Not Just Reading About It, But *Doing* It: Graduate Students Learning the Case Study in a Cross-Disciplinary, Co-Taught Course

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This article describes a year-long doctoral course on ethnographic case study research in which a communities of practice approach helped non-traditional students manage the challenging identity negotiations of entering a new academic field. Co-taught by faculty in two disciplines—Rhetoric and Composition and Teaching, Learning, and Culture —the course enabled the students who were from both disciplines to work in research teams as they applied what they were learning about ethnographic research to actually conducting research in the site of required first-year university writing classes. The article describes the process of setting up the course, along with the challenges encountered. Excerpts from two students' research notebooks and student interviews offer insights into how this pedagogical approach can assist non-traditional students in navigating their initial forays into research.

Every field of study has its own methods of inquiry that reflect particular values regarding the production of knowledge. As undergraduates, students are usually expected to be consumers of this knowledge, or in other words, to understand the research in the field and to apply their understanding to their own future professional contexts. Graduate students, however, are typically taught to contribute to knowledge in their fields by conducting research, usually as part of a capstone project such as a practicum, thesis, or dissertation (Lovitts, 2005; Ozay, 2012). Though it is likely that they would have taken methodology courses before conducting their own research, many students still struggle, despite assistance from their major professors. As a result, students may take a long time to earn a degree, acquire significant debt, or even not get the degree at all (Casanave, 2014; Cassuto, 2013).

To help graduate students in their journey of becoming researchers, we created a doctoral course in which students conducted an ethnographic case study through an apprenticeship model. We believe that one reason students often get stuck when they begin their own research is that doing research is more than learning approaches and procedures. Doing research is about students becoming researchers by entering an academic community of practice with specific routines, values, and habits of mind. This process is inherently social because becoming a participant in a new community is a sociocultural process that involves interactions with others (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). In most methods courses, students learn about research approaches in the field, and they might even conduct a mini-pilot study. However, they are less likely to have participated in gathering data for a research project or to have analyzed data with peers and faculty. One of the best ways to prepare students for doing research is to give them opportunities for collaborative research while they are guided by faculty. Even better, cross-disciplinary collaborative research offers students opportunities to compare the practices of different fields, better understand their own positionalities, and see their own fields from a new perspective.

In this article, we use a Communities of Practice (CoP) lens (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) to understand a cross-disciplinary graduate course that we developed and taught together and called Literacy/Biliteracy: A Case Study. In this course, students from two different disciplines (Rhetoric and Composition and Teaching, Learning, and Culture) became integrated into research teams and conducted an ethnographic case study. The two of us had an approved Institutional Review Board (IRB) proposal for the study and had secured research sites in two first-year college composition classes, one during the day and one in the evening, to accommodate our students' schedules. In this course, students from interrelated disciplines worked together as they entered their new, respective academic communities. We will describe the course, explain its strengths and challenges, and analyze examples of students' work from their research journals and from interviews. Our description and analysis of this course can be seen as one model for cross-disciplinary collaborative teaching and learning in a variety of instructional contexts.

Team Teaching and Learning

Team teaching in higher education can be challenging because of the disciplinary silos that exist on many university campuses (Meizlish & Anderson, 2018; Trust, Carpenter, & Krutka, 2017). Nonetheless, fruitful collaborations have existed in different formats depending on the subject matter, class size, and administrative structures. Dugan and Letterman (2008) described two main models: a co-teaching model with both faculty either in the classroom at the same time or at alternative times, or a panel model consisting of three or more faculty. In the co-teaching model, two faculty collaborated on a single course;

these faculty were consistently present in each class session or took turns being present. When in the class together, they took turns leading the class or spent the entire class interacting together in a kind of dialogue. In the "panel" modality, faculty from various disciplines were assigned a segment of the course, and only they were present during their segment. For instance, in a Humanities course faculty from History, Literature, and Art each taught a separate unit. Variations on these models have occurred, as when the faculty instructor and an industry professional co-taught (Higgens & Liztenberg, 2015) or when faculty team taught with their students (Gray & Halbert, 1998). The workload and responsibilities of faculty have varied as well, ranging from one faculty taking on most of the grading and communication with students to equal sharing of responsibilities between the team members (Benjamin, 2000; Dugan & Letterman, 2008). Usually cross-disciplinary team-teaching has involved disciplines that have some overlap, such as Criminal Justice and Psychology (Bucci & Trantham, 2014) and Education and Sociology (Arrington & Cohen, 2015). Our two fields (Rhetoric and Composition and Teaching, Learning, and Culture) shared topics of study and methodological approaches, despite our speaking to different scholarly audiences. We used the co-teaching model.

Whatever the discipline or pedagogical model, the teaching team needed to share a similar teaching philosophy and perspective on how students learn (Morelock et al., 2017). Communication was key so that the co-teachers discussed their teaching philosophies, course goals, perspectives on assessment, work schedules, and so on before beginning to develop a course (Volger & Long, 2003). They also needed to discuss how to handle disagreements, difficult students, and other potentially emotionally charged issues (George & Davis-Wiley, 2000; Robinson & Schaible, 1995; Shibley, 2006). The learning climate established by the teaching team was correlated with student satisfaction and subject matter competency (Killingsworth & Xue, 2015). When effective communication did not occur, instructors' philosophies failed to mesh, or when a member of a teaching team did not fulfill important obligations, then student learning was inhibited (Shibley, 2006). When this happened, students reported confusion about course expectations and evaluation criteria (Jones & Harris, 2012; Smith & Winn, 2017). Also, team teaching can be challenging from a logistical perspective; for instance, our university has no way of dividing up teaching load credits so that co-teaching faculty can share them, a fairly common situation according to Morelock et al. (2017). We were able to co-teach because one of us had an administrative appointment and did not need teaching load credits, which allowed the other instructor to take the course-equivalency credit necessary for her assigned workload.

When successfully implemented, team teaching was found to be beneficial for both students and faculty (Jones & Harris, 2012). The presence of two or more instructors, each with different expertise and experiences, increased students' depth of knowledge, understanding of professional contexts, and critical thinking skills (Bucci & Trantham, 2014; Gosetti-Murrayjohn & Schneider, 2009; Higgins & Litzenberg, 2015). Students also learned different modes of inquiry when the co-teaching faculty were from distinctive areas such as the Humanities and the Sciences (Nikitina, 2006). Students also received more individualized instruction (Vogler & Long, 2003) and were exposed to different points of view (Harris & Harvey, 2002). When students saw their co-teachers learning from each other, team teaching served as a model for professional collaboration and intellectual growth (Blanchard, 2012). Faculty who co-teach benefited as well. Blanchard (2012) found that through co-teaching, faculty became more reflective and deliberate about their pedagogical practices and philosophies through communicating with their collaborators and the process of creating a different kind of course. Novice faculty benefited when teaching with a fellow novice teacher (Chanmugam & Gerlach, 2013) or when they were mentored by a more senior teaching partner, while experienced teachers felt renewed by learning from someone new to their field or from a different field altogether (Blanchard, 2012). A more extensive team of instructors was also effective (Ilomäki & Toom, 2018). For example, Pharo, Davison, McGregor, Warr, and Brown (2014) described the work of a team of instructors at four different Australian universities who each taught classes on climate change using a Communities of Practice approach. Though they taught their courses individually, they shared approaches and materials and helped each other feel less isolated. With the aid of a paid facilitator, they created a community of practice that benefited both the faculty and their students.

Communities of Practice (CoP)

As we have noted, learning to become researchers—or learning to master a new subject matter in general—is a process involving learning new rituals, norms, behaviors, and belief systems that is situated in a particular community of practice (Farnsworth, Kleanthous, & Wenger-Trayner, 2016). People just entering a CoP engage in activities usually on the periphery of the group but over time can make more significant contributions as they gain more expertise and validation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Studies have shown that university students taking coursework and conducting research were in the process of gaining entry and acceptance into their academic discipline (Danowitz, 2016; Lee, Chang, Chen,

& Yoneda, 2017; Prior, 1998; Starke-Meyerring, 2011). Identities were negotiated and adapted as learners gained access to and enter into new scholarly communities (Wenger, 1998). A CoP is also a learning trajectory in which people draw on past experiences and future opportunities, beginning as novices and through engaging in legitimate peripheral participation, coming to be experts (Prior, 1998). This trajectory can be disorienting and difficult (Patton & Parker, 2017). As Casanave (2002) noted, this process of identity change often led to tension and loss of self-esteem; in her words, "identity construction and learning to belong go hand and hand . . . and both take time and effort and may never be complete" (p. 23). Coffman, Putman, Adkisson, Kriner, & Monaghan (2016) found that the CoP established in their doctoral-level course gave students opportunities for self-reflection and mutual support that facilitated this challenging shift from student to scholar. Similarly, we found that our course, with its focus on faculty and student collaboration, provided students with a space in which they could share their anxieties about entering and succeeding in their doctoral programs.

Why This Course?

Co-teaching when faculty are from different disciplines can help to fill in the gaps that academic programs might have because of teacher shortages, changes in curriculum, or, in our case, because of gaps within the curricula themselves. Our two programs, Rhetoric and Composition and Teaching, Learning, and Culture, both needed to strengthen students' research expertise, though for different reasons. Rhetoric and Composition, with origins in English Departments in the 1970s and 1980s, is a multidisciplinary field with strong roots in the Humanities (Skeffington, 2011). Historical and theoretical scholarship has tended to dominate the field (McComiskey, 2016). Scholars in the field need to conduct more empirical research in order to strengthen its alignment with the research-oriented higher education arena (Driscoll & Perdue, 2014; Haswell, 2005; Johanek, 2000). However, as of 2008 (the most recent data available), only 34 percent of doctoral programs in Rhetoric and Composition required a course in research methods (Brown, Enos, Reamer, & Thompson, 2008).

Doctoral preparation in Education, in contrast, has had less emphasis on theory and more focus on research methods, in particular the need for both understanding and expertise in qualitative and quantitative methods, and epistemological diversity (Fenstermacher, 2002; Florio-Ruane, 2002; Metz, 2001; Page, 2000; Popkewitz, 2002; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2002; Young, 2001). The question remains: how do students acquire research skills? Pallas (2001) argued that students acquire these skills through formal study, coupled with legitimate peripheral participation in a research project, as seen through a CoP framework (Wenger, 1998). What was key is apprenticing on a research team, according to Pallas (2001). By co-teaching this course, we were able to offer our students the chance to work in research teams and to fill in a crucial gap within their academic programs. As co-teachers, we each contributed our expertise, with Ullman being the more experienced ethnographer and Mangelsdorf the more knowledgeable about the research site of first-year writing courses. By combining our strengths, we enriched this project.

Description of the Course

Overview

Our primary goal in this course was to help graduate students start the journey of becoming researchers through an apprenticeship model in which they conducted an ethnographic case study. We set them up with an approved IRB proposal to explore the co-construction of identities, ideologies, and texts in two different sections of a first-year writing course at our university. None of the students had examined this topic before, and this would be most of the students' first experiences doing qualitative research rather than simply reading about it. Since part of the process of becoming a researcher involves presenting research to professional colleagues, the students also wrote conference proposals about their research, and several of the team members presented their research at national and international conferences. They also drafted manuscripts in their teams in which they reported on their research findings. Students learned to conduct procedures for ethnographic data gathering such as taking field notes, conducting interviews, and gathering artifacts. Along with data collection, they learned to analyze their data and wrote initial manuscripts.

The students also dealt with the same issues that experienced researchers encounter, such as developing relationships with research participants and examining their own positionalities. We took the perspective that helping students through an actual research process would help to demystify research and writing and help them to feel more confident about the process (O'Hara, Lower-Hoppe, & Mulvihill, 2019; Turner et al., 2012). This was especially important because our students were very different from the "traditional" demographics of graduate students: White, middle-class, in their twenties, and able to devote themselves full-time to their studies (Jackson, 2018). Most of our students were first-generation college students, all but two were Latinx[1], the others being a straight Black woman and a

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[1] We are using this term to avoid gender binaries.

queer White man from Appalachia with a hearing difference. Ranging in age from their late twenties to their early fifties, all of them worked, many of them in demanding full-time positions, while earning their doctorates. Half were parents, and one had left her young children with her husband in another state for a year so that she could focus on her doctoral studies. Non-traditional graduate students such as these, with family and job responsibilities weighing on their time and energy, encounter more challenges than "traditional" students (Gardner, 2008; Leyva, 2011; Pierce & Hawthorne, 2011).

Throughout the course we both talked about our own missteps in conducting research in order to demonstrate the realities of conducting qualitative research. We shared stories about the nuances of maintaining relationships with study participants and about going back to interviewees to ask important questions that had been initially forgotten. There were two research teams, each focusing on a particular classroom (one daytime and one evening class) in order to accommodate the student researchers' schedules. The students in each research team observed classes, took field notes, conducted interviews with first-year students and instructors, reviewed the course text, and collected student writing, as well as writing instructor feedback. Each research team shared their data collection experiences with the whole class, which enhanced the collaborative nature of the experience. At this point we have taught this class twice, with 14 students in the initial class and 9 students in the second iteration. After having taught the class once, we realized that we needed to extend the course into two semesters in order to give students sufficient time to code and analyze their data and to draft manuscripts.

Course Preparation

The exigence for team teaching, as noted earlier, can vary. In our case, we ourselves decided to teach this class after several discussions about our respective graduate programs in which we realized that both groups of students could benefit from more practice working together in research teams. We also realized that we had similar philosophies of teaching and learning, preferring discussion-based classrooms and inquiry-oriented assignments. It became immediately apparent to us that in order to accomplish our goal of students from both disciplines learning about and conducting research, we needed to start the semester with a research site already chosen. The university's first-year writing classes were suitable because they could be easily accessed by busy graduate students since the classes were offered at a variety of times right on campus. Before the semester began, we secured permission from the Director of First-Year Writing for

the for the project, as well as the writing instructors for two sections of the course. We also had an approved IRB proposal before the semester started. Finally, we recruited the doctoral students through flyers and email solicitations and created the syllabus and calendar. One of the most successful aspects of our co-teaching was that we contributed specific readings that were thematically related but which reflected the different emphases of our disciplines. Many of the course readings came from a scholarly journal that is renowned in both of our fields, the *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education.* In a way, this journal represents the Venn-diagram intersection of our disciplines.

During the Course

Throughout the course we used a co-teaching model in which we were both in class at the same time, taking turns presenting information and leading discussions based on our areas of expertise. We also collaboratively evaluated our students' writing assignments through long work sessions in which we each reviewed the students' papers and shared our assessments, remaining open to changing our perspectives through our discussions. After reaching an agreement on the quality of each student's assignment, we both commented on each student's paper. Though labor intensive, this co-teaching model helped to maximize the benefits of combining our different areas of expertise.

In the first month of the course, the doctoral students read about and practiced ethnographic research techniques such as taking field notes and conducting interviews. Since this kind of research emphasizes self-reflection, the students kept research journals in which they reflected on the course readings and the research they were preparing to conduct. Students selected the writing class they wanted to study based on their schedules, and we made sure there were students from Rhetoric and Composition, as well as from Teaching, Learning, and Culture in each research team in order to promote the sharing of skills and perspectives. After the first month, each team started their actual data collection by doing participant observations of one of the two first-year writing classes and taking extensive field notes. The doctoral students also interviewed as many of the first-year composition students as agreed to participate, along with the writing instructors for each class. Our doctoral student researchers arranged these interviews outside of class time and learned that undergraduate students sometimes made appointments and forgot to show up, which meant that the researchers had to respectfully chase the first-year students down. In our doctoral course, we analyzed the textbook used in the first-year composition course, and we collected artifacts such as student writing, instructor feedback, and the course textbook. With our guidance, we drew the doctoral students to the themes of ideologies,

identity, and texts. By midway through the semester, our class periods were devoted to discussing the data that each team had collected alongside discussions of the articles we were reading from the *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education* that dealt with the themes we were researching. In our class discussions, we helped the graduate students recursively review their data for emerging themes and also encouraged the teams to brainstorm for solutions for problems they were encountering, such as getting first-year writing students to respond to requests to participate in the study. The notion of positionality was threaded throughout these discussions as we encouraged our doctoral students to consider how their identities as researchers, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and (dis)ability, affected the way that they viewed and understood the world.

We found that our doctoral students had the most difficulty using theory to understand their data and listening to what the data revealed. Their difficulty highlighted some of the differences between the disciplines of Teaching, Learning, and Culture (educational research) and Rhetoric and Composition. The graduate students in Teaching, Learning, and Culture tended to focus on power dynamics between teachers and students, including some of the negative assumptions that instructors made about students. These graduate students noted, for instance, that in an interview the instructor called students who dropped the class "lazy" when in fact the first-year students who dropped the class were all English Language Learners who were not well served by the course curriculum. In contrast, the Rhetoric and Composition graduate students concentrated more on the language choices of the first-year writing instructors and students, many of whom were bilingual. Students from both disciplines noticed that in interviews, it was common for first-year students to express the belief that speaking Spanish in the classroom was inappropriate or detrimental to their learning to write in English. At the same time, our student researchers observed that writing students translated the teacher's directions into Spanish for each other and that Spanish was the primary language for group work and talk amongst themselves. These different observations—one on the first-year writing course curriculum, the other on classroom language practices—enriched our class discussions and helped the research teams see that their observations were not the only way to understand what was happening in the classrooms. And just as our students were deepening their understanding of their research practices and questions, we were learning more about our two disciplines, which has helped to rejuvenate both our teaching and research.

In the second iteration of the course, we realized that it made sense for us to conduct a meta-study –

that is, a study of how the graduate students were learning to become qualitative researchers. That means we obtained IRB approval for the graduate students to conduct their research study in the first-year writing classrooms, with students and teachers there, and we had another IRB proposal approved to study our own graduate students who were taking this class with us. We invited a graduate student who had taken the course with us the first time to be a preceptor and to teach the second iteration of the course with us. We also asked him to collaborate with us on researching the graduate students, and he was the one who asked the student researchers if they wanted to participate in the project, as he did not have grading authority for the course. It turned out that all of the students in our course agreed to participate in the study. So while we were teaching this course, we were also gathering data, which included taking field notes during classes and conducting individual interviews and focus groups with the student researchers after the course had ended. We, along with our graduate student, have published a book about our students' experiences becoming qualitative researchers (Ullman, Mangelsdorf, & Muñoz, 2021).

End of the Course

Both times that we taught the course, students drafted research reports about their findings. Before this occurred, however, we helped the students write conference proposals based on their research to submit to the Ethnographic and Qualitative Research (EQRC) conference, an annual gathering of interdisciplinary qualitative researchers. We considered this a student-friendly conference where the feedback was likely to be constructive and supportive, and fortunately that turned out to be the case. For all of the students, this was the first time they had written a conference proposal to present original research.   During this process we shared with the students several conference proposals we had written in the past, and we described the objectives and norms of academic conferences. We gave them feedback on their proposals before submission, and we discovered that conferences in our respective fields were quite similar in their expectations, so in this instance the similarities in our fields helped to reinforce our ideas.   All of the proposals were accepted, and all but two of the eight students were able to attend the conference to share their work. We met with the students beforehand to help them rehearse their presentations and to give feedback. The students were still in the process of analyzing their data and drafting research reports when they presented at the EQRC, so the students were able to think about the feedback they received from conference attendees to help them develop their

analyses. Indeed, this first research conference presentation was a rite of passage for all of the students.

As noted above, we realized the first time that we taught the class that the students did not have sufficient time to thoroughly analyze their data and compose their research reports, so the second time we taught the course, we required that they take it for two semesters. In the second iteration of the course, we again had students write proposals for the EQRC as well as for a panel with a discussant (whom one of us invited) for the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association (AAA). Before this conference the students talked about their insecurities regarding their competence in research methods and their analysis of their findings, as well as about the possible questions from the discussant and the audience at the AAA conference. The panel at the AAA was another hurdle for them, and this time the student researchers received both written and oral feedback about their papers, along with questions from the audience, which they dealt with nervously, but with confidence.

Apprentice Researchers and Collaborative Learners

Both times that we taught this class, our student evaluations were positive; students said they had learned a great deal and had found the class well organized. However, these student evaluations were standard across the university and failed to ask specific questions about the course content and design. To learn more about the students' views of the course, we reviewed the data that we had collected for our meta-study, including field notes, interviews, and the students' research journals. We discovered that the students' research journals, which they kept throughout the class and in which they reflected on the readings and research in the course, were the most helpful in telling us the students' thoughts about the class. In particular, the students' journals revealed much about their feelings and experiences as novice researchers who were working with fellow students from another discipline and being taught by two instructors. These research journals were self-reflective spaces where students could become more aware of their experiences and feelings as they entered new professional communities (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2010). Because space limitations prevent us from describing all of the students' responses, in the following section we will focus on two students: Dalia, a more experienced student who found the process of team research intellectually beneficial, and Hector, whose disorientation upon entering a new doctoral program was eased by working with others.

When Dalia took the course, she was at the end of her second year in the Teaching, Learning, and Culture doctoral program and had come to the program with a strong orientation toward action research (Borda, 2007). She also had a government-sponsored scholarship from her country (Colombia) to complete a doctoral degree that would produce useful knowledge for national universities. She had conducted a pilot study for her dissertation with English language instructors at her university in Medellín through Skype, in which she explored their teaching philosophies and identities. At the time she was taking this course, Dalia had transcribed her interviews, and she thought that her pilot study might be expanded into a dissertation that would look at teacher identities and assessment. However, at this point, Dalia was still unsure as to what her dissertation would address. She also knew her university department in Colombia was hoping she would look at language assessment practices. From her perspective as someone analyzing data from a pilot study and looking toward her dissertation work, Dalia could appreciate the philosophy of our course, which was about learning to become a researcher. She wrote in her notebook[2]:

> I am glad we are having the opportunity to follow the whole research cycle in this class, from recruiting participants through preparing a paper to submit[ing] to a conference... Research is done by doing it definitely. Not only do we need to read about research, but we also need to start to put into practice the research procedures we are reading about and then experience research in real-life situations. There is no other way to learn. Not to mention the important role that interactions and group work play in this learning to do research experience.

From her vantage point as an advanced doctoral student—and as someone who had studied the framework of CoP for the theoretical framework of her dissertation proposal—Dalia was able to articulate the learning theory behind our course design. Also, since she was embarking on the individual process of writing an article using data from her pilot study while writing her dissertation proposal, she could appreciate the value of working in a research team. This was especially true during the brainstorming process. In this entry Dalia described what she saw in class as the teams thrashed out ideas:

> I was just fascinated to see how ideas and confusions flowed to make all that mess become clearer and how we were building ideas together with the group members and the professors. I think that class environment is more similar to what really life in academia could be like if we try to work with others.

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[2] We have lightly edited these selections from the students' research notebooks for clarity and space.

This last comment—"what really life in academia could be like if we try to work with others"—reflected Dalia's own experience as a language teacher and fledgling researcher in Columbia. She had worked on a research team in Colombia with one of her professors, but this was something that was done during their "free time" and was not part of the everyday work of Dalia's position among the language faculty.

Dalia perceived working as part of cross-disciplinary research team as a messy but exciting process that would improve the intellectual quality of all of the team members' work. As she expanded in another notebook entry:

> I liked that we had time in class to know a little bit more about our classmates, and I see a connection with this identity exploration we are called to do through the study the class has to develop. The students seem to be very interesting, too, and our background and experiences are as varied as they are enriching.

In contrast to Dalia, who focused in her notebook on the intellectual benefit of team research, Hector, a new student in the Rhetoric and Composition doctoral program, wrote that working in a team bolstered his confidence because some of his fellow students were also new to research. In his first research journal entry, Hector wrote:

> I am starting to feel a lot better about this course. In all honesty, a large portion of that has to do with my teammates. In the few times that we have gotten together, I have had the opportunity to relax a little bit knowing that some of them are also feeling a little bit lost. It is comforting in the sense that I know we will be able to find our way together.

Here Hector is demonstrating a key aspect of a CoP: apprentices learn through relationships with other apprentices (Lave & Wenger, 1991). At the beginning of the course, Hector explained that he understood the phenomenological nature of ethnographic research, but he still expressed fear about delving into the research process. According to several other research journal entries, he initially felt disoriented and even inadequate in the class. Hector wrote:

> In all honestly, I have questioned to myself whether I am even qualified to be doing this type of research. Again, I have no formal education in rhetoric, or education, for that matter… At best, I am just some dude who signed up for a class with nary a clue of what to expect.

At this point Hector was struggling to see himself as potentially a legitimate student in the course (and in his new field at large). Learning is a social process involving the whole person (Wenger, 1998), including one's sense of identity. Bridging the gap between multiple identities is a struggle for graduate students as they try to find a place for a new academic identity (Coffman et al., 2016). It is by actively engaging in a CoP that newcomers can begin to imagine themselves as belonging within the community (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder,2002). Hector, who identified as Latinx, struggled to connect his life outside of school with the classroom—to imagine himself as belonging to his new discipline. He wrote:

> [M]e and my mind that are [*sic*] leading me astray. I say this because I genuinely feel as though I have an understanding of the material in class. Once I get out of class, however, I feel as though I am navigating an entirely unknown field. While I grasp the concepts, my biggest problem I feel is my reluctance to engage my own personal views and experience.

This disconnect between Hector's different identities was shared by several other students in the course, who were also at the beginning of their doctoral studies. In many of our class discussions, students talked about their anxieties as they were learning the norms of academic work. The more advanced students—in CoP terms, those who were closer to the center of the discipline—sometimes served as mentors when they talked about their experiences their first semester in their programs.

When Hector and his three teammates (Elsa, a fellow Rhetoric and Composition student, and Jerry and Sebastian, who were in Teaching, Learning, and Culture) collaborated on their conference proposal and presentation, their different disciplinary backgrounds at first seemed to interfere with their collaboration. While Jerry said that he appreciated working with others who were in Rhetoric and Composition—for one thing, they could help him with the writing of the proposal—he noted in his research journal that his group, which was struggling to find a time when everyone could meet, had decided to each work on distinct sections of the presentation that did not seem to mesh. When the group practiced the presentation in class, Jerry said he knew his part but was "unsure of how it fits in with the rest of the group." But by the time they presented their work at the conference, Hector, Elsa, Jerry, and Sebastian had found common ground by focusing on language ideologies in the composition class they had studied. For this topic, the Rhetoric and Composition students contributed their knowledge of language capital, a theoretical concept, while the Teaching, Learning, and Culture students contributed their knowledge of language practices, a more applied understanding. As co-teachers from these two disciplines, we were able to give feedback to the students as they wrote their conference proposals and practiced

their conference presentations. We helped them mesh these two disciplinary subjects as they came to better understand how to analyze their data. In the final section of this article, we describe the challenges that we faced in teaching the course and suggest ways that this course can be adapted to be successful in other academic contexts.

Conclusion

Research Team Problems

Throughout this article we have talked about the benefit of students working in cross-disciplinary research teams. However, we admit that at times these teams failed to work optimally. We discovered that we needed to explicitly make connections between the two disciplines in order to remind students to work together. The students' tendency was to work with fellow students they knew from their program since they knew each other and were in other courses together. Sometimes the teams had problems working together because of differing schedules (as Jerry noted in the previous example) or because they were hesitant to offer criticism, even when it was constructive. Perhaps because the students had a longer time to get to know and trust each other, the teams in the second iteration of the course worked together better as a whole. Certainly, working in research teams can help with the labor of conducting research because students can take turns making class observations and conducting interviews. We recommend careful monitoring of research teams, perhaps by meeting individually with students to learn their concerns or by having them create a classroom blog (Williams & Jacobs, 2004).

Entering a New CoP: It Takes Time

Wenger et al. (2002) describe a CoP as a living entity with its own rhythm and patterns. The design of our course, in which students initially read about and practiced research procedures, followed by conducting research, then making their research public through a professional conference, did follow a logical pattern of entry into the CoP and practicing the habits and norms within the community. The first time we taught the class, however, we found that a semester did not provide enough time for students to proceed through these steps. The second time around, we made the class into two semesters; students enrolled into the course for one semester, and then for the second semester they enrolled in a group Independent Study that met as an organized class. With this additional time, the students were not only able to learn to gather data and to begin to analyze it, but also to reflect on their own learning processes. The second group met more often in their research teams, received feedback on their conference

proposals and research drafts, and practiced and got feedback on their conference presentations. Because we were the students' program directors, we naturally gave the students credit for both semesters, which we understand might not be possible in other teaching situations. If this is not possible, students could continue their work over a holiday term or a summer break, especially if they realized that this could help them publish their research or serve as a pilot study for their dissertation research. In fact, two students have drawn on the course in their dissertations, one by conducting further research in first-year writing classes, and the other by using some of her research data from the course in a chapter of her dissertation.

Overcoming Logistical Hurdles

Junior faculty might not have the luxury that we had in designing the course and enrolling students. However, arguments can be made about the course effectiveness. Since writing projects can prevent students from completing their degrees (Casanave, 2002, 2014; Kamler & Thomson, 2008), a course such as this can improve retention and graduation rates, particularly for students from non-traditional backgrounds or students who might be distracted from the work of their degree programs due to work or family obligations. Faculty can benefit as well since they can not only learn from their teaching collaboration, but they can also end up conducting their own research with their co-teacher, as has happened with us. Moreover, if teaching load credits cannot be shared, co-teachers can take turns being in the classroom or commenting on student work to alleviate the workload.

What is most important for faculty is communication, the sharing of expertise, mutual support, and intellectual rejuvenation. What is most important for students is learning to do research by actually doing research. Doing that research in a CoP, with professors, as well as more advanced classmates who can mentor them, can make all the difference. Producing a manuscript to be submitted for peer-review, and of course, a thesis or a dissertation, are all high-stakes projects. Since conducting research is a requirement for most graduate programs, a course such as this can help students to complete the requirements for their degrees. Versions of this course can easily be imagined for other instructional contexts. While this course focused on the ethnographic case study, other methodological approaches could be employed, depending on the professors' expertise. Something similar to this course could even be used as a capstone course with undergraduate students, as the work is highly scaffolded. Perhaps if undergraduates were to take a course such as this one, it could encourage them to pursue graduate study, as experience is sometimes the best teacher.

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