). For Baxter Magolda, "an internal sense of self" is essential to this mature process of meaning-making and "is central to effective participation in the social construction of knowledge" (195). This "internal sense of self," Magolda suggests, helps guide mature adults as they sift through competing "knowledge claims" (195) and assists them

in essential ways as they participate in the construction of knowledge. For Baxter Magolda, developing this internal sense of self is part of a complex maturation process that theorizes authority and expertise as "shared in the mutual construction of knowledge among peers" (188). It is important for teachers of writing to find ways to nurture this "internal sense of self" and to make activities in writing classes more deliberately designed to address this important learning outcome. Bringing listening to the center of our curriculum can help us do this.

WILLIAM PERRY AND COMPOSITION SCHOLARSHIP

It is important to note that among the learning theorists mentioned here, William Perry's work has proved to be especially influential in composition studies. As Toni-Lee Capossela (1993, 56) notes, "Given the strong affinities between holistic critical thinking and the upper positions of Perry's scheme, and given the connections between writing and thinking, it is not surprising that writing teachers have found Perry's findings applicable to their work in many ways." Bernard-Donalds, Carroll and Hunt (2004), Patricia Bizzell (1984, 1986), Alice Brand (1987), Christopher Burnham (1986, 1992), Toni-Lee Capossela (1993), Curtis and Herrington (2003), Eubanks and Schaeffer (2008), Kay Halasek (1999), Douglas Hunt (2002), Donald Lazere (2009), Marcia Seabury (1991), Mary Soliday (2004), and Taczak and Theilm (2009) have all written about Perry or referenced his developmental scheme in significant ways in their work. Perhaps the most important recent work for our purposes here is Curtis and Herrington's recent essay, "Writing Development in the College Years: By Whose Definition?" Drawing on work from a variety of scholars and researchers in the field of student development (including Gilligan 1982; Haswell 1991, 2000; Sternglass 1997; Belenky et al. 1997; and Perry 1999), Curtis and Herrington suggest that writing teachers move beyond the "academic essay" and take "a broader view of writing development and a broader view of the kinds of self-reflection we want to urge for personal development" (Curtis and Herrington 2003, 86). Like many in our discipline, they are impatient with the reductive ways that standardized assessment practices have framed teaching and learning in the writing classroom: "We think many of us are frustrated by the way many assessment instruments and many statements of objectives narrow our view of what constitutes development for our students, narrow our view to focusing on grammar, syntax, and a limited range or single type of writing, primarily expository or argumentative writing" (85).

As I do here, Curtis and Herrington call for adding reflective writing to the undergraduate curriculum:

An undergraduate liberal arts education should make room for the kind of overt self-focused reflection called for by Lawrence's spiritual autobiography course, as well as the kind of self- and cross-cultural reflection through empathic identification called for by Rachel's education and human services course. Rachel's claim that these writings "restructured the way I thought about things" is one a developmentalist has to love. (Curtis and Herrington 2003, 87)

NEUROPLASTICITY

The field of neuroscience has provided us with fascinating new information about how the human brain develops and how it responds to its environment. This new research is incredibly important for how teachers of writing design curriculum and think about pedagogy. The old scientific model theorized a fixed, unchangeable brain capacity that was hardwired from birth. Current research reveals a brain with much more "plasticity," one that is deeply responsive to stimulus, activity, and environmental conditions. This news couldn't be more startling or encouraging for educators, and it reinforces the need for teachers of writing to attend carefully to learning theory. Taken in aggregate, this research suggests that "the brain can change its own structure and function though thought and activity" (DoIDGE 2007, xix).

Jane Healy first introduced teachers, parents, and the general reading public to the concept of "neuroplasticity," and to the role that activity, environment, and culture plays in shaping the way we think and the way that the neural pathways in our brains develop. The hypothesis advanced in her landmark book, *Endangered Minds: Why Children Don't Think and What We Can Do about It* (Healy 1999), has now been corroborated by hundreds of studies. As Healy notes in her new introduction to the book:

I was pretty far out on a theoretical limb when I first presented the hypothesis that children's brains might be so significantly changed by contemporary culture as to be increasingly maladapted to our traditional notions of "school." In the intervening years, however, the concept of cortical plasticity—the process by which the brain shapes itself in response to various environmental stimuli—has become a staple of the mainstream press and has even sparked a White House conference.

Given this understanding, the implication doesn't seem so far-fetched: Children surrounded by fast-paced visual stimuli (TV, videos, computer games) at the expense of face-to-face adult modeling, interactive

language, reflective problem solving, creative play, and sustained attention may be expected to arrive at school unprepared for academic learning—and to fall further behind and become increasingly "unmotivated" as the years go by. The current education scene attests to this misfit even more strongly than it did when this book was originally published. . . .

Neuroplasticity is now thought to include emotional/motivational as well as cognitive circuits. This would mean that a child's habits of motivation and attitudes toward learning don't all come with the package, but are physically formed in the brain by experience. Thus, if a child is discouraged, defeated, or emotionally abused by parents or teachers, she might develop physical "tracks" in the system or a negative pattern of neurochemical response that become increasingly resistant to change. When she enters a new learning situation, therefore, she brings a brain predisposed to apathy, negative response, and failure. (Healy 1999, 1–2)

Recent work in brain science now points teachers of all stripes, including those who teach writing, to attend carefully to "the revolutionary discovery that the human brain can change itself" (DoIDGE 2007, xvii; Bransford, Brown, and Cocking 2000). As Healy suggests, evidence from the hard sciences is now providing convincing support for the transformative value of interactive language use, reflective problem solving, creative play, sustained attention, the importance of reading and precise language use, and motivation (all key areas of concern for the pedagogy we are discussing here) (Healy 1999, 2). As Healy notes, "environment shapes intelligence" (66–82), and "the brain grows best when it is challenged, so high standards for children's learning are important" (69). Active learning, a focus on questions, and a curriculum that nurtures curiosity should be key pedagogical goals for teachers in all disciplines, according to Healy (1999, 73).

In *The Brain That Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science*, Norman DoIDGE provides a comprehensive review of this research and what we have learned about the brain and cognitive development. His book provides compelling support for Healy's claims. The key finding in this body of work is that "the brain can change its own structure and function through thought and activity" (DoIDGE 2007, xix). This is an incredibly important discovery for teachers and educators. Culture and activities like attending school "creates" and shapes the way the neural pathways in our brains develop over time. "The irony of this new discovery," DoIDGE notes,

is that for hundreds of years educators did seem to sense that children's brains had to be built up through exercises of increasing difficulty that strengthened brain functions. Up through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a classical education often include rote memorization

of long poems in foreign languages, which strengthened the auditory memory (hence thinking in language) and an almost fanatical attention to handwriting, which probably helped strengthen motor capacities and thus not only helped handwriting but added speed and fluency to reading and speaking. Often a great deal of attention was paid to exact elocution and to perfecting the pronunciation of words. . . . But the loss of these drills has been costly; they may have been the only opportunity that many students had to systematically exercise the brain function that gives us fluency and grace with symbols. (Doidge 2007, 41–42)

As Doidge suggests, American popular culture and entertainment pose considerable problems for educators interested in helping students develop the ability to engage complex ideas thoughtfully because attention span, memory, and the ability to sustain focus are affected in problematic ways. Much of the harm from television and other electronic media, such as music videos and computer games, he suggests, “comes from their effect on attention”:

It is the *form* of the television medium—cuts, edits, zooms, pans, and sudden noises—that alters the brain, by activating what Pavlov called the “orienting response,” which occurs whenever we sense a sudden change in the world around us, especially a sudden movement. We instinctively interrupt whatever we are doing to turn, pay attention, and get our bearings. The orientation evolved, no doubt, because our forebears were both predators and prey and needed to react to situations that could be dangerous or could provide sudden opportunities for such things as food or sex, or simply to novel situations. The response is physiological: the heart rate decreases for four to six seconds. Television triggers this response at a far more rapid rate than we experience it in life, which is why we can’t keep our eyes off the TV screen, even in the middle of an intimate conversation, and why people watch TV a lot longer than they intend. Because typical music videos, action sequences, and commercials trigger orienting responses at a rate of one per second, watching them puts us into continuous orienting response with no recovery. No wonder people report feeling drained from watching TV. Yet we acquire a taste for it and find slower changes boring. The cost is that such activities as reading, complex conversation, and listening to lectures become more difficult. (Doidge 2007, 309–10)

Clearly, this is vitally important research for teachers of writing because we are attempting to build curriculum around precisely these activities—reading, engaging in complex conversations, and listening.

This recent work in neuroscience confirms in some important ways Ruth Benedict’s foundational ideas about the extraordinarily powerful role culture plays in our lives. Benedict famously suggested in her book, *Patterns of Culture*, that culture shapes everything about our lives, including our possibilities and our “impossibilities”:

No man ever looks at the world with pristine eyes. He sees it edited by a definite set of customs and institutions and ways of thinking. Even in his philosophical probings he cannot go behind these stereotypes; his very concepts of the true and the false will still have reference to his particular traditional customs. . . .

The life history of the individual is first and foremost an accommodation to the patterns and standards traditionally handed down in his community. From the moment of his birth the customs into which he is born shape his experience and behavior. By the time he can talk, he is the little creature of his culture, and by the time he is grown and able to take part in its activities, its habits are his habits, its beliefs his beliefs, its impossibilities his impossibilities. (Benedict 2005, 2–3)

There is increasing evidence that this, indeed, is very much the case, and probably in ways that might have even surprised Benedict. And the more we learn about neuroplasticity and the effects of culture on the development of neural pathways, the more important the work we do as educators becomes. The pedagogy we are theorizing here has been designed with the goal of providing different—and better—kinds of “possibilities” for our students.

Carol Dweck’s important work on “fixed” vs. “growth” mindsets (in the fields of developmental psychology, social psychology, and personality psychology) confirms these important findings from neuroscience and links this work in neuroscience to issues related to motivation and agency in the classroom (which we will be examining later in the book). Dweck has shown that different “mindsets” or beliefs about one’s potential produce different kinds of experiences, futures, and lives: “For twenty years, my research has shown that *the view you adopt for yourself* profoundly affects the way you lead your life. It can determine whether you become the person you want to be and whether you accomplish the things you value” (Dweck 2007, 6).

People with fixed mindsets believe that their basic qualities like their intelligence or talent are “carved in stone”—that they are fixed and unalterable traits. People with “growth mindsets” believe that their basic qualities can be cultivated through their efforts (7). This work has very important implications for the classroom. One recent study conducted by Dweck and her colleagues, for example, found that “the belief that intelligence is malleable (incremental theory) predicted an upward trajectory in grades over two years of junior high school, while a belief that intelligence is fixed (entity theory) predicted a flat trajectory” (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck 2007, 246).

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

As we can see, we have much to gain from helping students progress toward more sophisticated cognitive orientations. Do current practices in the writing classroom effectively nurture the development of mature cognitive orientations? Have we already responded effectively to this important body of research and scholarship? There is a considerable body of evidence that suggests that we have not. There clearly appears to be the need for a fresh approach to teaching writing, one informed by learning theory and congruent with what we know from the field of neuroscience and developmental psychology.

3

"IT IS THE PRIVILEGE OF WISDOM TO LISTEN"

*It is the province of knowledge to speak,
and it is the privilege of wisdom to listen.*

—Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

What might such a fresh approach to teaching composition look like? I would like to suggest developing a pedagogy that situates the practice of "listening" at the center of the intellectual work we do in the writing classroom. This pedagogy is designed to provide students with opportunities to engage required readings and complex ideas dialogically and collaboratively (and less simplistically and argumentatively). It is also designed to actively nurture the development of more mature cognitive orientations toward the world, toward others, and toward the production of knowledge and meaning. As I hope readers will see, this pedagogy would also provide students with a variety of skills and habits of mind that would transfer to writing and thinking tasks outside of the writing classroom. Any serious intellectual work, after all, must begin with listening, empathy, and reflection.

I situate this call for bringing listening to the center of our writing pedagogy within our ongoing scholarly conversation about learning and the teaching of writing. In this regard, I am especially indebted to Krista Ratcliffe's important work on rhetorical listening, Kay Halasek's work on Bakhtinian approaches to composition studies, and Mariolina Salvadori's work on reading in the composition classroom. I am positioning this new pedagogy at the place where recent scholarly work on listening converges with foundational work on learning theory, critical thinking, neuroplasticity, and the teaching of writing. This call to examine the value of listening in light of learning theory, critical thinking, and neuroscience introduces a variety of important new considerations into our conversation about writing pedagogy. One of our goals here is to replace argument and assertion as the primary focus in the composition classroom

and to champion, instead, a teaching practice focused on listening, empathy, and reflection. Although argument is an important form of writing—and one we should continue to teach on a limited basis—I am calling here for a pedagogy that replaces argument as our primary focus in the writing classroom and embraces a new pedagogy that focuses instead on listening, empathy, and reflection, especially in grades 6–13.

We can begin theorizing the practice of listening on a continuum that begins with interpersonal communication skills like active and empathetic listening (Wolvin 2010; Wolvin and Cokley 1996, 279–84) and then moves outward toward more complex understandings of listening that include Krista Ratcliffe's (2005) work on "rhetorical listening" and Mariolina Salvatori's foundational work related to reading that theorizes the process of reading as carrying out "the tremendous responsibility of giving a voice, and therefore a sort of life, to the text's argument" (Salvatori 1996, 441). This continuum then ranges outward beyond the teaching of reading and writing toward more philosophically-informed approaches to the principled engagement of others. These include Emmanuel Levinas's (2006) important work developing an ethic of humanism defined by respect for the "humanity of the Other" in *The Humanism of the Other* and Martha Nussbaum's (2001) work on empathy and compassion in *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. A focus on listening would situate students in very beneficial and sympathetic ways to "the other." Before moving on to discuss how this pedagogy might work in our classrooms on a practical, daily basis, let us first see how such a pedagogy might position itself in relation to the existing body of work related to listening and composition scholarship.

LISTENING AND SILENCE AS A RHETORICAL ART

As Krista Ratcliffe has noted in *Rhetorical Listening*, "for more than two thousand years, the four rhetorical arts of reading, writing, speaking, and listening were cornerstones of Western rhetorical studies" (Ratcliffe 2005, 18). But in the early twentieth century, "these arts were separated from one another during the divorce of English studies from communication studies" and, "custody of these arts was awarded to different disciplines; with reading and writing relegated to English studies and speaking and listening relegated to communication studies. This divorce still haunts English studies" (Ratcliffe 2005, 18).

Ratcliffe identifies a number of reasons for the relative unimportance of listening in modern theory, scholarship, and curriculum

development, including poststructuralist theory, a bias against listening brought about by our discipline's focus on the teaching of writing, and gender bias whereby "listening is gendered as feminine and valued negatively" (Ratcliffe 2005, 21). Ratcliffe's work seeks to return listening to a central place in our writing curriculum, something I seek to do as well. Ratcliffe defines listening much the way I do here: "as a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture" (25). Although her pedagogical recommendations are different than mine (see 133–71) and proceed from a different theoretical foundation, we are both attempting to have students engage others in more open, collegial, and collaborative ways.

Cheryl Glenn and Krista Ratcliffe's important work on listening and "silence" is also important to consider for our purposes here. As Glenn and Ratcliffe note in their introduction to *Silence and Listening as Rhetorical Arts*, "Westerners have long forgotten (if we ever knew in the first place) the ancient Egyptian and Pythagorean beliefs about the value of silence and listening. The first canon of Egyptian rhetoric was silence, silence as a 'moral posture and rhetorical tactic'—not to be confused with 'passivity or quietism'" (Glenn and Ratcliffe 2011, 1).

A great deal can be gained for writing students by framing listening as a kind of "moral posture" that requires a principled engagement with others. Glenn and Ratcliffe suggest, for instance, that

Individuals, as well as entire political parties, professions, communities, and nations, can more productively discern and implement actions that are more ethical, efficient and appropriate when all parties agree to engage in rhetorical situations that include not only respectful speaking, reading, and writing, but also productive silence and rhetorical listening, all of which help prepare a person for eloquence. (Glenn and Ratcliffe 2011, 3)

Both of these scholars champion listening and silence as valuable rhetorical tools in the writing classroom because they help develop a "judicious respect not just for the power of silence and listening but also for the spoken word" (2). Perhaps most importantly for our purposes here, as Gesa E. Kirsch notes, Glenn's work on silence invites us to examine "how contemplative practices can enrich a writing classroom and the intellectual life of students" (Kirsch 2009, W3; Glenn 2004). As I hope readers will see, we have much to gain, following Glenn and Ratcliffe, from embracing the idea that "the arts of silence and listening are as important to rhetoric and composition studies as the traditionally emphasized arts of reading, writing, and speaking" (Glenn and Ratcliffe 2011, 2).

Pat Belanoff's (2001) beautiful essay, "Silence: Reflection, Literacy, Learning, and Teaching," eloquently summons support from a variety of important thinkers and writers to champion the value of silence, reflection, and listening in the writing classroom. Drawing on the Old Testament, Augustine, Aquinas, medieval meditative practices, Bede, Keats, Tille Olsen, and N. Scott Momaday, as well as the work of compositionists including Moffett, Birkerts, Berthoff, and Yancey and Spooner, Belanoff invites writing teachers to embrace silence as an essential pedagogical tool: "Silence (inhabited by meditation, reflection, contemplation, metacognition, and thoughtfulness) provides one lens through which to see the interlace of literacy, action (response, conversation) provides another lens, but both lenses are pointed at exactly the same object, which continuously turns on itself with no discernible beginning or ending" (Belanoff 2001, 422).

Belanoff, in fact, offers persuasive support in her essay for a pedagogy built around listening, empathy, and reflection. "I am arguing here," she says, "for another place of sanctuary that we as teachers can create for our students by valuing reflection and by creating reflective time and space in our classrooms and in our own and students' writing" (Belanoff 2001, 410). Like Glenn and Rarcliffe, Belanoff embraces silence as a rhetorical art, which for each of these scholars embodies a whole range of vital characteristics essential to good reading, writing, and thinking. These include, as Belanoff notes, meditation, reflection, contemplation, metacognition, and thoughtfulness. How is it possible that we have not fully embraced these noble foundational principles and moved them to the very center of our pedagogy? After all, in some ways, what we are seeking to do here is very simple. As Belanoff notes, "What I am campaigning for is space and time in our classrooms and in our scholarly lives for looking inward in silence" (420).

LISTENING AND BAKHTIN

Kay Halasek's work on Bakhtinian approaches to teaching composition is also important for our discussion here. In *A Pedagogy of Possibility*, Halasek privileges a writing pedagogy that actively seeks to avoid "closure and opposition" (Halasek 1999, 18) and that replaces the dialectic with the dialogic. Of particular importance for our discussion here is the quality of engagement with others that Halasek embraces: "Through the concept of dialogism, Bakhtin establishes the critical need to sustain dialogue in the unending quest to maintain difference and diversity, hallmarks of intellectual growth and health, or what de

Man refers to as the 'heterogeneity of one voice with regard to any other'" (Halasek 1999, 8).

The phrase she uses here—"hallmarks of intellectual growth and health"—is a vitally important one, as it links our discussion of writing pedagogy to foundational ideas in learning theory. The critical need to "sustain" and privilege dialog rather than to seek the closure and finality of traditional argument is an important one for Halasek, and is one of the key elements of the pedagogy of listening, empathy, and reflection that we are developing here. It is important to note as well, that Halasek is defining the dialogic in opposition to the dialectical and the argumentative. Perhaps Halasek's most important statement about the value of emphasizing the dialogical in the classroom is this one, where she discusses and quotes from Don Bialostosky's work: "To read others dialogically, then, would be to read for an opening in the discussion or a provocation to further discourse. . . . Dialogic reading would not generally reduce others to consistent dialectical counterparts, or dwell on the inconsistencies in their positions, or transcend them in higher syntheses. Nor would it minimize others as rhetorical opponents by attempting to discredit them" (Halasek 1999, 18).

That last sentence contains a crucial phrase: "minimizing others as rhetorical opponents." This is something that is encouraged and perhaps even required by many kinds of simplistic argumentative writing done in high school and college. A pedagogy focused on listening would help promote the kind of "intellectual growth and health" that Halasek champions here, and also help develop the kind of "social and ideological self-awareness" (Halasek 1999, 170) that she seeks to promote with her "pedagogy of possibility."

We should also pause briefly here to note Halasek's reservations about the troublingly "static" nature of most academic writing assignments:

Given that discussions in composition studies of the subject of discourse have remained essentially unchanged in recent years, it is perhaps not surprising that college essay forms, along with their objectified notions of the subject of discourses, have remained relatively static as well. If we are to believe Volosinov, who argues that cultural and social changes are reflected in discourse forms of a given community, then it follows that the changes in writing pedagogy and education in the past twenty years ought to be discernible in the discourse within the discipline. Still, a surprising standardization of form among college essay genres remains. Even some of the more progressive composition theorists promote prescriptive organizational formats. Why is it the case that college essay forms have not seen significant revision? Perhaps the changes in writing pedagogy are not as dramatic as we are led to believe, or perhaps the academy insulates

pedagogy from some of the conditions that may affect changes in generic forms (Halasek 1999, 95)

We appear to have much to gain from moving beyond the minimizing of others as rhetorical opponents and opening up our curriculum to more dialogical and collaborative intellectual work.

EMPATHY AND A "RADICAL GENEROSITY" TOWARD "THE OTHER"

Ratcliffe's ideas about listening, Glenn's work on silence, Halasek's work on Bakhtinian approaches to teaching composition, and Salvatori's work theorizing reading as a "hermeneutical conversation with a text" (Salvatori 1996, 440)—important work that we will be turning to in more detail later—all converge at a point that embraces a philosophically informed and principled engagement with others. This is the kind of ethic that has been championed perhaps most eloquently by Emmanuel Levinas and Martha Nussbaum, two thinkers who provide part of the philosophical foundation for the approach to teaching reading, writing, and thinking that we are theorizing here. Levinas is famous for promoting an ethic informed by an "absolute orientation toward the Other" (Levinas 2006, 27). His critique of the discipline of philosophy, for example, hinges on this quality of engagement: "Philosophy's itinerary still follows the path of Ulysses whose adventure in the world was but a return to his native island—complacency in the Same, misunderstanding of the Other" (Levinas 2006, 26).

Instead, Levinas champions "an orientation that goes freely from Same [or self] to Other is a Work" and that "the Work thought all the way through demands a radical generosity of movement in which the Same goes toward the Other" (26–27).

As we noted when we reviewed the work of learning theorists, this "radical generosity of movement" away from the self, the familiar, and the "Same" toward a principled engagement with the "Other" is precisely where learning theory suggests that mature meaning making and personal growth become possible. In fact, in some places in this book, Levinas sounds a great deal like King and Kitchener, Perry, Kegan, and Baxter Magolda. Consider this passage from *Humanism of the Other*, for example:

"Turn to the truth with all one's soul"—Plato's recommendation is not simply a lesson in common sense, preaching effort and sincerity. Is it not aimed at the ultimate most underhand reticence of a soul that in the face of the Good, would persist in reflecting on Self, thereby arresting the movement toward Others? Is not the force of that "resistance of the

unreflected to reflection" the Will itself, anterior and posterior, alpha and omega to all Representation? Then is the will not thorough humility rather than will to power? Humility not to be confused with an ambiguous negation of Self, already prideful of its virtue which, on reflection, it immediately recognizes in itself. But humility of one who "has no time" to turn back to self, who takes no steps to "deny" the self, if not the abnegation of the Work's rectilinear movement toward the infinity of the other. (Levinas 2006, 34–5)

The distinction between "thorough humility" and "the will to power" captures one of the primary differences between simplistic argumentative essays and more reflective kinds of writing practices. A focus on listening, empathy, and reflection as a pedagogical practice is designed to promote this kind of humility by nurturing a more mature, productive, and open engagement with others. A philosophical orientation with a focus on listening can also help promote qualitatively better reading and thinking across grade levels and across institutional boundaries.

Martha Nussbaum's important work on empathy and compassion invites us to move in this pedagogical direction as well. In *Upheavals of Thought*, Nussbaum suggests that "a central part of developing an adequate ethical theory will be to develop an adequate theory of emotions" (Nussbaum 2001, 2). Nussbaum notes here that emotions are "intelligent responses to the perception of value" (1) and that "part of ethical thought itself will be omitted with the omission of emotions. Emotions are not just the fuel that powers the psychological mechanisms of a reasoning creature, they are parts, highly complex and messy parts, of this creature's reasoning itself" (3). At the center of this system of ethics are the related emotions of empathy and compassion (327–454). For Nussbaum, empathy is "a mental ability highly relevant to compassion" (333) and "is psychologically important as a guide" (359). Nussbaum places compassion at the center of her ethical system, and suggests that compassion "assists the personality in the struggle with ambivalence and helplessness" (351) and, particularly through encounters with art (especially tragedy), compassion can help "promote concern for someone different from oneself" (352).

Empathy and compassion, Nussbaum believes, help bring us to an "apprehension of a common humanity," a "delineation of the possibilities and weaknesses of human life," and the causes of "human difficulties" (Nussbaum 2001, 429). Furthermore, Nussbaum suggests that "compassion pushes the boundaries of the self further outward than many types of love" (300). Emotions, she notes, "involve judgments about important things, judgments in which, appraising an external object as salient for our own well being, we acknowledge our own

neediness and incompleteness before parts of the world that we do not fully control" (Nussbaum 2001, 19).

This is a line of reasoning that parallels in some important ways ideas forwarded by the learning theorists we have discussed, and is also consistent with important recent work on intelligence. Both Howard Gardner and Daniel Goleman, for example, recognize and support the development of empathy and compassion as essential human qualities (Gardner 1993, 237–76; Goleman 2005, ix–xii, 96–110). This pedagogical focus is also supported by our discipline's growing interest in emotion and cognition (Brand 1987; Lindquist 2004; Robillard 2003; see also Damasio 1994; Damasio 2003). There is even international work that supports this kind of focus (Davidson and Harrington 2001). Listening is a gateway skill that can lead to the development of these vitally important characteristics. A pedagogy that focuses on listening, empathy, and reflection can help nurture better, more sophisticated, and ultimately more humane kinds of reading, writing, and thinking in our writing classroom and across the disciplines.

LISTENING AND CRITICAL THINKING THEORY

Critical thinking theory lends additional support for developing the kind of pedagogy we are discussing. Considerable agreement has emerged among critical thinking scholars that the dispositional characteristics we are examining here—and can be included under the umbrella terms of listening, empathy, and reflection—are essential to mature critical thinking. (We will returning for a fuller discussion of these characteristics later in the book.) As the American Philosophical Association notes, for example, in its Delphi Report,

The ideal critical thinker is habitually inquisitive, well-informed, trustful of reason, open-minded, flexible, fair-minded in evaluation, honest in facing personal biases, prudent in making judgments, willing to reconsider, clear about issues, orderly in complex matters, diligent in seeking relevant information, reasonable in the selection of criteria, focused in inquiry, and persistent in seeking results that are as precise as the subject and the circumstances of inquiry permit. (Facione 1990, 3)

Among the additional habits of mind that the American Philosophical Association identifies as important "affective dispositions of critical thinking" are the following:

- open-mindedness regarding divergent world views
- flexibility in considering alternatives and opinions

- understanding of the opinions of other people
- honesty in facing one's own biases, prejudices, stereotypes, egocentric or sociocentric tendencies
- prudence in suspending, making or altering judgments
- willingness to reconsider and revise views where honest reflection suggests that change is warranted (Facione 1990, 25)

In a more recent report, Facione et al. (1995) examine the growing consensus about dispositional qualities essential for critical thinking, and they develop in this report a fascinating "characterological profile" (2) of effective critical thinkers (see also Jones et al. 1995). Among the dispositional qualities that scholars now believe are essential to critical thinking are inquisitiveness and intellectual curiosity (4–5), open-mindedness (5), truth-seeking (5–6), and "maturity" (6–7). A pedagogy focused on listening, empathy, and reflection would actively support the development of each of these essential habits of mind. Open-mindedness, for example—"being tolerant of divergent views and sensitive to the possibility of one's own bias" (5)—is a foundational disposition in the pedagogy we are theorizing here, but it is often not valued very highly in classrooms focused on the development of thesis and support argumentative essays. The truth-seeking disposition is also foundational to our pedagogy. Critical thinking scholars define truth-seeking as

the disposition of being eager to seek the best knowledge in a given context, courageous about asking questions, and honest and objective about pursuing inquiry even if the findings do not support one's self-interests or one's preconceived opinions. Once a liberally educated person acknowledges a given set of facts to be the case or a given set of reasons to be relevant and forceful, that person is inclined to adjust his or her beliefs in accord with those facts and reasons. The truth-seeker is one who remains receptive to giving serious consideration to additional facts, reasons, or perspectives even if this should necessitate changing one's mind on some issue. The truth-seeking professional (student, faculty member, scholar) continually evaluates new information and evidence. In contrast, being un-attuned to counter-evidence perpetuates professional practice which is unreflective and unresponsive to changes in its theory-base. (Facione et al. 1995, 5–6)

Simplistic types of argumentative writing actively enable this kind of "unreflective and unresponsive" thinking and writing, as we have seen. The maturity disposition is also essential to good reading, writing, and thinking:

The CT mature person can be characterized as one who approaches problems, inquiry, and decision making with a sense that some problems are necessarily ill-structured, some situations admit of more than one

plausible option, and many times judgments must be made based on standards, contexts and evidence which preclude certainty. This dispositional attribute has particular implications for responding to ill-structured problems and making complex decisions involving multiple stakeholders, such as policy-oriented and ethical decision-making, particularly in time-pressured environments. Cognitive maturity in CT would appear to be critical to the development of expertise as a clinician, administrator, educator, attorney, or a policymaker in any venue. (Facione et al. 1995, 6)

We see highlighted in this important description some of the foundational elements of the pedagogy we are theorizing here—the focus on ill-structured problems and a pedagogy that intentionally invites students to engage uncertainty with care and caution. As E.M. Glaser, a renowned critical thinking specialist, has suggested, listening must be at the heart of any kind of mature critical thinking: “One must be disposed to *listen* to another’s presentation of opinion or argument, no matter whether he/she agrees with you or not. To *understand* the other person’s point of view broadens one’s ability to deal both with the differences in perception or values between one’s self and others and with the emotional surcharge which is represented by the other’s assertions” (Glaser 1985, 25).

The dispositions that are at the heart of mature critical thinking are precisely the dispositions that we are attempting to promote in a writing classroom built around listening, empathy, and reflection. It is important to note here that the pedagogy we are theorizing would create a classroom practice congruent with this foundational work on critical thinking.

LISTENING: AN ACTIVE, GENERATIVE, CONSTRUCTIVE PROCESS

So how can we best define this essential term of listening? I propose that we theorize listening as an active, generative, constructive process that positions writers in an open, collaborative, and dialogical orientation toward the world and others. Following Levinas (2006) and Nussbaum (2001), we can also theorize listening as a philosophical orientation toward the world that is characterized by “a radical generosity” toward “the Other” and informed most essentially by empathy and compassion. Listening can be defined as a practice that links a variety of activities, dispositions, and pedagogical strategies.

We can also theorize listening, following Arthur Costa and Bena Kallick’s international, research-based work on “habits of mind,” as a foundational “intellectual behavior that leads to productive actions”

(16). Costa and Kallick (2008) identify “listening with understanding and empathy” as one of their sixteen “habits of mind” essential for success in the classroom, the workplace, and life. These habits of mind have been widely embraced, and this work was instrumental in the development of the WPA/NCTE/NWP “Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing” document (Council 2011; Johnson 2013; Summerfield and Anderson 2012). Costa and Kallick note that

Some psychologists believe that the ability to listen to another person—to empathize with and to understand that person’s point of view—is one of the highest forms of intelligent behavior. The ability to paraphrase another person’s ideas; detect indicators (cues) of feelings or emotional states in oral and body language (empathy); and accurately express another person’s concepts, emotions, and problems—all are indicators of listening behavior. (Piaget called it “overcoming egocentrism.”) (Costa and Kallick 2008, 20).

Some of the key elements of our pedagogy are actively privileged here, including “listening,” “empathy,” “overcoming egocentrism,” and learning theory represented by Piaget. Significantly, Costa and Kallick (2008) frame “listening with understanding and empathy” as a sophisticated cognitive capacity, as “one of the highest forms of intelligent behavior”: “We want students to learn to hold in abeyance their own values, judgments, opinions, and prejudices so they can listen to and entertain another person’s thoughts. This is a complex skill requiring the ability to monitor one’s own thoughts while at the same time attending to a partner’s words” (21). As we will see, other “habits of mind” identified by Costa and Kallick—including “thinking flexibly,” “remaining open to continuous learning,” and “thinking about thinking (metacognition)” —are learning outcomes that can be nurtured by a pedagogy built around listening, empathy, and reflection.

As I hope readers will see, students have the potential to benefit in a number of important ways from a pedagogy that privileges listening as its foundational skill and value. Furthermore, I would like to see our profession reconfigure the writing classroom so that the reflective essay, a kind of writing that intentionally privileges listening and the dialogical and collaborative engagement of others, moves to the center of our curriculum.

THE GOAL OF FYC AND TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE

Finally, there has been much recent discussion about the purpose and goals of FYC that helps shed important light on the issues we are

discussing here. What is this learning experience we call "First-Year Composition"? What should students be reading and writing about in this class? What should our goals be? What kind of writing and intellectual work should students be doing to prepare for the more advanced writing they will be doing in college and in their major areas of concentration? Here they will begin to work within the specialized communities of practice that define academic disciplines, each with a unique way of looking at the world and defining value, meaning, and knowledge (Hirst 1973). Students will also be asked to write in discipline-specific genres, each with complex and "naturally occurring rhetorical situations and exigences" (Wardle 2009, 767). Students will be expected to theorize and situate this work within an ongoing professional conversation.

As we come to understand more fully the nature of expertise and how it is developed (Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1980; Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1992; Meyer, Land, and Baillie 2010; Scardamalia and Bereiter 2006; Sommers 1980; Sommers 1982), and as we come to understand more fully the nature of writing expertise and how closely this is linked to genre proficiency (Bazerman 1988; Beaufort 2007; Carter 1990; Freedman and Adam 1996; Russell 2002; Smit 2004; Soliday 2011; Sommers and Saltz 2004; Winsor 2000), the traditional stand-alone first-year writing course that "prepares students to write at college" and purports to develop skills that will transfer to their other courses across the curriculum becomes increasingly problematic (Freedman 1995; Petraglia 1995; Wardle 2009; Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak 2014). This is a difference, theoretically, between seeing writing as "a single elementary skill, a transparent recording of speech or thought or physical reality" vs. "writing as a complex rhetorical activity, embedded in the differentiated practices of academic discourse communities" (Russell 2002, 9). Elizabeth Wardle has described what is at stake here very memorably:

The gist of the critiques against FYC as a general writing skills course is this: the goal of teaching students to write across the university in other academic courses assumes that students in FYC can be taught ways of writing (genre and genre knowledge) that they can then transfer to the writing they do in other courses across the university. This goal and its underlying assumption, however, are complicated by the fact that the activity system of FYC is radically different from other academic activity systems in its use of writing as the object of primary attention rather than as a tool for acting on other objects of attention. Because of this difference in primary focus, the rhetorical situations of FYC courses around the country do not mirror the multiple, diverse, and complex rhetorical situations found across the university in even the most basic ways. Transfer to such varied situations is not easily accomplished. (Wardle 2009, 766)

Wardle goes on to suggest that "we should no longer ask FYC to teach students *to write* in the university" but should, instead, "construct FYC to teach students *about writing* in the university" (Wardle 2009, 767). So a great deal is at stake here in terms of the entire enterprise of teaching writing to students and using scholarship and research to guide our practices.

While we often can't control what happens in courses across the disciplines, at the very least writing teachers, grades 6-13, can attempt to equip students with skills, habits of mind, and orientations toward the world that will help them productively engage new discourses, genres, and fields of knowledge. A curricular emphasis on listening, empathy, and reflection, and a pedagogy that embraces openness and dialog is an approach to teaching writing that offers students transferable skills as well as habits of mind that will be of great value to them across a wide variety of disciplines and in many areas of their lives outside the classroom.

What should the purpose of FYC be? And what should students be doing in writing classes in high school? Developing an ability to listen, experiencing the power of empathy and reflection, and learning to value dialogic intellectual work are excellent goals for writing courses in high school and FYC. Given what we are beginning to understand about transfer of knowledge (Beaufort 2007; Brent 2012; Perkins and Salomon 2012), these appear to be transferable skills as well. As Doug Brent has noted in regard to research related to transfer of knowledge, there is growing interest in dispositions and habits of mind that may turn out to be more important than most other traditional subjects and skillsets currently at the center of many writing classes:

An even broader view of transfer underlies literature on transfer of dispositions. Researchers in this school of thought such as Carl Bereiter suggest that although it may be difficult to transfer discrete bundles of skills from one context to another, it may be more possible (and ultimately more important) to transfer dispositions or "habits of mind." Dispositions in this sense, such as scientific thinking and moral reasoning (we might add rhetorical thinking) more closely resemble character traits than bundles of skills. Studies in this tradition are often as frustratingly equivocal as other studies of transfer. However, the most encouraging ones emphasize long-term immersion in contexts that nurture the desired disposition in complex ways. Frequently, these studies involve entire classrooms (Campione, Shaprio, and Brown) and even entire programs (Presley et al.), which become microcultures that nurture particular learning dispositions. Shari Tishman, Eileen Jay, and David N. Perkins see the goal of such programs as "enculturation" rather than simply teaching for transfer. (Brent 2012, 563)

The pedagogy we are discussing here is designed to provide students with this kind of "immersion in contexts that nurture the desired disposition in complex ways." The "desired disposition," in our case, involves listening, empathy, and reflection, as well as the habits of mind identified in the WPA/NCTE/NWP document, "A Framework for College Success." These include curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition. This pedagogy is also designed to nurture the dispositional characteristics outlined in critical thinking scholarship: open-mindedness regarding divergent world views; flexibility in considering alternatives and opinions; understanding of the opinions of other people; honesty in facing one's own biases, prejudices, stereotypes, egocentric or sociocentric tendencies; prudence in suspending, making or altering judgments; and a willingness to reconsider and revise views where honest reflection suggests that change is warranted. (See Appendix 5 for a sample student artifact where these qualities are highlighted in a FYC essay.) Following findings from neuroscience research and important work done by scholars like Ruth Benedict and Jane Healy, our goal is, indeed, one of "enculturation"—that is, inviting students to see the tremendous power of listening, empathy, and reflection by an immersion process, 6–13, whereby these dispositions and habits of mind are actively, purposefully, and intentionally promoted and developed over the course of many years. We will return to examine this subject in more detail later in the book when we discuss habits of mind, but I would like to pause briefly here to offer readers a brief overview of important recent work on transfer of knowledge from outside of our discipline. This work will be of considerable value to us as we move forward with our discussion, especially when we turn our attention to motivation and habits of mind. Both motivation and dispositional characteristics have become increasingly important in discussions of teaching and learning.

David N. Perkins and Gavriel Salomon, in a recent summative essay about transfer of knowledge research and scholarship, "Knowledge to Go: A Motivational and Dispositional View of Transfer," make a number of important points that will be of concern for us as we move forward discussing pedagogy and the teaching of writing. First, Perkins and Salomon note that much current research related to transfer of knowledge tends to

obscure the role of motivations and dispositions "in the wild," even as they disclose the role of deep structure or related constructs. In virtually all the foregoing cases [which Perkins and Salomon review in this essay], learners are directly asked to undertake tasks, motivated by compliance

and rewards such as subject fees or course-completion credits. Emphasis falls on learners' ability to make the desired connections rather than their motivation or disposition to do so. (Perkins and Salomon 2012, 261)

In addition, Perkins and Salomon suggest that "reflection" can be used as an effective pedagogical tool for teachers to address the problem of "previously ingrained responses and other motives hijacking the desired transfer. Rehearsal techniques with reflection are one way of coping with this . . ." (Perkins and Salomon 2012, 263). Much thinking that we do, as a number of researchers have suggested, is done automatically (Bargh 1997; Bargh and Chartrand 1999; Willingham 2009) and is "thinking" only in the most limited sense of that term. Such thinking, Perkins and Salomon note, is often a function of bias, entrenched ways of looking at the world, "overlearned routines" (Perkins and Salomon 2012, 261), and "mindlessly treating new problems as if they are familiar ones" (261). The pedagogy we are theorizing here actively seeks to address this problem by seeking to challenge these kinds of entrenched ways of looking at the world and these "overlearned routines." A focus on reflection is how we can begin nurturing better kinds of student thinking.

Perkins and Salomon sum up their recommendations for teachers by contrasting what they see as the current "culture of demand" with an alternative "culture of opportunity." A "culture of demand" theorizes learning as a rather mechanical, circumscribed, and "passive" activity. A "culture of opportunity" asks much more of students both cognitively and dispositionally:

Recalling the familiar distinction between passive and active vocabulary, a culture of demand can build a passive "vocabulary" of skills, information, and understandings. Moreover, a culture of demand simplifies the logistics of education in ways reinforced by the current emphasis on high-stakes standardized exams. Exercises and tests can be relatively direct rather than open-ended. Courses and units can be relatively encapsulated rather than richly cross-connected—bounded rather than expansive framing in terms of Engle et al. Finally, notice that a culture of demand does not exclude some degree of learning for understanding. For instance, one can teach the law of supply and demand with plenty of interpretive exercises in response to varied problems.

However, for many of the roles educators envision for knowledge in learners' lives, a passive vocabulary is not enough. The environment does not strongly cue up the knowledge. Also, use is more discretionary and often in the face of contrary habits, intuitions, motives, and expectations from oneself or others. Most students participating in a straightforward unit on the law of supply and demand probably would not make spontaneous links later to love or the price of oranges. One needs to

be motivated to do so or have a general mindful disposition to look for possible bridges.

What's needed rather than a learning culture of demand is a *learning culture of opportunity* with the expansive framing Engle et al. suggest. Such a culture would not constantly organize students' work as a series of highly targeted demands. It would often engage learners in farther ranging and more open-ended experiences where supports are "faded" over time. Learners would more often need to grope for potentially relevant prior knowledge (detect) and use judgment to decide on its relevance and how to proceed (elect). Such a culture would anticipate likely counterhabits and counter motivations undermining later opportunities and prepare learners to face them. Indeed, such a culture would not limit its activities strictly to the classroom, but reach beyond the walls, for instance through reflective diary keeping about facets of everyday life or participation in social and intellectual initiatives in the home and community. (Perkins and Salomon 2012, 257)

Developing a "general mindful disposition" is one of the primary goals of the pedagogy we are discussing here. A focus on reflection and openness (rather than certainty and closure) and the priority we place on encouraging students to stay "open to further scrutiny, evaluation, and reformulation" and self-correction actively seeks to help students overcome "likely counterhabits and counter motivations" undermining opportunities for mature meaning making and transfer of knowledge. The "culture of opportunity" Perkins and Salomon recommend is also built around "open-ended" questions, the kind of ill-structured problems that we have already discussed and recommend positioning at the center of intellectual work in the writing classroom.

Perkins and Salomon cite Randi Engle's important scholarship, work that has important implications for teachers of writing. Engle and her colleagues have examined the powerful ways that "framing" strategies affect learning. Engle's work suggests that the way teachers "frame" instruction in their classrooms determines the kinds of things students learn—and the way they move forward applying or not applying that knowledge to other situations both in and beyond the classroom. The crucial difference for Engle is between "expansive" and "bounded" frames. "Expansive" framing encourages and enables transfer of knowledge, while "bounded" framing typically does not:

Here we investigate the idea that otherwise physically similar contexts can be framed as quite different social realities that may encourage or discourage transfer (Engle 2006). As Pea (1987, 647) explained, "contexts [that matter for transfer] are not defined in terms of physical features of settings, but in terms of the meanings of these settings constructed by the people present."

We use the term framing to refer to the communicative processes of establishing these social realities (Bateson 1972; Goffman 1974; Goodwin and Durand 1992; Hammer et al., Tannen 1993). Contextual framing is usually initiated in social interactions through meta-communicative signals about the context itself (Gumperz 1982, 1992; Hammer et al. 2005; Tannen 1993). For example, through organizing the desks in a classroom in particular ways and making certain kinds of directives, a teacher can work to frame a classroom as one in which students learn by quietly listening or by collaboratively engaging in knowledge construction with each other.

For purposes of understanding transfer, we focus on different ways that the boundaries of learning and transfer contexts can be framed, as this framing affects which contexts students orient to as being relevant sites for using what they have learned. For example, a teacher can introduce a lesson as an opportunity for students to begin taking on knowledgeable roles within communities they plan to participate in throughout their lives. Doing so expands the social boundary of the lesson temporally, spatially, and socially to encompass additional times, locations, and people for which each student's understanding of the lesson will be relevant. In contrast, the same teacher could have introduced the same lesson as only relevant to the next day's quiz, framing it much more narrowly as divorced from other contexts. By making links between the classroom and other contexts, the teacher's first framing created what is referred to as "intercontextuality" between contexts while the second framing did not (Bloome et al. 2005; Fiorani 1994; Gee and Green 1998; Leander 2001; Punney et al. 2000). The creation of intercontextuality is thought to give learners the message that they are allowed, encouraged, and even responsible for transferring what they know from one context to all others linked with it (Brown 1989; Engle 2006; Greeno et al. 1993; Pea 1987). (Engle, Nguyen, and Mendelison 2011, 604–5)

To maximize opportunities for transfer, it appears that students should optimally be framed as active meaning-makers. As Perkins and Salomon note,

Expansive framing emphasizes the meaningfulness and usefulness of what's being learned and its potential to relate to a range of other circumstances. Bounded framing treats what's being learned as for the unit, for the class, for the quiz. The broad teaching/learning moves that characterize expansive framing plainly put learners in a better position to detect opportunities for transfer. They include: cultivating expectations that what's being learned will speak to related settings; treating previous learning as continuously relevant; treating the use of prior learning as desired socially; and, broadly speaking, encouraging students to see themselves as the agents of their own learning and use of knowledge. (Perkins and Salomon 2012, 254)

A pedagogy focused on listening, empathy, and reflection is designed to be "expansive" in nature, framing learning in ways that have direct

and important applications to many areas of a student's life and career, not just writing classes. This pedagogy is also designed to position student writers as "agents of their own learning and use of knowledge." In sum, a pedagogy that privileges listening, empathy, and reflection is a pedagogy that is congruent not only with learning theory, neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and composition and critical thinking scholarship, but also congruent with important recent work being done on transfer of knowledge.

4

TOWARD A PEDAGOGY OF LISTENING

"FALSELY AUTHORITATIVE PAPERS"

How might a pedagogical approach informed by listening, empathy, and reflection, and responsive to foundational work on learning theory, critical thinking, neuroscience, and transfer of knowledge actually work in a high school writing classroom, basic writing course, or first-year composition? To give readers a sense of the crucial "deep structures" of our teaching practices, I would like to offer readers the following case studies—featuring two very different types of writing assignments and two very different types of pedagogies. It is my hope that these case studies will provide some clarity about what is at stake in the writing classroom. It is also my hope that this dialog will help guide us to make informed, thoughtful decisions about how we can develop more effective curriculum and writing assignments for our students, especially for grades 6–13. One pedagogy I will be discussing is traditional and focused on argumentation. This is a pedagogical approach that employs what Gary Olson has called "the rhetoric of assertion":

In one way or another, composing (at least the way it is often taught) has always seemed to be associated with asserting something to be true. Students are instructed to write an essay, which usually meant to take a position on a subject (often stated in a "strong," "clear" thesis statement, which is itself expressed in the form of an assertion), and to construct a piece of discourse that then "supports" the position. Passages in an essay that do not support the position are judged irrelevant, and the essay is evaluated accordingly. (Olson 1999, 9)

The problem with this kind of writing for scholars like Olson, Lyotard, and others is that it "pretends to be complete," that it pretends to "build a system of total knowledge about something," and that it undervalues dialog, inquiry, and the exploration of complex ideas and feelings in favor of a certain kind of closure and certainty (Olson 1999, 12–15). These are the kinds of "falsely authoritative papers" that Richard Marius rightly criticizes in his essay in *Rethinking the Boundaries* (Marius