Theses and Dissertations (All)

2-11-2013

Listening to Students & Answering the Call: One Woman's Writing, Responding, and Reflecting

April Zosia Sikorski-Julier
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Follow this and additional works at: http://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd

LISTENING TO STUDENTS & ANSWERING THE CALL:

ONE WOMAN'S WRITING, RESPONDING, AND REFLECTING

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

April Zosia Sikorski-Julier

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

December 2012

Indiana University of Pennsylvania
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of English

We hereby approve the dissertation of

April Zosia Sikorski-Julier

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

_____   _____
                                    Michael M. Williamson, Ph.D.
                                    Professor of English, Advisor

_____   _____
                                    Gian Pagnucci, Ph.D.
                                    University Professor

_____   _____
                                    Brian Huot, Ph.D.
                                    Professor of English
                                    Kent State University

ACCEPTED

_____ _____
Timothy P. Mack, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research

iii

Title: Listening to Students & Answering the Call: One Woman's Writing,
    Responding, and Reflecting

Author: April Zosia Sikorski-Julier

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Michael M. Williamson

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. Gian Pagnucci
                            Dr. Brian Huot

This study is my attempt to consciously reflect on what is at hand in one student's work. I set out to learn about how students react to responses they receive. As I read portfolios at the end of the semester, Sapphrikah chose me through her amazing ability to consciously reflect and grow as a writer, activist, and womyn. By examining Sapphrikah's work, I learned about how my teaching hindered her development as a writer. I also learned what Sapphrikah respects in response and responders, valuable insight that helps me construct classrooms that facilitate these valuable writer/responder relationships for future students.

Sapphrikah's conscious reflection taught both of us a similar lesson, one I would have missed if I hadn't decided to investigate my curiosities about student interpretation of response. Studying Sapphrikah's writing, responding, and reflecting enabled both of us to realize that we need to temper our "feminist fury" if we hope to communicate our truths to others. Throughout the class, Sapphrikah became a friend. Throughout my research, Sapphrikah became my teacher. If she can be a friend and a teacher, she is a person. As such, she is more than the "necessary vehicle for gathering the data" about "language development, or concept formation or problem solving or reading" (Carini 2001 p. 5). Sapphrikah as a person—her "continuousness with herself"—drives my inquiry. Describing

her writing and experiences enables me to learn about my teaching, my research, and my life. Instead of making her the object of my study, I envision Sapphrikah as the subject, the person I observe in order to learn about teaching, writing, and life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

foundation for my work with Chris in the Writing Center. These women showed me that composition was a field, teaching was an art, and I could have a real place in both worlds. Without Linda, I wouldn't have found my way into the Snake Pitt. Without Chris, I would not have found my way out. These women introduced me to the man who would become my academic father and advisor: Dr. Michael M. Williamson.

The best moment of my academic life thus far was being able to introduce Mike as a Featured Speaker in New Orleans. After announcing that the next speaker was the "best advisor a PhD student could ask for" the people in the audience rose to their feet to welcome Mike to the podium. Standing among so many people whose lives Mike had changed, I felt honor. Honor to be in the ranks of such amazing thinkers and scholars. Honored to have had the experience to work, talk, and think with Mike. And, most of all, honored to consider my advisor my family.

The day I asked Mike to be my advisor, we were waiting to take in the Pittsburgh nightlife with Brian Huot during NCTE. Unsure of the appropriate way to go about popping this all-important academic question, I got down on one knee. In front of Mike and Brian, I held out my NCTE program and asked if they would become my dissertation committee. Thankfully, they accepted. Without Brian and Mike's constant feedback, this project wouldn't be what it is today.

Although response isn't always easy to receive, Brian's feedback always led me to question what I needed to question. After receiving a Brian's comments on what I thought to be a brilliantly written chapter, I was so despondent that I

tossed them across the room. The pages hit my cat. So, I was upset, and so was Kabuki. They just lay there in the corner like a red badge of hatred. Then, a few days later, I picked them up and began to re-read Brian's feedback. I realized everything he said was spot on. His responses and suggestions were pushing me to reconsider my assumptions in wholly productive ways. Through that experience, Brian helped me identify with Sapphrikah and my other students. All responders and writers, and writers can have emotional reactions to even the best feedback. Thank you Brian for helping me to constantly remain human and connected to my students as people.

All of these people helped me to be a strong student scholar, but one woman more than any other has given me the confidence to drop the "student" and authorize myself as a scholar: Dr. Carmen Kynard. Throughout my education, I have realized that the best teaching and learning moments happen in casual conversation—often in someone's office or in a smoking area. During one of these office conversations, Carmen looked at me casually and said: "Well of course you get it; you're a researcher." I didn't know how to respond. Here was this woman who I respected telling me that I was a researcher. I had never considered myself as anything more than a novice, a student, an imposter. At that moment, I realized that Carmen not only saw something in my work, she saw me as a person. And that person was a researcher, a woman who knew her shit and wasn't afraid be intelligent. You helped me to realize I deserved the respect and authority I wanted my students to own. So, thank you, Carmen, for becoming a colleague and academic sister to me when I needed one most.

As an academic sister, Carmen joins great ranks with Jessica Ganni and علوان دانة (Dr. Dana Olwan). Since our days as undergraduate students, دانة and Jessie have been readers, listeners, and friends. Thank you دانة for not only reading and responding to my work throughout the years, but for helping me to question the reality fed to me by the West. Your work and passion are literally awesome, دانة, and I am truly honored for your perspective in my life.

Then, there's my J-girl. Jessie has been a true sister and sounding board since we sat together as the only English Education majors at La Roche. Talking with her has helped me negotiate intellectual obstacles and find peace in the midst of anxiety and panic. You are my rock, Jessie. I know that I could not have written this dissertation without your support, and I know that I could not have navigated the past 15 years without your friendship.

After all of this, I would be remiss if I didn't thank my biological family as well. To my Mom, who sacrificed everything to give me what I have today. You have been a mother and a friend. Thank you for supporting the woman I have become. To Jack, the best man I have ever met. You showed me what it means to love someone unconditionally, and I would be lost without your support. To my father, whose early exposure to talk radio made me a lifetime NPR listener. Your interest in my work and opinions amazes me, Dad. Thank you for asking me questions about my writing and politics. To Rachel, my sister, my friend, my teacher. You are my source of peace and balance. Your focus and dedication inspire me. You have ALWAYS been the smart one.

And to Jules. I spent so many nights chatting with you as I wrote and revised. You were my contact to the outside world when I was sequestered at my dissertation station. Somewhere in the midst of our conversations and friendship, I feel in love with you. Thank you, Jules, for marrying me and being my partner. I want to have all of my adventures with you, because it wouldn't be an adventure without you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"[W]hen the student disappears, histories of writing will revert to the mode of "great teacher narratives," singing the praises of individual teachers rather than of student learning" (Salvatori and Donahue, 2010, p. 31).

Response research has only recently begun to ask for and listen to the reactions of students to teacher and student response (Fife & O'Neill, 1997; Fife & O'Neill, 2001; O'Neill & Fife, 1999; Murphy, 2000; Phelphs, 2000). Since the 1970s, this body of work has focused on teachers interpreting for students (Connors & Lunsford, 1988; Marzano & Arthur, 1977). By examining student drafts and revision work, teacher-researchers have made assumptions about how students read and react to responses. These assumptions have been made on behalf of students, who often are referred to with generic pseudonyms, first names only, or numbers. In these ways, existing response research has often "denied or negated" students (hooks, 1994, p. 88).

Although I am reading these studies critically, I don't mean to negate their importance to the field of response research. I believe work like Harris (1977), Connors & Lundsford (1988), and Sommers (1982) aimed to help teachers align the *high order concerns* (HOCs) (Reigstad and McAndrew, 2001) they value in the classroom with the *low order concerns* (LOCs) (Reigstad and McAndrew, 2001) their responses suggest they value. In this research, comments are analyzed and, at times, categorized (Connors & Lunsford, 1988) in order to show which are geared towards the elimination of grammatical and mechanical errors (LOCs) and

which are designed to help students revise their structure or develop their ideas (HOCs). Thus, the goal of these studies is to expose gaps between theory and practice, between what teachers claim to value (HOCs) and what values their response practices show (LOCs) (Harris, 1977; Sommers, 1982). Response researchers construct these values by interpreting the responses teachers write. Therefore, this research is locked in analysis of both teacher comments and student revision. Researchers make claims about how students interpret feedback and students' understanding of how to use feedback is inferred from a comparative analysis of teacher response and student revision (O'Neill & Fife, 2001).

Seeing the lack of student voice in conversations about their interpretations of responses leads me to insist on the value of students' perspectives in this discussion. Through this instance, I hope to persuade response researchers to acknowledge and listen to students because they are thinking, human, sentient beings capable of having and expressing thought and opinion.

Marrizano and Arthur's (1977) insistence that students don't read responses has never sat well with me. Where Marrizano and Arthur (1977) saw dismissal in students, I saw effort. I saw students really trying to understand the responses they received on their writing. When they weren't sure how to use those responses as a way to revise, they moved on—frustrated and uncertain.

The idea that students read but have difficulty making meaning from response became foundational to my pedagogy. I constructed a full class

workshop, where students were at once writers and responders. In this way, students learned to interpret and use responses as they learned to write them. Response became a subject for discussion in the classroom, and O'Neill and Fife (1999) suggest it should be.

Teaching students to effectively read and respond to writers became a focus of my classroom design. hooks (1994), Ferm (2005), Freire (1998), and Jensen (2004) reminded me that students are human, and, to be engaged in learning, they must have a hand in constructing their scholastic projects. I wanted to create a class that allowed any student to investigate and attempt to answer a question dealing with something in their lives. Knowing I couldn't be Jane-of-all-trades, I needed to open discussions up to students. I didn't understand some of their projects and questions, but other writers in the class did. So, they were able to form research, writing, and responding partnerships with one another.

My classroom became a community where each member "acts responsibly together to create a learning environment" (hooks, 1994, p. 152). Within this classroom, I worked not to exert control (Boomer, 1987) but to allow my students to become a community of leaders (Freire, 1998; hooks, 1994; Chochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Every member was positioned to learn from the other members. Practitioner inquiry gave me way to assume an honest position as a researcher and learner. While my inquiries were different that the students', we all witnessed how other people learn and see the world. As a learner, I met my students on a common level. By searching with students, I worked to provide opportunities for them to empower themselves:

Rather than illustrating how teachers empower students, [our research into inquiry as stance] reveals how inquiry conducted with and by students allows learners to empower themselves to take different stances toward their education, acting as agents for change in their schools and communities. (Chochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 14)

When respected as people with ideas, students can begin to see themselves as a part of a larger educational enterprise. Where they may have been passive receivers of knowledge before, when students positioned themselves as researchers, they became active constructors of knowledge based on inquiry. When given the space to reflect on experiments with their voice and curiosity, students could begin to shape their selves more consciously. At best, they may begin to see themselves as active "agents for change." At worst, they might see that their learning isn't dictated by anyone but themselves.

Once the authority of my response was decentered by the presence of twenty-five other writers and responders, I became interested in how students were interpreting and using the responses they received. I also wanted to know how their work as response writers affected their personal writing and revision efforts.

Using O'Neill & Fife (1999), Fife & O'Neill (2000), Carini (2001), Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2009), and Goswami (2009) as guides, I created a study that was fully integrated into my classroom. Students reacted reflexively to the responses they received in Response Confessionals—reality TV-like videos in which students speak directly into their laptop cameras, ranting and reacting to the

4

responses they received from me, their classmates, or the Writing Center. After recording their knee-jerk reflexes, students were then asked—in their final portfolios—to re-watch their confessionals and reflect more formally on how these videos helped them learn about writing. The integration of these confessionals into the class framed responding and using response as a teaching and learning moment. By crafting the Response Confessional assignment, I hoped to allow students the opportunity to learn about response and responding. These videos gave all of us a way into the conversation about the teaching potential of response. In this way, response didn't die on the margins of student writing; it became the focus of class discussions.

Through these Response Confessionals, I learned that students read responses through the lenses of their past and present experiences with writing. I gathered mountains of data and jump disks full of videos showing students reacting to responses. Some were angry; some were upset; some were hopeful; some were surprised, but all showed evidence that they read their responses and used these confessionals to talk through the revisions they planned to execute.

Every student helped me learn something different about my assignments, my self, my writing, and my teaching. However, when I began to compare these students to one another, I started to abridge their rich, individual selves into categories. I thought to Carini's (2001) *Jenny's Story* and remembered how moved I was by the learning potential of reading one student, and her work, so closely.

Enter Sapphrikah[1]

Carini's (2001) descriptive review process blended perfectly with models of practitioner and classroom-action research I was borrowing from Kemmis & McTaggert (2003), Chochran-Smith & Lytle (2009), and Goswami (2009). By honoring Jenny, Carini (2001) gave me the confidence and license to examine how one student moved through the reflections in our course. This student was Sapphrikah—a womyn[2] whose penname blends Sappho and Afrika.

This study is my attempt to consciously reflect on what is at hand in one student's work. I set out to learn about how students react to responses they receive. As I read portfolios at the end of the semester, Sapphrikah chose me through her amazing ability to consciously reflect and grow as a writer, activist, and womyn. By examining Sapphrikah's work, I learned about how my teaching hindered her development as a writer. I also learned what Sapphrikah respects in response and responders, valuable insight that helps me construct classrooms that facilitate these valuable writer/responder relationships for future students.

Reading deeper into her work, I opened up to what I saw in Sapphrikah's movement and struggles as a writer, and I saw clear connections between our difficulties. She had already taught me much about teaching and writing, but there was a larger lesson I was able to glean from my reflection on Sapphrikah's work. Both of us struggled to temper our passion, what she termed her "feminist

---

[1] Phonetic pronunciation of Sapphrikahh: Sa-phere-ic-ka.

[2] While I am aware this spelling of woman has a history of alienating trans* people, Sapphrikah insists on its usage. She calls on a second wave of feminism when employing this term. By exchanging the "a" for a "y," Sapphrikah is insisting that women are separate from man in spelling and identity. I use this spelling when referring to Sapphrikah as a way to honor her identity construction.

fury," with our ability to communicate to our audience. Both of us insisted on forcing people to see we were right. Instead of trying to present our arguments so as to persuade or educate people, we were aggressive and shut down conversations.

Sapphrikah and other students began to call this idea of tempering feminist fury "getting over yourself." In order to be able to really listen to responses, writers need to get over themselves and realize that nothing worth writing is ever perfect or finished. In turn, in order to write responses a writer might listen to, responders must get over their own beliefs and agendas to make room for those of other people. As the study moved on, I realized I had a lot of "getting over myself" to do as a teacher, responder, colleague, and researcher.

I didn't expect this lesson, and I wouldn't have ever thought to look for it. But Sapphrikah's writing about her difficulties spoke to me. I was currently dealing with negotiating a silencing, an imposed assessment tool that shut down organic research conversations in our department. My response was to dominate conversations about this tool and chastise my colleagues for their complacency and lack of participation in earlier research conversations. While there may have been truth to my aggression, it made me no friends. Through Sapphrikah, I learned that if I wanted my audience to respect my position and claims, I needed to respect them as well.

As writer, Sapphrikah has felt attacked by response. As a responder, Sapphrikah realizes she can also attack. She finds a way, when responding to Evelyn, to connect with her on the common ground of being a feminist. At the

end of the semester, she acknowledges that she also shares that common ground with William, a writer who she ideologically disagrees with.

Why Sapphrikah?

Every student in my class was a potential participant. I could have, for instance, compared Sapphrikah to William, but that would be like comparing apples to oranges. William, a first-generation college student form the Bronx, was searching for a way into a career in medicine. His motivations were money and success. If I were to inquire into William's work, I would have investigated his discovery of the structures at play that keep students of color isolated from pre-med student communities. I may have discussed his struggle to expand his writing goals—which focused on money, cars, and homes—to include a discussion of this racism into his writing. William struggled to radically re-see his writing because he was struggling to fully understand the barriers our institution placed in the way of his success.

I could have compared the work of these two students of color; however, that would be abridging William and Sapphrikah's vastly different past experiences. Sapphrikah attended a preparatory school in Bedford Stuyvesant, one that groomed her for political action. William did not have the same experience in his public school. In order to make the similar enough to compare, I would have had to abridge each students' individuality. To attempt to equate her experiences with William's would be unethical because they are different people from different backgrounds. Thus, my research would have elided what

my class aimed to help students realize: we are all curious, intellectual individuals.

Aside from the differences in their backgrounds, William's work lends itself best to its own descriptive review, one that would investigate university cultures and the support they offer students of color. While I am interested in how William's reactions to his responses could have led to his realizations about institutional culture, this inquiry is quite different from the one I moved through with Sapphrikah. They are both valid and have the potential to teach me a great deal about writing, learning, and myself. However, when I created the structures of this class and this inquiry, I was most involved with radical feminist politics and direct action. Thus, Sapphrikah spoke to me in a way that William did not.

By asking one student to discuss the lenses through which she reads responses, I hoped to shed light on the multiple contexts created in the relationship between a teacher-writer and student-reader. This work is much like protocol studies by Hayes & Daiker (1984) and Wansor (1990), as well as Edgington's (2004) self-study. However, because the aim of this study is to establish an identity for a student as an intellectual authority in response research and evaluate the classroom and human contexts that influence a student's interpretations of responses she receives, I believe it responds to Fife and O'Neill's (2001) call to examine response as a pedagogical activity.

The process of reading through Sapphrikah's work and talking to her throughout the semester was so powerful for me that I decided to center this study on the investigation of Sapphrikah's work with response. Her work made me

curious about what more I could learn about response, writing, and feminism, so I set out to engage in a descriptive review of Sapphrikah's work. My hope is this reading of Sapphrikah's work will allow me to illustrate the potential practitioner research has to reinforce response as a pedagogically hermeneutic activity (Phelphs, 2000).

Sapphrikah showed me that responding isn't about me, my intentions, or my ego. Regardless of what I write, the student has final cut. So, if I want my opinions to be considered, I need to present them so as to help the writer think through her own inquiries in a new way. The worst thing I could do is see something I disagree with and shut that writer down. That response would halt her inquiry instead of showing her possibilities for where it could go.

Throughout the class, Sapphrikah became a friend. Throughout my research, Sapphrikah has become my teacher. If she can be a friend and a teacher, she is necessarily a person. As such, she is more than the "necessary vehicle for gathering the data" about "language development, or concept formation or problem solving or reading" (Carini, 2001, p. 5). Sapphrikah as a person—her "continuousness with herself"—drives my inquiry. Describing her writing and experiences enables me to learn about my teaching, my research, and my life. Instead of making her the object of my study, I envision Sapphrikah as the subject, the person I observe in order to learn about teaching, learning, writing, and life.

When I look to Sapphrikah to construct and reflect upon inquiries born from her own personal, human curiosities, I disrupt the educational system

founded on the tenant that the teacher teaches and the student learns (Chochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). By adopting a pedagogy that asks all students to pose their own problems, I position them as creators of knowledge, and the hierarchy between knower and learner begins to blur. Students are teaching each other about their subject and about writing, while they are teaching me about how they learn and how my teaching enables or breaks down those processes. We are engaged in our own inquiries and our reflections of these processes enable us to learn about our learning and ourselves.

To approach teaching, learning, and research from points of inquiry is to first admit that both the students and myself are human individuals, with real goals, needs, desires, motivations, and curiosities. However, Himley & Carini (2000) and Carini (2001), along with Chochran-Smith & Lytle (2009), acknowledge that envisioning students as human beings who are at the center of the classroom is a political act. Students and teachers to engaging with each other on the similar level of inquiry disrupts current norms of educational practice. Administration, more accustomed to directive, banking educational practice, might not understand how to read this work during observations. Other colleagues might not see this classroom as rigorous. Some students might be put off by the request to become consciously in control of their educational inquiry. When the current educational climate is driven by test scores and generalizable assessment measures, "It is a radical idea to put the child—the person—first: ahead of the system, ahead of 'achievement,' ahead of school business, ahead of economic concerns" (Himley & Carini, 2000, p.165).

The information about students as humans is not new. Educators have

been discussing the power of self-actualized learning since Auntie and Uncle

Ferm began the Modern School Movement in the early 1900s. Before that,

Dewey (1956) was discussing progressive education. Emerson (1965) was

concerned, as were most of the enlightenment thinkers, with self-reliance—a way

of seeing the world that relied on reflection and observation of the self in action.

With all this accumulated knowledge about students as humans, the question

remains:

> How do we make 'children at the center' an actual an enacted value and
>
> not merely agreeable rhetoric? How, in the climate of an ever expanding
>
> testing technology, do each of us and all of us together keep alive ways of
>
> inquiring and talking about children that safeguard us and them from
>
> definition in the terms of narrowly conceiving assessment strategies?
>
> (Carini, 2001, p. 98)

Carini (2001) calls for more than lip service to be paid to the idea of student-

centered teaching. She asks for a way to actively value students as people in a

climate where we are being constantly pushed to conceive of them as nameless,

generalizable data sources. I propose that through practitioner inquiry, teacher-

researchers can show students as human intellectual authorities by making them

the center of our scholarship. Thus, practitioner research is a practice that enables

the sort of research and scholarship Murphy (2000), Phelphs (2000), and Fife &

O'Neill (2001) call for. The more we move students towards the center of our

inquiries, the more they will move to the center of our field and the center of

conversations regarding education at all levels. When we respect students enough to learn from them publicly, their identities, knowledge, and experiences will be central to our teaching and learning.

We are teaching self-actualization; therefore, we aren't creating mini-mes. Students choose to go against or with the grain.   What is most important isn't that they embrace the beliefs and epistemologies that empower us, but that students embark on a journey based on their own conscious curiosity. I can think of several times when a student eloquently stood for a way of seeing I reject. One instance occurred when teaching Judy Brady's (1993) "I Want a Wife" as a substitute for a colleague a few years ago. During our discussion, a student in the room insisted that she wanted to be Brady's wife. She loved the safety and security of the 50's housewife, and believed her Christian faith dictated that she be the best wife she could be. Although met with resistance, she moved through and rejected every argument her peers made. She was critical and conscious about her decision. While I completely reject her choices for myself, what I respect is her determination to let her values and beliefs guide her critical examination of current norms. I could have shut her down, demanding she change her perspective, but what would be the point of that? Wouldn't rejecting her stance silence her? Wouldn't joking about her epistemology be a violent denial of her self? When we accept that the classroom is a free space, we accept ways of knowing that rub up against us, occasionally leaving brush burns.

While we might accept that students are human beings with curiosities and desires, students have been inundated with a sense of education as "a driving in"

13

"rather than a drawing out" (Avarch, 2006, p. 10). Roseanne Barr once said to women: "No one gives you power; you just take it." However, a student who has been "banked" (Freire, 1974) her whole life may be reluctant to take her own power. And, as we saw with the student who wanted to be Brady's wife, no learning can force someone to want to change. Without the desire for change (or curiosity about another way of being in the world), growth does not occur. Since awareness of self cannot be mandated, the classroom must be free enough that it encourages students to reflect on themselves as individuals in the world:

> To be able to recognize his own nature, to become conscious of himself as an entity, the child must have opportunity to exercise his faculties and to see himself in the external which he has created. Freedom to act and freedom to receive the reaction of an act is indispensable to self-knowledge. (Ferm, 2005, p. 85)

Through reflection, the learner comes to see herself "in the external which [s]he has created." In a Lacanian sense, Ferm (2005) is suggesting that the student comes to see herself as other. Through this repositioning of the self, the student is able to see herself as a conscious entity that acts on and within the world. These actions "receive reactions," and these reactions teach learners about the consequences of their choices. When based in inquiry, these consequences become food for thought and reflection.

Through Sapphrikah, I realized that research that honors the individual fully is akin to activism, writing, and learning. All are complicated processes. And, to quote Sapphrikah's final project, "Anything but the Master's Tools": "the

14

beauty of being involved in something unneat, unquick, unpretty, and totally

righteous [is that] complications are not disqualified from being progress."

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF STUDENT VOICES IN RESPONSE RESEARCH

"Students are an important—but often overlooked—source of information in analyzing and understanding response. . . In the quest to understand and improve response practices, compositionists need to listen to the primary audience of those comments, their students" (O'Neill & Fife 1999, p. 39).

A significant amount of response research has focused on helping teachers write better comments or narrowing down the best practices in commenting/responding for teachers. Marizano and Arthur (1977) begin the discussion by declaring that students don't read the comments teachers write, perhaps igniting a decades-long focus on researchers inquiring into ways they can write better comments. Harris (1977) and Sommers (1982) work to the goal of expose gaps between theory and practice, between what teachers claim to value (HOCs[3]) and what values their response practices show (LOCs[4]). Knoblauch and Brannon (1984) suggest teachers abandon the notion of "Ideal Text" and respond to students' own intentions and goals for writing. Connors & Lundsford (1988) survey teacher comments on student drafts in order to categorize aspects of teacher response like the frequency of errors. Crowley (1989), Katz (1989), and Anson (1999) continue to study the role of students' authorial intent in helping teachers compose better responses. Petrosky (1989) studies his own responses in order to find better ways to respond in the future. Sperling (1994) categorizes the various identities, or orientations, teachers assume when reading student writing.

---

[3] High order concerns (Reigstad and McAndrew, 2001)
[4] Low order concerns (Reigstad and McAndrew, 2001)

Straub (1996) surveyed teachers in order to study the levels of control different responders assumed over student drafts.

For Fife & O'Neill (2001), the central problem of this existing response research "is the tendency to view comments from the researcher's perspective alone, analyzing the comments as *text* apart from the classroom *context* that gave rise to them" (p. 301). Researchers' focus on closely reading comments as to determine their usefulness leaves unexamined the context in which these comments where written. When researchers focus on comments alone, they abridge the responding situation down to it's most base element. Instead of investigating the complexity of responding, they focus on how to write better comments. This focus denies the rhetorical reality of response.

As Huot (2001), Phelps (2000), and Edgington (2005) have suggested, in order to respond to student writing, a person must first read that writing. For this reason, the act of responding to a student text is a hermeneutic (an interpretive) one. When responding is recognized as a reading activity, the teacher's reading and responding are pedagogical activities (Phelps, 2000).

As Phelps (2000) writes, response is both hermeneutic in its construction and pedagogical in its intent. Phelps' (2000) pedagogical hermeneutics is a theory of response that positions responding as both instructive and interpretive. Writing is a process of drafting, reading, and revising; therefore, response must be a process of guiding writers through these obstacles. The teacher, in pedagogically hermeneutic response, is a reader who interprets student writing in order to coach writers towards their own meanings, arguments, and goals.

Borrowing loosely from Freire (1974), Phelps (2000) notes: "texts and readers, in pedagogical hermeneutics, are inevitably read not as being, but as becoming" (p. 104). Student texts are often drafts, and teacher response is designed to help students realize and achieve their goals for that text. When reading becomes pedagogical, teachers read in order to teach. This reading can show teachers new openings and possibilities for the student text. By reading texts as writing in the ever "process of becoming—as unfinished, uncompleted [texts] with a likewise unfinished reality" (Freire, 1974, p. 84), teachers read for potential and not polish. Thus, pedagogically hermeneutic response will attempt to help students can become better writers.

When we read, teachers have to interpret what students intend (Knoblauch & Brannon, 1982), read those goals against our goals for the assignment/course, and then respond to the students' writing in ways that allow them to pave a path towards communication. This work is necessarily difficult:

> Pedagogical reading remains hermeneutically difficult because of the mysterious gaps, imperfections, and miscues in the artifacts we must interpret and the radical instability of the ``objects'' (the emergent text, the emergent writer) we are trying to apprehend and articulate. (Phelphs, 2000, p. 102)

Because student texts and writers are "emerging" as the class progresses, teachers must respond as ever-vigilant interpreters, constantly reading for possibility. Readings must seek to enable writers to emerge instead of shutting them down. When teachers approach texts in order to correct them, they stifle the writer's

emergent expression (Harris, 1977; Knoblauch & Brannon, 1982). Instead of erecting roadblocks, response should allow teachers to view texts as movable and response as a pedagogical and hermeneutic process.

Navigating the difficulties of seeing response as both pedagogical (a teaching activity) and hermeneutic (a reading/interpretive activity) is artful. In fact, Phelps (2000) consistently refers to response as an "art." Like the artist who is open to watching her work evolve as she creates, both the teacher and student: "remain radically uncertain and open; they deal with emergent ends and emergent means" (p. 106). The art of response is the art of embracing this uncertainty and openness. The teacher should not fix her gaze on ideas or perspectives that prevent her from "interpret[ing] a situation configured around writers, texts, and classrooms; test[ing] out their hypotheses by probes (exploring the situation) and moves (intervening to change the situation); and reshap[ing] their understandings and plans in light of what they learn" (p. 106). The goal of pedagogical hermeneutics is to use response to teach. To meet this goal, response research can capitalize on the hermeneutic and recursive reality of the rhetorical response triangle (see Figure 1). By viewing the writer, reader, and text positions as ever-shifting, response researchers can begin to consider the interpretation of teachers and students. In order to fully understand the context of the classroom, response researchers must investigate the reactions of teachers to student writing and of students to teacher response. Also, the best material to help a teacher "reshape" her responding practices comes from her students' and their reactions to her teaching.

Reader
(Student, Teacher)

Meaning

Text
(Paper, Response)

Writer
(Student, Teacher)
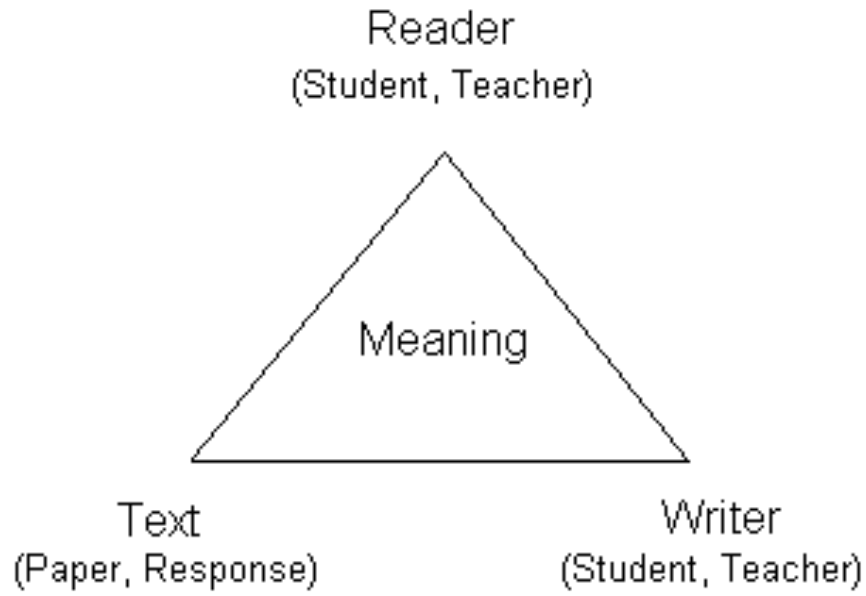
Figure 1. The rhetorical response triangle, a revision of Rosenblatt's (1978)

rhetorical triangle.

As with all readers, both the teacher and the student interpret comments

and writing through their own personal perspectives (Rosenblatt 1978). The

shared context for these interpretations is the classroom, because both teachers

and students are in the same classroom, even if they are constructing very

different realities based on what happens in that space. Therefore, response

research must also involve classroom observations in order to evaluate how

response is taught. Students' response in class, as well as the teacher's discussion

of response and revision, need to at the forefront of response research. When

class discussions of writing and response are a central focus, response research

will begin to truly lift response out from the margins and establish is as an active,

alive, artful teaching activity. For students to be readers, research must authorize

them as such. For response to be pedagogical, research must examine how it is

taught.

Responses are written, sometimes within the context of multiple drafts. Response writers often have goals and intentions they hope their responses to achieve. Responses are also read and interpreted. They are judged as useful or not. And, some of them are used to then springboard revision. There is no one best response for all writers because all writers approach their drafts with different intentions, issues, problems, and concerns. Therefore, research that seeks to find the best way to comment or best set of comments misses the chance to investigate the reading and writing processes at work within the context in which that comment was written.

Research focused on classroom context attempts to paint a full picture of a response situation. This picture needs to account for the teacher and the student as readers. If response is a reading activity, there are writers and readers on both the teacher and the student side of the page. Research cannot get at the context of a classroom by relying solely on authorial (teacher) intent and interpretation. We must, as Murray (2000) suggests, look to the readers interpretations in order to complete the rhetorical triangle and, thus, construct meaning for that classroom, that teacher, that student, and that response:

> We need to consider how we can use the knowledge we have about how
> readers read—specifically how teacher-readers read in asking questions
> about student texts vis-à-vis other kinds of texts. Until we do, we may be
> denying the very freedom to develop many of the possibilities for finding
> expression in writing that we exhort our students to explore. (p. 84)

According to Murray (2000), response researchers need to investigate the uses of research into teacher-readers. When this research is focused on enabling teachers to write better comments, a world of possibilities for inquiry into reading, writing, and learning are lost. Because response research has focused less on teaching response and more on writing comments, this research hasn't interrogated students in order to determine what they value. Focusing on how students learn to read/react to response enables response research to look beyond the comment and acknowledge the complex rhetorical nature of responding.

Sperling and Freedman (1987), O'Neill and Fife (1999), and Fife and O'Neill (2001) all acknowledge an absence of student voice in response research. Even Sommers (1999), in a reflection composed for *The Bradock Essays,* acknowledges the absence of student voices in her oft-cited 1982 response article as a problem in her research. Fife and O'Neill (2001) contend that response research "needs to consider the particular context in which response occurs as well as the students' and teacher' perspectives, and…this has not been done in published research on response to date" (p. 303). Context, according to Fife and O'Neill's (2001) refers to the rhetorical relationship of the response writing/reading situation. Responses are written from the oft-unexamined teachers perspectives. Then, they are received, read, interpreted, and acted upon (or rejected) by students—whose reasons for their choices post response and their interpretations of response are, as Fife and O'Neill (2001) acknowledge, unexamined. The teacher reads a student paper and then crafts a response (hopefully) aware of the student's intentions and goals for this draft/piece. The

response is written and read not only within the context of intended revision but also within the context of class lessons, discussions, assignments, and workshops that highlight, facilitate practice with, and otherwise teach response.

To answer Fife & O'Neill's (2001) call to interrogate context and teacher/student perspectives, response research needs to move away from textual analyses of response and revision. These studies speak *for* students. Instead of interpreting for students, response research should investigate the context through which response is written and those through which it is read (Fife & O'Neill 2001).

According to the Colorado State University "Writing Situation Model," we must consider audience, purpose, and context in order to achieve our goals as writers. There has been plenty of research into the purposes for comments and the reasons why teachers write them. Investigations into audience—students' interpretations and uses of comments—have most often spoken for students. In these studies, researchers have compared commented drafts to revised drafts and then made assumptions about how students' read/understand/use these responses, they have categorized common errors teachers respond to (Connors & Lundsford, 1988), and they have looked into the role authorial intent plays on the comments they write (Knoblauch & Brannon, 1984; Anson, 1999). However, they have rarely asked students to comment on the reasons behind their use or rejection of responses. These studies of audience have not spoken to the audience for teacher comments.

Context also remains under-studied. Because research has not investigated the student, there has been little research into the context in which responses are written. This context is the classroom, the space where writing is assigned, read, reviewed, composed, discussed, and revised. When response research doesn't account for classroom conversations about response and revision, that research doesn't show a full picture of the rhetorical response situation.

Practitioner research facilitates inquiries that investigate audience, purpose, and context by design. By definition, practitioner research engages teacher (practitioners) in the study of issues pertaining to their subject, their teaching, and their students. The sites of these inquires are most often the practitioner's own classroom, and the audiences are often the practitioner students. Most practitioner inquiry doesn't hit the published page or conference podium. Most of this research is what teachers do at the end of nearly ever semester or assignment when they look back on what worked and what didn't.

Practitioner research gives teachers license to enact liberatory pedagogy while engaging in research that investigates students' perspectives, intentions, and opinions--an essential component missing from most response research. Liberatory pedagogy demands we respect students as intellectual beings. When I combine liberatory pedagogy with practitioner inquiry, I realize that my students are the best people to learn about my teaching from. They are authorities on learning and they have first hand experience about what its like to be in my classroom. From students, I can learn what responses they value, how they figure out how to use or reject those responses, and how they stumble through towards

24

using those responses to work out revisions. When I am a liberatory pedagogue and a practitioner inquirer, I can't help but speak to students about their experiences as learners and teachers. These joint frames authorize students to speak back to the responses they receive, and, perhaps, affect change in the responses teachers give.

When response research focuses on how students react to teacher feedback, students are authorized as active and aware forces in the response situation. Reframing response research to investigate how students' read teacher response moves students from a passive to an active role in their education. Consequently, student's feedback (and not assumptions of these reactions) can become a major force in the teacher's revision of teaching and response practices. Instead of being interpreted, students are asked to interpret what they hear and see in their teacher's response.

Analyzing "comments as *texts"* in isolation—without pedagogical/situational context or student readers—can help teachers revise their practice. However, speaking to students about how they react to teacher response, the same teachers can gather a different set of more meaningful data. That is, by asking students how they read feedback, teachers are getting advice from their primary audience. Most importantly, asking students to identify the genesis of their reactions to teacher response will move the discussion of classroom context out from behind the teacher's desk. Practitioner research allows response researchers to really get at what the audience for teacher response hears because of the students are in the classroom and so is the teacher/practitioner. Asking

students to talk/think about how and why they used feedback is a good teaching practice, one that enables students to recognize there judgment as it develops. Practitioners who research what their students hear when they read response can and should be a natural part of teaching writing. Learning how (and through what lenses) students read teacher response enables researchers to analyze how a localized classroom context affects these student interpretations.

By talking to students, talking to teachers, and observing classrooms, response researchers can begin to investigate the role of classroom context to response practices. This investigation necessitates response researchers inclusion of not only discussions of the teacher-as-reader (of student writing), but also, most importantly, discussions of the student-as-reader (of teacher response).

My study initially hoped to shed light onto the perspectives of students. While I believe it does this work, I feel more inclined to speak about the ways in which Practitioner inquiry and classroom based action research can help facilitate response scholarship that investigated audience, purpose, and context. What follows are the touchstone studies that have spoken with students to investigate response forms, best practices, and students responding to each other. While they may not have called themselves practitioner researchers, these scholars consider the full context of response rounds in the classroom, work that I have found foundational and inspirational to my own.

This move is divided into two sections, one for self-studies and one for outside studies. Although many of self-studies don't examine class context and teacher philosophies, they may be popular because observations are seemingly

easier to conduct in ones own classroom. The outside studies in this section focus

on involving classroom observations and interviews or protocols with students in

order to explore their reactions to teacher response.

Self Studies

Odell (1989) performs a self-study in the sense that he uses his

classroom's small writing workshops as the focus of his response research.

Throughout the semester, Odell (1989) met one-on-one with students to discuss

the responses they received in these workshops. These one-on-one meetings were

tape recorded, and students prepared for them by reading over their workshop

responses and choosing three to four comments they felt were helpful and another

3-4 they thought were unhelpful.

In Odell's (1989) conferences, students reacted to the feedback that

workshop peers offered. These reactions allow Odell (1989) to identify "five

basic issues" that emerge when students analyze workshop feedback: (1)

"accuracy and completeness of responders knowledge of the subject," (2)

"consistency with the writer's worldview…perception of how things ought to be,"

(3) "whether a comment could be verified by the writer's own reading of his/her

text," (4) "consistency with the writer's knowledge of him/herself," (5)

"appropriateness" of the comment" given the ethos the writer wanted to create"

(p. 227). Although students did not identify their responses using the above

issues, Odell (1989) was able to use these issues to categorize student statements.

That is, these like-issues emerged frequently in his conversations with students,

and through analysis of these conversations, Odell (1989) constructed these themes.

Odell (1989) was talking to his students about their reactions to their workshop-groups' responses. Students could be honest about what was helpful and what wasn't because they were not talking to their student-responders but instead to Odell (1989), in a one-on-one meeting. In Odell's (1989) study, students critique the responses they receive from fellow students. Therefore, Odell's (1989) authority as the teacher has less of an impact on how each student constructs "helpfulness." That is, students won't side with Odell's (1989) interpretation. Instead they have to interpret their responses through the lens of their past and present experiences with writing: "Deprived of the authority of the teacher, these students invoked the authority of their personal experiences, perceptions, and interpretations" (p. 232). Because they didn't have Odell's (1989) sense of what was "right," these students relied on their own experiences to guide their sense of what feedback was helpful.

Often, students would use the context of Odell's (1989) classroom to find ways to interpret revision suggestions from feedback. With the role of context exposed, Odell (1989) notices that students, when writing and responding, pay little attention to the possibility of "audience resistance." Thinking about the context of his class, Odell (1989) wonders if his classroom provided enough time/space for conversations about audience. Only by authorizing his students-as-readers does Odell (1989) notice the lack of focus he offers discussions of audience. This practice provides Odell (1989) an opportunity to interpret what

writing/responding issues his students have control over and which ones he isn't covering in class. Seeing audience awareness as a weak spot in student's responding and writing allows Odell (1989) to return to his curriculum and add moments for conversations about writing and audience to his repertoire. Thus, looking to the students as readers allows Odell (1989) to find ways to revise his teaching.

Because his focus is on students' responses to one another, this data doesn't directly impact Odell's (1989) own responding. However, if we re-see response as a teaching activity, as Odell's (1989) workshop pedagogy suggests, then his decision to discuss audience resistance could be seen as a way to help students become better responders and better writers. Conceiving of his students-as-readers of feedback provides Odell (1989) with the opportunity to revise his teaching practices. Thus, response, in Odell's (1989) study, is pedagogically hermeneutic because his interpretations of student feedback (and their interpretations of workshop peers' feedback) facilitate a shift in the way he teaches audience.

Turning the tables on this study and asking students to respond to their teacher's feedback would be more of a challenge because the authority the teacher has as grade-giver would undoubtedly affect the students' ability to respond to that teacher's feedback honestly, especially if these conversations occurred during the semester in which that class was in session. Beach (1989) decides to work through some of these difficulties when he surveys and interviews his (past and present) students in order to determine their interpretations of his comments to

29

their writing journals. Beach's (1989) survey asked students to determine which comments were useful and which were not, and his interviews allowed him to generate thicker descriptions of surveyed students' responses.

As true of most student-as-reader research, this self-study provides immediate feedback the teacher-as-researcher can use to revise his practices. This analysis shows Beach (1989) that he often responds in ways that work against a student writer's own goals and intentions. Thus, he concludes that he needs to ask students to define their goals and intentions as writers before he responds:

> Once I am able to perceive a student's particular approach or purpose, I can respond accordingly. As I noted previously, I may want to hold conferences with my students to help them to define or clarify their purposes and needs. Or I may ask students, within the journal, to define their purposes and needs. (p. 195)

As Knoblauch & Brannon (1984) contend, knowledge of a student's "particular approach or purpose" is essential to writing responses that will be interpreted as helpful and useful. When responses don't acknowledge the writer's personal project, these responses are likely to be dismissed as uninformed and unhelpful. That does not mean that responses can't help a writer grow and change her work. However, responses that encourage revision need to be couched in a clear understanding of how that change will help the writer better communicate her intended meaning.

Also taking up the teacher-as-research position, Smith (1989) works to gauge students' reactions to his feedback through interviews. During these

conversations, Smith (1989) works to determine which feedback forms (marginal comments, end notes, response letters, reader-response questions, etc) were most beneficial for students by asking them to react to his response on two of their final drafts. As the article progresses, Smith (1989) focuses on how the reactions of his students can inform his own response writing.

Much like Straub's teacher-as-researcher, Smith (1989) uses this study to check his work as a responder. By examining what responses his students prefer and exploring what they hear when reading his feedback, Smith (1989) generates data that helps him revise his teaching and response practices. He does not go so far as to use his students' reactions to re-craft a theory of response; however, writing theory doesn't seem to be his project. Instead, Smith (1989) provides a nice model, especially when coupled with Straub (1996), of how teachers can (1) speak to their students about response and (2) use these conversations as feedback to inform their responding and teaching.

Welch (1998) conducts a less formal study in "Sideshadowing Teacher Response," a *College English* piece that names work Knoblauch and Brannon (1982) suggested. Sideshadowing asks that students use the margins to write interpretations of the paper, document their intentions, or offer descriptions of their processes and/or difficulties. In order to demonstrate the possibilities of this response aid, Welch (1998) studies one student, Bill, his writing, and his sideshadowing.

The purpose of sideshadowing is to better understand a student's intentions. Thus, for Knoblauch & Brannon (1984), sideshadowing becomes a

way to respond in a way that helps the author revise for their purposes and not to meet an "Ideal Text." In both Knoblauch & Brannon (1984) and Welch (1998), the practice of sideshadowing allows students to retain ownership over their text and authority over their expression. However, Knoblauch & Brannon's (1984) focus on determining an author's intentions seem like foreshadowing. Welch (1998), on the other hand, uses sideshadowing when reading student writing to help her see that text as multi-faceted:

> In a writing classroom, sideshadowing can multiply the stories we would tell about a draft, what its reality is, what its future might be, by calling on students to initiate, to extend, a marginal conversation with their writing. Sideshadowing disrupts the pattern of student-composes-and-teacher-comments. (p. 377)

By affording students the authority to unpack their interpretations of their own work, Welch (1998) is able to see where students hit and where they miss their own communicative marks. No longer is Welch (1998) in control over what the student writes. Sideshadowing his own interpretations allows Bill to show Welch (1998) what he is trying to communicate. Knowing these intentions allows Welch (1998) to respond in a way that helps Bill learn how to work through his *specific* writing goals, issues, and obstacles.

For Welch (1998), response is a reading activity and sideshadowing adds a text that helps guide her interpretation (her response). As a reader who will respond, Welch (1998) desires a larger context for Bill's writing, one that accounts for his thinking and decision making processes. Granting Bill authority

over his choices as a writer, positions Bill as someone who can (and should) decide what feedback to take and how to use that response to revise. Thus, sideshadowing also authorizes Bill to have a voice in the response process as a reader and reviser. The information in the margins is Bill's interpretation of his own writing, and this self-reflexive reading allows Welch (1998) to respond not only to his words on the page but also what he has learned and wants to learn about writing:

> When I sit down with Bill's draft, then, I also encounter Bill's reading of the draft, and his reading creates a multi-stranded trialouge between him, this text, and me: about his travels, about the perception-creating and – limiting power of stories, about the pressures of composing to match numerous idealized texts and the questions of what's possible and what's necessary in an essay for a composition class. (p. 388)

Because Bill is a reader, he is able to construct interpretations of his work, identify his intentions, and grapple with his possibilities as a writer in college. Reframing her response research by focusing on the student-as-reader enables Welch (1998) to afford Bill more authority in the writing and responding process. This authority is rooted in the way Welch (1998) views Bill as a writer and the way she uses practice (sideshadowing) to value Bill's intentions. By giving Bill the chance to develop a sense of his goals, Welch (1998) integrates response into the way she teaches writing. More than authority, Bill has a voice in the construction of his essay, of his response, and of "what's possible and what's necessary in an essay for a composition class" (p. 388). All of these teaching

moments are facilitated by Welch's (1998) construction of Bill as a reader not only of her response but also of his own writing.

By marrying work with teacher-as-reader, Edgington (2004) takes an important turn towards researching the interpretations of students-as-readers of response. Edgington (2004) sets out to study which response formats his students prefer. Throughout the course of one semester, Edgington (2004) offered his students three different forms of response (marginal comments, personal letter/end comments, and conferences). Then, through a questionnaire, Edgington (2004) asks students to react to these various forms of response. Through this self-study, Edgington (2004) hopes to use the reactions of his six student-participants in order to help himself, "and possibly other instructors, become more knowledgeable and better prepared in regard to the response formats we choose" (p. 288). Following Sperling & Freedman's (1987) call, Edgingtion (2004) moves away from a textual analysis of teacher feedback and student revision. This move allows Edgington (2004) to turn to his students—and their reading of his feedback—as a way to determine the success or usefulness of various forms of feedback.

Edgington (2004) is viewing his teaching work as his research, but he turns his gaze towards his students-as-readers. Therefore, this teacher-as-researcher work is more aligned with those students' reactions than with his own interpretations of the impetus behind their revision decisions. By moving beyond his own close reading of teacher feedback, Edgington (2004) opens the door to finding out (1) how his students read his response and (2) what response they

value when revising. Framing the students-as-readers allows Edgington (2004) to interrogate their reading position and the context that influences their interpretations (of teacher response and the teacher himself). With this data, Edgington (2004) is poised to make claims about teaching and learning, claims that are backed (perhaps springboarded) by the needs, goals, and interpretations of his students-as-readers.

When everyone is a reader, the context they share becomes wholly influential to the hermeneutic decisions each reader makes. A teacher's interpretation of a student's identity can influence how she reads evidence of a student's growth, the chances that student takes, and the presence of uncertainty in that student's writing (Freedman, 1984). A teacher's lack of attention to audience in class might account for a student's lack of attention to those same aspects of her project (Odell, 1989). A student's past experiences with writing well might conflict with the teacher's values, creating the tendency for students to interpret feedback in a way the teacher did not intend (Sperling & Freedman, 1987). Within the larger context for response, many factors, including the classroom, become viable grounds for gathering data to shed light on the ways teachers and students read in the classroom.

By opening her research to the classroom context (via observations) and student interpretations (via interviews), Rutz (2006) discusses how a lack of context affects raters' reactions to teacher response. Following studies conducted by Connors & Lunsford (1988) and Straub & Lunsford (1995), Rutz (2006) collects papers (with comments on them) from four participating instructors. As

with the studies she's modeling, Rutz (2006) asks "independent raters" to "count and classify" the comments present on the student writing in the study. Along with these classifications, Rutz (2006) also interviews the participating teachers and students and observes several of the teacher's class sessions. This work exposes incongruities among the raters' interpretations of teacher feedback and those Rutz (2006) gleans from her own observations and interviews with teacher and student participants (p. 261).

Because the raters were not privy to the day-to-day classroom practice, they read comments in isolation or against their understanding of what "quality" written response looks like. Thus, raters misread teachers as controlling and directive when their classroom context unveiled the pedagogical and facilitative nature of their responses. Divorced from classroom context, these raters were unable to accurately read and classify the teacher responses they read.

Although this piece is short, Rutz (2006) hits on an all-important aspect of response research: the role of classroom context. Unless researchers (and in Rutz's case, raters) have an understanding of how a teacher teaches or within a specific classroom functions, they will construct interpretations of teacher response that are informed by outside contexts, contexts that are not related to the intentions of the teacher or goals and expectations of the students.

Outside Studies

In order to attempt to answer Sommers' (1982) and Knobauch & Brannon's (1982) call to construct a theory of response, Hayes & Daiker (1984) turn their attention to "how students respond to [teacher] responses" (p. 1). Through think-

aloud protocols with seventeen students in one Miami University composition class, Hayes & Daiker (1984) attempt to uncover "what goes through [a student's] mind when they receive graded essays" (p. 1). This piece offers student drafts, teacher written response (marginal and end comments), and student's "think-aloud" reactions to this feedback.

The focus of this article is clearly on helping teacher's compose/offer more understandable comments. Much like Anson (1999), Hayes & Daiker's (1984) conclusions suggest moving towards more conversational commenting forms (cassette tapes, conferences). Also, they suggest asking students to respond to teacher feedback, another practice discussed by later researchers (Yancey, 1996). However, this focus on ways of writing elides the fruitful data dealing with how students read teacher feedback (Fife & O'Neill, 1999).

Most concerned with how student's interpretations of a teacher's feedback align with that teacher's intentions, Hayes & Daiker (1982) focus on those moments in the protocol where one student, Jason, misreads his feedback. In this protocol excerpt, Jason reads teacher response through a larger context, one that includes his experiences with writing and feedback with this instructor. For instance, when Jason tries to interpret his teacher's request for more analysis, he draws on a class discussion about eliminating summary: "[B]ased on what I heard her say in class, she doesn't like us to summarize " (p. 3). Hayes & Daiker (1982) conclude that Jason's interpretations of his teacher's feedback are grounded in his misunderstanding of the differences between summary and analysis. In some sense, Jason's (mis)reading of class lessons leads to his (mis) reading of his

teachers responses. Thus, the class intricately shapes the context surrounding Jason's readings, even if that context is misinterpreted.

Simply shifting their frame to focus on students-as-readers and not teachers-as-writers would have allowed Hayes & Daiker (1982) to see the connection between Jason's misreading of his teacher's responses and his misreading of her class lesson on summary. However, the focus on helping teachers write better feedback strips Jason of his ability to inform his teacher's classroom practice. Thus, the way researchers approach response research affects both what they find and how they apply these findings to teaching practices.

In another seminal response text, Sperling & Freedman (1987) conduct a case study of the response rounds shared by one student, Lisa, and her writing teacher, Mr. Peterson. "Following Garvey, a response round consists of a segment of student text, the teacher's written response, the student's reaction to that response, and sometimes, the student's subsequent redrafting of the text" (Sperling and Freedman, 1987, p. 349). The purpose of this case study is to study the response context in order to determine why students misinterpret teacher feedback. Relying heavily on their own past work with the teacher-as-reader, Sperling and Freedman (1987) use this case study as a way to determine what their student participant, Lisa, thinks when she reads Mr. Peterson's feedback. By observing class sessions and interviewing Lisa (and Mr. Peterson) as part of this case study, Sperling & Freedman (1987) interpret Lisa's reactions to Mr. Peterson's feedback and her interpretations of the rationale for these choices.

In this case study, Sperling & Freedman (1987) examine "information,

skills, and values that teacher and student possess." They want to determine how these three factors help teachers and students define to the response situation. Sperling & Freedman (1987) seek to study Lisa and Mr. Peterson's:

> expressed sense of [the response situations] purpose as well as in their apparent solutions to the writing problems addressed by the responses. These definitions, of course, cannot be "read into" the responses written on a student's papers or even into a student's revisions based on the responses. They must be garnered from the context in which the response is embedded, that is, from the classroom talk and other activities surrounding teaching and learning and from the student's and teacher's perceptions of the activities.
> (p. 346)

Students and teachers don't always meet on the same page; they don't always share the same values. Their respective goals, expectations, and intentions are confused based on a host of contextual features. Depending on what they value or how they construct a sense of "good writing," teachers and students can participate in conversations (on the page, face to face, in the classroom, etc.) and come away with different meanings and understandings of those events. Sperling & Freedman (1987) resist attempts to read meaning "into" teacher written response and student revision post-response. Instead, Sperling & Freedman (1987) define Lisa and Mr. Peterson's response situation by embedding that response within the context of Mr. Peterson's classroom, student-teacher conference, and other social situations, and they encourage researchers to follow a similar, context-conscious model.

Sperling & Freedman (1987) put responses from Mr. Peterson and Lisa in two major categories; both are focused on the contextual reference of the response. Responses that provide "information about writing that teacher and student explicitly expressed" (p. 349) are coded [+/- IDEAL TEXT]. Sperling & Freedman (1987) also "categorized Mr. Peterson's written comments on each draft of Lisa's writing according to whether or not he had been explicit in his classroom talk about the kind of problem or issues the comment referred to. That is, each comment does or does not have a referent in the classroom teaching" (p. 350). These later responses were coded [+/- CLASSROOM REFERENCE].

Since Sperling & Freedman (1987) are ultimately concerned with how the classroom context affects the teacher/student construction of the response situation, I'd like to discuss these results in specific. During their interviews, Sperling & Freedman (1987) gather data about how both Lisa and Mr. Peterson's values affect (1) Lisa's interpretation of Mr. Peterson's feedback and (2) Mr. Peterson's interpretation of Lisa's revision. When Mr. Peterson does not refer to the values behind his responses, a disconnect surfaces, and Lisa misinterprets Peterson's feedback. Mr. Peterson's feedback regarding cliché's in a few of Lisa's drafts leads her to revise out the cliché "smiling from ear to ear":

> However, while on the surface Lisa gets rid of the problem, we have no evidence that she shares Mr. Peterson's information about clichés. We emphasize, though, that she shows herself to be a careful follower of directions. (p. 354)

To determine what Lisa knows, Sperling & Freedman (1987) interview her as part

of the study. As Sperling & Freedman (1987) realize, Lisa has no problem deferring to Mr. Peterson's authority as teacher or to his knowledge of "good writing." Lisa is a good, dutiful student who is "reading and willing to approve of her text's being appropriated by the teacher" (p. 357). Lisa is a "good girl" who does what Mr. Peterson's responses tell her to, even if she doesn't understand why she's making those changes.

By authorizing Lisa as a reader and thinker, Sperling & Freedman (1987) are able to analyze why and how Lisa revises. This analysis is not based on interpretive assumptions but grounded instead in Lisa's own statements and reactions. Although Lisa is able to please her teacher-reader, she makes a distinction between writing for Mr. Peterson and writing for herself when she admits that "when [she writes her] own book, [she] can do it the other way" (p. 357). While she is in Mr. Peterson's classroom, Lisa writes for Mr. Peterson. When she changes teachers, Lisa notes, her values about good writing will also change. For Lisa, "good writing" is relative to her teacher-reader's values (as implied by his feedback). Thus, context determines how she writes, reads, and revises.

Even though her goal is to adopt Mr. Peterson's values and produce writing he will like, Lisa still misses the mark. By reading Lisa's "good girl" values against Mr. Peterson's Sperling & Freedman (1987) surface an impressive gap in "classroom reference." Peterson values students developing "a personal sense of judgment about writing" (p. 358). However, because Mr. Peterson does not discuss this value in class [-CLASSROOM REFERENCE], Lisa cannot develop

41

the authority to "compromise his suggestions in favor of [her] own reasoned choices" (p. 359). Understanding class and student context is key to understanding how students interpret and use teacher feedback. As Sperling & Freedman (1987) mention earlier in the piece, the only way response researchers can hope to understand how students read and use feedback is through *observation* of classroom context and *conversation* with students and teachers about their personal, interpretive contexts.

Sperling & Freedman's (1987) study is unique in that they actively sought out to talk to a student about her reactions to her teacher's response. Like many student-as-reader response researchers, O'Neill & Fife (1999) set out to build on Connors & Lunsford (1988) and "conduct a textual analysis" of teacher comments (p. 41). This duo combined interviewing and conducting think-aloud protocols with two teacher-participants (Anna and Sharon) with 3 sets of interviews with 10 student-participants. Along with this interview and protocol data, O'Neill & Fife also collected copies of these 10 student-participants' writing and accompanying teacher comments. Although O'Neill & Fife (1999) intended to analyze the text of teacher responses, the context that emerged from their student-participant interview sets surfaced a startling disconnect "between teacher/researcher perceptions and student perceptions" (p. 41). That is, teachers and students read feedback differently because they construct their interpretations through different contextual lenses.

This disconnect allows O'Neill & Fife (1999) to "demonstrate that the texts have meaning for the students as part of a rich, dynamic situation that has

42

not been considered in much composition research" (p. 50). O'Neill & Fife (1999) don't attempt to reconcile the differences between teacher and student reading, nor do they discuss the gaps between teacher intentions (pedagogical philosophy) and the seeming intentions of the comments on the page. Instead, O'Neill & Fife (1999) use their findings to make a larger, more impressive claim: students are readers. If students are readers, then it stands to reason that their processes of interpreting teacher comments would be just as complex and "dynamic" as the hermeneutic processes their teachers go through when reading student writing in order to compose these comments.

When the student is honored as a legitimate reader, their experiences, interpretations, perspectives, etc. become "important—but often overlooked— source[s] of information in analyzing and understanding response" (p. 39). By reframing their discussion of response as a reading activity, O'Neill & Fife (1999), much like Edgington (2004), also reframe students as authorized readers, readers who have as much to offer response research as their teachers:

> The students' reading and interpretation of the response situation proved
> complex since they read the written response as part of the entire
> classroom context including their previous experiences, the teacher's
> ethos, and the class structure. Textual features such as wording, phrasing,
> and structuring may also be important factors, according to the students'
> response, but they were not necessarily the most important. (p. 48)

Moving beyond an analysis of "textual features" in teacher written response enables O'Neill & Fife (1999) to determine what affects students' interpretations

of response. They discuss their student-participant's hermeneutic processes because their frame allows this investigation. Because they acknowledge students' authority as interpreters, they are in a position to allow their student-participants to generate the taxonomy for how students read teacher response. Instead of doing this work for their student participants, as other teacher-researchers have done, O'Neill & Fife (1999) go to the source—the student audience—and authorize them, as readers, to construct their own ways of reading.

In some sense, O'Neill & Fife (1999) are observing and interrogating students' perceptions and perspectives because they have framed their research in such a way that affords students the authority (as writers and readers) to have these perspectives. Other studies have acknowledged that students read from a determined point of view; however, O'Neill & Fife actually interrogate this student-as-reader perspective and use it to drive their research. After all, students are "the primary audience of [teacher] comments" (p. 39), so it makes sense to use response research in order to investigate these student-audience interpretations: "Examining only a teacher's response ignores a student's contribution to the exchange and provides a limited understanding of the role of response in a writer's development and writing pedagogy" (p. 48).

Summary of Previous Research Findings

No matter what the frame, the central aim of response research central has been to help teachers become better responders and better teachers. Throughout the history of response research, these frames have been expanding to account for more features that can help teachers, and eventually students, better understand

how to use response productively and pedagogically. The teacher-as-writer frame establishes response research as pedagogical, and this perspective quickly gives way to the hermeneutic realities of the teacher-as-reader. Once the response situation is seen as rhetorical, researchers further extend the frame to account for classroom and reader contexts. Eventually, these gazes reach into the student-position when finally the student is authorized to have a voice in response research. By expanding the studyable context, response research has opened the door to students and their reactions.

Because response researchers value the complex nature of transactional reading, response research moved to position the teacher-as-reader of student texts. This re-framing was based in the move to align research with what the field values, in theory. If researchers saw students as writers with intentions (Knoblauch & Brannon, 1982; Welch, 1998), authority over their response decisions (Odell, 1989; Petrosky, 1989), and with the capability to interpret the rhetorically complex response situation (Katz, 1989), then response research must also honor these students.

Only by authorizing students-as-readers of response in our research can we truly begin to afford them authority over their writing in the classroom. Until students are the focus of response research, the teacher will remain the central authority in response practices, and the students' interpretations will not be credited or influential to re-evaluating response practice. If students are the center of writing classrooms, they should also be the center of response research.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY: PRACTITIONER & ACTION RESEARCH

"Among the vast array of practitioner inquiry related projects and programs, many are intentionally pushing back against top-down mandates and expanding narrowing definitions what constitutes a "good" education" (Chochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p.34).

Practitioner research is a way for teachers to legitimize practices they value and formalize curiosities into inquiries that emerge from our "own need to understand and clarify the phenomena in [our] classroom[s]" (Goswami, 2009, p. 47). The phenomena I began investigating is how students make meaning with responses to their writing. As I moved through the semester, other phenomena began to emerge and hold my curiosity. These phenomena centered around the learning and experiences of one student as she struggled to communicate clearly and calmly. This student, Sapphrikah, held my curiosity because of our shared experiences as radical queer feminists. Our similarities intrigued me, and showed me that I had as much to learn from Sapphrikah's process as she does. Through the doing and sharing of this practitioner research, both mine and Sapphrikah's understanding of education, learning, teaching, and studenting are expanded (Goswami, 2009; Himley & Carini, 2000; Chochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

The focus of this inquiry is to closely analyze how one student, Sapphrikah, constructed her understanding of responses she received on her writing. My goal, with this research, was not to nail down a set of practices that best suit a generalized sense of Sapphrikah's identity. Instead, I wanted to make

Sapphrikah "more visible by coming to understand…her more fully and complexly as a particular thinker and learner" (Himley & Carini, 2000, p. 127). By documenting one student's learning, I hoped to reach a deeper understanding of how Sapphrikah reads and uses response. My goal then is to embody a position that promotes learning on both sides of the desk, and Himley & Carini's (2000) descriptive review process best lends itself to these ends:

> The descriptive processes do not provide research results or new curricula or "solutions" to the "problems;" rather, they develop in all of the participants the habits of mind—the *stance*—of careful observation and description. Teachers…become, as Carini says, disciples of students' childhood. (Himley & Carini, 2000, p. 127)

Through engaging in the process of descriptive review, I was able to resee my work as a practitioner-researcher. Instead of searching for a "solution" that I could plug into a "problem" in my curriculum, descriptive reviews positioned me as an observer. The idea of solutions fitting problems like pegs fitting holes gave way to the more important work of becoming observers of student play, experimentation, and learning. More than solutions, descriptive reviews yield a stance of inquiry, like the one Chochran-Smith & Lytle (2009) forward. Best practices became part of the fabric of my descriptive review and not the end goal. To engage in descriptive review was to make visible and understand learning through the experiences of learners themselves.

I envisioned this study much like Carini & Himley's (2010) *Jenny's Story*. While not as longitudinal or deep, my inquiry into Sapphrikah's learning follows

the form and goals of Carini & Himley's (2010) descriptions of Jenny. Both

inquiries seem small in scale because they investigate, describe, and review the

work of one student alone. However, when focused closely on observing and

describing the learning of one individual, Carini & Himley (2010) prove that

these studies are small in scale but large in scope. The concept of descriptive

review and practitioner-inquiry suggests a shift in the way teachers and

researchers think about education. Instead of searching for categories and

classifications, I want this work to illustrate the benefits of seeing students as

intellectuals who come to the table as ready to teach as they are to learn.

Although these seem studies small in scale, that should not make them less

legitimate:

> Inquiry is the basis of research, and changes in research procedures have
>
> made it possible for teachers to undertake small-scale studies without the
>
> backing of time and money, which supports professional research.
>
> Whether it be small scale or large scale, classroom based or university
>
> based, it seems to me to partake of the same essential nature, *inquiry*; and
>
> the potential for experiment and discovery is enormous. (Martin, 1987, p.
>
> 27)

As Martin (1987) writes, inquiry need not be large in scale for it to be useful to

the teacher-researcher. There is no rulebook that states that more participants will

yield a "better" result. Thus, this study aims to embrace the stance of inquiry.

Both the teacher-researcher (myself) and the student-participant (Sapphrikah) are

engaged in multiple levels of inquiry throughout the study. While our inquiries

may not lead to a critique of "the current educational regime" they do "contribute to the efforts to re-envision the work of practitioners" (Chochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 119). When practitioners make our inquiry, learning, thinking, and classrooms public, we present alternative pictures of learning and teaching. Just by engaging in and talking about our inquiries, practitioner researchers put forth an educational reality that stands in opposition to other images of teaching and learning. Through practitioner research, teachers are able to show that students can learn in a liberatory/engaged classroom—through freedom, choice, and independence. This research creates a strong counter-narrative to existing educational frameworks and practices focused on categorization, standardization, and easily measurable units of data.

Inquiry was both my position, my stance, but also my methodology. However, inquiry is a bit amorphous, so I am also pulling from other methods of practitioner-inquiry in order to unpack this work for my readers. By using *participatory action research* I hoped to get a sense of the "insider knowledge" students, as "insider[s, have] access to" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003, p. 373). Since this knowledge was ultimately dependent upon the perspectives relative to each individual participant, each participant presents a sort of case study. Regardless of the number of participants, I would not be able to make generalizations about this data because the meaning and interpretations each participant construct are too closely connected to that participant's way of seeing the world. Five to ten participants will yield complete data-sets of five to ten "insiders."

This study was designed to make tangible the "material, social, and historical circumstances that produce (and reproduce)" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003, p. 383) participant's interpretations of responses they receive. With multiple participants, the analysis of these circumstances would lend itself more to categorizations and comparisons between people, but categories would not enable me to illustrate the complexities of any student's work. I could show who benefits from different interventions by closely reading each student's work, as I do with Sapphrikah. With multiple participants, these cases would become easy points of comparison. I could interpret why one student does something different from another. I could compare each student's reflections to see variations in what each learned. But, I wonder, what is gained from this work? And what is lost?

My goal was not to compare individual students but to see what I could learn from closely reading one. I don't desire to create a set of best practices for writing responses to all students. I aimed to analyze how one student read responses in order to illustrate what teachers can learn when we see students as individual people and not data sets to be generalized and compared. In essence, this study was more like Carini's (2001) descriptive reviews in that it aimed to fully paint a picture of one student. I wanted this work to enable me to see Sapphrikah's strengths instead of finding ways to bandage her weaknesses. I wanted to see how one student works through her own struggles, so I could better create classrooms that support individual, human learning experiences. The benefits of this work lay in the processes more than in the results. I won't have clean tables or easy bullet points that illustrate best practices. I will, however,

illustrate what teachers can learn about the benefits of seeing response as pedagogically hermeneutic when we closely read the practices of one student.

Narrowing participants to one enabled me to undergo a more thorough and descriptive inquiry. Instead of focusing on what was missing or different between participants, I could focus on what works for one student alone and really inquire into how an individual learns and moves through my writing course. I was not curious about how two students compare to one another. I was curious about the contexts that one student pulls from when she reads response. Closely examining one student freed me to inquire more deeply into the processes of reading, writing, and reflecting.

Subject and Setting

Salvatori (2003) has argued that a student should be valued as an author, akin to any other author, literary or theoretical, when quoted in composition research. In fact, Salvatori (2003) believes that a student should be responsible for building theories of teaching writing and reading right along with their teachers. Along with this authority, a student should receive the same credit as another writer, because her work should be valued on par with those writers. A student (and her interpretations) should not be relegated to a lower place in theory building:

> Using the student to talk back to theory enhances our knowledge of not
> only student writing(s) but also the theoretical texts themselves, providing
> a much-needed corrective to what is always a danger in theoretical work in
> education — that we lose sight of the fundamental question: "Cui prosit?"

This is not to suggest that teachers should become utilitarian or that they should forgo the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. But it is to say that inattention to student texts (and to how students respond to texts) can lead to professional and social solipsism: teachers will be tempted to talk only about themselves, or to take the merit of their theories for granted, or to persist in the idea that students can acquire disciplinary expertise by watching it performed. (Salvatori & Donahue, 2010, p. 31)

Salvatori & Donahue's (2010) "fundamental question" (p. 31) is an important one. When writing and researching about education, we must be conscious of the dual nature of our work. While we may be teacher-researchers, we must always be conscious of the students who should benefit from our scholarship. When we construct research studies by asking "cui prosit?" (p. 31), we ask who benefits from this work: teachers and/or students. By making paying attention "to student texts (and to how students respond to texts)" (p. 31) teacher-researchers can be sure to use all research in order to benefit the student and her learning experiences. As Salvatori & Donahue (2010) note, until teacher-researchers turn our gaze outside of ourselves, we will not be using our theory to help inform the best decisions for teaching and learning. Without speaking to students, response research is not valid because it will not account for their positions as readers and interpreters of responses they receive on their writing.

While I wanted to honor one student's voice as a reader of responses to her writing, I also wanted to avoid censoring her reactions to these responses in fear of receiving a bad final grade. Since participants in this study were students

in my Fall 2010 Composition courses, my dual role as teacher and researcher would affect the results. Student participants may not have felt completely free to react to my responses. If student participants wished to criticize or react negatively to responses I wrote to them, they may have reserved themselves in front of me out of concern that their grades might affected by their honesty.

In order to avoid this possible participant censorship, I relied on a form of participatory action research: *classroom action research*. In classroom action research, "key participants in classroom action research are teachers, and sites are typically school settings" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003, p. 340). By marking myself as a participant in this work with students, they may come to see me as a learner. When I become a learner, students become the teachers.

Discussing students' responses and reactions to their responses in class helped everyone learn about reading, responding, writing, and revision. Bringing research into the classroom space made sense because the tools of that research are pedagogical. Since students reflecting on responses they received helped them to use those responses to springboard revision and helped them craft more helpful responses in the future, their Response Confessional and other reflections aided their learning as writers and mine as a teacher-researcher.

Together, we used their confessionals to learn about writing, responding, revision, and teaching one another. Kemmis & McTaggart (2003) suggest: "Focusing on practices in a concrete and specific way makes those practices accessible for reflection, discussion, and reconstruction as products of past circumstances that are capable of being modified in and for present and future

circumstances" (p. 383). Asking student-participants to focus on the interpretive

practices they employed when reading responses to their writing, this study hoped

to make "those practices accessible for reflection" and "discussion" (p. 383). The

nature of the study was designed to collect data about how students understand

response and where those understandings come from (past experiences, personal

beliefs, Writing Center, class discussion, conferences with instructor, etc.), and

its' aim was to find ways to modify ways of teaching and composing response.

In order to illustrate how my study fits into the parameters of classroom

action research, I will use Table 1 to show how this study meets the "key

features" (p 384) Kemmis & McTaggart (2003) establish.

Table 1

Key Features of Participatory Action Research and Corresponding Aspects of

Current Study

Key Features of Participatory Action Research	Corresponding Aspects of Current Study
"*Participatory action research is a social process.* Participatory action research deliberately explores *the relationship between the realm of the individual and the social*" (Kemmis and McTaggart 2003 p. 384).	This study seeks to examine the affects classroom instruction has on one student participant's interpretation of response to her writing. Using response confessionals, this study will examine the relationship between the individual student participant and the social construct of the classroom.
"*Participatory action research is participatory.* Participatory action research engages people in examining their *knowledge* (understandings, skills, and values) and interpretive categories (the ways they interpret themselves and their action in the social and material world)" (Kemmis and McTaggart 2003 p. 385).	By spending time reading and reflecting on the responses they receive, the student participant will be actively constructing knowledge about what revision choices to make. After she interprets responses she receives, she will be asked to reflect on her interpretations, offering her a chance to discuss how she plans to use that advice to revise and, later in the study, inquiring about the context from which those interpretations are constructed.
"*Participatory action research is critical.* Participatory action research aims to help people investigate reality in order to change it" (Kemmis and McTaggart 2003 p. 386).	The student participant is being asked to investigate responses they receive in order to use it to change the reality of their writing. Moreover, this study asks her to engage in research that aims to investigate the reality of individual student interpretations and use those interpretations to change the "reality" of response practices.
"*Participatory action research aims to transform both theory and practice.* Participatory action research does not regard either theory or practice as preeminent in the relationship between theory and practice; it aims to articulate and develop each in relation to the other through critical reasoning about both theory and practice and their consequences" (Kemmis and McTaggart 2003 p. 386).	The end goal of this study is to determine whether collecting data from a student-reader will allow me (as a teacher-researcher) to revise my practices. Data collected by the student participants will hopefully surface moments that will enable me to revise my practices and to meet the needs of my students. These practical revisions will be born from a theoretical belief that response is a reading activity in which all positions (reader, text, and writer) are authorized as sources for research and data.

Participant Selection

After I submitted final grades, I was able to review the consents that my outside agent, Dr. Carmen Kynard, collected for me at the end of the semester. Upon reviewing the consents, I narrowed the pool of possible participants to four. As I read through possible participant's materials, I saw patterns, but what fascinated me were the differences—those moments that lived outside these emergent patterns. These experiences, the ones that existed in the margins, were what made each individual student interesting to me. The thought of eliding them in order to compare students seemed antithetical to my goals and beliefs as a teacher-researcher.

When considering more participants, I returned to Salvatori & Donahue's (2010) fundamental question: "Cut prosit?"/"Who benefits?" How would a comparative analysis of four case studies help me make a case for practitioner research as a way to maintain an inquiry stance? How would more students help me make the case for response as pedagogically hermeneutic?

Following Goswami's (2009) lead, I want to use this work to document learning in order to reach a deeper understanding of how one student reads and uses response:

> Inquiry into practice—deep understanding of the ways of teaching and learning—is the most significant contribution each of us can make to the students under our care and others in this profession. Teacher research— systematic, carefully conceived, and well-executed inquiries—are urgently

needed in this time of excessive testing that does not even being to

document learning. (Goswami, 2009, p.10)

I have heard many colleagues bemoan the work of practitioner research. Some

see this work as foreign to the textual research they "grew up with" in graduate

school. Some are intimidated by IRB. And some feel that thinking and writing

about the experiences we have in our classrooms just isn't "real research." So, we

teach, we reflect, we revise, and we move on. This work doesn't see the light of

day; it's rarely published and often thought of as simply what happens between

semesters. When I consider "Cut Prosit?" I think of these teachers who aren't

aware of the power of formalizing these reflections. By truly documenting the

learning we see in even one student and illustrating how that learning causes

revisions in our teaching, we are professionalizing the work of teaching and

research. By making formal my end of semester reflections about Sapphrikah, I

hoped to show how research of this type benefits teaching and learning. I hoped

to carve out a place for these descriptive reviews and teacher-research within

response research.

　　As a practitioner researcher, I felt more present in my teaching. This

awareness that came with "teacher research provide[d] a revolutionary forum for

informing my personal practice and enhancing the learning of my students"

(Goswami, 2009, p. 52). While Sapphrikah helped me to investigate how one

student makes meaning with response, she also helped me to understand what it

means to be a feminist teaching feminist students. Investigating a fiercely

independent student enabled me to integrate more freedom and choices into my

curriculum. She mirrored myself back to me in a way that challenged me to create a learning space that is open and honest. At this moment in time, I am most curious about what I can learn from engaging in a descriptive review about someone like myself.

<div align="center">**Apparatus and Instrumentation**</div>

Response Confessionals

As Lakoff (2008) claims, "most thought is reflexive, not reflective, and beyond conscious control" (Lakoff, 2008, p. 9). A student, like any other person, needs time to reflect on her initial reflexive reactions. Response confessionals allow students this time to record their reflexes and then reflect back on them later. Thus, these confessionals allow students to "make unconscious politics conscious" (Lakoff, 2008, p. 74). Because most of the learning people do is unconscious, response confessionals offered a space for students to easily reflect on their learning.

After receiving response, all students were asked to record and archive (via PBWorks) *confessionals*. Each confessional had guiding questions, but they were also spaces for students to express their feelings about their class, their responses, and their writing. Students were comfortable with Reality TV's adaptation of confessionals—places where people go to vent about their frustrations or share their experiences.

In the Reality TV format, the data from confessionals is edited together to frame live-action footage, thus creating a narrative for the episode. I employ the term to make the think-aloud-protocols and interview requirements of the study

seem less intimidating. Like confessionals in Reality TV, confessionals in this study were places where students could reflect on their experiences. I have tried to replicate the MTV *Real World* style confessional, where a person is alone in a small room, speaking directly to a video camera (Curnut, 2003).

Since that confessional space was not available at my institution, I instead asked that students digitally record their confessionals on their own. The Laptop Program at St. John's University afforded each student participant the technology to record digital video and post those videos on a password protected PBWorks site they created for the class.

All students in the class were encouraged to reflect on responses they received in specific ways. Unlike a think aloud protocol (Emig, 1971; Flower & Hayes, 1980; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Hayes & Flower 1983; Witte & Cherry 1994; Erickson & Simon 1984, Smagorinsky 1989; Swanson-Owens & Newell 1994) designed to study a student in the process of composing, this study was designed to explore the following inquiries:

(1) How does one student make meaning with (or interpret) responses she receives on their writing?

(2) What sources or contexts does one student pull from when reading and interpreting these responses?

The final inquiry presupposes that a student draws from myriad contexts (eg. past experiences, advice from friends/roommates, class lessons, one-on-one conference, etc.) when making decisions about how to apply responses to their revising. One of the aims of this study was to understand the impact of classroom

instruction on a student's interpretations of response; therefore, the research methods employed needed to allow for an investigation of the effects of classroom intervention on that student's reactions. Since this study was completely imbedded within the curriculum of my first year writing class, interventions were prompts, assignments, reminders, and clarifying discussions in class.

Confessionals were sequenced to help the student get used to the technology of recording and posting with lower stakes. She began with an Introduction Confessional that allowed students to record their initial goals, intentions, and reflections about writing, responding, and our class. A second intervention occurred the class after those Introduction Confessionals were due, and I fielded questions about technology. Throughout the semester, the student recorded Response Confessionals in reaction to feedback she received from me (Appendix D), feedback she received from a classmate (Appendix D), and feedback she received during workshop (Appendix C).

Each confessional was prompted and guided by a specific set of questions that acted as interventions. The first intervention asked the student to read aloud and then reacted to the responses they received. As Swanson-Owens & Newell (1994) claim: "asking students to give intermittent reports on relatively small chunks of text shortens the interval of time between performance and report, and provides useful information before goals and sub-goals have been met" (p. 149). Hopefully, asking the student to read and reflect on each comment provided the intermittent reports Swanson-Owens & Newell (1994) suggest. These reports

60

weren't inspired by researcher intervention. Instead, the student relied on the

Framework (see Appendix) and intermittent class discussions to guide her reports.

After the student read and reacted to the responses she received, she had

an opportunity to offer *retrospective accounts* of their individual protocols. The

criticism surrounding retrospective accounts abounds (DiPardo, 1994; Green &

Higgins, 1994; Hayes & Flower, 1983; Smagorinsky, 1989); however, these

retrospective accounts asked that the student consider how she would apply their

responses to their writing. The student wasn't being asked to retroactively

reconstruct her composing processes. Instead, she was being asked to

retrospectively reflect on how they would connect the work in the protocol to

their revising for the course. What could not be assumed from these retrospective

accounts was how or if this student actually acted on the plans they constructed.

Student Confessionals

The purpose of this *Initial Confessionals* was to gather background data

about the student participant. Also, this Initial Confessionals provided the student

an opportunity to discuss her goals for the semester and her preexisting beliefs

about writing and reading. At the end of the semester, students watched and

reflected on this confessional as part of their Exit Confessional (see Appendix B).

The final *Exit Confessional* students recorded asked them to return to their

Introduction Confessional and reflect on these initial claims and responses. These

confessionals were sequenced in the course to precede students' formal work on

their final portfolios. Therefore, the exit confessional acted as a moment for

students to begin to reflect on their introductory reflexive reactions to the course (see Appendix F).

After the student's writing was reviewed by our whole class workshop, she had until the next class meeting to record and post a *Post-Workshop Confessional*. The requirements of these confessionals were discussed before we began whole class workshop, and they were part of the writer's responsibilities after their work is discussed. In these response confessionals, the student reviewed the responses she received from the class and organized them into those that were most and least helpful. Then, she used the prompts to reflect on the response she received, how she would reject or use them when revising, and what she learned about writing and responding from their workshop experience (see Appendix C).

After receiving feedback from me or another student in the class, the student participant could choose to record a *Post-Response Confessional*. The requirements of those confessionals were discussed when the student first received response from me (Appendix D). After I handed back her work, we reviewed the requirements of the Post-Response Confessional and the student was invited to record one at that time. Throughout the semester, whenever the student received response from anyone (me or a classmate), I reminded them of the Post-Response Confessional.

Ongoing Confessionals asked the student to respond to moments in the class that helped them better understand the responses she has received (see

Appendix E).   These confessionals were to be recorded and posted 24 hours after

the conclusion of the class being discussed.

Data Collection Procedures

The student collected her own data by posting it to her personal PBWorks

web spaces. I created a PBWorks space for the class, and each student then

created their own personal pages within this class site. The entire site was

password protected, and only students in the individual class had access to one

another's work. The student posted her confessionals in keeping with a course

schedule disseminated during the first week of class (see Table 2).

Table 2

Response Confessional Timeline

Monday 9.13	**Introduction Confessional**
Monday 9.27- Monday12.2	**Ongoing Confessionals Post-Response Confessional**
Monday 10.4 – Monday 11.4	**Post Workshop Confessional**
Monday 12.6	**Exit Confessional**
Monday 12.13	**Final Portfolio Due**

Data Analysis

While reading Sapphrikah's Final Portfolio and looking back over her Response Confessionals at the end of the semester, themes began to emerge. I decided to let these themes guide and structure my data analysis.

After transcribing Sapphrikah's response confessionals, I coded the transcripts by highlighting themes that emerged between the videos themselves. I created separate documents for each theme. These documents had two columns, one for Sapphrikah's observations from her Confessionals and the other for my notes. In the notes column, I recorded intersections that existed between the emergent themes, which led to sub themes.

With the Confessionals as lenses, I read through and coded Sapphrikah's portfolio for the same themes (allowing new themes to emerge as well). I then folded this data into my existing theme documents. At this point, I typed in my

notes and added a third column to the document so I could arrange how each of

these data points connected together.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS: STUDYING SAPPHRIKAH

Value is always placed in *real* questions, those which matter to a person.

There is trust in the power of questions to open inquiry and of persons to

investigate their inquiries. Teaching, framed in this way, has much to do

with guiding and participating in the process of inquiry. (Himley &

Carini, 2000, p. 142)

In the Fall of 2010, I began a study of how students react to responses they

receive. Prior to the study, I integrated a lot of reflective work into the course.

That is, students were asked not only to write, but also to constantly consider why

and how they have written. Students, in my mind, were writers of both text and

responses; therefore, they initiated sideshadowed[5] conversations with responders

in the margins of their writing. They also reflected on these response-

conversations in confessional videos. At the end of the semester, students

reviewed all these materials, and chose the ones that would allow them to make

some argument about their identities as writers in the ever-unfinished process of

becoming.

This classroom was the genesis of this practitioner inquiry. The study

began before students hit their seats. When I began to craft and sequence the

assignments and reflections in the course, I was doing so with my central inquiries

in mind:

---

[5] Sideshadowing is a practice developed by Nancy Welch (1998) through which students add
marginal notations to their writing. These margin notes indicate moments students want read for
clarification, moments students are proud of, and moments students have revised.

(1) How does Sapphrikah make meaning with (or interpret) responses she receive on her writing?

(2) What sources or contexts does Sapphrikah pull from when reading and interpreting these responses?

I created assignments and folded in workshops that would allow Sapphrikah, and all students, to reflect on the responses they received from their classmates and me. These reflections became my data. The course itself is the foundation for both my own inquiries and those of my students. It must be strong and flexible, so that students and I are comfortable moving around within it.

The following chapter depicts the journey of one of these students, Sapphrikah. By pulling from the materials she included in her final portfolio, I plan to illustrate how she comes to see response and revision as useful through recognition of other writers as equals in evolution/process. This recognition of audience enables Sapphrikah to alter her voice to achieve communicative success as a responder and as a writer. For Sapphrikah, the people she is writing and responding to (or reading writing and response from) create with her a context of respect or rejection. When she learns to identify with writers/responders, she learns to respect their response as helpful and their writing as worthy of development. Ultimately, seeing others as people enables Sapphrikah to identify with their difficulties. This identification proves, to Sapphrikah, that she too can revise.

The Course

We all have questions that we are, as Ken Macrorie (1988) writes, "itching" to ask. According to Martin Heidegger, "The essence of a person lies in a question." When I put Macrorie (1988) together with Heidegger, I get the sense that scratching these itches, or raising these questions, that lie within us will help people better understand their own "essence." This work, this inquiry, is research.

I believe there's some truth to the idea that searching out answers to questions we have whispering at the backs of our minds can help us to learn about ourselves. By learning what we want, need, or think, we are then in the position to take that knowledge out into the world and share it with others. In this way, allowing ourselves to ask questions we've been avoiding or discrediting can help us realize how we can affect change in the communities we see ourselves as a part of.

As part of my course, students participate in this sort of research. They identify and search out an answer to a question they have always wanted to ask. While they might not know the question on day one, we work together—thinking, talking, writing, and reflecting—to help every student realize a question to which they are curious to search out the answer. Each search asks students to interview people who can help answer their respective search questions. Following Macrorie's (1988) lead, students experience how people can be the best and most up to date sources for their inquiries. And through these interviews, students learn about their question and find avenues for future interviews, reading, and searching.

The only requirement, aside from the request to conduct interviews, is that the Search Question comes from the student's first person subject position. That is, they have to use "I"/"me" in their question because they are the primary audience for this inquiry. Listen as Macrorie (1988) talks more about this:

> What should *you* choose to search? I can't say enough times that this is the wrong question. Rather ask, "What's choosing me? What do I need to know? Not what I believe will impress others, but what keeps nagging me?" It needn't be a new, momentary need or itch. Maybe it's an old one that you've had for years but never got round to scratching? (Macrorie, 1988, p. 72)

By asking students to construct questions that revolve around something they want to learn more about, I hope to engage their innate sense of curiosity and wonder. Some students are resistant to this freedom, while others take to it immediately. In order to be as honest as possible, I expose the structures we are working within. We discuss the restrictions of the classroom and university setting and come up with ways to use moments of evaluation and reflection to help their searching rather than stopping their progress with a mark.

In order to grow as writers and continue with their searches, students do a lot of reflection work. The Reflection component of the course is *ongoing*. The hardest practice for any writer is self-evaluation; however, making ones intentions, process, or problems tangible through written reflection allows a writer to notice patterns that have been successful or detrimental to her progress. Based on this belief, I as student to reflect on (1) the writing they hand in by

Sideshadowing drafts, (2) the responses their receive from me and response partner, (3) the responses they write to classmates during workshop, (4) their successes and difficulties throughout the semester.

These final reflections are captured in response confessionals—reality TV like videos where students talk-aloud about their feedback and revision work. Students use the web cams on their St. John's provided laptops to record themselves reacting to the feedback they receive. The video must be at least 3 minutes long; however most are far longer. In these confessionals, students are as free with their reactions as they choose to be. They don't censor themselves; they just read their responses out loud and offer honest, no-holds-barred reactions to them. Occasionally, they really rant about how you feel as you read your feedback. Students record 8 confessionals throughout the semester, 6 in reaction to responses received, and an intro and exit video.

Along with the confessionals, students assemble two portfolios throughout the semester, one at midterm and one at final. While their final grades are based solely on the work in their Final Portfolio (Appendix G), the Midterm Portfolio (Appendix H) provides them with an opportunity to practice portfolio assembly and reflection, a new processes to many students.

My Context About Sapphrikah

Sapphrikah is a writer. In her Intro Video, she runs down a CV of sorts, discussing different genres she's experimented with, venues she writes in/for, and writing performances she's given.

She has a strong presence and doesn't mince words. Many teachers would be intimidated by Sapphrikah. And I think she has incredibly high standards that she holds her educators to—perhaps they are stereotypes based on past experiences. Stereotypes future teachers have to overcome.

I first met Sapphrikah in the Spring of 2010. She was a student in my English Composition class, and my first interaction with her was a one-on-one conference about her mix tape project. She had missed a number of classes, but came prepared to discuss her writing in my office. As she explained that she had some personal drama that kept her from class, I scanned her project and noticed she had broken the only rule. She was writing this mix to her partner, Tramiane, and her project was to convince Tramiane to rekindle their romance.

I explained to Sapphrikah that her project put me in an awkward position. I couldn't offer her feedback on her writing without offering her relationship advice, and that felt unethical to me. Throughout this conversation, Sapphrikah was mostly silent. She had a stone cold expression and started at me, arms crossed. She was defiant and pissed off. She explained that she worked hard on this piece and that I had not made the directions (banning the relationship mix) clear enough. I replied that she didn't understand the directions because of her absences.

Then it happened. She called me out: "You're only bent because I am writing about my girlfriend."

Well she didn't call *me* out. But she called out the professor she thought I was. I pushed back a bit from the desk and turned to face her more squarely:

"Honey, I'm queer as a three dollar bill. I don't care who you write to, as long as you aren't writing about love."

The conversation broke down from there. The next draft Sapphrikah handed in was an edited version of the same mix. No matter how many times I told her I wouldn't accept her topic, Sapphrikah kept handing it in. We developed a friendly rapport, and sometimes she'd stay after class to talk about things she was reading or a course I suggested she try out. But, eventually, she stopped coming to class and withdrew.

I had hoped she would be a student I could identify with, but then she was gone, and I was onto the rest of the semester. I wondered how I could have helped her better. I wondered how my limits felt to her. I wondered how my restrictions kept her from making the leaps I knew she could make as a writer and thinker. I wondered whose class she would take in the next semester. I wondered if she would transfer or drop out.

That summer, as I gathered my rosters for the Fall, I saw Sapphrikah's name pop up, and I was immediately filled with anxiety as I wondered how this semester would go. I had dropped the mix assignment, and the course was full of new stuff I wanted students to try out as part of my dissertation study. I was nervous to see how Sapphrikah would react to all of the changes and excited to see what she did with her search project.

Lessons from Reading Response

"Be ruthless!"

Politeness and etiquette are not things Sapphrikah sees as useful to improving her writing. She reminds me of a colleague I worked with in a writing group at La Roche. He would hand his work out to the group with a note that invited us to: "Be ruthless!" While Sapphrikah plans to seek out responders she can trust as readers for future writing projects (like a classmate, her girlfriend, or me), she claims that the best responders are: "someone who hates you! I am sure they'll point out every mistake you make" ("Final Exam," Appendix J). Sapphrikah saying that someone who hates her with enough passion will read her work very closely in order to nit pick it apart. Thus, a responder who hates will show the cracks that give way to the counter arguments Sapphrikah (or any writer) needs to make. Sapphrikah's stubborn streak would make listening to this response difficult, but she cares enough about her projects to return to them with those dissenting opinions in her mind.

A perfect example of her resistance to a responder whose response she eventually accepts comes in her reaction to Joe's feedback (Post Workshop Confessional). Joe responded, along with the rest of the whole class workshop, to an early draft of Sapphrikah's opening move. His responses focused on Sapphrikah's interpretation of an epigraph she uses to open her piece:

Nigger.

My *niggaaaaaa!*

Quit actin' like a fag, man.

Oh her? She's a *bitch!*

Her search project begins with an epigraph showing some conversations Sapphrikah hears on a regular basis. This epigraph is presented to hook us, to shock readers into paying attention. Then, Sapphrikah takes us through a critique of language—the language she has used in the past and the language she chooses not to use today. She constructs her identity as a womyn who used to use this hate speech out of ignorance, a womyn who attempted to reclaim this hate speech, and then a womyn who realizes the problems in using hate speech at all.

Joe comes at Sapphrikah from a position critical of her rejection of hate speech:

Sapphrikah's Writing:

It took me a while to see that you can't really change the meaning of words.

Joe's response:

I disagree with this. You can never change a word's origin, yes. However, its use and its effect can greatly vary across time and location. If the worst racist activity was words, I'd say it isn't that bad. Off the top of my head, I can think of several worse things. I'm not excusing it, but maybe this isn't the right word here.

Sapphrikah's reaction (Post workshop confessional):

Um Joe Joe's feedback I actually really like but um there are places in his comments where I feel **quite criticized as a person**, but that's fine. Um

he said he disagrees with the thought that you can't really change the

meanings of words. But as I explained in class . . .

Because Sapphrikah's writing is personal, Joe's feedback is read as a personal

critique. Sapphrikah connects herself to her argument because she is writing

about a situation she has lived both sides of. She has lived both saying nigger and

feeling the effects of being the audience for that word. Sapphrikah realizes the

power she has to say nigger but she embraces the power she has not to say it here,

when she rejects Joe's feedback. Joe's comment actually minimizes Sapphrikah's

personal experiences when he writes: "If the worst racist activity was words, I'd

say it isn't that bad. Off the top of my head, I can think of several worse things.

I'm not excusing it, but maybe this isn't the right word here." By critiquing

Sapphrikah's word choice, Joe actually critiques Sapphrikah's racial identity. In

his response, Joe suggests that hate speech isn't as bad as other things,

presumably physical violence. However, Sapphrikah, a womyn who sees the

power of language to create, shape, and revise reality, disagrees.

In some sense, Joe's response enables Sapphrikah to reinforce and better

articulate her standpoint, as evidence by her response to Joe in her Confessional

Video: "I think that's completely untrue. You definitely can't change the

meaning of words. I think you can adopt new meanings, people can use it in a

new way, but its always gonna carry that old meaning as long as there are people

around who know what it meant. . . . That's [flips page up and then back down] . .

. yeah, that's probably something that needs to get into the paper more."

Sapphrikah disagrees with Joe's insistence that the meanings of hate speech shift

over time. A word born from hate carries that hate forever. These ideas aren't in the paper, which Sapphrikah realizes when she looks back at her writing. She decides to add in these complexities, so readers, like Joe, better understand her opinion regarding hate speech.

Their disagreement is on an ideological or political level. Because Sapphrikah disagrees with the stance Joe takes, she finds his response insulting. Although Joe's response personally offends Sapphrikah, this feedback also shows Sapphrikah a moment that she needs to unpack in her writing. By suggesting that her feelings regarding the stagnant meanings of hate speech is "probably something that needs to get into the paper more," Sapphrikah acknowledges a weak moment in her writing—a moment that can be made stronger with a discussion of how the audiences/speakers of words influence their meaning ("its always gonna carry that old meaning as long as there are people around who knows what it meant").

Earth + Plastic

I don't mean to suggest that the wealth of scholarship valuing positive feedback is misguided (Ferris 2003, Sperling 1994, Straub 1997, Zak 1990). In fact, I believe Sapphrikah's other Confessional reactions reinforce the idea that positive feedback is helpful when coupled with critical advice. George Carlin makes the argument that, when the Earth made humans, it really wanted plastic (something shiny and positive), so it could be a super planet: Earth+Plastic.

Perhaps when Sapphrikah is engaged with her writing, she wants a bit of plastic. As long as the plastic isn't empty—as long as the positive feedback

76

comes from a reader who is engaged in reading Sapphrikah's work for their own reasons or to satisfy a genuine curiosity. The way Sapphrikah perceives the intensions of the responder affects how she receives their responses. This reader doesn't have to be someone who found her work online/on her blog. This reader just has to approach Sapphrikah's work with a genuine sense of curiosity and helpfulness, as Ariel does below.

When Sapphrikah is worried, needs reinforcement, or wants to check the success of revision work, she seeks positive feedback. During a face-to-face session during our second to last class meeting, Ariel offers Sapphrikah positive reinforcement regarding the direction Sapphrikah was taking her opening reflection. Sapphrikah reflects on this feedback in a Post-Conference Confessional:

> But she gave me um really good feedback and pretty much said that like that it its good that I'd written what I'd written in my um in my um opening reflection and stuff because I'm showing that I've noticed things about myself that I did not notice before things I didn't know how to fix before. . . And um it made me feel better about my opening reflection cause I really hated it.

Sapphrikah is uncertain about the success of her piece. She isn't sure if her writing is meeting the needs of her intended audience (me) and the task (the final portfolio opening reflection assignment). Therefore, she needs response that will reassure her. Ariel's positive responses reinforces that Sapphrikah is meeting the goals of the opening reflection.

For Sapphrikah, positive feedback is only useful when it responds to her immediate concerns. When she isn't sure of whether something is "working," Sapphrikah seeks positive responses from her readers. In the case of the opening reflection, Ariel's enjoyment of her project gives her confidence in something she was dreading. Finding the positive—feeling better—helps Sapphrikah enjoy her writing project. With Safera, Sapphrikah realized that revising can help readers to find more meaning in her work, and that realization—springboarded by positive response—encourages Sapphrikah to continue revising, a practice she was resistant to before this course.

Positivity is good, but too much of it can be scaring. Although she felt proud in her writing and revision work, Sapphrikah she notes that Safera "didn't have much criticism for me" during their face-to-face session. She closes her confessional by discussing Safera's positive reaction to her opening:

> But what she did say is that she thinks that my paper's really powerful, and that means a lot to me. Because I could say a lot of things that matter to me but that doesn't mean its gonna reach other people. And I'm just I mean I'm glad she felt that way. I'm not sure she would read it if she didn't have to for the class but that's fine.

For Sapphrikah, success is making her audience feel something in response to her work. Safera finding her opening move powerful, suggests to Sapphrikah that she has reached at least Safera. However, she is still critical of Safera's motivations for reading her work. In some sense, these "forced" motives connect to Sapphrikah's overall critique of one-on-one response. Sapphrikah is resistant to

moments of one-on-one response because she feels they aren't genuine. That is, the readers don't feel a genuine concern for the writer or her work; therefore, the response moment is forced and faked.

As a writer, Sapphrikah sees the assignment to read and respond in class to be inauthentic, forced, not something that would happen in the real world. However, Sapphrikah still feels proud when her writing reaches and affects her assigned audience: "um I just wanted to say that the responses Safera gave me made me feel proud. And, I mean, it make me feel good. It made me feel like I should finish this thing" (Post conference Confessional). Although Sapphrikah is critical of overly positive response, Safera's positive response makes Sapphrikah proud in herself and her work.

One-on-one feedback works for Sapphrikah at this moment because Sapphrikah is starting to mellow. This round of feedback follows Sapphrikah's workshop experience, one that really pushed her to see the potential in rethinking and revising her work. Here Sapphrikah forms a connection between the responses she writes and the paper she's writing. She has seen and thought about how the attitude and attention of responders/readers affected her as a writer. She translates this awareness into a more successful way of reaching her audience, whether she is writing responses or activist arguments.

Not to be negated is the pride Sapphrikah feels in the effort she put forth, revising this opening move three times, admittedly the first significant revision work she's ever done:

Safera gave me good feedback in her comments during our face-to-face response session by saying, "love that you giving more details, definitely keep this paragraph." It made me feel accomplished to have taken what people said into consideration and to have made my paper even better. It was rewarding to have someone actually notice the difference, which I feared they wouldn't have. Amongst all of Safera's comments, she told me I had a powerful paper and strong things to say, which shows me that all of the ambiguity I was giving before clouded over my message. ("Opening Reflection" Appendix J)

Safera's positive comments, empty as they may have been without Sapphrikah's revision effort, serve to reassure Sapphrikah that her revision work (done in response to whole class workshop feedback) had changed her opening for the better. The powerful comment from Safera suggests to Sapphrikah that her message is coming across more clearly than it was before. This pride in being heard by her audience—Sapphrikah's struggle as a writer as articulated in her portfolio—motivates Sapphrikah to continue her writing and revision. The idea that someone might read, like, and be affected by her writing motivates Sapphrikah to finish.

What Sapphrikah needs as a writer, reassurance in a job well done, Safera provides with her positive responses. Here Safera's positive response is plastic with a purpose; it's what Sapphrikah needs to hear about her first move. However, when the conversation moves into the rest of her piece, Sapphrikah finds Safera's positive responses to be lacking. In this confessional excerpt she

laments her inability to find the same pride in her second move as she does in her opening: "I for one am proud because I barely ever draft and this thing had like three drafts and it came out amazing compared to the first one. So I mean, I am so proud of the set up, but I think the rest of it falls so flat" (Post conference confessional). Already proud of the work she put into her writing/revising, Sapphrikah finds Safera's positive response reassuring. However, since Sapphrikah finds her next move to be lacking the flavor of her radically revised opening, she resents the lack of critical response to that move.

The feedback, even positive responses, that Sapphrikah receives validates her revision decisions, enabling her to gain confidence over her ability to revise: "[Safera] gave me mostly good feedback on the parts that I was not sure about, like on the new anecdotes I added to flesh it out. So I think I'm gonna leave all of those." Here, Sapphrikah indicates that the moments she was unsure about were responded to. Proving that a part of the work of response isn't to show moments of improvement but to honor and celebrate moments of change, growth, and success.

So what does Ariel have that Safera doesn't? Well, that might be the question. Perhaps Ariel is more engaged with Sapphrikah's writing. Perhaps Ariel is a stronger reader/responder/writer? Perhaps Safera wasn't prepared for her conference with Sapphrikah? Actually, the real inquiry lies in the context in which Sapphrikah reads/receives these responses. While she is primed by past experiences to be critical of one-on-one sessions, Sapphrikah's changes in her

process make her vulnerable in ways she hasn't been before. Therefore, she is

seeking reassurance in a time where she previously felt completely confident.

Workshop Realness

In her Workshop Reflection (Appendix J), Sapphrikah notes that she

disliked face-to-face response because these responses were less critical. Often,

during face-to-face sessions, Sapphrikah felt that students were being plastic—

kind yet shallow. According to Sapphrikah, the anonymity afforded by writing

responses ahead of time for whole class workshop allows responders to be more

honest in their responses:

> Often times I had one on one responses--and I-it it'd just be like I don't
>
> mean to sound cocky or anything--but it would be it would be like "oh
>
> your papers good right like just ya know do it whatever." "Its its good just
>
> keep going." Because I mean I never changed anything after one of those
>
> meetings. If anything I got something from maybe like the track changes
>
> they gave me when they handed me my paper back or posted it on my
>
> PBworks page but like the face to face part didn't do anything [laughs]/for
>
> me like we never really got any criticism out that way. (Exit Confessional)

Sapphrikah is quick to deflect the idea that she is trying to show her writing's

excellence through this response. Instead, she highlights the positive feedback

she received through one-on-one interactions in order to show its flaccidity. The

written feedback strikes Sapphrikah as more honest, harsher, less fake. Talking

one-on-one provided a barrier to "[getting] criticism out," a barrier Sapphrikah

identifies as etiquette or a desire to be polite and not hurt anyone's feelings.

For Sapphrikah, workshop responses are the most helpful. She acknowledges that my requirement that students compose four comments a page "pushed people to say what they were really thinking, things they may not have said for fear of not wanting to make [the writer] feel bad or whatever it may be" (Exit Confessional).

Sapphrikah loves workshop. The relationships she formed with the members of the class helped her to value the feedback she received and find meaningful the feedback she wrote. The workshop environment enabled Sapphrikah to move beyond the comfort zone provided by her blog and begin writing to a community of people who were not as aware of or concerned with gender, racial, and LGBT equality. Sapphrikah knew her classmates probably hadn't considered the issues she focused on in her writing and responding; however, Sapphrikah was never one to shy away from a chance to discuss issues she was passionate about. She felt a strong enough commitment to her activist goals that she entered into a the classroom space without the safety of silence, and her voice—as she developed and honed it—allowed her to push her classmates' thinking by sharing her writing, her responses, and often by just being present in the class. bell hooks writes of the power of forgoing safety for a class community:

> Rather than focusing on issues of safety, I think that a feeling of community creates a sense that there is shared commitment and a common good that binds us. (hooks, 1994, p. 40)

While hooks (1994) doesn't dismiss the need for safety, she chooses instead to embrace the possibility of unease in favor of community. That is, teachers should focus on creating community more than they focus on creating safety. Too much focus on safety can make us afraid of the necessary conflict growing together as a group creates. Although this focus on community make create a more dangerous space that students might feel reluctant to enter, the community, as it evolves and writers buy into it, will give way to a feeling of safety and "shared commitment to the common good that binds."

By writing about her role as a writer and LGBT activist, Sapphrikah had already positioned herself in a tenuous space, one on the margins of our conservative catholic institution. Therefore, she was prepared, as she had been in the Spring 2010, to meet resistance from her readers. In fact, as an activist, Sapphrikah seeks out marginal spaces to inhabit as a way to publicly shake the status quo. For Sapphrikah, safety wasn't a concern because she was rarely safe from the critiques of students and professors. Community wasn't a concern because, at the start of the semester, Sapphrikah felt she had a strong community that existed outside of the university in activist circles she sought to join. Sapphrikah was selfish in a good way. That is, Sapphrikah was concerned with how to marry her activist self with her writing self in public and productive ways. So, all Sapphrikah did was put herself out there. What the class did that enabled her progression was to both accept and reject her expressions through their responses. What I did was create a foundation for her to reflect on and learn from those responses.

Perceived Reader Authenticity/Engagement

Successful response relies on how Sapphrikah perceives her readers'
interest and engagement in her work and her process. The best response comes
from a reader who has a genuine interest in the writers' project. Or, a reader who
is able to put her interests aside to help that author meet her goals as a writer.
Who her audience is affects how Sapphrikah receives their responses. For
instance, in the Post Conference confessional with Ariel, Sapphrikah opens by
conversationally reflecting on Ariel as a person.

> What I really admire about Ariel—and I don't mean to make this a like oh
> my god I love Ariel video—is that, after having heard her paper and
> thinking to myself: "Wow! She must think I'm a totally cad cause I'm
> sitting here caring so much and she don't give a shit." She um really
> listened and then gave me good feedback. And its not that she doesn't
> understand where I'm coming from, I don't think. Ya know it's just not
> her choice. I mean it's not what she chooses to do with her life.

Sapphrikah respects Arielle's attention as a responder, despite of (or perhaps
because of) their differences as queer women. Sapphrikah's project for her final
portfolio involves showing how the process of writing and the process of a
womyn's revolution are both glacial and revisionist. While both she and Ariel are
queer, Sapphrikah knows Ariel isn't as concerned with LGBT activism and
expresses a bit of self-consciousness around her passion and power. For
Sapphrikah, this self-conscious is HUGE. What she does here, in this simple
move, is acknowledge the differences between her audience and herself. Instead

of then dismissing Ariel, Sapphrikah respects the care and attention a woman different from her is able to give to her work. Sapphrikah has become concerned with reaching an audience outside herself, and this concern is becoming reflexive—natural and unexamined.

A reader being interested in her work is very important to Sapphrikah. The "forced" nature of class activities bothers Sapphrikah because it takes out the authenticity of readers finding her work because they are interested in her causes:

> When it comes to class work because I feel, I feel like it's forced. Like I feel like people are only willing to do group work cause um professors make them do it and it doesn't mean you really wanna read my stuff. . . I just feel like I trust myself more. I'd rather do things on my own.
>
> (Introduction Confessional)

I hear a lot of past experience coming through in this clip from Sapphrikah's intro video—a video recorded during the first week of the semester designed to allow students to begin articulating their goals, beliefs, and values regarding writing. As a writer, Sapphrikah finds the act of professors making students respond isn't genuine. For Sapphrikah, a reader who "really wants to read her stuff" is a response in itself. The fact that someone has sought out and chosen Sapphrikah's work is a compliment. After they have expressed that interest, Sapphrikah welcomes them into her conversation. However, if they are only reading to fulfill a course requirement, Sapphrikah is resistant to them—either because she assumes their responses to be lazy or (perhaps) uninformed. It's possible that Sapphrikah has received responses from people ignorant to the context and

scholarly conversation she is writing in and around. Knowing she is well read,

Sapphrikah yearns for responses that push her thinking forward—that challenge

her writing on the page. When readers respond to her work without an

understanding of the larger conversation she is writing within, Sapphrikah feels

frustrated. This frustration leads to her desire to "do things on [her] own," a

desire I have felt as well.

Whereas she finds one-on-one response to be stale and plastic, she

embraces the relaxed nature of our workshop—a place where students "got to be

candid; we bonded, a lot of classes aren't like that at all" (Appendix I). By being

themselves in the workshop, Sapphrikah bonded with other students in the class,

like Noemia—a student she marks as one she would turn to as a reader in the

future.

Sapphrikah takes Noemia's feedback seriously because Noemia takes the

time to explain how she is reading Sapphrikah's paper and why she is reading

from that perspective. During workshop, many students in the class took issue

with Sapphrikah's spelling of the work womyn. A few students assumed

Sapphrikah had misspelled the word, and many didn't understand the reference or

allusion Sapphrikah was making with its use. Sapphrikah was frustrated that

students would criticize her when they were too ignorant to look up something

they didn't understand. Noemia, however, was able to see past her own confusion

of Sapphrikah's use of womyn and express care and thoughtfulness in her

responses:

Instead of being utterly distracted and hound-like about my spelling of womyn, Noemia focused on my paper and suggested really helpful things for me to do. I understood what she was trying to suggest and where she was coming from, because she took the time to explain to me why she thought what she did. I took most of her suggestions into account during revision, because I took her comments seriously. (Appendix I)

Feeling vulnerable, Sapphrikah latches onto Noemia's response because it is both critical and thoughtful. Unlike other responders who assumed Sapphrikah needed spell-check, Noemia took the time to craft responses that unveil the logic behind her comments and questions. By taking the time "to explain to [Sapphrikah] why she thought what she did," Noemia provided Sapphrikah with a context through which to situate Noemia's responses. Because Sapphrikah understood the rootedness of Noemia's responses, Sapphrikah was able to understand them and not see them as ignorant or as an attack. After workshop, Sapphrikah sought Noemia out during face-to-face sessions, and they also met to discuss their writing outside of class. In her Final Exam, Sapphrikah classes Noemia as one of the people she would turn to when seeking a reader for future work. When providing any sort of critical response, providing a context that shows where that response comes from is essential to the writer regarding that response as helpful.

Developing Judgment

As Sapphrikah accepts that some responders might have something useful to say, she is accepting that revision adds depth to her writing and enhances her abilities to communicate clearly with her audiences. I can't say which came first

in this chicken-or-egg scenario. I don't know if Sapphrikah saw value in revision and then began to seek responses to springboard these developments. Nor can I say for sure that Sapphrikah received valuable feedback and these responses spurned her onto revise. Linear time isn't really as important as Sapphrikah's developing subject position. Always a writer, Sapphrikah often feels she knows best. Blinded by her confidence, Sapphrikah never really had to make decisions about writing. What she did was finished and good as is. However, as she begins to identify with the other writers she is responding to, Sapphrikah realizes she too can be better understood through revision. This realization combined with an overabundance of response was the situation Sapphrikah needed to experience in order to take even more control over her writing.

When Sapphrikah sat for workshop, she sat behind a piece she believed to be finished. As she listened to the critiques of her classmates, she got angry. Then, after a cool-down, she admitted that the sheer number of responses to certain sections couldn't be coincidence. In her Workshop Confessional, Sapphrikah begins to develop the first of many strategies for weeding out helpful response/deciding which responses to take and which to reject: repetition. When a number of students respond to the same moment, Sapphrikah takes that repetition as a sign that something isn't clear: "Someone else someone completely different also highlighted the second paragraph and said they didn't know what I was talking about. Which is why clearly I need to revise that" (Post Workshop Confessional). Sapphrikah reads her readers' uncertainty as a moment where she needs to revise. Because more than one person doesn't understand her second

paragraph, Sapphrikah realizes that she needs to change something up. Because her goal is to be understood by her audience, moments where many readers are confused point Sapphrikah towards the moments she can unpack. Instead of writing off readers as morons, Sapphrikah's awareness of audience—born from her position as responder—encourages her to identify with the human beings responding to her. If these human readers were all confused, Sapphrikah acknowledged the need for her to revise.

In order to narrow down the overabundance of feedback she received during workshop, Sapphrikah finds moments many responders took issue with. Although their feedback may suggest different changes, Sapphrikah achieves a sort of group consensus by comparing the responses she's received: "Right I'm going to expand on the poets and the people who that [inaud] the people who have enlightened me, 'cause clearly people are curious about that, and I want to quench their thirst" (Post-Workshop Confessional). A bulk of Sapphrikah's workshop session in class was devoted to responders asking Sapphrikah for more information. In the above passage from Sapphrikah's Post-Workshop Confessional, Sapphrikah discusses how "people are curious about [who the poets and people who have enlightened her]." In order to do "quench [her readers'] thirst," Sapphrikah unpacks her short sentence referencing "people who have enlightened me" into a four page close reading of a few essays from *This Bridge We Call Home,* including Audre Lourde's "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," a piece she samples in her Search Project title: "Anything But The Master's Tools."

After she uses the volume of responses to narrow down the sections that need work, Sapphrikah realizes that she needs to develop judgment when deciding which suggestions to take and which to reject. For Sapphrikah, these decisions always rest on the reader's needs and expectations. Whether she is trying to determine how much is too much or she is trying to negotiate conflicting feedback, Sapphrikah interprets the responses she receives by considering how best to communicated effectively with her readers.

Sapphrikah captures her developing sense of judgment in her Post Workshop Confessional. During workshop, Sapphrikah received a lot of conflicting opinions regarding the last line of her piece. Some people loved it and some people wanted something "stronger":

This ending is one of the things where it just comes to my judgment. Someone else said: "Closing statement was bad ass." That was very nice of them. That was A Wow who said that. Which is funny 'cause some people didn't like it. A lot of people highlighted the last line and people some people said "how would it change the meaning if you had a stronger sentence at the end" and some people said "I really like how I ended it."

So I just have to like judge on my own whether or not I should change it.

Sapphrikah ends her opening move with a summary question: "I need to make activism my living, thus the Search for *how?*" (Early Search Draft 9). While A-Wow and others thought her closing was "bad ass," some students "didn't like it" and asked for "a stronger sentence at the end." When faced with conflicting feedback, Sapphrikah seems annoyed, but she is determined address this

91

multitude of responses in some fashion. With so many students discussing the same moment, Sapphrikah realizes she has to think about her choices, even if she decides not to take responders suggestions. Sapphrikah decided to agree with responders who liked her line, as it remains unchanged ("Anything But The Master's Tools," Appendix J). Although a number of responders wanted something more, Sapphrikah, realizing she couldn't satisfy every reader, decided to close her opening move with a line that she knew spoke to her and many of her readers.

Sapphrikah's judgment involves deciding what will engage and/or turn off her readers. For Sapphrikah, judgment rests on what will engage her readers. These readers are alive in her mind as she reads through and reflects on the responses she receives in workshop and later one-on-one response work. Her Post Sideshadow/Written Response Confessional highlights how she used her judgment regarding what readers might want to interpret Safera's feedback:

> She also asked how would it change the meaning if I added piece of poem of poetry from like as a good example for the people who helped me the poets that I met who helped me reach the place where I am now. And I feel like adding any anything else like a piece of poetry or anything like that in the middle of it would both distract the reader and probably make them feel like its getting a little long or too wordy. I don't know. I don't think that I should do that. (Post Response Confessional)

When receiving feedback, Sapphrikah is aware she is getting the opinions of one reader. She weighs these opinions against responses she has gotten in the past,

her goals, her intended audience, and her desire to continually engage her readers. In the draft Safera read, Sapphrikah had already developed her influences into a four-page move where she closely read feminist texts from *This Bridge We Call Home*. Therefore, when considering length, she worries that "adding any anything else like a piece of poetry or anything like that in the middle of it would both distract the reader and probably make them feel like its getting a little long or too wordy." While Sapphrikah doesn't discuss where the concept of wordiness comes from, I believe she develops this sense of balance from reading her own work and that of her classmates with an eye towards revision and her audience. Aware people are reading her work, Sapphrikah is aware she must maintain her interest. As a responder, she has gotten bored with to many details and examples, so she is cautious not to overburden her own readers.

Lessons from Writing Response

Responding to Writers as Human Beings

Throughout the semester, Sapphrikah comes to see her project as a writer as connected to her project as a responder. Sapphrikah determines that she needs to focus not on her opinions and beliefs when responding but on offering suggestions that will help other writers develop and articulate their own opinions and beliefs, even if they don't jive with her own.

Sapphrikah wants to help readers question their identity as they exist in society but she realizes that this personal project may be hinder the larger project of helping writers express themselves. Sapphrikah comes to this awareness by reflecting on her own response work. She examines how her construction of who

93

she was responding to—the individuals she believed each writer to be—affected the generosity and helpfulness of her response. Throughout the semester Sapphrikah begins to meet all students on the common ground of being writers. Thus, she is able to identify with them as writers, and offer them the respect she wants in return.

William. Whereas Noemia explained her confusion over Sapphrikah's use of Womyn, Karina did not. Her more flippant comment about misspelling and using spell check left Sapphrikah feeling "attacked." Because Karina didn't seek to understand Sapphrikah's context or explain her own, Sapphrikah was read her feedback as aggressive. Not considering the context of the writer is, to Sapphrikah, an act of violence towards her person. While Sapphrikah can feel this lesson for herself, she struggles to apply it to her own work as a responder. After disregarding Karina's suggestions because she felt "attacked," Sapphrikah moves to attack William, a student grappling with whether or not he should put in the effort it takes to become a doctor:

> **William's Paper**
>
> Just a side note, but a job that pays 600K/yr is my type of pie.
>
> **Sapphrikah's response**
>
> Don't hate me, but have you ever thought about the unfairness of America? Free enterprise and all that. Anyone making well over 50-60k a year is taking all the money the impoverished will never see. When you can live more than comfortably at 60k.

Sapphrikah jumps right in with a political critique of William's involvement in American capitalist culture. When she reads William's line, she reacts almost reflexively (Lakoff 2010). She doesn't stop to consider William and his needs as a writer. Instead, she takes up her activist project and responds to William on another level.

While critiquing William's capitalist goals isn't a problem, Sapphrikah realizes that her response wasn't framed in a way to affect any change.

These comments didn't do anything for my writing process. Joe did exactly what I did to William, inject his opinion instead of doing what he was asked to do, and critique the writing. It didn't help me, my opinions didn't change, and it did nothing for my paper. (Appendix I)

In her Workshop Reflection, Sapphrikah marks her response to William as the least helpful she wrote throughout the semester. In this reflection, Sapphrikah has taken the time to look back on a semester of responses and writing and embed her response to William within that larger context. She likens her response to William to Joe's response to her, and in doing so, creates a binary. Sapphrikah sees a division between "injecting…opinion[s]" and "critiqu[ing] the writing." Both responders, Sapphrikah and Joe, write feedback based on the their own opinions. Both responders, Sapphrikah and Joe, disregard the writer's opinions or context through which the piece was written. And neither responder springboards a change in opinions or in the paper. Sapphrikah sees a dichotomy emerge. Responders can be focused on changing opinions or focused on changing writing. A focus on the former can lead, and for Sapphrikah has led, to feelings of anger

and violation on the part of the writer. A focus on the later can lead to revision, if the responder pays attention to the context in which the writer is producing work. If the writer has revised, positive reinforcement can be helpful. If a responder is confused about moments in a paper, explaining the root of that confusion will afford the writer a context through which she can understand and interpret that feedback. Without this understanding, feedback can be received as aggressive.

In her Workshop Reflection, Sapphrikah connects what she is learning about response to what she is learning about writing. Just as she can turn her audience off with her 'feminist fury," Sapphrikah realizes that she can, and perhaps has in the case of William, also turn off writers' she's trying to help with her response:

> Here, I got caught up in my own activist thought. Instead of being the listener and giving him critical things to help his writing process, I forced my opinions on him. This is one of those ways I end up turning people off so they end up not hearing what I have to say at all. And in the workshop it got a little heavy, the speakers telling him that his values were all wrong. We probably could have helped him better than that.

After looking back at her response to William and reflecting on his workshop session, Sapphrikah regrets her forcefulness. She acknowledges how her focus on her "activist thought" kept her from "being the listener and giving him critical things to help his writing process." As an activist, Sapphrikah is always encouraging others to push on the norms they embrace. However, as a responder, she feels a need to temper this activist project in order to help a writer with his/her

personal ones. In this reflection, she fleshes out the binary she is constructing

between the intentions of the responder. She finds her drive to affect change on

an activist level at odds with her abilities to respond in a way that helps writers

revise. This tension becomes clear when she juxtaposes Joe's responses to her

with her responses to William. By looking at these responses in concert with one

another, Sapphrikah was able to identify with William—a student whose values

are quite opposed to Sapphrikah's. Regardless of their divergent epistemologies,

in Sapphrikah's reflection, they are BOTH writers. And, as such, they are both

entitled to responses that meet them where they are; responses that help them to

unpack their writing by placing the responders confusion in context.

Evelyn. Huot (2002) makes the claim that better responders are better

writers. For Sapphrikah, this becomes especially true when she comes to identify

with another student in the class: Evelyn. While responding as part of workshop,

Sapphrikah forms a connection with Evelyn, a writer investigating how she can

best work towards immigration reform.

Sapphrikah can identify with Evelyn because they have similar projects.

Thus, the contexts surrounding their writing seem similar. Because Sapphrikah

sees Evelyn as someone who is like her, and she recognizes those similarities in

her writing project, Sapphrikah offers Evelyn feedback that Sapphrikah found

helpful. For instance, because she found unpacking her identity to be a powerful

learning experience, one her audience of classmates both requested and responded

positively to in revisions, Sapphrikah's feedback is geared towards helping

Evelyn articulate her own identity:

Evelyn's Paper

At first, I seem to be invisible; masked by the individual's impression, but I am not just this two-dimensional character. I am the girl who first raises her hand in class. I am the girl who boldly picks up the microphone to face her classmates. I am the girl whose peers look at for guidance.

("Workshop Reflection" Appendix J)

Sapphrikah's Response

Why would people get this first impression of you?

In order to help Evelyn flesh out her identity on the page, and perhaps articulate it to herself, Sapphrikah asks her to elaborate on why people see her as "this two-dimensional character": "Why would people get this first impression of you?" Like Noemia and other helpful responders Sapphrikah has had, when responding to Evelyn, Sapphrikah asks a simple question that begs Evelyn to unpack more details. Sapphrikah discusses this response in her Workshop Reflection: "I think asking her to explain and unpack, especially on the parts that have to do with herself, help her become more relatable to the reader. In the end it could help her affect more change" (Appendix J). Sapphrikah links Evelyn's project with her own. Because she found unpacking her identity to be a powerful learning experience, one her audience of classmates both requested and responded to, Sapphrikah encourages Evelyn towards the same unpacking. Sapphrikah's own response writing is linked with the responses she has received/is reading. Sapphrikah is connecting her personal project with Evelyn's. In doing so, Sapphrikah responds to Evelyn as others have responded to her—with requests

for specificity. According to Sapphrikah, Evelyn needs to connect herself more to the material in her paper. By getting personal and "unpacking especially on the parts that have to do with herself" Sapphrikah hopes to help Evelyn "become more relatable to the reader" (Workshop Reflection—most helpful response written). Sapphrikah offers Evelyn the best of the responses that she received. After getting such positive response from Safera, Sapphrikah knew that unpacking her identity in her opening move was a change that helped her express herself and her project more clearly to her readers. When responding to Evelyn, Sapphrikah offers her questions and responses that will enable Evelyn to revise in ways Sapphrikah has found successful.

When Sapphrikah writes successful feedback, she takes up the persona of the responder she'd like to have. In her response to Evelyn, she crafts great questions that really invite Evelyn to think. For instance, after Evelyn leaves the word "rampant" in scare quotes, Sapphrikah asks: "Do you use quotations because you don't necessarily agree with this idea? Let us know." Here she is doing more than commenting on Evelyn's use of scare quotes. At this moment, Sapphrikah uses her question to invite Evelyn to think about what she's leaving between the lines.

These conclusions about the links between writing and responding are the result of intensive and purposeful reflection. Although she doesn't come to these conclusions until the end of the semester, when Sapphrikah is responding to a writer who she feels a kinship with, her responses take on the depth she wishes she had given to William, the depth Noemia offered her.

At the beginning of the semester, how Sapphrikah perceived writers affected the responses she wrote. At the end of the semester, Sapphrikah recognizes her tendencies to dismiss writers' based on their opinions or politics. She also acknowledges ways she could have improved her response to those writers. Instead of perceiving each writer as a political individual often in opposition to her, Sapphrikah pictures them as writers who are all working to unpack their personal projects. She creates a distinction between opinions and writing. She actually calls out the danger of opinions in a Reading Log she includes in her final portfolio. In this triple entry log, Sapphrikah uses Macrorie's piece about "Objectivity and Subjectivity" to better understand when and how to offer her opinions:

Quotes:

"The difficulty is that reporters may communicate their disapproval of what they're writing about in such subtle ways that they're not aware of doing it."

Reactions (made after the reading):

Ooooo. Okay, so I'm one of these people I'm sure. Is that bad? I don't know, but I'm such an opinion-geared person, and so outspoken at times that I feel it's impossible to NOT express how I feel.

Reflections (made before including log in portfolio at end of semester):

Opinions are good when applicable, I've realized.

("Reading Log #1: Objectivity and Subjectivity" Appendix J)

When Sapphrikah reflexively reacts to Macrorie (1988), she struggles to find a way to tone herself down. At the end of the semester, she notes that sometimes she HAS to temper her opinions in order to make herself heard (whether in writing or responding). In the case of responding, Sapphrikah finds opinions not to be "applicable."

While a binary between opinions and writing is dangerous, it is necessary for Sapphrikah at this point in her writing/responding. She needs the boundaries between writing and opinion to be severe, so she can temper her fury and focus on helping writers. When she realizes that she can respond to the writing in ways that helps writers make themselves more clear, she finds a way to speak to writers she disagrees with. By stopping to consider how William could have unpacked his writing to discuss the motivation behind his goals, Sapphrikah could have used her response to afford him more respect as a writer. While she doesn't have an opportunity to practice this revelation throughout the semester, she at least comes to it at the end.

Audience Awareness. Sapphrikah's awareness of her audience and their resistance to her opinions connects both to her writing of responses and of her other projects. In fact, I believe that by developing an awareness of how readers react, often negatively, to her opinions, Sapphrikah was able to see how writers might negatively receive her responses. She links these two forms of writing together when she discusses her developing audience awareness in her Opening Reflection:

William most likely didn't hear any of my other, actually constructive criticism, because of the condescending responses I gave him. My condescending attitude is something I've given off in writings outside of the class, too. Typically, when I have a point to make, and I feel the target audience is wrong, I show no mercy. For example, in my free skate "On the Topic of Trey Songz", the audience I'm addressing consists of the homophobes who wrote the original dialog. My disdain for homophobic language caused me to open up with: "I'm not even gonna speak on the topic of Trey Songz, because frankly, I couldn't give any less of a shit."

Truthfully, that is how I feel, but I could have started off in a different way. I quite possibly reached the people that I was targeting, but turned them off immediately with an opening sentence like that. And I do this all the time. Yeah, I've got feminist fury, but sometimes people don't want to listen to the furious.

I've acknowledged the issues of my approach before, like in another free skate, "Here we go…": "This is why I try to re-evaluate how I approach those with processed hair. Like, seriously, I hate the fact that you're fucking oppressing yourself and I need to work on how to accept you without wanting to scold you every five minutes." This is a conundrum I have, and continue to have if I don't catch myself. Sometimes, my face twists up at the sight of a weave. When I'm writing about it, I may appear to be talking down to those who choose to have weaves or perms or to straighten their hair. It makes me a less productive

writer, because I know it blocks me from being heard. My stubbornness

had to be softened (without losing my beliefs of course.)

(Appendix J)

By linking her response to William and her response to Trey Songz, Sapphrikah

shows a connection she makes between these different forms of writing. In both

responding and writing, Sapphrikah is trying to reach an audience. And, in both

responding and writing, Sapphrikah has to balance her opinions with her voice.

In order to make sure she is heard, Sapphrikah has to pay careful attention to how

she is speaking: "When I'm writing about it, I may appear to be talking down to

those who choose to have weaves or perms or to straighten their hair. It makes me

a less productive writer, because I know it blocks me from being heard."

Sapphrikah believes that straightening and perms are oppressive; these hairstyles

are ways Women of Color cosign white images of beauty. Sapphrikah realizes

reacting negatively to a woman with a weave would turn that woman off from

whatever reasoning or arguments Sapphrikah has against the fake hair. In order to

be heard, Sapphrikah needs to find a way to respect an audience (and a writer)

who she fundamentally disagrees with. In order to affect change, Sapphrikah

needs to understand an identity she doesn't respect.   Sapphrikah acknowledges

that unless she tempers her "feminist fury," she will not be successful in affecting

change in the minds of her audience. While she doesn't want to drop her project,

she does assert that her "stubbornness has to be softened (without loosing [her]

beliefs of course)" (Appendix J).

Through workshop and reflection Sapphrikah is learning that she needs to respect people enough to speak to them as if they have already made the changes she sees them needing to undergo. Through this writing and reflection, Sapphrikah is learning how to subtly manipulate and persuade the human beings she is writing to. By seeing her audience as people she wants to convince, Sapphrikah sees her project as less aggressive and more educational.

By practicing to become a more effective responder, Sapphrikah raises her awareness of audience, thus becoming a more effective writer. Responding to Evelyn as a person enables Sapphrikah to identify with her. Thus, she can see parallels between their writing projects. Seeing room for improvement with Evelyn's work suggests that Sapphrikah also has room for revision. Upon reflection, Evelyn—a similarly minded student—provides Sapphrikah with an opportunity to make her subject position as the writer the object of her reading and response.

As Sapphrikah becomes aware of the needs and positionality of her audience, she finds ways to revise her Search Project to better speak to her audience of classmates at St. John's. She also finds ways to better understand the responses they write. Whereas Sapphrikah was previously resistant to response and revision, throughout the semester, she realizes the power in listening to others and reseeing her work:

> But in the case of using the word 'womyn' consistently in a paper that will be distributed to my peers, it left them asking questions, such as Noemia's (32-35): "Is this spelling of 'woman' a feminist term? How would it

change the meaning if you explained why you did that?" (34). I realized

that in places that are not necessarily suited to accommodate words like

these, it wouldn't hurt to be a little considerate. Why should I want to

confuse the people I am speaking to? I obliged in my final draft by adding

a footnote which reads: "Often associated with feminism, womyn is an

alternate spelling of 'woman' or 'women' that eliminates the word 'man'

or 'men'." (Appendix J)

Sapphrikah's "peers" were in a place, St. John's, "not necessarily suited to

accommodate words like [womyn]." The confusion of her peers—that which she

uses Noemia's response to call attention to—is understandable. St. John's—a

conservative, catholic institution nestled at the watershed between queens and

long island—doesn't boast a Gay Straight Alliance and wishes to provide a hostile

environment to LGBTQ students. There is no climate or conversation at St.

John's whereby students would hear and question the inclusion of man in woman.

Sapphrikah entered this feminist dialogue outside of St. John's. Aware that her

knowledge of feminist reclamation of language far exceeds that of her current

audience, Sapphrikah makes a concession by adding a footnote to explain the

politics behind her word choice.

While she wont always be speaking to an audience of St. John's students,

Sapphrikah acknowledges a desire revise her voice so she can be heard. This

lesson applies not only to the writing she composes and revises for our class, but

for her blogging and other activist work in her personal life. She reflects on this

lesson in her Opening Reflection: "If I approach those who need my message in a

way that turns them off, nothing will get done. That is the lesson I've learned

from this writing experience, and I'll take it with me on my journey to sucking

less and less" (Appendix J).

Writing to Understand: Using Response Confessionals

While Sapphrikah's ultimate goal is to communicate her activist theories

to her readers, she is still working through some pretty difficult concepts. For her,

revision becomes a way to better understand her own identity and arguments. By

interpreting responses asking for Sapphrikah to slow down and think on the page,

Sapphrikah uses her writing to better articulate her own stances. Sapphrikah

discusses the link between communicating to her readers and understanding her

arguments for herself:

> The last issue that made my paper a little hard for the audience to get was
>
> my lack of organization. I ran a lot of my ideas together, when separating
>
> them affectively would let people absorb the ideas I have about racism,
>
> sexism, and homophobia. Noemia again asked me: "will you break it
>
> down into different sections? For example, being "queer" and a "womyn
>
> of color." I took this comment into consideration as well, and honestly, my
>
> paper was even easier for me to understand once I took the time to slow it
>
> down and separate the moves. (Appendix J)

Sapphrikah doesn't lead with the idea that she was having difficulty separating

her tripartite identity as a feminist, queer, and womyn of color. However, she

does admit that her "paper was even easier for [her] to understand once [she] took

the time to slow it down and separate the moves." Sapphrikah almost seems

surprised that she received some benefit from her revision work. At least, this benefit seems to be unexpected.

Revising to better communicate to her readers allows Sapphrikah to better understand her own beliefs and positions. But this understanding doesn't come easily. Sapphrikah really uses her Post Sideshadow Confessional to grapple with how to interpret and apply Noemia's feedback:

Within the source move, I said something about how I can run a conversation from one person to another. If we start talking about oppression, I can go on and on and link all of the issues that I care about together in conversation without even trying; it just happens. Like we can be talking about racism, and I'll start talking about sexism, and I'll start talking about homophobia. It just keeps going on and on.

So she says how would it change the meaning if I like include an example, and I guess I can flesh out in the paper--just like I just did--how I think that most oppressions are linked together. I mean they are all oppression at the end of the day, and they really do come together on certain grounds and often times the people who are ignorant who have these things within in them—racism or whatever—also have some other oppressing thing in them. Like I've never met a real feminist but racist person. Usually the people things are coming from are all around ignorant. Jus-- lik—

Oppression comes from the same source as ignorance. It just comes from not knowing; it comes from not being well rounded; it comes

from not opening your mind. It comes from letting close mindedness rule

you. And so often close-minded people who have one of these things have

others, and I guess I can explain that. I might expand on that. I'm gonna

give it more thought.

Issues surface in her writing that relate to Sapphrikah's thinking. That is,

Sapphrikah struggles to articulate her identity and political/theoretical reality in

her mind; therefore, she struggles to articulate the relationship between these

identities on the page. The act of writing through this struggle is an act of

understanding and articulating her self. Sapphrikah discusses the moment her

reviewer, Noemia, responds to, then she goes on to read the feedback she

received. Noemia doesn't see the connections that are obvious to Sapphrikah;

therefore, Noemia crafts a response that asks Sapphrikah to pull those connections

out from between the lines. Sapphrikah determines, as she talks, that the concepts

of race, gender, and sexuality are all linked under the umbrella of oppression.

Someone who accepts the identity and ideology of feminist won't, according to

Sapphrikah, be able to function as a racist, because both feminism and anti-racism

fight against oppression. Sapphrikah identifies her ability to weave connections

between race, gender, and sexuality in conversation, and these links she sees are

proof that there must be a larger concept that links these three identities. In this

video, Sapphrikah then begins to think-write. That is, she is talking out drafts of

the lines she may include in her paper. In a very real sense, without prompting,

Sapphrikah is thinking aloud.

Sapphrikah uses this video as a space to really consider how to use feedback to springboard revision because she is struggling with how to articulate the common ground between racism, sexism, and feminism. This choice isn't conscious. That is, Sapphrikah doesn't go into the video intending to sort out the intersections between race, gender, and sexuality. However, by reflecting on her feedback and thinking aloud, Sapphrikah rambles into the idea that the three concepts are linked under oppression. Instead of relying on vague yet sexy language announcing that "the militia of prejudice has shaped why my life experiences have been" ("Early Draft," Appendix J), Sapphrikah revises this moment to better articulate the connections she sees between her three selves: "Black. Queer. Womyn" ("Anything But The Master's Tools," Appendix J). Although her sexy sentence comes up in the next paragraph of her final draft, she has gone to great lengths to articulate her personal-as-political identity to her readers and to herself: "Coming across all of these developed viewpoints and amazing people behind them, it's impossible now for me to deny who I am, and that every part of these defining factors that combine to define me have been riddled with oppression. Black. Queer. Womyn. The militia of prejudice has shaped what my life experiences have been. I am bound to be imposed upon by 'society'. Going on any longer without recognizing these prejudices and oppressions as linked and fighting to effect change on all three levels would be lying to myself" ("Anything But The Master's Tools," Appendix J).

These three –isms are all oppressions; therefore, they are all caught up in reality and in her mind under the umbrella of oppression and prejudice. Her

difficulty in separating these camps lies in the connectedness she feels to all three. For Sapphrikah, her identity is intertwined with feminism, queerness, and being a womyn of color; therefore, she cannot pull these threads apart without snagging the fabric of her self. Her difficulty articulating these ideas in writing is married to her difficulty separating these ideas in her self, her difficulty articulating that her self is in fact tripartite. The response confessional offers Sapphrikah the opportunity to read and talk through these difficulties; thus enabling her to better articulate herself to her readers.

Sapphrikah uses confessionals to think about possible material to include in the paper. She, in her Opening Reflection, marks this thinking-aloud as "rambling" suggesting she views this work in a negative light. However, these concepts that Sapphrikah thinks aloud on this Confessional make their way into her search paper. In her Post Workshop Confessional, Sapphrikah grapples with her decision to use the word "nigger" as an example of her attitude shift. After being prompted by a number of responses and conversation during workshop, Sapphrikah thinks-aloud about why she used nigger:

> Which was only because that was how most people that I knew talked to each other. And that's not a good enough reason, especially when [nigger is] something that has such a bad connotation. I don't know if I'm gonna include that answer I just gave in the paper.
>
> I'm not sure.

Sapphrikah doesn't include these exact words in her paper. Instead, she unpacks her opening page to deal directly with her epigraph modeling phrases she hears in

the halls of her high school ("Nigger. My *niggaaa*!). Her next two paragraphs unpack Sapphrikah, uses this example of her complicitness in using nigger to illustrate her willingness to let "oppression pass her by" in her youth. Although she can't articulate exactly when her opinions shifted (I can't pinpoint exactly when my mindset did a 180), Sapphrikah uses her growing distain for people saying nigger to introduce readers to her growing anger towards injustice and oppression. By describing how nigger is oppressive and racist, Sapphrikah owns her choice to stop using this word and defends her decision to speak up against people who don't understand that using nigger as black people "reinforces a double standard." Allowing people with "pale skin" to say nigger was like offering them "permission to make a blacks-like-chicken joke…[or ask] us what having food stamps is like." Sapphrikah sees a connection between language and racial oppression, and this injustice spurns Sapphrikah to make a personal call to action: "This had to change."

Taking the time, in her confessional, to think about why she was using nigger—what she wanted this example to demonstrate—enabled Sapphrikah to really unpack the motivation for her project. She wants to search out how she can become an effective activist writer, and, in doing so, she wants to make activism more a part of her life. In order to lead readers into this inquiry, she shows us where she began and how she became interested in fighting oppression. The response she received and the thinking she did on that response, enabled Sapphrikah to come up with the idea that she used the word nigger because it was a word used by her high school friends. This realization, that she was speaking so

111

as to stay with the mainstream, confuses Sapphrikah in the confessional. She acknowledges that she used the word "because that was how most people that I knew talked to each other," and believes that following the crowd isn't a "good enough reason especially when [nigger is] something that has such a bad connotation." Although she is uncertain whether or not she's "gonna include that answer I just gave in the paper," she is aware that readers/responders believe that her feelings regarding her own development have a place in this piece. Ultimately, her desire to separate herself from the oppression associated with mainstream usage of nigger and other pejoratives, pushes her to articulate her personal movement from unwitting oppressor to conscious activist. In this new opening move, readers are able to see the evolution of Sapphrikah's movement towards activist writing, a genesis that helps both them and Sapphrikah contextualize the rest of Sapphrikah's inquiry.

Based on the above example, I contend that response confessionals are a useful tool in helping students reflect and come to conclusions about themselves and their writing. Later in the same Post Workshop Confessional, Sapphrikah answers reviewers question on video in real time, then thinks about how the reviewer is a model audience member. Because this reader has responded with questions about Sapphrikah's high school, she decides to unpack these ideas more "to avoid any discrepancies." In this way, Sapphrikah reflects on response using the confessional in order to determine how better communicate with her audience.

Response confessionals also offer Sapphrikah a chance to go back through and re-read/re-consider feedback she received. At one point in her Post

Workshop Confessional, Sapphrikah comes across feedback she didn't remember receiving:

Um

--Pause [reading]--

Weird

I don't remember this comment.

[reads] "Give the reader better insight about the blog."

Um ehhhh

I I I'm I'm I mean I'm really really stubborn sometimes. And I'm I was so happy with the way the set up fleshed out that I kinda don't wanna touch it. I just want to hang it up put it on a wall and be proud of that.

While Sapphrikah chooses not to take this responder's suggestion, the confessional does afford her the time to read through her feedback more closely. This additional close reading provides Sapphrikah with the opportunity to notice responses she had previously ignored, missed, or disregarded. At this point in her process, Sapphrikah still struggles with her stubbornness and pride, two characteristics that keep her writing but that act as hurdles to her revision. Throughout the semester, Sapphrikah shed's her belief that writing is a one stop activity, and reluctantly accepts that even a strong writer, like her, can revise to better articulate concepts and communicate to readers. However, this process is a semester long struggle that Sapphrikah unpacks with the reflections and choices she includes in her Final Portfolio.

Sapphrikah on Sapphrikah

Up to this point, we have seen Sapphrikah develop as a writer. We have seen her use response as a springboard for reflection and revision. We have seen her "get over herself" and realize that even she can improve her communication through revision. We have seen her recognize and come to respect her audience, even if she disagrees with them. We see her grow as an activist, now willing to attempt to meet her audience where they are in order to help them evolve. But I feel like we don't know Sapphrikah as a person. We haven't heard Sapphrikah speak about the strides she's made. While all of the above claims arise from Sapphrikah's reflection work, the claims have been my own. Now it's time to listen to Sapphrikah, and hear how she constructs herself as a writer, activist, womyn, and, above all, person.

Sapphrikah's identity is tied with her writing/blogging self. Sapphrikah is an activist not because she names herself as such (although she does). She is an activist because she feels like she has been "shaped" by a "militia of prejudice." For her to feel whole as a "Black. Queer. Womyn." Sapphrikah is compelled to "recogniz[e] these prejudices and figh[t] to effect change" within society. Although she faced resistance from her partner, Sapphrikah could not ignore the call to fight:

> Coming across all of these developed viewpoints and amazing people
>
> behind them, it's impossible now for me to deny who I am, and that every
>
> part of these defining factors that combine to define me have been riddled
>
> with injustice. Black. Queer. Womyn. The militia of prejudice has shaped

what my life experiences have been. I am bound to be imposed upon by 'society'. Going on any longer without recognizing these prejudices and fighting to effect change would be lying to myself. ("Anything But The Master's Tools," Appendix J)

Sapphrikah is a person who feels "bound to be imposed upon." And this reality is not something to which she can acquiesce her power. First, she recognizes these prejudices, then she works to affect change. She has long since recognized these prejudices and has been speaking out against them since high school. However, her goal is to find a way to do more. Her goal, for herself—for her life—is to find a way to "fight to effect change" within a society that riddles her with injustice for being who she is: "Black. Queer. Womyn."

Immersed in this society that imposes normative stereotypes on Sapphrikah's person, Sapphrikah turns to writing her blog to exercise her voice and find her community. Sapphrikah's blog, *Pussies & Ankhs,* precedes the class, and is Sapphrikah's personal project, part of how she constructs her identify as a writer and as an activist. Sapphrikah marks the womyn who read her blog as not only her audience but as her inspiration. When constructing her identity in her search project, Sapphrikah "identifies[s] with [these womyn and] their outrage at sexist advertisements and stereotypes of what womyn should do, wear, say, and how they should speak." She sees her own opinions in those of her audience. By identifying with these readers, Sapphrikah affords her audience with more than respect. She not only respects their opinions, but she seeks to emulate these womyn and thru them she defines herself:

On top of the expansion of my new socio-political racial and queer

identity, I came across my third cause—feminism. Amongst the heritage-

embracing and queer rights activating people, I met womyn through my

blog. These specific womyn were ablaze with feminist fury. They spoke

out against the over-sexualized and under-appreciated race of womyn.

They were unapologetically against the patriarchy of America that places

womyn on the lower totem of society. I remarkably identified with their

outrage at sexist advertisements and stereotypes of what womyn should

do, wear, say, and how they should speak. ("Anything But The Master's

Tools," Appendix J)

The womyn Sapphrikah meets, the audience for her blog, show Sapphrikah the

power of feminism. They mirror her frustration with "the patriarchy of America

that places womyn on the lower totem of society." By identifying with these

women, Sapphrikah realizes her identity as a feminist. Here she reminds me of

myself, finding Riot Grrrl music, like Bikini Kill, when I was in high school.

Realizing there were other women who hated American cultures acceptance of

street harassment and male abuse of women made me keep waking up every day.

Hearing the lyrics of Kathleen Hanna helped me to keep looking for the "rebel

girl that would be the queen of my world." That is, the music helped me find my

community through which I constructed my identity. I didn't speak to Hanna; she

never got the letters and poems and lyrics I didn't send. I didn't have a

communication line with my riot grrl community because I came to the scene 6 or

7 years too late. However, thanks to the internet revolution, Sapphrikah's writing

puts her out there for other women to find. And find they do. This blog has created a way for Sapphrikah to gestate as the activist, writer, and human she is.

While this blog is her womb, workshop exposes her to another audience that is not so accepting or agreeable to her arguments. Her classmates force Sapphrikah to come face to face with the idea that her content and arguments might be fine, but her execution and explanation of them wasn't clear. Since she was speaking to an audience of non-believers, Sapphrikah saw an opportunity to persuade or educate. Through this public forum, she began to experiment with ways of writing that would help her articulate her position and make it understood by her classmate reader/responders.

Sapphrikah is a Writer at the Start

Sapphrikah's goals are connected to writing and activism from the start of the semester. She is highly motivated as a writer and by her choice of assignments in the course. In her Introduction Confessional, she discusses what she wants to get out of the course: :I hope to get outta this class pushing myself as a writer. Like I hope to just push myself as a writer and hopefully also through my I-Search paper, get to know more about activism" (Introduction Confessional). From day one, Sapphrikah sees herself as a writer. She illustrates her claim that she is a writer by running off a CV of sorts, discussing different genres she's experimented with, venues she write in/for, and writing performances she's given: "I do see myself as a writer heavily. That is probably one of the first things I might tell someone about myself. I've been in poetry workshops. I've slammed. I write fiction. I've even written on role-play boards. I've started writing in fan

fiction, actually which is kinda like nerdy but …" (Introduction Confessional).

As a writer, Sapphrikah is confident in her abilities. She is a strong personality, as I remember from the previous semester, and is very sure of herself. As a result, she is reluctant to listen to responders, even if she judges the responder as an equal. Later in her intro video, Sapphrikah characterizes this confidence as stubbornness: "Teachers have seemed bothered by me as a writer as a student before. And sometimes they don't react so well but it doesn't phase me very much. Because I'm stubborn sometimes" (Introduction Confessional). Sapphrikah has a strong presence and doesn't mince words. When she sees something she deems to be an injustice, she speaks up. As a woman, Sapphrikah is not afraid of her voice, and she rejects the idea that she shouldn't have space to speak, even if she is doing so from the margins. A student who won't hesitate to question everything, many teachers would be intimidated and perhaps frustrated by Sapphrikah. In our workshop sessions, she was quick to encourage students to think outside of their heteronormative paradigm. During workshop, she suggested a student questioning whether or not to have a committed relationship that she should try polyamory. In our cloistered, catholic university, polyamory is a concept most students haven't even heard of, and the introduction of multiple partnerships into our conversation could have likely thrown many teachers here for a loop.

As a writer, Sapphrikah notes that she is quick to reject feedback, believing that she had taken her first drafts as far as they could go. Sapphrikah is proud of her work, and she is used to writing and speaking in the margins.

Therefore, she is reluctant to push on her writing because she doesn't want to acquiesce her authority or position. She believes in the struggles she writes about, and doesn't want to consider ways of seeing that she has previously rejected. This pride in her work, combined with a stubbornness spurned by her search for justice, makes Sapphrikah very reluctant to accept response or revise.

I know this because I worked with Sapphrikah in the past. I brushed up against her pride and resistance. She didn't know me, and she believed my response to be a form of silencing. Throughout our conferences and struggles that semester, Sapphrikah came to respect me as a teacher, writer, and woman. When we started this new semester, I think she approached me well because we have similar political and activist agendas, as queer women. During class she would often shoot knowing glances my way, and she was quick to meet with me about her project, blog, and life during office hours. It is safe to say, that we became allies. But that didn't mean she was any more willing to revise or accept my feedback or that of her classmates. Not yet.

Pride & Stubbornness

Sapphrikah is a writer. But, unlike me, she takes a lot of pride in her work. I am more of a self-hating sort of writer. I am always certain I have failed, at everything. So, to (over) compensate, I revise, rewrite, and revise some more. I plan, outline, and organize quotes onto documents; it's a lot of overkill. But Sapphrikah, she had a pride in her work and confidence in her writing that I just can't muster. So, as I watched her videos throughout the semester, I was really

focused on Sapphrikah's discussions of pride, in herself and her work. However, Sapphrikah noticed something that I missed:

> In fact, in my Response Confessional After Response Partner video, I even said, "I'm so happy with the way the set-up came out that I kind of don't want to touch it." I build up this impression of myself that I've already done well enough that no one should dare criticize me before recognizing my good deeds. Of course, I've become this way unintentionally, but it's counterproductive nonetheless. (Appendix J)

For Sapphrikah, her ego and stubbornness are something she needs to get past in order to progress. She marks her happiness in her work as something that kept her closed off from the class and their suggestions. For Sapphrikah, this video marks a moment where she was able to see how her own stubbornness was keeping her from realizing her personal and writerly goals.

Pride and stubbornness are reoccurring themes in Sapphrikah's portfolio. In her writing center reflection, Sapphrikah discusses how pride will actually encourage her to return for help:

> Sometimes I feel like I probably won't go back on my own, but then again, I'll probably have a "wow this paper is sucky" moment, and it'll be important, and I'll be too proud to ask my friends to review something for me. So, you never know! (Appendix J)

Although she doesn't plan to use the Writing Center again, she foresees a moment when she doubts herself but is "too proud to ask [her] friends to review something" (Appendix J). At this end point in the semester, Sapphrikah seems to

have conquered the aspect of stubbornness. However, pride remains an issue.

Instead of an obstacle towards revision, pride has become a feeling that will

encourage Sapphrikah to seek help outside of her social, activist community. She

is able to differentiate between an audience that will help her revise and the

audience with whom she is speaking. So as not to blow her communicative wad,

Sapphrikah acknowledges that the Writing Center can help her articulate herself

before (re)entering the conversations ongoing in her activist community.

Tempering Feminist Fury

Sapphrikah's audience is ever-present in her mind and in her writing.

Although she was always aware she was writing for an ongoing activist dialogue,

she didn't realize how her voice and tone beat some readers into bored

submission. Sapphrikah's pride encouraged her to believe that if people didn't

get her work, that's because they were unenlightened. She didn't, at the start of

the semester, see the power in revising her work to help enlighten. Negotiating

struggle to be heard by a larger audience is what Sapphrikah marks as her most

influential experience of the semester:

> Over the course of this English class and throughout this I-Search
>
> assignment, I've discovered things about myself as an activist writer.
>
> Originally, what mattered most to me was getting my opinions out and
>
> onto the page, brash as I may be. What I've learned is that my presentation
>
> as a writer greatly affects how I'll be heard, or if I'll be heard at all, for
>
> that matter. This writing process has helped me discover that developing
>
> myself as a writer could in turn make me a better activist. (Appendix J)

In this first paragraph of her portfolio, Sapphrikah connects developing as a writer to developing as an activist. For Sapphrikah to become more successful as an activist, she needs to present her ideas (in writing or elsewhere) in a way that will make them "heard" by whomever she's speaking to. Initially she wanted to speak, but now she wants to be heard. She overcame her resistance to revision when her classmates of readers responded positively to the changes she made. In conversation with her readers, Sapphrikah was able to see them resist, accept, and reject her arguments, and this exposure to readers reading and reacting allowed Sapphrikah to realize that revision could help her affect real change through her writing.

Initially, Sapphrikah was speaking to the womyn who read her blog, those already in her circles, those who agree with her. By the end of the semester, Sapphrikah sees that writing can be a way to affect change outside of her margins:

> Being a better writer, minus all of the vague, pompous, disorganized language could make me someone who is more likely to be heard. If I approach those who need my message in a way that turns them off, nothing will get done. That is the lesson I've learned from this writing experience, and I'll take it with me on my journey to sucking less and less. (Appendix J)

Sucking less, or being a better writer, means being heard and "not turning off…those who need [her] message." Sapphrikah has passion; she could rant a manifesto. But if she wants to be heard by a mainstream audience, she needs to calm down her "feminist fury" and actually speak to people. Throughout this

semester, she has learned to cool down her stubborn pride and write so as to be heard. But this writing goal, like revolution, is a process.

Writing and Revolution are Both Processes:

Sapphrikah Connects Writing and Life

Sapphrikah has two goals for the semester. One, to become more active in her community, and two to "push herself as a writer" (PBWorks Page, Exit Confessional). At the start of the semester, she articulated her goals on her PBWorks Page:

> My goals are to leave with something progressed, something that has to do with my contribution to the world. I'd like to use the I-Search to get into activism more. Someone recently asked me "what are you doing for your community?" and I realized I speak a lot, which is important, but I don't take enough action. I don't want to get caught off guard by that question again.

Sapphrikah's goal is to use this semester to prepare an answer to a question posed to her by someone in her life. For Sapphrikah, this semester begins with a genuine curiosity. She wants to find a way to turn her words into action, and she plans to use her course projects to move closer to that goal. Although Sapphrikah doesn't return to this question in specific, her Search Project is centered on discovering what she can do for her community. She begins with the question of how she can "make a living as a queer woman of color in activism," and her search plan is to find an organization to join and work with/for. Throughout her

search, however, the road bumps Sapphrikah hits and feedback she receives steer her on a more solo path.

Her search jumps off with close readings of feminist texts from *This Bridge We Call Home.* This move allows Sapphrikah to establish the socially conscious work she wants to do and the affect she wants to have on and in the world. She then moves into interviews that shake her resolve and put pressure on her desire to earn "a living" as an activist. Some people, like her then girlfriend Tramiane and Krys Freeman, are hostile to the introduction of capitalist values into activist frameworks. At one point, Sapphrikah laments: "no matter how much I stress that I'm not trying to milk activism, and reassure people that I just want to be able to sustain while focusing mainly on activism, they grow weary of my phraseology. It seems that the phrase "make a living" and "activism" don't go very well together" ("Anything But The Master's Tools" Appendix J).

After getting the run around from the Audre Lourde Project, one of the groups Sapphrikah sought alliance with, she returned to the only thing she had: responses. Having hit a dead end in her search for a job as an activist in an established organization, Sapphrikah was stuck. So, she re-read feedback she had received and re-viewed her earlier confessionals and discussed her lack of direction with other members of the class. During this last-ditch effort to find a source or way through the project, Sapphrikah noticed a connection between art and activism she had been avoiding or disregarding. Her final interview with artist and editor of Veuxdo Magazine, Lala Akbar, helped her to trust this link:

In Akbar's words, "My art has definitely gained a more socially conscious purpose as I have developed a more socially conscious mind. This is something that's really taken off in recent years because I've come to realize that I can actually do something with my art."

Akbar has a way of saying something so simple, but making me feel like it's something I can absolutely relate to. Over time, I have come to the realization that I can do something with the art I produce. People have been suggesting it, even within the workshop of April's class, and I usually turn a deaf ear. I don't think I've ever seen any of my past work as powerful enough to make a difference. But it *can* be. ("Anything But The Master's Tools," Appendix J)

The suggestions she had "turn[ed] a deaf ear" to included Christina's suggestion during Sapphrikah's workshop to "try to make a difference in photography." Sapphrikah reacts to Christina's response in her Post Workshop Confessional:

Someone, Christina. Christina asked if um why don't I try to make a difference in photography. Which is a good. It's a good thing to look into. Because I'm I'm not opposed to photojournalism. I took I went to New York High School, and I specialized in law and journalism. So I know quite a few things about journalism, and, since I do like photography, it might be a way to make a difference. You never know. (Post Workshop Confessional)

In this confessional, Sapphrikah is clearly resisting the idea of including photography in her project as a writer and as an activist. Perhaps this resistance

125

stems from Sapphrikah's lack of confidence in her photography. As she writes in her search: "I don't think I've ever seen any of my past work as powerful enough to make a difference." Sapphrikah is confidant as a writer and proud of the work she has already accomplished. Just after workshop, a move towards integrating photography into her activist work seems like a divergent path. However, the resistance Sapphrikah meets as she tries to live as an activist push her away from community and towards meaningful isolation. Alone, Sapphrikah begins to connect writing with photography. Throughout this semester, she saw her writing improve and her ability to communicate with her audience increase. Knowing that photograph and writing are both creative processes, Sapphrikah knows that she can work towards becoming a more socially conscious artist. This faith is born from the success she has had in writing and revising this semester, and it carries into her future artistic and activist work.

Ultimately, Sapphrikah's inability to find a home as a member of an activist group spurns Sapphrikah on a search for a solo path, and art seems to be a way for her to center her life on living and creating her activist message. She writes of this shift in her search:

> Akbar's whole basis for her activism is art. She fulfills her need to fight against social disparities from her main medium, and most importantly, all on her own. This interview has been the most helpful to me because it helped me to realize that although organizations are great, I don't necessarily have to be a part of one. I can cultivate my talents to help me portray the messages I want to put into the world. Akbar has found a way

to make her art and her writings into a movement all on its own—this is

something I can *really* do. ("Anything But The Master's Tools," Appendix

J)

For Sapphrikah, at this point in her search, she needs to hear that being alone is

ok. Her relationship with Tramiane is on the rocks, she has alienated herself from

Krys Freeman, and she never found her way into the Audre Lourde Project.

Sapphrikah needs to find some comfort in the margins of the margins, and Akbar

offers her this ease by helping Sapphrikah become aware of a future in art.

Not finding membership in Audre Lourde Project or another project in

NYC isn't a failure, even though it was Sapphrikah's initial goal. Being a loner is

actually right where Sapphrikah the artist feels she needs to be. As she says in her

exit confessional:

In deciding to change my major to photojournalism, I feel like that could

lead me to do something with purpose and still feed my artistic soul. And

its flexible I can travel and so its perfect for me it seems and I'm really

excited about that major. What's crazy is I don't know if I would have

thought of it without Christiana's comment back in September. Who

knows? (Exit confessional)

Sapphrikah's writing project is so connected to her life that Christina's feedback

yields a change not in Sapphrikah's search project but in her life. That is, the

connectedness Sapphrikah forms between her writing and her life allow

Christina's feedback to leap off the page and into the decisions she's making

regarding her major. After all her writing, responding, revising, and searching,

Sapphrikah still acknowledges and credits Christiana with giving her the idea to try photojournalism. Although she was resistant to this suggestion, between the lines of her project, and in the back of her mind, Sapphrikah uses her search to seriously consider Christina's point. Her interview with Akbar is like fate challenging Sapphrikah to go ahead and try to live life as a socially conscious artist, and Sapphrikah decides to accept.

Just because Sapphrikah has decided to integrate photography into her activist work, doesn't mean she has forgotten about writing. In fact, the argument in her final portfolio, *Writing The Movement: Activist Writing—Unneat, unpretty, unquick* (Appendix J)*, illustrates the connections she sees between writing and activism. For Sapphrikah, both writing and activism are processes; processes that are "unneat, unpretty, and unquick." She discusses these connections at the end of her search project:

> Working with these sources, quite a few times I've felt like my heuristic
> was failing, like nothing would help me answer my question. I've felt like
> maybe I'm trying to do something I was actually incapable of. I've been
> scared and discouraged. What I've come to learn is that perhaps I was just
> asking a question that was a little off the mark. Really, it just goes to show
> you that Pat Parker was more than right: revolution simply isn't neat or
> pretty or quick. And it certainly won't come marching up to you. My
> search through these sources was tumultuous. Through the Pat Parkers,
> and the Audre Lorde's, the Cheryl Clarkes, the Tramaines, the Lala
> Akabars, the Krys Freemans who no longer respect me so much, and the

womyn I can't keep a steady email stream with over at the Audre Lorde

Project. I mean, in no way did I find the answer I thought I was looking

for. But that's the beauty of being in something unneat, unquick, unpretty,

and totally righteous: complications are not disqualified from being

progress. ("Anything But The Master's Tools," Appendix J)

Sapphrikah's entire Search project was a way for her to define her identity as an

activist, as a feminist, and as a queer womyn of color. Throughout the project,

reevaluates her goals while reifying her identity. She didn't connect with the

people she thought she might (Freeman and the ALP), but Sapphrikah realized

two very important things. The first, that she articulates here in the conclusion of

her paper, is that writing and revolution are messy ***processes***; "But that's the

beauty of being in something unneat, unquick, unpretty, and totally righteous:

complications are not disqualified from being progress" ("Anything But The

Master's Tools" Appendix J).

Sapphrikah is a Writer at the End

Sapphrikah self identifies as a writer at the beginning of the course. At the

end of the course, she insists upon this identity during her exit confessional: "Do

I see myself as a writer? Psh FUCK YEAH! I saw myself as a writer. I've been a

writer since I was [sucks teeth] in um lets see 5 6th 7th grade 8th grade-- at least 9th

grade. Man, I've always been a writer. There have been a lot of things I hesitate

to call myself like a photographer or a poet, but I'm a writer; that's for damn

sure." While she doesn't state it here, her 71-page portfolio is full of focused

evidence that proves Sapphrikah has grown as a writer, thinker, activist, and person.

The first of her two biggest lessons were that she needs to listen to be heard. She learned that she needs feedback from responders/readers who push her against the grain of her own thinking if she is going to grow as a thinker and be effective as an activist writer.

Her second lesson was that writing and revolution are processes. These processes aren't neat, pretty, or clean. They are messy and necessarily so. Through this mess of inquiry and process, Sapphrikah came to a greater understanding of how she can affect change as an individual artist. And this lesson is one that Sapphrikah, the person, was searching for from the start.

CHAPTER FIVE

SO WHAT?

Aimed at generalized solutions, applicable across all schools, models and

systems miss the human point: the point of human differences and human

complexity. It is after all people—an most vigorously, children and

youth—who learn, who make sense and meaning of the world, and they

simply don't all do it the same way. Whatever the model, children tend to

fall through these technological nets. The more refined and totalizing the

model, the more fall through. Human complexity, the complexities of

learning, the complexities of teaching resist systematization. (Carini,

2001, p. 9)

I root my research in the classroom because, while I am a researcher, I am

first a teacher. My inquiries are inspired by my successes, difficulties, and

curiosities about teaching and learning. For me, "the classroom, with all its

limitations, remains a location of possibility" (hooks, 1994, p. 207) for me to

better my practice through constant research and reflection. In order to negotiate

these personal inquiries, my classroom must also be a location of possibility for

my students. That is, they have to have the foundation, support, and freedom to

engage in inquiries in which they are personally invested. That way, the inquiries

we are all moving through will be real in that they are meaningful to our lives.

By engaging in practitioner research, I came to realize that my inquiries

lead to changes in the way I teach and structure my class. Goswami (2009)

speaks more about the connections between teaching and research:

I came to understand the value of choice when one is in the process of

acquiring another language. In restructuring my classroom, I built in ways

for my students to collaborate in the choice of their own research while

investigating complex and engaging topics. This created an integrity that

gave the students real ownership. Reading, writing, and talk became a

way to bridge new understandings while answering each student's own

compelling questions. Communication with peers—so vital to this

process—created new opportunities for language learning" (Goswami et

al., 2009, p. 41).

At the start of this study, I positioned my teaching from what Chochran-Smith &

Lytle (2009) call an "inquiry stance." Everything I folded into my class served

the goal of helping students to voice their reactions to responses they received. I

utilized various media in the hope that if one student didn't react well to video

confessionals they were able to express their reflections through Sideshadow

writing or other reflections. The purpose of all of this ongoing reflexive and

reflective work was to give students the space to see what they were thinking. In

order to engage in my own inquiry, I needed to put pedagogical elements in place

that would allow students to do the sort of interpretive work I believed they were

capable of.

Taking an inquiry stance was not just something that happened before the

class began, but this position also affected the way I related to my students

throughout the semester. I was engaged in their research projects because I saw

them as similar to my own. Whereas we were not writing about similar things,

we came together under the common bonds of being researchers. We were all struggling with common research and writing problems, and workshop, one-on-one review, and class discussion offered us a space to negotiate these concerns together. As researchers all attempting to answer questions we didn't know the answers to, we were all novices in a way. Some of us had various resources and expertise, and we balanced each other's contributions out as a class. One student seemed to know someone everyone could talk to. During workshop, students eventually began asking her for source suggestions because they realized she was well networked within the St. John's community. Another student had worked in a Writing Center in her high school; therefore, she was accustomed to responding to students. As the semester progressed, she became one of the most requested responders in the class, and eventually went on to become a Writing Center consultant. Students saw one another as resources, and I became just one of the flock.

With all of this foundational work, every student in the class could have been a research participant. I could have done case studies of many students and compared their reactions. However, I did not see the benefit in generalizing about my students' work. Every writer in my class had specific projects and struggles. While I could have itemized and categorized these experiences, I couldn't figure out why I would want to do that work. I kept returning to Salvatori & Donahue's (2010) central question "Cut prosit?" From my inquiry stance, I couldn't see how these generalizations would help my teaching. Thus, I didn't see who would benefit from me reducing my students into numbers or categories.

My research taught me that every student was wholly individual. As I attempted to abridge my students into comparisons, I kept shaving off parts of their identity. This work wasn't exposing my students and their learning. I realized the truth in what Ferm (2005) had written:

> When we contrast the action of one individual with that of another, we see it out of perspective. We lose its true proportion. Every act must stand alone in its consideration. We fail to understand the real thing, the spirit, the effort and consciousness of the individual, when we separate his act from his own living need and measure it with the act of another. (Ferm, 2005, p. 71)

I was only able to write about what my students did, but this was just writing around the major shifts they personally experienced. Ultimately, I want people "not only to see what I see about her, but also to *see* [Sapphrikah]." (Himley & Carini, 2000, p. 125). Therefore, I decided to focus my work on one student in an attempt to reinforce my beliefs that we can learn volumes from even the smallest scale research. I couldn't narrow my students down into comparisons because what they learned taught me more than best practices. I learned to respect every student as a human individual, and I needed my results to reflect that.

In Chapter Four you saw what Sapphrikah did. Now, I want to take a look at how her work helped me to answer my central research questions. The following is divided by those questions, and in each section, I offer my interpretations of what Sapphrikah has said and done in her work. Chapter 4 acts as Sapphrikah's moment to speak, and this next section is mine.

How Does Sapphrikah Make Meaning with the Responses She Receives?

Voice of Response/Responder

How a response is written makes a difference for Sapphrikah. When Sapphrikah sees thoughtfulness or an attempt to understand her position in a response, she is far more likely to utilize that response when revising. For instance, Noemia composes responses that Sapphrikah interprets to be both thoughtful and critical. In Noemia's response, she attempts to understand why Sapphrikah uses the spelling "womyn," but admits that she isn't clear about why Sapphrikah decided to use this spelling. When Sapphrikah reads Noemia's response, she hears a reader struggling to understand her work and the political choice behind her spelling of womyn. Karina, on the other hand, responds by suggesting Sapphrikah use spell check. Sapphrikah interprets Karina as flippant, and disregards her suggestion. More than that, she reads Karina's response as an attack, even though Karina isn't aware of the etymology of womyn or the politics behind Sapphrikah's choice to use it. Noemia voices her confusion and struggle in her response, and Sapphrikah reads that as honest. While Karina has the same confusion, she doesn't articulate that in her response, so Sapphrikah reads what's on the page.

Consensus

Although Karina responds differently than Noemia, they both find issue with Sapphrikah's spelling of womyn. This spelling was a moment of discussion among many students during workshop. And, during her response confessional, Sapphrikah notes that she has to at least footnote her reasons for her spelling. She

realizes that to be read as educated she needs to indicate clearly that her spelling is not an accident but a personal political choice. The consensus of responses encourages Sapphrikah to unpack this moment.

Throughout the semester, whenever Sapphrikah got more than one person responding to a similar moment or in a similar way, she took a second look at that section. The consensus of two or more readers proved to Sapphrikah that there was something missing or unclear in her work, something that needed to be revised. In fact, the opportunity for consensus may be one of the reasons Sapphrikah favors workshop over one-on-one response.

In her reflections, she indicates that workshop responses are more thoughtful because students have an opportunity to take her writing home and spend more time reading and responding. In her practice, Sapphrikah values workshop because the volume of responses she receives create a situation of consensus. Certain moments of Sapphrikah's draft were confusing to many responders, and this consensus of confusion suggests to Sapphrikah that she has a moment where her message isn't being clearly communicated.

Later in the semester, Sapphrikah builds on consensus responses in order to make one-on-one feedback more successful for herself. She asks responders, via Sideshadowing, to consider moments of prior confusion brought up in workshop or by other readers. She indicates her intentions in theses moments, and uses her responder to confirm whether or not she is communicating clearly.

Judgment

Just because a lot of responders agree doesn't mean Sapphrikah is going to follow the flock. As she moves through the semester, she develops a sense of judgment. That is, she develops a sense of what feedback to take and what to reject. When her responders suggest changes in her draft, Sapphrikah weighs them against her goals for her writing and the way she wants to be heard by her readers. One responder suggests, later in the semester, that Sapphrikah unpack a moment describing her poetic influences. This was a moment responders had mentioned during workshop, but one Sapphrikah chose not to revise. During her post Post Sideshadow/Written Response Confessional, Sapphrikah discusses her choice:

> [Safera] also asked how would it change the meaning if I added piece of poem of poetry from like as a good example for the people who helped me the poets that I met who helped me reach the place where I am now. And I feel like adding any anything else like a piece of poetry or anything like that in the middle of it would both distract the reader and probably make them feel like its getting a little long or too wordy. I don't know. I don't think that I should do that.

Although this reader (and perhaps others) might want to hear more about her poetry and who inspires her, Sapphrikah decides that these additions would overwhelm most readers. Because this information would lengthen an already long introduction move, Sapphrikah was concerned about making her readers wait to find out the purpose for her inquiry. She didn't want to weigh down the

opening with details that took away form her inquiry, therefore, she opted not to describe the poets who inspired her. Instead, she moved more quickly into an explanation of her heuristic. In the meat of her paper, she chose to devote space not to the poets of her past but to the feminists of her future.

I Learned: Implications for Teaching

In order to develop judgments about which responses to take and which to reject, students need to receive many responses. Since I am only one woman, turning over the responsibilities of reading and responding over to the entire class community makes sense. We are all writers working on our individual inquiries; therefore, it's only natural for us to come together to discuss our writing and searching. After all, we have these convenient meeting times all sorted out by the university.

Response, whether it comes from me or from a student, needs to communicate interest and an attempt at understanding. That means, students need to feel invested in attempting to understand the work of their peers. In order to attempt to reach this human level of interest in one another, we need to find a way to put our concerns, fears, and egos aside in order to form a community: "Rather than focusing on issues of safety, I think that a feeling of community creates a sense that there is shared commitment and a common good that binds us" (hooks, 1994, p. 40). Speaking up in a group may cause anxiety, but experiencing and negotiating that feeling enables a group of people to come together. In order to negotiate a safe space for people to share their writing, students need to have some control over workshop. Without ownership over their experience in the

class, it will be difficult for them to buy-into the idea of the class as a community. This control can come in some very simple forms. Before we begin workshop for the semester, we gather in a circle and take the time to make sure everyone can make eye contact with one another. I spend some time making sure everyone can be seen in the circle because everyone is important to the work we are doing. Once eye lines are established, I tell students that they are responsible for creating this circle when they arrive in the room. Although they are moderately annoyed about their new interior design gigs, they create the classroom space every meeting, before I ever arrive. In a real sense, they are taking responsibility for making our workshop physically possible.

Community is more than a physical space. In order to develop a sense of "shared commitment" over the writing and responding we are about to do, I offer students the chance to discuss how workshop will run. We discuss how responders will offer feedback—round robin, person-to-person around the circle, by throwing a beach ball to one another, by raising hands and letting the writer call on the next responder, etc. We also discuss the benefits and downsides of the writer remaining silent while receiving response. Students decide how to act as writers and responders, and we create a list of behaviors for writers and responders that the class utilizes throughout the semester. As with everything else, this list is fluid and subject to change.

Sometimes students mention that they want to eat during class, so we arrange different students to bring snacks each class. The rigor of workshopping three writers a class is sometimes overwhelming. To ease the pressure, students

have decided to play mini-games or run icebreakers between writers (if time permits). Students decide what to play and when by brining in their ideas to the group. While food and icebreakers seem like small elements, creating a class that is open enough to allow for these variations enables the group of classmates to become a community. Real communities eat and play together. Real communities laugh and work together, too. However, I want to create a classroom community bound by a sense of "common good," all people in the class need to be able to bring ideas together and be real.

During workshop, every writer shuttles between various identities as writers and responders. In doing so, they begin to see the benefit of response and responding. Often, students are more vocal and present in workshop after their turn as a writer because that experience changes their minds about the benefits of feedback.

Workshop provides a moment for students to make this leap into seeing responders as readers. Because they are constantly reading to respond, they are faced class after class with moments where their reading doesn't yield understanding. Therefore, when they offer writing up to the class, they are aware that these students are reading their responses, some with more care than others. For Sapphrikah, workshop was the activity that allowed her to make a connection between her goals as a writer and her readers' comprehension of those goals and messages.

Workshop alone won't necessarily enable students to see the connection between responders and readers. Therefore, the integration of ongoing reflection

is important. As Lakoff (2008) suggests, people need an opportunity to move from reflexive though into reflective thought. When students react to responses they receive in Response Confessionals or Sideshadow comments, they are recording their reflexive thoughts. When they move through more formal reflections, as required by the Midterm and Final Portfolios, students are able to reflect on their initial reflexes. They can see what has helped them revise and get a sense of what readers have wanted. This insight helps writers construct a set of values that inform the responses they write. If something has worked for them, they might suggest the same kind of revision to another student, indicating that this work helped their communication.

These reflections ask students to reconsider their response writing and reading. Thus, students are asked to reflect not only on their writing but also on their responding. In this way, students' response writing also becomes a text for discussion in the class and in conference, and how to use responses becomes the primary subject of class discussion. The readers are the people speaking to the student about her writing. The connection between the people writing response and the people reading their work is immediate. Moments where readers are confused leads to responses suggesting ways to better unpack thoughts and ideas. Faced with multiple readings (and misreadings) of their intentions, a writer can then judge how to best express herself so that (at least) these reader/responders understand her message.

Students often ask for another chance to workshop their writing because they want to see if their revisions were successful, if the chances helped their

classmates better understand their position. I haven't found a way to work two full-class workshops into a limited sixteen-week course. Perhaps, in the future, I could break up the class into smaller writing groups for two weeks. Then, at least one writer could get response from another few writers. In a sense, they could use these mini-workshops as a chance to either "check their work" or get feedback on another section of their project.

What Contexts Does Sapphrikah Pull From When Reading Response?

Personal Life Experience

Sapphrikah is writing about her life, and her writing includes a lot of real experiences. Therefore, when someone responds to her writing, they are responding, in part, to her person. If Sapphrikah reads a response that negates or contradicts her reality, she reacts negatively. Sapphrikah's reaction to Joe's response is a good example of her pulling from her life to interpret responses. Joe's response suggests that Sapphrikah "get over" her anger over peoples' use of the word nigger. In her response confessional, Sapphrikah says that Joe's response affected her as a person; it made her angry. Joe believed that words like nigger can change meaning over time, and become reclaimed from their hateful etymology. Sapphrikah, after a moment of consideration, demands "No they can't." When a responder doesn't understand Sapphrikah's point of view and doesn't attempt to see things through her eyes, she rejects their feedback.

Comfort with Product and Process

Initially, Sapphrikah doesn't appreciate positive feedback. She interprets these responses as inauthentic based on her past experiences. In past writing

classes, peer responses were empty. She marks that often people gave her praise, but she didn't feel that these responders really read or made an attempt to understand her piece. At the start of the semester, Sapphrikah records these experiences in her introduction confessional, and marks them as the source of her reluctance to engage in workshop or peer review activities.

As the semester progresses, Sapphrikah takes chances with her writing that she isn't sure of. She begins to revise her work for the first time. These revisions are spring-boarded by Sapphrikah's desire to better communicate with her readers. Therefore, she begins to seek out responders in class to validate her revision choices and suggest meaningful alternatives. After having revised, Sapphrikah looks for positive feedback, but this feedback isn't empty, it's feedback that acknowledges that the work she has done has made her message come across more clearly. The context of the class, her relationship with her reader/responders, and her desire to revise in order to better communicate enables Sapphrikah to come to respect and value positive feedback at certain stages in her writing process.

Communication

For Sapphrikah, responders are readers. Moments of response are moments to check her work against a live reader/audience. The responses she received were feedback from readers validating her progress or illustrating moments of confusion. Through this perspective, Sapphrikah beings to use moments of response to work for her. She comes prepared with sideshadowed comments that indicate moments were she wants the most attention, and she

143

relishes in moments to hear where she's met or missed her mark as a writer. For Sapphrikah, readers/responders become, as she notes in her exit confessional, essential to her revision process.

Pride

One of Sapphrikah's major challenges as a writer was her pride. At the beginning and then at the end of the semester, Sapphrikah declares herself to be a writer. However, at the beginning of the semester, her negative experiences with responses and her pride stood as obstacles to her progress. After workshop, Sapphrikah realized that he needed to "get over herself" a bit. That is, she learned that her responders were actually reading her work and offering her valid suggestions for revision—suggestions that Sapphrikah came to realize strengthened her ability to communicate her message. Ultimately, pride was a context Sapphrikah saw through, one that she needed to overcome. I believe that, when Sapphrikah began to trust her classmates as thoughtful readers and careful responders, she began to see the way feedback could enhance her writing and communication.

I Learned: Implications for Teaching

Before students are going to care about choosing responses to better their writing, they have to first be invested in that writing. Thus, they need to be engaged in a project that they care about. They have to have an honest connection between their project and their lives. Otherwise, the motivation to communicate and revise is artificial. Like Ferm (2005) and the other founders of the Modern

144

School Movement established nearly a century ago, people need to be driven to learning by their own curiosities.

Students need to want to say something, so my assignments need to allow them the freedom to figure out what they want to say, search, think about. While I might want to ask students to write about racial privilege or radical feminist theories, I am very aware that many of them aren't interested in these topics. I could try to find a subject that we all can investigate, but the chances of twenty-five people all-caring about the same thing are really slim. Trying to fit twenty-five people into one assignment sequence is like trying to fit two cats in the same carrier. We might be able to make it work, but no one is going to be happy about it.

Selfishly, I want to like what I am reading, and I find that writers who are invested in their inquiries write with more passion. They feel a desire to engage readers and get them to listen to their opinions because they care about what they are writing. To paraphrase Huot speaking in *take 20* (Taylor 2008), if you don't like what you are reading, look to your assignment. And that's what I did. For me, Macrorie's (1988) *The I-Search Paper* provides a nice structure of support for inquiry projects. So, I ask students to read a couple of chapters in that book in order to discuss what an inquiry project is and can be. My only requirement is that students use their writing to investigate a question that (1) speaks from the first person (uses "I") and (2) is something they don't have an answer for already. This assignment requires students to ask a question that will help them learn about something they care about.

From there on out, it's up to them to create the question, locate people to talk to about their inquiry, and write it up. Form and content are all up to the students. Depending on what they are searching and who they choose to interview, writers will want to structure their pieces in different ways. These decisions are often subjects of class discussions, and, as we make decisions about what to do and what not to do, students add to an ongoing document called "Guidelines and Possibilities for the Search." At the end of semester, these guidelines look more like possibilities because they are messy and often contingent on a writers' individual goals. The ultimate lesson is that before a writer makes any decision they need to think about the benefits and downsides of any course of action.

Choices about how to organize a piece, where to include a source, or how much information is necessary are ultimately made by the writer. So, when students ask about these choices, I often reply by asking them why they want to make those changes. What's important isn't the change by what they writer hope that change will accomplish for his communication. Understanding why a piece is structured as a narrative vs. an argument is as important as knowing how to write in both formats.

I Learned: Implications for Research

If I want students to be engaged in their inquiries in honest ways, then I have to step up to the plate as well. Like Freire, I am a teacher and a researcher. I teach because I am curious about how people learn. And I research to attempt to

satisfy these curiosities. Unless I am engaged in researching with my students, I will not be as engaged in my teaching.

This doesn't mean that every class needs to be a formal research site. However, every time I enter the classroom, I do so from an inquiry stance. This stance requires that I see each class as an experience for me to learn about my own teaching. After teaching, I journal briefly to capture the experiences I had during that class. Based on these experiences, I alter my methods and approaches as the class goes on. Then, later in the semester, I reflect on this reflexive writing and my experiences in order to determine what hit and what missed. With this information, I ask students to comment (by adding questions to university mandated course evaluations) on the issues I saw in my own pedagogy. Thus, I get feedback from my audience about what changes I might make in the next semester.

As you can see, the above research isn't formal. I don't write it up for publication, and I don't get IRB approval. All I am doing is engaging in an ongoing inquiry about my teaching. As I see it, this work is part of my responsibility as an educator because it enables my teaching to be fresh and my classroom to change.

When this research is formal the process needn't be more rigid. Naturally, in order to honor students' intellectual property and contributions, IRB and student consent must be obtained for formal research projects. However, obtaining consent is an important part of any participatory research project because, when consent is obtained, students being their work as participants.

Engaging in participatory action research is an active endeavor. While methods and structures may have been defined prior to the start of the study, these processes must be open to revision. As students alter and dictate the movement of the course, they alter the data researchers can collect. When students alter the workshop space, add material to the "Guidelines and Possibilities for the Search" document, decide to compose more than the "required" number of drafts, record additional Response Confessionals to reflect on their writing, or revise the structure of the Response Confessionals to better suit their individual habits and needs, they affect the data the teacher-research will review. If classrooms and research protocols are open to change, then research will be open to all students have to offer. Instead of limiting results, research protocols will encourage results that may not have been anticipated before the study began. The more open classroom and research tools are, the more possibilities for students to participate in the creation of knowledge.

What Does Sapphrikah Learn From Writing Response?

Sapphrikah is a Writer

She realizes that responding is a reading activity; however, as a writer, she aims to craft helpful responses. Sapphrikah finds responses that explain confusion to be helpful. She also appreciates positive feedback that validates revision work. More than anything, Sapphrikah finds helpful readers who attempt to understand her work and write responses that help her to better communicate her overall message.

After composing her Workshop Reflection, Sapphrikah realizes how she meet and missed her response writing. She looks to the responses she wrote William as some of her least helpful. Because she didn't try to understand William's inquiry, Sapphrikah wrote her responses to suit her own communicative needs. She wrote what she would have said to William on the street, no what would help him articulate his message in a less superficial way.

In her project, Sapphrikah struggled to balance her "feminist fury" with her desire to reach and educate her audience. When she reflects on her work as a writer of response, Sapphrikah realizes, if she is to help the writer to whom she is responding revise, she has to temper her fury there as well.

As a writer, Sapphrikah has felt attacked by response. As a responder, Sapphrikah realizes she can attack. She finds a way, when responding to Evelyn, to connect with another writer on the common ground of being a writer. In her Workshop Reflection, she acknowledges that she shares that common ground with William, a writer who she ideologically disagrees with. This common ground allows her to craft thoughtful responses even when she is helping writers unpack ideas she doesn't support.

The movement between reading response, reflecting, and writing response isn't linear. Neither is the progress and development seen when this many irons are in the pedagogical fire. Constantly moving between writing reflecting and responding yields moments for changes, moments Sapphrikah reflects on and calls out in her Final Portfolio Reflection.

I Learned: Implications for Teaching

How many times have we had to help students articulate arguments and inquiries we disagree with? I hope it's many.

Sapphrikah showed me that responding isn't about me, my intentions, or my ego. When responding I may have to help students develop ideas I disagree with. However, using my response, a pedagogical tool, to criticize someone's political position or values isn't appropriate. As responders, we need to connect on the common page of helping one another best express ourselves and best meet our personal, communicative goals.

While I am a teacher, in the space of our classroom workshop, I work as much as possible to defer my authority and act as another responder in the community. I often disagree with students. Instead of being critical in these moments, I work to offer response that encourages students to be critical. I use my responses to make them aware of alternative ideas they may not have considered, and I offer my reading of what they are saying, so they hear what one reader is getting from their work.

But, regardless of what I write, the student has final cut. So, if I want my opinions to be considered, I need to present them in a way that helps the writer think through their own inquiry in a new way. The worst thing I could do is see something I disagree with and shut that writer down, because that response would halt their inquiry instead of showing them possibilities for where it could go.

I Learned: Implications for Life

To be honest, I have a much easier time "getting over myself" when I am responding than I do when I am writing or talking. Maybe it's because, after over 10 years of teaching and more than 1500 students, I have learned to separate my ego from my teaching work. As a teacher, my project is first and foremost to help my students reach their goals and not consistently do so through the veil of my critical options.

When talking at a department meeting, on the other hand, I am much more likely to fly into a manifesto rather than promote conversation. It's a bad habit I learned to deal with feeling inadequate in graduate school. While it was a fine defense mechanism as a student, as a colleague, shutting down discussions isn't productive. Sapphrikah's move to equate her writing of prose and response helped me to link the communication I hope to achieve when responding to students with that I now hope to achieve in conversations with colleagues.

What Does Sapphrikah Learn From Response Confessionals?

Response confessionals provide a moment for Sapphrikah to think through her ideas. In each of her confessionals, she talks through a concept of her project that she was having difficulty articulating. The confessionals provided Sapphrikah time to slow down and clarify ways to communicate her ideas.

One that she spends the most time talking through is the concept of intersectionality. At the moment of her project, Sapphrikah didn't have the word intersectionality to help her express the connections she was starting to experience between her identity as a queer, black, woman. Without the language to express

this intersectionality of politics, she stumbles through several explanations in her piece. Responders consistently see and have difficulty understanding these moments. Therefore, Sapphrikah comes back to response confessionals to speak out her ideas.

More than once, after thinking aloud to her confessional, Sapphrikah muses that she should just transcribe what she said into her paper, and she does just that. Another such instance is when Sapphrikah is thinking through her reaction to Joe's critique of her resistance to the word nigger. Joe, a student who had been called fat, was equating his experience with bullying to Sapphrikah's experience with racism. For Joe, reclaiming his identity as a fat guy was powerful for him, a way to take the power back from his bullies. Sapphrikah, tuned into the difference between sizeism and racism, doesn't equate the two. After all, people who embody color can also be people of size, but white people of size will never embody color. Therefore, they don't have the same experience with racism. Realizing this, Sapphrikah is offended by Joe's attempt at "oppression olympics"—when one person suggest they understand the experiences of a person of color because they have their own oppression to deal with. Her offence leads to a rant on her response confessional, one she decides to write into her paper as a way to better articulate her position on race and the word nigger.

I Learned: Implications for Teaching

In order for students to realize what they have learned from their investigations, I need to provide spaces for them to reflect on their goals and writing. I have to offer moments for students to move from reflex to reflection by

providing assignments that ask them to look back on their own ideas. That way, they can look back and actually see how far they have come.

Response confessionals, sideshadowing, workshop, and portfolio reflections all help me to do this. For Sapphrikah, Response Confessionals worked well. She was anxious about being on video, and often records in a dark room. However, the content of the confessionals was foundational to the learning she illustrates in her Opening Reflection. These confessionals provided a way for Sapphrikah to capture her learning for future reflection, allowing her to move through the class and see how far she has come at the end:

> The true function of the teacher was to encourage self-learning, to allow each child to develop in his own way, rather than force a predetermined program of study on him…For if the child is not compelled to learn, his own curiosity will draw him to the subjects that interest him, and his education will be more natural and pleasant, more enduring and meaningful. (Avrich 2006 p. 9)

Like the founder of the Modern School Movement, Francisco Ferrier, my chief responsibility as a teacher is to create a space that is at once open enough and structured enough for my students to realize and develop their own curiosities. I cannot just allow a free-for-all, but I can structure a course so that students are directed to choose their course of study based on their own, innate curiosities. Wendy Bishop wrote that the subject is writing, and that hasn't changed. However, in order to help students learn about writing, they must first be invested

in their work. This investment cannot be manufactured or faked. It has to be as genuine as possible within the classroom setting.

I don't mean to suggest that students all hit their seats with a desire to learn about writing or research a question pertinent to their lives. Often, helping students—who have been given assignments, arguments, thesis, and projects since grammar school—figure out what they want to work on is our first hurdle. In order to help coach students over this obstacle, I have to listen to them and learn about who they are and what they are about:

> To teach is not to transfer the comprehension of the object to a student but to instigate the student, who is a knowing subject, to become capable of comprehending and of communicating what has been comprehended. This is the sense in which I am obliged to be a listener. To listen to the student's doubts, fears, and incompetencies that are part of the learning process. It is in listening to the student that I learn to speak with him or her. (Freire 1998 p. 106)

Response confessionals and one-on-one conferences help me do this work. They provide space for the student to speak about her struggles, which is essential to their realization of their own learning. For me, these confessionals provide a space for me to see and hear my students, a space to come to know a part of them as people. Listening to their "doubts, fears, and incompetencies" helps me "learn to speak with him or her." And Response confessionals provide an accessible tool to enable this listening.

So What?

Each of these observations, assorted as they are, invokes a trip of pivotal questions: *what is the meaning of what we are seeing? What of value about children, about learning and teaching, about the school can these observations tell us? What do they make us think about?* (Himley & Carini, 2000, p. 158)

My academic grandfather, Bill Smith, loved to ask his students the question "So What?" After they had described a research project or an idea, he would reply with that question: "So what?"

I learned that question from my academic mama, Linda Jordan-Platt. She used to write it at the ends of all of my papers in Basic Writing one and two. So what? So what is the point of all of this good stuff?

It only seems right that I end this study with an attempt to answer that same question that has been so productive to my writing. So what?

I began this study wondering how students reacted to teacher and peer feedback. Response research left big holes where students' voices could have been, and much of it focused on assumptions about what students were thinking. More than that, the bulk of this literature seemed to be focused on teachers writing better comments and less on student writing.

Fife & O'Neill (1997, 2001) put me on the path to considering how my pedagogy and course design were engaging students in conversations about response and responding. Huot reminded me that better responders are often better writers, so I integrated focus on how to read writing and write response into

my curriculum. Edgington (2004) reinforced that idea that different students will be most receptive to different modes of response. More than that, he showed me that students respect the work of their teachers when they see that work as thoughtful, as connected to their writing. Students responded best to a teacher that was reading their work as a human being and composing a thoughtful letter in response.

The next hurdle was how to get my students to see me as a human being, capable of help and guidance as a reader and responder. And how did I get my students to desire response and assistance? Well, if I wanted them to see me as a human being, I needed to see them as human as well.

hooks (1994), Ferm (2005), Freire (1998), and Jensen (2004) reminded me that students were human and to be engaged in learning they must be have some hand in constructing their scholastic projects. The endeavors of education must reach into students' own lives. Not in a synthetic way, like me bringing Jay-Z into the classroom and teaching Midwestern white kids to write hip-hop. But in a more natural way, where people bring their own questions and concerns into the classroom for investigation.

hooks (1994) reminded me that my responsibility as a teacher is not to create carbon copies of myself but instead to help students find their own voice. With all of these theories in mind, I thought of my experience in college research writing. I registered for that class with some friends of mine: Jaime and Disco. We decided that we wanted to take a class together, and because they were art students, the only common core we shared that semester was writing, so we

jumped at the chance. During that class, I wrote about how children learn from stories and reading. Jaime wrote about Warhol. And Disco… Well, he dropped the class because he favored morning hikes in the woods.   My teacher knew a lot about my project, so I was able to get some excellent feedback. However, Jaime struggled to write what she ended up thinking of as a book report about Warhol. I wondered how I could have such an engaging research question and she could be summarizing an artist's life.

I wanted to create a class that would allow all three of us to have the same rigorous experience that I was having. Knowing I couldn't be a Jane-of-all-trades, I needed to open discussions up to students. I didn't understand some of their search projects and questions, but other writers in the class did. They were able to form research, writing, and/or responding partnerships with student who had similar projects or experiences. That way, when a student was writing about whether or not to contact his father who abandoned him, I wasn't on the hook. Another student, with a similar experience, was able to speak up during workshop and become a partner that helped and supported him throughout his research. I helped him with his writing as well, but I never would have known how to respond to him like his classmate. And he and that classmate never would have known to help one another unless there was space for that conversation.

Teaching and research go hand-in-hand. When a teacher enters the class as a researcher, they are poised to question everything. An inquiry stance is active. From this pose, the teacher-researcher can construct a classroom foundation that enables freedom because as we learn our needs change. From this

157

pose, the teacher-researcher can be vulnerable and ask questions of their student participants because they are all learners. From this pose, teacher-researchers can admit what they don't know and learn along with their students.

So what?

So, research needs to start with what we know about people and education. If we want to listen to what our students have to say, we need to give them the space to want to say something. This work of teaching and research is not easy or without obstacles. But, to quote Sapphrikah: "But that's the beauty in something unneat, unquick, unpretty, and totally righteous: complications are not disqualified from being progress" ("Anything by the Master's Tools," Appendix J).

REFERENCES

Anson, C. (1999). Talking about text: The use of recorded commentary in response to student writing. In R. Straub (Ed.), *A sourcebook for responding to student writing* (pp. 165-174). Cresskill, NY: Hampton.

Atwell, N. (1987). *In the middle: New understandings about writing, reading, and learning.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Avarch, P. (2006). *The modern school movement.* Oakland, CA: Automatic Kalashnikov Press.

Bartholomae, D. (1980). The study of error. *College Composition and Communication*, *31*(3), 253-269.

Beach, R. (1989). Evaluating writing to learn: Responding to journals. In B. Lawson, S. S. Ryan, & W. R. Winterowd (Eds.) *Encountering Student Texts: Interpretive Issues in Reading Student Writing* (pp. 183-198). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Berthoff, A. (1987). The teacher and REsearcher. In D. Goswami & P. Stillman (Eds.), *Reclaiming the classroom: Teacher research as an agency for change* (pp. 249-305). Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook.

Boomer, G. (1987). Addressing the problem of Elsewhereness: A case for action research in schools. In D. Goswami & P. Stillman (Eds.), *Reclaiming the classroom: Teacher research as an agency for change* (pp. 4–13). Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook.

Brady, J. (1993). Why I want a wife. In S. Barnet and et al. (Eds.), *Literature for composition* (pp. 775-776). New York, NY: HarperCollins.

159

Britton, J. (1987). A quiet form of research. In D. Goswami & P. Stillman (Eds.),
  Reclaiming the classroom: Teacher research as an agency for change (pp.
  13-19). Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook.

Carini, P. (2001). *Starting strong: A different look at children, schools, and
  standards.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Carini, P., & Himley M. (2010). *Jenny's story: Taking the long view of the child.*
  New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Chochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. (2009). *Inquiry as stance.* New York, NY:
  Teachers College Press.

Chompsky, N. (2000). *Chomsky on miseducation.* New York, NY: Rowman &
  Littlefield.

Connors, R., & Lunsford, A. (1988). Frequency of errors in college writing: Ma
  and pa kettle do research. *College Composition and Communication,
  39*(4), 395-409.

Crowley, S. (1989). On intention in student texts. In B. Lawson, S. S. Ryan, &
  W. R. Winterowd (Eds.) *Encountering student texts: Interpretive issues in
  reading student writing* (pp. 121-128). Urbana, IL: National Council of
  Teachers of English.

Curnut, H. (2003, May). *The 'me' genre: Confessional-reflexivity in reality
  television.* Paper presented at the third annual MiT3: *Media in Translation
  conference.* Cambridge, MA.

Dewey, J. (1956). *The child and the curriculum/The school and society.*
  Chicago, IL.: Phoenix Books.

Diederich, P. (1974). *Measuring growth in english.* Urbana, IL: National Council
of Teachers of English.

DiPardo, A. (1994). Stimulated recall in research on writing: An antidote to "I
don't know, it was fine." In P. Smagorisnky (Ed.), *Speaking about writing:
Reflections on research methodology* (pp. 163-183). Thousand Oaks, CA:
SAGE.

Edgington, A. (2004). Encouraging collaboration with students on teacher
response. *Teaching English in the Two Year College, 31*(3), 287-296.

Edgington, A. (2005). "What are you thinking?": Understanding teacher reading
and response through a protocol analysis study. Unpublished manuscript.

Emig, J. (1971). *The composing process of twelfth graders* (*National Council of
Teachers of English Research Report No 13*). Urbana, IL: National
Council of Teachers of English.

Emerson, R. W. (1996). *Selected writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson.* New York,
NY: Penguin.

Erickson, K. A., & Simon, H. A. (1984). *Protocol analysis: Verbal reports as
data.* Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Ferm, E. (2005). *Freedom in education.* New York, NY: Factory School.

Ferris, D. (2003). Student reactions to teacher response in multiple-draft
composition classrooms. *Teaching English as a Second or Other
Language Quarterly, 29(1)*, 33-53.

Fife, J. M., & O'Neill, P. (1997). Re-seeing research on response. *College*

Composition and Communication, 48(2), 274-277.

Fife, J. M., & O'Neill, P. (2001). Moving beyond the written comment:

Narrowing the gap between response practice and research. *College*

Composition and Communication, 53(2), 300-321.

Flower, L., & Hayes, J. R. (1980). The cognition of discovery: Defining a

rhetorical problem. *College Composition and Communication*, *31*(1), 21-

32.

Flower, L., & Hayes, J. R. (1981). A cognitive process theory of writing.

College Composition and Communication, 32, pp. 365-387.

Freire, P. (1974) *Education for a critical consciousness.* New York, NY:

Continuum.

Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of freedom.* New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield.

Green, S. & Higgins, L. (1994). "Once upon a time": The use of retrospective

accounts in building theory in composition. In P. Smagorisnky (Ed.),

Speaking about writing: Reflections on research methodology (pp. 115-

140). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Goswami, D., Lewis, C., Rutherford, M., & Waff, D. (2009) *Teacher Inquiry:*

Approaches to language and literacy research. New York, NY: Teachers

College Press.

Harris, W. H. (1977). Teacher response to student writing: A study of the

response patters of high school english teachers to determine the basis for

teacher judgment of student writing. *Research in the Teaching of English,*

11, 175-185.

Hayes, J. R., & Flower, L. (1983). Uncovering cognitive process in writing: An

    introduction to protocol analysis. *Research in the Teaching of English, 13,*

    23-35.

Hayes, M. F., & Daiker, D. A. (1984). Using protocol analysis in evaluating

    student responses to student writing. *Freshman English News, 13*(2), 1-10.

Himley, M., & Carini, P. (2000). *From another angle.* New York, NY: Teachers

    College Press.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Huot, B. (2001). *(Re)articulating writing assessment for teaching and learning.*

    Logan: Utah State University Press.

Huot, B. (2002). Toward a new discourse of assessment for the college writing

    classroom. *College English, 65*(2), 163-180.

Jensen, D. (2004). *Walking on water: Reading, writing, and revolution.* White

    River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green.

Katz, N. (1989). Reading intention. In B. Lawson, S. S. Ryan, & W. R.

    Winterowd (Eds.) *Encountering Student Texts: Interpretive Issues in*

    Reading Student Writing (pp. 111-120). Urbana, IL: National Council of

    Teachers of English.

Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (2003). Participatory action research. In N. K.

    Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (pp. 336-

    396). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Knoblauch, C. H., & Brannon, L. (1982). On students' rights to their own texts: A

model of teacher response. *College Composition and Communication,*
33(2), 157-166.

Knoblauch, C. H., & Brannon, L. (1984). *Rhetorical traditions and the teaching*
of writing. Portsmouth, NH: Boyton/Cook.

Kynard, C. (2006). "Y'all are killin' me up in here:" Response theory from a
newjack composition instructor/sistahgurl meeting her students on the
page. *Teaching English in the Two Year College, 33*(4), 361-387.

Lakoff, G. (2008). *The political mind.* New York, NY: Penguin.

Macrorie, K. (1988). *The I-search paper.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Martin, G. (1987). A letter to bread loaf. In D. Goswami & P. Stillman (Eds.),
Reclaiming the classroom: Teacher research as an agency for change (pp.
165–169). Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook.

Marzano, R. J., & Arthur, S. (1977). Teacher comments on student essays: It
doesn't' matter what you say. Study at the University of Colorado,
Denver. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 147 864).

Murray, S. (2000). A sociocultural perspective on teacher response: Is there a
student in the room? *Assessing Writing, 7*(1)*,* 79-90.

O'Neill, P., & Fife J. M. (1999). Listening to students: Contextualizing response
to student writing. *Composition Studies, 27*(2), 39-51.

Odell, L. (1989). Responding to responses: Good news, bad news, and
unanswered questions. In B. Lawson, S. S. Ryan, & W. R. Winterowd
(Eds.), *Encountering Student Texts: Interpretive Issues in Reading Student*

Writing (pp. 221-234). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Petrosky, A. (1989). Imagining the past and teaching essay and poetry writing. In B. Lawson, S. S. Ryan, & W. R. Winterowd (Eds.), *Encountering Student Texts: Interpretive Issues in Reading Student Writing* (pp. 199-220). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Phelphs, L. W. (2000). Cyrano's nose: Variations on the theme of response. *Assessing Writing, 7*(1)*,* 91-110.

Reigstad, T., & McAndrew, D. (2001). *Tutoring writing: A practical guide to conferences.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1978). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Rutz, C. (2006). Recovering the conversation. *College Composition and Communication, 52*(2), 257-262.

Salvatori, M. (2003, March). *Reading theory in student writing.* Paper presented at the annual Conference on College Composition and Communication*,* New York, NY.

Salvatori, M., & Donahue, P. (2010). Disappearing acts: The problem of the student in composition studies. *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture, 10*(1), 25-33.

Shaunasey, M. (1977). *Errors & expectations.* New York, NY: Oxford

University Press.

Sloan, G. (1979). Frequency of errors in essays by college freshman and by
   professional writers. *College Composition and Communitcation. 41*(3),
   299-308.

Smagorinsky, P. (1989). The reliability and validity of protocol analysis. *Written
   Communication, 6,* 463-479.

Smith, E. (1989). "It doesn't bother me, but sometimes it's discouraging": Students
   respond to teachers' written responses. *Journal of Teaching Writing*, *8*(1),
   255-266.

Sommers, N. (1982). Responding to student writing. *College Composition and
   Communication, 33*(2)*,* 128-156.

Sommers, N. (1999). Responding to student writing: Afterward. In L. Ede (Ed.),
   The braddock essays (pp. 30-31). Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martins.

Sperling, M., & Freedman, S. W. (1987). A good girl writes like a good girl.
   Written Communication, 4(4), 345-369.

Sperling, M. (1994). Constructing the perspective of teacher-as-reader: A
   framework for studying response to student writing. *Research in the
   Teaching of English, 28*(2), 175-207.

Straub, R. (1996). The concept of control in teacher response: Defining the
   varieties of "directive" and "facilitative" commentary. *College
   Composition and Communication, 47*(2)*,* 223-251.

Straub, R. (1997). Response rethought. *College Composition and
   Communication, 48*(1)*,* 277-283.

Straub, R., & Lundsford, R. (1995). *Twelve readers reading: Responding to student writing.* Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.

Swanson-Owens, D., & Newell, G. (1994). Using intervention protocols to study the effects of instructional scaffolding on writing and learning. In P. Smagorisnky (Ed.), *Speaking about writing: Reflections on research methodology* (pp. 141-162). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Taylor, T. (Director). (2008). *Take 20: Teaching Writing* [Motion Picture]. United States of America. Bedford/St. Martin's.

Wansor, C. T. (1990). *The rhetorical dynamics of teacher written response to student writing: A descriptive and protocol study.* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA.

Welch, N. (1998). Sideshadowing teacher response. *College English, 60*(4)*,* 374-395.

Witte, S. P., & Cherry, R. D. (1994). Think-aloud protocols, protocol analysis, and research design: An exploration of the influence of writing tasks on writing processes. In P. Smagorisnky (Ed.), *Speaking about writing: Reflections on research methodology* (pp. 20-54). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Yancey, K. B. (1996, March). *Writing assignments, responding to writing, and self-assessment: The role of self-assessment in composing, the role of self-assessment in curriculum.* Paper presented at the annual Conference on College Composition and Communication. Proceedings from Conference on College Composition and Communication, Milwaukee, WI. New York,

NY: Bedford/St. Martin.

Zak, F. (1990). Exclusively positive responses to student writing. *Journal of Basic Writing, 9*(2), 40-53.

Informed Consent
A Study of the Student-as-Reader of Teacher Response

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by April Sikorski, a doctoral candidate in English Composition and TESOL at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the way students read their professor's responses to their writing. Below is a description of what a participant would be asked to do:

Initial Confessional (1)
If you agree to be a part of this study, you will be asked to record and post an initial confessional. In this confessional, you will answer some questions about your background as a student and a writer.

Response Confessional (4)
If you agree to be a part of this study, you will be asked to record and post up to 4 response confessional. After you've received writing back from your instructor, you will have 24 hours in which to record and post your response confessional. As you read your responses, you will periodically stop and react to them. Then, you will offer a final comment on the response and how you might use it to revise. The response confessional is a video recording of your reactions to the feedback April offers. Before the study begins, you will be asked to attend a meeting with other participants to learn how to conduct a response confessional and to trouble shoot the technology we will be using.

Ongoing Confessionals (2)
If you agree to be a part of this study, you will be asked to record and post two ongoing confessionals. Whenever something in class helps you understand the responses you get from April, you should post a response confessional. You should post your video within 24 of the class you're discussing.

Final Confessional (1)
Like all students in the class, you will receive your Final Grade during a conference with your professor at the end of the semester. If you agree to participate in this study, after you receive your grade, you will have 24 hours to record and post your final confessional. In this confessional, you should to react openly and honestly to your grade. Also, you should discuss what you learned about response and writing in the class and as a participant in the study.

Protection from Risks:
Your professor will not know who has decided to not to offer consent for this study. All participants will be selected randomly an outside agent. Students chosen to participant will be emailed by Researcher and invited to a pre-study meeting. Consent forms of students not chosen will be shredded.

You will create a password-protected gmail account during out pre-study meeting. Since all confessionals will be uploaded into this account, your professor will not have access to the data you are generating. After you receive your final grade and have submitted your final Confessional, you will be asked to disclose your gmail password. Although your professor will know who is participating in the study, she will have no access to your confessionals until after your final grade is submitted to the University.

<u>Levels of Participation</u>
Students are true participants in this study; therefore, you deserve your own voice, name, and identity as part of the project. For this reason, you will have the option to opt for one of three different levels of privacy if you decided to participate:

1. <u>Full Disclosure:</u> Participants' names and identities will be provided and respected like the names and identities of scholarly authors, like those cited in any formal academic writing (following APA Style Guidelines). In the event Researcher wishes to share segments from confessionals with other professionals in the field, participants will be allowed to review chosen segments in order to accept or decline inclusion. Even if you allow full disclosure, you will always have full control over what video segments are used.

2. <u>Partial Disclosure:</u> Participants' names will remain confidential, and they will be assigned pseudonyms. In the event Researcher wishes to share segments from confessionals with other professionals in the field, participants will be allowed to review chosen segments in order to accept or decline inclusion. Even if you allow partial disclosure, you will always have full control over what video segments are used.

3. <u>No Disclosure:</u> Participants' real names and any identifying information will be left out of all reports of this study. While text from your video transcripts may be quoted and shared with professionals, no video clips will be shared at any time.

<u>Benefits:</u>
This study will potentially benefit the students who participate by helping you better understand your professors response. Spending serious time reflecting on the responses you receive may help you find new and interesting ways to approach your revision. The more you reflect on your writing, the greater your understanding of your own writing process will become.

<u>Incentives:</u> Upon successful completion of this study, you will be compensated with $50.00. In order to successfully complete the study, you must record and upload at least 8 Confessionals—(1) Intial, (4) Response, (1) Ongoing, (1) Final.

You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with me, St. John's University, or the Institute for Writing Studies.

If you would like further information about this project of if you have any questions, you may contact me or the project director, Dr. Michael M. Williamson.

Researcher:	**Project Director:**
April Sikorski,	Dr. Michael M. Williamson
Ph.D. Candidate, Indiana University of Pennsylvania	110 B Leonard Hall
St. John's University	Indiana University of Pennsylvania
8000 Utopia Parkway	421 South Walk
St. Augustine Hall, Room 169	Indiana, PA 15705
(718) 990-7910 (office)	(724) 357-2671
sikorska@stjohns.edu	mmwimson@iup.edu

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724.357.7730)

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed consent form.

I agree to take part in (check below):

☐ Confessionals (s).

In terms of confidentiality, I choose:

☐ Full disclosure

☐ Partial disclosure

☐ No disclosure

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____ Phone where you can be reached: _____

Best days and times to reach you:

_____

_____

I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

Date: _____ Researcher's signature: _____

Appendix B

Framework for the Introduction Confessional

I. Background Information
- Name and age
- What's your major?
- What's your year (freshman, sophomore, etc.)?
- Have you taken this class before at this institution?
- Describe your experiences in that initial class.

II. Goals and Intentions
- What do you home to learn in this class?
- What do you hope to learn about writing?
- What goals do you have for yourself, regarding this class?
- What do you want to achieve in this class?

III. Past experiences with getting feedback
- Did past writing teachers have rubrics? What's your opinion of them?
- Did past writing teachers use grading guides? Opinion?
- What sort of responses have you gotten on your papers? What have you found helpful about these responses? What sorts of responses don't you like?
- Have you ever participated in a whole class workshop? Describe your experiences.
- Describe your experiences with peer review. What do you like? Dislike?
- How have your past teachers talked about writing? Were there strict rules to follow? Was there a lot of freedom?

IV. Writing History
- Do you see yourself as a writer?
- Describe a past experience you've had with writing.
- Describe your experience with writing/revision process. What is your typical revision process like?

Appendix C

Framework for Post-Workshop Confessional

Before you record your confessional, you will want to read through your feedback and notes, and try to evaluate the most helpful feedback you received. Please address (at least) each of these six points in your Confessional:

1.   Briefly summarize the discussion of your piece. What aspects of your piece did many people seem to agree about? What aspects of your piece did people disagree about? Why do you think they disagreed? What do you think?

2.   What were the 3 or 4 most helpful comments you heard? Find these documents, and read these comments out loud. Why were they helpful to you as you begin to revise this piece?

3.   Did any comments bother you? Confuse you? Find these documents, and read these comments out loud. What will you do to address your negative feelings about these comments?

4.   Having heard our feedback, what steps will you take to significantly revise your piece? Describe at least 3 areas you will make your piece better than it was. How do you hope these revisions will improve your piece?

5. What have we been talking about in class that helps you understand and/or use this feedback? What class discussions help you figure out how to interpret your feedback? What class discussions help you figure out how to use your feedback to revise your writing?

6.   What did you learn about writing from this workshop? Why was certain feedback helpful? How will you go about getting feedback in the future?

7.   What did you learn about responding from this workshop? How does your responding compare to the most helpful responses you've received? What sorts of changes will you make to your responding practices as a result of your workshop?

Appendix D

Framework for Post-Response Confessional

You do NOT have to prepare for this confessional as you did for the Workshop Response Confessional. I want you to read through all of the comments you received OUT LOUD as you record your confessional. Just get your writing out, read the comments, and talk off the cuff:

If you got a response letter
1.   Read through *each paragraph* of the letter OUT LOUD. After you reading each paragraph, STOP and react to it. What do you think of that comment? Does it make sense? Does it piss you off? Does it make you happy? What is the comment asking you to do? How will you apply that note to your revision?
2.   What was the most helpful aspect of this feedback? Explain why it's helpful to you. How will this comment help you revise?
3.   Did any comments bother you? Confuse you? Find these comments, and read these comments out loud. What will you do to address your negative feelings about these comments? If the reader/responder didn't understand your meaning, how will you rectify this audience confusion?
4.   <u>Reflect on these responses overall:</u> What steps will you take to significantly revise your piece? Describe at least 3 areas you will make your piece better than it was. How do you hope these revisions will improve your piece?
5.   What did you learn about writing from this draft?
6.   What did you learn about responding from this experience? What sorts of changes will you make to your responding practices as a result of the feedback you received?

If you got marginal comments & and end note
1.   Read through *each comment* written in the margin OUT LOUD. After you read each comment, react to it. What do you think of that comment? Does it make sense? Does it piss you off? Does it make you happy? What is the comment asking you to do? How will you apply that note to your revision?

2.   Read through the end note OUT LOUD. After each paragraph or idea in the end note, offer your reactions. What do you think of that comment? Does it make sense? Does it piss you off? Does it make you happy? What is the comment asking you to do? How will you apply that note to your revision?

3.   What was the most helpful aspect of this feedback? Choose the best comment. Read that comment out loud. Then, explain why it's helpful to you. How will this comment help you revise?

4.   Did any comments bother you? Confuse you? Find these comments, and read these comments out loud. What will you do to address your negative feelings about these comments? If the reader/responder didn't understand your meaning, how will you rectify this audience confusion?

5.   <u>Reflect on these responses overall:</u> What steps will you take to significantly revise your piece? Describe at least 3 areas you will make your piece better than it was. How do you hope these revisions will improve your piece?

6. What have we been talking about in class that helps you understand and/or use this feedback? What class discussions help you figure out how to interpret your feedback? What class discussions help you figure out how to use your feedback to revise your writing?

7.   What did you learn about writing from this draft?

8.   What did you learn about responding from this experience? What sorts of changes will you make to your responding practices as a result of the feedback you received?

Appendix E

Framework for Ongoing Confessional

Ongoing Confessionals should respond to moments in April's class that help you better understand the responses you've received. When a class discussion speaks to you, helps you understand a confusing concept, or pertains to your writing/revising, take a moment and record and post a Confessional. If you get stuck, use these questions to help springboard your ideas:

- Note the Date of the class.
- What was the subject of the class discussion?
- Why did this subject get your attention?
- How does this lesson help you understand some feedback you've received?
- What feedback did you get that you found confusing?
- How did this lesson help you understand how to use that feedback to revise?
- What about the feedback did you misunderstand?
- What will you do to your paper as a result of this class discussion?

Appendix F

Framework for Exit Confessional

I. Goals and Intentions

- How you met your initial goals for the semester?
- What other goals emerged?
- How did you meet/miss these goals?

II. Classroom Experiences

- How does April discuss response in the classroom?
- How does she discuss writing?
- Would you like her to spend more time talking about response? Less? Just right?

III. Writing Experiences

- Do you see yourself as a writer?
- What sorts of responses did you find helpful?
- How did you use your responses to revise?
- What was the result of this reading? Do you feel like you often interpret April's responses they way she intends?
- What do you rely on when interpreting April's responses? Class lesson, past experience, own sense?
- What did you learn about writing and response from your class? From the protocol?

IV. Future Goals

- What do you plan to do when you graduate?
- What role do you think that writing will play in your future career?
- What role do you think writing will play in your future courses?
- What ideas about writing will you take from this class into other classes?
- What have you learned about writing from reading April's response?

Appendix G
Final Portfolio Assignment

Your Final Portfolio will afford you the opportunity to self-select the work that shows your growth and development as a writer. It is an ongoing text, one you construct throughout the semester. You will use this portfolio to make an argument about who you are as a writer in two ways. (1) You will choose writing that allows you to show your struggles and successes. (2) You will compose an Opening Reflection where you flesh out the argument about your struggles and successes you writing allows you to make.

All of the writing and reflecting you do this semester will constitute the materials that help you develop this portfolio argument. I will evaluate this portfolio holistically. That is, I will not grade individual pieces of work. When I read your portfolio, I will start with your Title and Opening Reflection to get a sense of your argument. Then, I will evaluate the materials you include to evaluate how well you've sustained this argument. In some sense, I will be looking to see how you have used these writings to articulate what you've learned. I will assign a grade to this portfolio based on your abilities to develop your argument about your learning and development (and difficulties) using the materials you include in the portfolio. If you approach your work with an honest sense of curiosity and a desire to search out an answer to your Search Question, you will do fine in this course.

Criteria for Evaluation: In this portfolio, I expect you to be able to:
1) TALK about yourself as a writer by identifying your goals and intentions.
2) REFLECT on how you've emerged as a writer this semester by acknowledging your difficulties and successes.
3) INCLUDE materials as evidence to support your arguments about who you are as a writer (i.e. these difficulties and successes).
4) IDENTIFY where you've hit and where you've missed your goals.
5) THINK about the role of writing to you this term and in the future.

Title of Portfolio	*Give your entire collection of this semester's writing a name that captures the overall theme of your work.* Please note that titles like "My Writing This Semester" or "The Life and Times of the Wonderful Me" or "My Story" do NOT represent themes!
Table of Contents	List the order of all of your writings with their titles. In parentheses, behind every title, you should have the content label for this project, as described below. Here's an example: *Aura Made That?: Searching for Ways to Not Burn Toast* (Early Draft)
Opening Reflection	This is an opening essay to the portfolio that describes the contents of the portfolio and reflects on your writing throughout the semester. The reflection should show how and why you have included the writings you've chosen and how these writings are all related. Your reflection is a space for you to describe why you made the choices you made in your writing; it is a space for you to describe the connections between the disparate

	writing selections you've chosen to include in the portfolio. This reflection should have a solid argument/heuristic. That is, you do NOT want to simply explain why each piece is in the portfolio individually, but use the Opening Reflection as a way to craft an overarching thread/argument that allows you to link together the writing you've chosen to include.
Early Search Draft	This is the earliest draft of your Search Project (NOT the Topic Proposal). This should be a draft you return to and say to yourself: "Wow! This final piece came from that?! Dang, I'm good!"
Final Search Draft	This is the last and final version of your Search Paper.
Workshop Reflection	Please include the Workshop Reflection (and papers/responses you reference samples responses).
Response Confessionals	Choose two Response Confessionals that help you develop your portfolio's (opening reflection's) argument.
Sideshadow Drafts	Include one sideshadow draft that allows you to make some claims about how you dealt with feedback in your writing.
*Annotated Bibliography with Rationale (Search Project)	This Annotated Bibliography should have at least five (3) sources. The citations should follow APA or MLA format. The rationale (or text below the citation) is where you describe how and why you've incorporated these sources into your Search Project.
*Source Archive	Include all PRIMARY source materials you collected for this project (interview transcripts, survey results, etc.). You will need to have written permission from your sources to use their words. So, please include SIGNED Consent Forms for each of these source documents. You are permitted to obtain email consent; however you must provide a screen shot of the email or a print out including the email signature (that To/From/Subject stuff).
Reading Logs	Go back through your reading logs from earlier in the semester. Choose two that you would like to complete. In the third column of that reading log, reflect on how your perceptions about the reading have changed and attribute these changes to your classmates, workshop, or whatever helped you to form these ideas.
Free Skate (optional)	This is any writing project of your choice. You can choose to include the Final Document or any other writing you've done this semester (in or outside of STU). Did you write something on your own time, not for our classes? If so, include that. Did you have a detailed exchange about elections or some other political topic on Facebook? If so, print out the exchange and include it as a transcript. Did you perform something that you recorded or design a new game? If so, include that.

*Final Exam (if applicable)	The final exam will be centered on the material we cover in class. If you have *two or less* absences you are exempt from taking the final. If you have three to five absences, you are required to take the final in an attempt to earn your 5% attendance/participation points. If you have to take the final, please include it at the back of your Final Portfolio. If you don't have to take the final, you will automatically earn that 5%.
*Writing Center Reflection (WCR)	Include at least one Writing Center Reflection (downloadable worksheet in AprilsClass.pbworks.com)

*Items starred do NOT need to be discussed in the Opening Reflection (Writing Center Reflection, Annotated Bibliography, Source Archive, Final Exam.)

OPENING REFLECTION

The Opening Reflection is like a descriptive guide you write to me about the portfolio. In this Opening, you want to reflect on the materials you chose to include in the portfolio. Why did you choose these materials? What did you choose these materials to show about what you've learned?

Use this Opening Reflection to an argument about what you've learned this semester. In order to develop this argument, you want to quote and refer to the materials in the portfolio. The paper should show how and why students have included the writings they have chosen and how these writings are all related. Explain why you chose each project. What does each project let you say about your work this semester? How does each project help you develop your argument about what you learned this semester?

Students should also address their own processes and learning in the semester as well as the program learning objectives. After you have constructed your argument, take a look at the program learning objectives (Syllabus 1-2), and determine which ones your argument discusses you having met.

Format: NOT a letter. Write this as you would write any paper for our class.

Length: As long as it needs to be. You want to be sure you are fully developing your argument by quoting and discussing excerpts from the materials you've included. So, this piece should be fairly long.

DIRECTIONS FOR SUBMITTING YOUR PORTFOLIO

Electronic Copy (due posted by Thursday, December 15th @ 1pm)
You must submit your portfolio to your PBWorks Page. Your Final Portfolio should be uploaded
as ONE document. That means, you want to copy and paste all of the writing you are choosing
to include into ONE MSWord document. Save that as your Portfolio and upload that ONE
document to the Final Portfolio section of your PBWorks Page.

Appendix H
Midterm Portfolio Assignment

Towards the middle of the semester, you will have composed a strong draft of your Search Project. Because the search project relies on process, it's essential that you provide me with a context of your writing, learning, and responding throughout this first half of the semester. That's where the Midterm Portfolio comes into play. At Midterm, you will assemble a portfolio of your work throughout the first half of the term.

I will evaluate your Midterm Portfolio holistically in order to make a decision about where you stand at the mid-point in the semester. That means, I will read the portfolio as a total document, and I will NOT grade the individual components separately. Therefore, it's really important that you use your Opening Reflection to clearly flesh out what you've collected your work to show me.

Because you are still learning how to move through a portfolio grading process, your Midterm Grade will be a **shadow (or soft) grade**. Shadow grades are "soft" because I don't record them. Therefore, they are like shadows of grades. These letter grades serve only as markers of how your writing would be assessed if this were the end of the semester. The markers are for your reference, and I don't record them because recording these grades, in a traditional way, could lead to you being penalized for your own development. If I have to record and average letter/numerical grades, then you can't really revise and improve your work, because you will always be working off earlier "bad scores." This shadow grading system offers you a chance to practice with portfolio evaluation before you have to compose your Final Portfolio, the one worth all the marbles.

Criteria for Evaluation: In this portfolio, I expect you to be able to:
6) TALK about yourself as a writer by identifying your goals and intentions.
7) REFLECT on how you've emerged as a writer this semester by acknowledging your difficulties and successes.
8) INCLUDE materials as evidence to support your arguments about who you are as a writer (i.e. these difficulties and successes).
9) IDENTIFY where you've hit and where you've missed your goals.
10) THINK about the role of writing to you this term and in the future.

Title of Portfolio	*Give your entire collection of this semester's writing a name that captures the overall theme of your work.* Please note that titles like "My Writing This Semester" or "The Life and Times of the Wonderful Me" or "My Story" do NOT represent themes!
Table of Contents	List the order of all of your writings with their titles. In parentheses, behind every title, you should have the content label for this project, as described below. Here's an example: *Aura Made That?: Searching for Ways to Not Burn Toast* (Early Draft)
Opening Reflection	This is an opening essay to the portfolio that describes the contents of the portfolio and reflects on your writing throughout the semester. The reflection should show how and why you have included the writings you've chosen and how these writings are

	all related. Your reflection is a space for you to describe why you made the choices you made in your writing; it is a space for you to describe the connections between the disparate writing selections you've chosen to include in the portfolio. This reflection should have a solid argument/heuristic. That is, you do NOT want to simply explain why each piece is in the portfolio individually, but use the Opening Reflection as a way to craft an overarching thread/argument that allows you to link together the writing you've chosen to include.
Early Search Draft	This is the earliest draft of your Search Project (NOT the Topic Proposal). This should be a draft you return to and say to yourself: "Wow! This final piece came from that?! Dang, I'm good!"
*Annotated Bibliography with Rationale DRAFT	This Annotated Bibliography Draft should have at least five (2) sources. The citations should follow APA or MLA format. The rationale (or text below the citation) is where you describe how and why you've incorporated these sources into your Search Project.
*Source Archive DRAFT	Include all PRIMARY source materials you collected for this project (interview transcripts, survey results, etc.). You will need to have written permission from your sources to use their words. So, please include SIGNED Consent Forms for each of these source documents. You are permitted to obtain email consent; however you must provide a screen shot of the email or a print out including the email signature (that To/From/Subject stuff).
Final Search Draft (at the moment)	This is the last and final version of your Search Paper (for the moment). This draft should include your set-up, (at least) two source moves, and a working conclusion.
Reading Logs	Go back through your reading logs from earlier in the semester. Choose **one** that you would like to complete. In the third column of that reading log, reflect on how your perceptions about the reading have changed and attribute these changes to your classmates, workshop, or whatever helped you to form these ideas.
Free Skate (OPTIONAL)	This is any writing project of your choice. You can choose to include the Final Document or any other writing you've done this semester (in or outside of STU). Did you write something on your own time, not for our classes? If so, include that. Did you have a detailed exchange about elections or some other political topic on Facebook? If so, print out the exchange and include it as a transcript. Did you perform something that you recorded or design a new game? If so, include that.
*Writing Center Reflection (Extra Credit)	Include at least one Writing Center Reflection (downloadable worksheet in on AprilsClass.pbworks.com)

*Items starred do NOT need to be discussed in the Opening Reflection
(Writing Center Reflection, Annotated Bibliography, Source Archive)

The Opening Reflection is like a descriptive guide you write to me about the portfolio. In this Opening, you want to reflect on the materials you chose to include in the portfolio. Why did you choose these materials? What did you choose these materials to show about what you've learned?

Use this Opening Reflection to an argument about what you've learned this semester. In order to develop this argument, you want to quote and refer to the materials in the portfolio. The paper should show how and why students have included the writings they have chosen and how these writings are all related. Explain why you chose each project. What does each project let you say about your work this semester? How does each project help you develop your argument about what you learned this semester?

Students should also address their own processes and learning in the semester as well as the program learning objectives. After you have constructed your argument, take a look at the program learning objectives (Syllabus 1-2), and determine which ones your argument discusses you having met.

Format: NOT a letter. Write this as you would write any paper for our class.

Length: As long as it needs to be. You want to be sure you are fully developing your argument by quoting and discussing excerpts from the materials you've included. So, this piece should be fairly long.

DIRECTIONS FOR SUBMITTING YOUR PORTFOLIO

Electronic Copy (due posted by the start of your class on Thursday, October 14th)
You must submit your portfolio to your PBWorks Page. Your Final Portfolio should be uploaded as ONE document. That means, you want to copy and paste all of the writing you are choosing to include into ONE MSWord document. Save that as your Portfolio and upload that ONE document to the Final Portfolio section of your PBWorks Page.

Appendix I
Workshop Reflection Assignment

Your Name:	
Count the number of responses you posted to PBWorks:	
Count the number of comments you wrote in the margins:	
Count the number of end-notes you wrote:	

I. REFLECT ON RESPONSES YOU WROTE:

II. REFLECT ON RESPONSES YOU RECEIVED:

III. REFLECT ON WHAT YOU LEARNED:
- ➢   **learned about writing**

- ➢   **liked about workshop**
- ➢   **would like to change about workshop**

IV. ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO TELL ME ABOUT YOUR WORKSHOP EXPERIENCE?

WRITING THE MOVEMENT

ACTIVIST WRITING—UNNEAT, UNPRETTY, UNQUICK.

Sapphrikah's Final Portfolio

187

Opening Reflection

Over the course of this English class and throughout this I-Search assignment, I've discovered things about myself as an activist writer. Originally, what mattered most to me was getting my opinions out and onto the page, brash as I may be. What I've learned is that my presentation as a writer greatly affects how I'll be heard, or if I'll be heard at all, for that matter. This writing process has helped me discover that developing myself as a writer could in turn make me a better activist.

When it comes to my writing, I know I can give off a forceful and harsh persona, which would never give someone the impression that I'm sensitive, but I am. Being sensitive to another person's criticism has made me stubborn. I usually feel more attacked that anything by what people have to contribute, and in the attempt to protect my beliefs and opinions, I ignore how their criticisms can help my writing. I've turned into the 'my-writing-is-perfect, you-don't-know-anything' kind of writer.

In fact, in my Response Confessional After Response Partner video, I even said "I'm so happy with the way the set-up came out that I kind of don't want to touch it." I build up this impression of myself that I've already done well enough that no one should dare criticize me before recognizing my good deeds. Of course, I've become this way unintentionally, but it's counterproductive nonetheless.

The writing experience in this class was the first time I ever honestly drafted something, and my first attempts were *shitty* to say the least. I was unorganized, vague, and used words or concepts people didn't understand. It really hurt my level of effectiveness. And when people made comments in a way that made me feel like they didn't listen at all, I turned a stubborn ear to it.

188

In Karina's Workshop Response (free skate #4) to me, she left an endnote that concluded: "Throughout the entire paper you sound angry and stiff. Also explaining the significance behind spelling womyn, not everyone will understand it. You can't assume that everyone knows you." I felt attacked by this statement. To be honest, I felt like she was more against what I had to say that my actual writings and that made me really put a wall up to her comments. Other short comments she added, such as one-word track changes like "confusing", showed little to no effort, and I decided that if she weren't going to put an effort into workshopping my paper, I wasn't going to put any effort into applying her suggestions.

What's funny about this is I realized, I did the same thing to some people in our class during the workshop as well. I often projected my own ideas into the track changes, or didn't give a friendly aura when approaching someone's paper. In responding to William's workshop piece, I often told him that wanting to be a doctor just for the big checks was awfully greedy, instead of helping him construct a better paper. I came to realize in my Objectivity and Subjectivity Reading Log, "I should have had more respect for William. And if I really felt the need to give him my opinion, I could have done it somewhere else than the track changes I left on his page."

William most likely didn't hear any of my other, actually constructive criticism, because of the condescending responses I gave him. My condescending attitude is something I've given off in writings outside of the class, too. Typically, when I have a point to make, and I feel the target audience is wrong, I show no mercy. For example, in my free skate "On the Topic of Trey Songz", the audience I'm addressing consists of the homophobes who wrote the original dialog. My disdain for homophobic language caused

me to open up with: "I'm not even gonna speak on the topic of Trey Songz, because frankly, I couldn't give any less of a shit."

Truthfully, that *is* how I feel, but I could have started off in a different way. I quite possibly reached the people that I was targeting, but turned them off immediately with an opening sentence like that. And I do this all the time. Yeah, I've got feminist fury, but sometimes people don't want to listen to the furious.

I've acknowledged the issues of my approach before, like in another free skate, "Here we go…": "This is why I try to re-evaluate how I approach those with processed hair. Like, seriously, I hate the fact that you're fucking oppressing yourself and I need to work on how to accept you without wanting to scold you every five minutes." This is a conundrum I have, and continue to have if I don't catch myself. Sometimes, my face twists up at the sight of a weave. When I'm writing about it, I may appear to be talking down to those who choose to have weaves or perms or to straighten their hair. It makes me a less productive writer, because I know it blocks me from being heard. My stubbornness had to be softened (without losing my beliefs of course.)

It was around the time that I had a face-to-face response partner meeting with Safeera that I started to open up to the criticisms I received from my peers. In fact, in my response confessional, wrongly titled Untitled 0005, I said to the viewing public: "I can say a lot of things that matter to me but it doesn't mean it's going to reach other people." This was my way of acknowledging that the fact that my words have been put down on paper, doesn't mean they'll be absorbed the way that I want them to, especially if I'm being vague, disorganized, or inexplicably harsh.

I was very vague in the first draft of my I-Search paper. As I interpreted in my Reading Log for the Interviewing chapter, I kept these words in mind: "Cut the fluff! If it's about puppies and your paper is about becoming a dentist, it's irrelevant." I already knew that talking about myself was something I do well, and I didn't want to go off into random tangents, bore the reader, or make them feel like the paper was drawn out, so I was nearly obsessed with cutting to the chase as I jotted those first words down.

I often used words or concepts that a lot of my peers were unaware of, and in a combination of believing they'd look the words up themselves mixed with my desire to cut to the point, I offered no elaboration. I used words like 'cisperson', like in the free skate titled "Hey you!", which I start off by saying: "Hey you, the caucasian, straight person, male, or cisperson!", without explanation.

That article originally comes from my blog, which is situated in a network of progressive and socially aware people, which means that a lot of them probably are already aware of cissexism, so the sentence is perfectly suitable without explanation.

But in the case of using the word 'womyn' consistently in a paper that will be distributed to my peers, it left them asking questions, such as Noemia's: "Is this spelling of 'woman' a feminist term? How would it change the meaning if you explained why you did that?" I realized that in places that are not necessarily suited to accommodate words like these, it wouldn't hurt to be a little considerate. Why should I want to confuse the people I am speaking to? I obliged in my final draft by adding a footnote which reads: "Often associated with feminism, womyn is an alternate spelling of 'woman' or 'women' that eliminates the word 'man' or 'men'."

191

In other areas of my original draft, I had plenty of opportunity to expand and make myself more relatable as a writer, but I used phrases that short-handed those opportunities—made my writing vague. For example, in the first draft I gave a sentence that read: "The militia of prejudice has shaped what my life experiences have been and going on any longer without recognizing them and fighting to effect change would be lying to myself." People continued to ask me for anecdotes or examples of these "life experiences" that affected me, so I added stories from high school, or about my girlfriend molding me into the socially aware being that I am now. Or like April asking me to "unpack this phrase" after underlining "on the contrary" in my Sideshadowed Draft (will hand in to you), which was a phrase I never would have thought twice of.

Safeera gave me good feedback in her comments during our face-to-face response partner by saying, "love that you giving more details, definitely keep this paragraph." It made me feel accomplished to have taken what people said into consideration and to have made my paper even better. It was rewarding to have someone actually notice the difference, which I feared they wouldn't have. Amongst all of Safeera's comments, she told me I had a powerful paper and strong things to say, which shows me that all of the ambiguity I was giving before clouded over my message.

The last issue that made my paper a little hard to get to the audience was my lack of organization. I ran a lot of my ideas together, when separating them affectively would let people absorb the ideas I have about racism, sexism, and homophobia. Noemia again asked me: "will you break it down into different sections? For example, being "queer" and a "womyn of color." I took this comment into consideration as well, and honestly,

192

my paper was even easier for me to understand once I took the time to slow it down and separate the moves.

I sucked before, but now I suck less. Being a better writer, minus all of the vague, pompous, disorganized language could make me someone who is more likely to be heard. If I approach those who need my message in a way that turns them off, nothing will get done. That is the lesson I've learned from this writing experience, and I'll take it with me on my journey to sucking less and less.

Early Search Draft

Nigger.
My *niggaaaa*!
Quit actin' like a fag, man.
Oh her? She's a *bitch*.

I've spent too much of my time letting these words fly pass me in everyday conversation, too many years letting oppression weigh on me without protest. Many of which I walked in ignorance, using the same words to unknowingly oppress myself. The revolt in me crept up at first, only breaking through whole-heartedly not too long ago, but it is here now. Within the past several months, my view on life and the interactions of the human race have solidified, supported with a passion.

It's impossible now for me to deny who I am, and that every part of these defining factors have been riddled with injustice. Black. Queer. Womyn. The militia of prejudice has shaped what my life experiences have been and going on any longer without recognizing them and fighting to effect change would be lying to myself.

When Professor Sikorski asked me for a question that had been itching to be asked, the only one weighing on me strong enough was obvious: *how can I make a living as a queer womyn of color in activism?* I know I want to be comfortable in life. I'm a writer, a graphic design, I dabble in photography, there are many fields I've thought about going in, but what will keep me passionate? What will make me feel full of purpose when I rise ever morning? What is something I can c*are* about forever? I've worried about being able to make a living and bring about change simultaneously for some time now. How do I do both at once? The solution to these questions: I need to make activism my living, thus the I-Search for *how?*

194

Final Search Draft
Anything But the Master's Tools

Nigger.
My *niggaaaa*!
Quit actin' like a fag, man.
Oh her? She's a *bitch.*

I've spent too much of my time letting these words fly pass me in everyday

conversation, too many years letting oppression weigh on me without protest. Many of

these years I walked in ignorance, using the same words to unknowingly oppress myself.

My friends used to be "niggas" to me, something I thought was an endearing way to start

a sentence. The realization that you can't really change the meaning of words took a

while to come to me.

I can't pinpoint exactly when my mindset did a 180, but I do know the final straw

was somewhat recently. Going to Stuyvesant High School, with nearly 4,000 other kids, I

endured a highly oppressive atmosphere. On a normal school day in Stuy, any of these

opening phrases was something I'd easily hear after turning a corner. Books in hand, the

n-bomb would hit me without warning, straight from the mouth of one of my peers.

Incidents like this happened often. My peers knew what to expect of me—I was loud

then. The students' faces would twist to mimic the "*oops*" going on in their minds, their

hands would raise hesitantly, palms facing my enraged face as if to fend off my verbal

lashing. I'd break out in a rant, demanding them to realize their pale skin disqualified

them from having the right to say such a word. They'd say sorry, without considering

making the effort of removing the word from their vocabulary. All the while I'd reinforce

195

a double standard that allowed me to say a certain thing, and denied others the allowance to. This had to change.

Ironically, most of the students identified as young democrats, but they were heavily and subconsciously prejudiced. The population, as reported by our school newspaper during my senior year, was 1.97 percent black—an incredibly low number compared to the 50% given to Asian students and the demographic of 46% assigned to whites. The lot of the school body would say the n-word as if slurs were nothing. Until I saw the word coming from foreign lips continuously I hadn't realized that these words and the stereotypes coat-tailing them were not okay. In Stuy, if you gave a kid an inch, they'd take a mile. One permission to make a blacks-like-chicken joke, and they'd soon be asking us what having food stamps was like. It became clear the error in my beliefs, this aforementioned double standard that I could present myself in such a way (i.e. drop the n-bomb) and any kids that were not of the black diaspora. I began to wake up.

During the struggle of high school, i.e. trying to find myself and simultaneously coming in contact with the precursors of prejudices to come, I somehow began to find positive outlets. I opened up to poetry through Urban Word NYC, a non-profit organization that held workshops consisting of other teens willing to use their pens. So many of these *young* people were enlightening, having wisdom far beyond most adults I had met prior. These poets were dripping in culture and knowledge, far more socially aware than any people I'd ever met. These were the people who pushed me to quest for my heritage, always. Most of these writers delved into the centuries of history stolen from those of us of African descent, and reflected that knowledge proudly in the words and

196

themes they used. I began to see how important the knowledge of heritage is to who we are as a people.

During my time at Urban Word, I met my current girlfriend of two years, Tramaine. When we first started dating she wouldn't allow me to wear rainbows or blatantly show any other form of gay pride. My sixteen-year-old self would ask her '*why?'* and she'd always reply with a different question.

"*When is National Coming Out Day, Demi?"* Tramaine would stare at me, the obvious oblivion on my face and eventually continue by saying something like "*Exactly.*" She explained that I couldn't just *be gay*; being gay automatically made me a political citizen, and I had to own that. Her older sister, who is also a part of the LGBT community, attacked Tramaine as soon as she came out, telling her she knew nothing about being gay. That's how she learned and she wanted me to learn the same thing. Of course, I understand now, and I fight against homophobia and for our rights with every action I take.

As college neared and arrived, with my budding anti-racism and anti-homophobia in tow, I continued to network amongst the conscious people, starting a blog in February of my freshman year at St. John's University. This blog, Pussies & Ankhs[1], where I jot down my thoughts and viewpoints, led me to more people with similar views. Following their blogs opened me to new politics I never took the time to know well. I cyber-met black men who studied their stolen heritage's and fought racial disparities and queer people banishing slurs and hate-speech from their worlds. These people fed me the fuel I

---

[1] http://sapphrikah.tumblr.com

needed to rage a fire against all injustices, their articles helped solidify a determination within me, to start identifying what's not okay, and fighting against these offenses.

On top of the expansion of my new socio-political racial and queer identity, I came across my third cause—feminism. Amongst the heritage-embracing and queer rights activating people, I met womyn[2] through my blog. These specific womyn were ablaze with feminist fury. They spoke out against the over-sexualized and under-appreciated race of womyn. They were unapologetically against the patriarchy of America that places womyn on the lower totem of society. I remarkably identified with their outrage at sexist advertisements and stereotypes of what womyn should do, wear, say, and how they should speak.

Coming across all of these developed viewpoints and amazing people behind them, it's impossible now for me to deny who I am, and that every part of these defining factors that combine to define me have been riddled with injustice. Black. Queer. Womyn. The militia of prejudice has shaped what my life experiences have been. I am bound to be imposed upon by 'society'. Going on any longer without recognizing these prejudices and fighting to effect change would be lying to myself.

When Professor Sikorski asked me for a question that had been itching to be asked, the only one weighing on me strong enough was obvious: *how can I make a living as a queer womyn of color in activism?* I know I want to be comfortable in life. I'm a writer, a graphic designer, I dabble in photography—there are many fields I've thought about going into, but what will keep me passionate? What will make me feel full of purpose when I rise every morning? What is something I can c*are* about forever? I've

---

[2] Often associated with feminism, womyn is an alternate spelling of 'woman' or 'women' that eliminates the word 'man' or 'men'.

worried about being able to make a living and bring about change simultaneously for some time now. How do I do both at once? The solution to these questions: I need to make activism my living, thus the I-Search for *how?*

First ruling out the fact that I'm going to need to sustain, I began my search by asking myself just how specific of a role I plan on playing in activism. Meaning, will I be comfortable if I end up working with an anti-racist group that minimally focuses on gender and/or sexuality? If I end up infiltrating the NAACP or starting a new age of the Black Panther Party, will I feel stifled as a queer feminist? Should I be looking specifically for a position that speaks to my queer, feminist, black identity? These are the questions running through my mind when I addressed one of my sources: *This Bridge We Call Home*.

In this book, there's an essay called "Being the Bridge: A Solitary Black Woman's Position in the Women's Studies Classroom as a Feminist Student and Professor" by Kimberly Springer. Springer speaks directly to this question in the back of my mind when she writes: "I straddled the fence of my identity and burned out quickly trying to bring an anti-sexist analysis to my 'race work' and an anti-racist sensibility to my 'gender-work'. Not surprisingly these two branches never met" (385).

Not being able to identify with Springer's feelings, I found this statement quite surprising. In my life I have found that I often run a conversation from one form of oppression to another, and they often come together with general ignorance and breed with each other. My opposition to her statement helped me realize that I'd most likely feel inadequate in an organization that only spoke to one of the injustices I stand against.

199

Before reading Springer's essay, I leafed through the book that inspired *This Bridge We Call Home* to be published. This holy grail of sorts is called *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* and is also a collection of essays and poems that speak to my aspirations. In Cheryl Clarke's "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance", she puts a superb voice on my opposition to Springer's statement:

> *Black lesbians who do work within 'by-for-about-black-people' groups or organizations either pass as 'straight' or relegate our lesbianism to the so-called 'private' sphere. The more male-dominated or black nationalist bourgeois the organization or group, the more resistant to change, and thus, the more homophobic and anti-feminist. In these sectors, we learn to keep a low profile. (132)*

I don't want a 'low profile'! I don't want anyone to undermine my opinions and efforts in the LGBT community or towards feminism because it isn't the premise of that organization. And I certainly don't want to deal with anyone who would want me to keep my sexuality 'private' so to speak, in a world where we're constantly bombarded with heteronormative movies and novels.

That is not to say, that although I clearly want a concentrated and specific environment, I'd also want to be involved with an organization that is not opposed to reaching out. There's no way anyone can make progress that without doing so. Black feminists need to interact with white feminists, and lesbians should reach out for support from gay guys. Those who have similar struggles are most likely to support us in creating revolution.

200

One of Audre Lorde's pieces, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master's House", also featured in the book, touches on the topic of feminists of different races:

> *Advocating the mere tolerance of difference between women is the grosses reformism. It is a total denial of the creative function of difference in our lives. For difference must not be merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialect. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening. (99)*

Lorde is attempting to tell the listeners that it is important to reach out to those educated on the same matters, with similar struggles, even in the situation where they are slightly different, even if that difference gives them a certain privilege. I certainly want to be a part of an organization willing to work with others. I am a minority in three different ways, and not one of these three communities can make a difference on their own, simply because they are indeed, minorities. Their numbers are substantially smaller than their counterparts, and will need support from others to effect change. As Pat Parker said in her speech featured later on in the book, "Revolution: It's Not Neat or Pretty or Quick": "Another illusion that we suffer under in this country is that a single facet of the population can make revolution. Black people alone cannot make a revolution in this country. . . Gay people alone cannot make a revolution in this country. And anyone who tries it will not be successful" (241).

The belief that none of us can make it without the support of those not necessarily included in our struggle is not uncommon at all. Many activists have expressed this idea. Cheryl Clarke, who happens to be featured in both books, states in her essay "Lesbianism, 2000" (from *This Bridge We Call Home*): "*progressive people [need to]*

struggle to take on hybridity, to take on queer, to take on diasporas, to 'work across'

sexualities, and to admit the always-already unready" (233).

Clarke comes into this essay with more defiance than her original piece, which is in the original *Bridge* book. She makes it clear that you have to step out against all injustices if you're going to be 'progressive'. Not only do you need to be open to help from those who are not part of your struggle, but you need to be willing to help other who are fighting battles that are not necessarily yours.

In fact, I began to find more and more womyn expressing this same opinion in their own words. It became a repeating idea in my readings. Also in *This Bridge We Call Home* is an essay by Migdalia Reyes, called "The Latin American And Caribbean Feminist/Lesbian Encuentros: Crossing the Bridge of Our Diverse Identities". Reyes comments, "Latin American women, both heterosexual and lesbians, must understand that hierarchies of oppression create antagonism and prevent our joining in a united front, and they must create coalitions."

Reyes is saying that we must never compare struggles, there are different forms and faces of oppression. No one has the right to call one oppression any worse than another, and to divide and compare creates a counterproductive dichotomy that could kill the efforts of us all. The truth is, when it comes down to different oppressive institutions, the victims still have at least one thing in common—they've been oppressed. Besides that, they often have at least one other thing in common, whether it be that they're queer, or of color, usually there's a factor that will help to groups springboard into action in terms of helping each other. It is necessary to help each other.

202

All kinds of oppression are connected, and to fight against one without acknowledging the others would be asinine. The fact that I need to be involved in a place that is not afraid to be involved with other groups of people has become clearer to me. The problem is, though, I'm not really sure how many organizations within my grasp really speak to queer, black womyn, specifically. I'm sure there are some, but where? And why haven't I found them yet? Truthfully, I've had a source sitting right under my nose. Someone who is more socially aware than I am. My girlfriend, Tramaine, is quieter than I am—not speaking out as much as I do. She spends most of her time observing, absorbing information and developing her own views. She works two jobs, and takes classes, and truthfully, I both envy and look up to her drive and knowledge.

I speak to my girlfriend every day, of course, but seriously, I barely ask her for advice. I suppose it's because I don't want to be following in her footsteps, but that doesn't mean she couldn't lead me in the right direction. That being said, I decided to see what kind of information I could get out of her.

My first question for her was if she had any recommendations for me, any organizations she thought I should look into. Tramaine gave me a list of organizations we've talked about already before mentioning she mentioned:

> *You should check in to Housing Works, the organization I intern for. I suggest them because while their focus is not on queer womyn of color they do have a program within their organization that focus on the concerns of a lot of Trans-womyn; and many of these womyn are womyn of color.*

You can tell that we're on the same page in life, right? Look at how she spells womyn! We're very much alike in goals and view points, but I don't know if I want to get involved with Housing Works. The place sounds amazing, truly, but the thing is that I

203

enjoy autonomy. I don't want to enter a place as 'Tramaine's girlfriend'. I don't want to directly follow in her footsteps. Besides, I feel like if we were to get involved with different organizations we could do twice the amount of work.

I looked to Tramaine, hoping to find out where she finds the organizations that she likes and she pointed out: "I mostly stumble upon them while I look for places to meet womyn of color trying to make a difference in the world. The one tip I will give you is to take every person you come in to contact with as a potential door opener."

I have half a mind to say she said these words knowing that I like to look for people who are somewhere near the page that I'm on. What Tramaine is trying to tell me is I have met a lot of progressive people as it is, what I need to start doing is asking them questions to help me find my way. I have a few resources I haven't looked into, enlightened womyn that I know and never ask what organizations they like. It's inevitably true, I do know a lot of free-thinkers but some of them live nowhere near here. Nonetheless it never hurts to ask.

What shocked me most in the email interview with Tramaine was her response to my general search question: "how can I make a sustain life as a queer womyn of color in activism?" Tramaine added: "*Don't try. We live in a racist capitalistic world and I do not see how anyone can make a decent living trying to better the plight of the queer people of color, without sacrificing everything they have physically and emotionally.*"

I don't even know where to start with this quote to be honest. Ugh, should I give up? Should I let activism be a hobby? Or does she think that I really am too focused on how I will make money doing this? For someone who knows my goals in life to *honestly* say not to strive for this is shocking. It almost makes me think that she has my best

204

interest in mind and is trying to tell me that I should find a career elsewhere, or doesn't want to me to end up drained. I hate to say it, but should I be reconsidering my question?

I believe the original presentation of my question, particularly the "make a living" clause, really turned people off. Before, I couldn't put my finger on it, but one of my original ideal sources seemed turned off for some reason. This possible source was Krys Freeman. Freeman is a well-known queer black activist, who I know because she happens to be Tramaine's cousin. Freeman and I have been connected on sites like facebook and twitter for some time, so it wasn't very hard for me to propose an interview with her. She accepted, and we exchanged numbers.

The time rolled around for an interview to be conducted, and I still felt that somehow, Krys Freeman wasn't very thrilled. To make matters worse, when she text me to let me know she was ready to get the interview going, I told her I'd be just a minute and fell asleep. Needless to say, after that, she was really turned off. Freeman basically told me that we could do the interview some other time, *maybe*. I sent her a few follow-up apology emails, but none of them were truly fruitful.

This was a real blow to my confidence. It made me realize that lazy people don't become activists, and there are plenty of established activists, but they won't take you seriously if you don't present yourself seriously. I honestly hope that one day, I will be established and Krys Freeman will think differently of me.

Another blow to my source confidence occurred with the Audre Lorde Project. I originally emailed someone who works at the ALP, the person in charge of their internship program, of course hoping for an interview. A while passed and I heard no word back, so I persisted to call. I spoke with another person, who kindly agreed to let me

205

interview her. We set up a date, and things were looking up! Suddenly, on the same day she emailed me referring me back to the original person I emailed, saying that she felt that I really needed to talk to her.

I grew a bit reluctant, perplexed by what might have changed her mind about me interviewing her. I believe that the questions I emailed her, and my main question, may have turned her off a bit as well. It seems that the phrase "make a living" and "activism" don't go very well together. And no matter how much I stress that I'm not actually trying to milk activism, and reassure people that I just want to be able to sustain while focusing mainly on activism, they grow weary of my phraseology. Regardless, I took her advice and sent a second email to the original person. I did hear back, eventually. An email war took place, with technicalities involving me having to fill out forms and then a waiting process where I was apparently being matched with someone most capable of answering my questions.

More days passed and I finally heard back from the ALP, in the form of an email saying that I had been matched with someone who could best assist me. I emailed *that* third person, and I have yet to hear back from them.

This whole ordeal with the Audre Lorde Project has confused me a bit to be honest. I don't necessarily want to believe that they don't care. Maybe they just don't have much time for little old me. Maybe it was my question and presentation. I want to believe that they are the pinnacle of queer womyn of color in the activism world, I sincerely do.

With things looking anywhere but up, I had to think of someone else to interview. People have been continuously suggesting that I combine my artistic hobbies (like

writing and photography), with my activism. Thus, I came up with the idea to interview Lala Akbar.

Lala Akbar is the head of Veuxdo Magazine, a modern culture-inspired magazine, that never shies away from the arts. Akbar is an Asian-American artist who uses her love for art and culture to raise social awareness. Best of all, I know her on a somewhat personal basis. She's recently asked me to write for the magazine's blog, and I'm getting my first shot at an article for this upcoming January issue. I couldn't think of anyone better than Akbar to help me understand how art can be used as a form of activism.

Going into this interview, I wanted to understand how powerful art can be, in relation to social awareness. Knowing that Akbar has done things like live painting at an Oscar Grant rally, I was sure she could help me sort out an understanding. In Akbar's words, "My art has definitely gained a more socially conscious purpose as I have developed a more socially conscious mind. This is something that's really taken off in recent years because I've come to realize that I can actually do something with my art."

Akbar has a way of saying something so simple, but making me feel like it's something I can absolutely relate to. Over this time, I have come to the realization that I can do something with the art I produce. People have been suggesting it, even within the workshop of April's class, and I usually turn a deaf ear to it. I don't think I've ever seen any of my past work as powerful enough to make a difference. But it c*an* be.

Art is important, especially because when applied well, it can be heavily influential. I could really make something out of that. Akbar goes on:

> *I want to reclaim art as major form of communication and growth within*
> *our culture. In recent years, the arts have been dismissed as something*

207

frivolous and budget cuts have rid them of our public schools, and it's

wrong. Without the passion that art provides, I fear for where our society

is headed. I think with the practice of art comes a certain awareness that

one would lack otherwise.

I found myself nodding in excitement while reading this part of Akbar's response. It's

incredibly true, art is being cut from public schools, when art is what feed's the starving

soul. Art wakes up sleepers. Art is an important form of communication. I could not

agree more with her here, because without things like art, we're in serious trouble. Why

wouldn't I want to help bring art to people? Especially if it helps project my social

views?

If I make art my main form of activism, I'm concerned that it might be

unfulfilling. When I yearn to work in straight-forward organizations like I considered

before? Will I need to do things like that just to keep my fervor? I asked for Akbar's

input on this, questioning if she were involved with anything that isn't mainly artistic.

Akbar reassures me when she says:

Art is my main medium, so I mostly work within that realm. I run Veuxdo

Magazine, which is geared towards cultural critique, the arts, social

awareness, music, and other aspects of urban and grassroots movements

and culture. That involves a lot of organization, recruiting, writing. But

even at that, I promote artists and try to raise awareness within the

community.

Akbar's whole basis is art. She fulfils her need to fight against social disparities all from

her main medium, and most importantly, all on her own. This interview has been the

208

most helpful to me because it helped me realize that although organizations are great, I don't necessarily have to be part of one. I can cultivate my talents to help me portray the messages I want to put out into the world. She has found a way to make her art and her writings into a movement all on its own—this is something I can *really* do.

  Working with these sources, quite a few times I've felt like my heuristic was failing, like nothing would help me answer my question. I've felt like maybe I'm trying to do something I was actually incapable of. I've been scared and discouraged. What I've come to learn is that perhaps I was just asking a question that was a little off the mark. Really, it just goes to show you that Pat Parker was more than right: revolution simply isn't neat or pretty or quick. And it certainly won't come marching up to you. My search through these sources was *tumultuous*. Through the Pat Parkers, and the Audre Lordes, the Cheryl Clarkes, the Tramaines, the Lala Akabars, the Krys Freemans who no longer respect me so much, and the womyn I can't keep a steady email stream with over at the Audre Lorde Project. I mean, in no way did I find the answer I thought I was looking for. But that's the beauty of being in something unneat, unquick, unpretty, and totally righteous: complications are not disqualified from being progress.

Workshop Reflection

Your Name:	Demi Elder
Count the number of responses you posted to PBWorks:	21
Count the number of comments you wrote in the margins:	177
Count the number of end-notes you wrote:	14

I. REFLECT ON RESPONSES YOU WROTE:

1) Look through your responses and find the most helpful or successful piece of

feedback you gave.

    a. Highlight your most successful response in the document.

    b. Copy/Paste that ENTIRE DOCUMENT here. Seriously, I want to see it

    all.

Evelyn Contreras

April's class 12:00

9-25-10

The Validity of Molds

210

An impression is nothing more than a mere mock-up depiction of one's identity; however, whether or not the impression made is factual, is open to discussion. As a general rule, the first impression is made in roughly three seconds of one's first encounter, in which both separate parties immediately critique one another, both consciously and subconsciously.

==At first, I seem to be invisible; masked by the individual's impression, but I am not just this two-dimensional character==. I am the girl who first raises her hand in class. I am the girl who boldly picks up the microphone to face her classmates. I am the girl whose peers look at for guidance.

Before coming to Saint John's University I lived in San Diego, CA, a place which runs "rampant" with illegal immigrants that further promote negative stereotypes of Hispanics, simply because they have no voice. For this reason I, who consider myself as American as the teaching of the preamble in eighth grade history classes, am also the victim of these labels. These labels have imposed themselves on my life, becoming evident with every positive stride I take. Every time that I attempt to elevate myself, both socially and educationally, I am repeatedly met by these barricades for which I must fight through in order to have the same opportunities that others have.

In the spring of 2006, the Legislation was presented with a bill that would provide a complete immigration reform, leading to absolute segregation against one group of people. The bill conveyed an illegal immigrant's removal, thus "freeing" up jobs for "real" Americans, but at the same time tearing up families.

211

Comment: Why would people get this first impression of you?

Comment: Do you use quotations because you don't necessarily agree with this idea? Let us know.

Comment: Perhaps give us an example of how?

Media frenzied over the bill, earning huge press attention. On April 26, 2006, friends began posting bulletins to a popular social networking site: Myspace. The bulletins posted, detailed a massive walkout for anyone of Hispanic origin on May 1, 2006, in order to petition against the immigration bill. The walkout was to expose the world of what it would be like if all the Hispanics would simply not work.

At this time I unquestionably found myself in a quandary. On one side I had intense feelings toward this bill; I found it repulsive; weren't all of our families immigrants at one point or another? On the other hand, I knew the reason why my parents had sacrificed so much so that I could receive an education therefore, an ameliorated way of life; one that they unfortunately could not have. I would have to decide whether to join the walkout, or to simply return to school. I chose the latter. I realized that my parent's definitive sacrifice would be a waste. I knew that this bill was iniquitous, but not going to school was not the right way to fight this battle. In reality, what would we demonstrate by missing one day of school or one day of work? Would we prove the stereotypes of lazy, ungrateful, and uneducated Hispanics? Instead of bettering ourselves, we would go a step back. A step back by not taking advantage of the opportunities we have. For someone that has Mexican-Americans as parents and who lives minutes away from Mexico, most of my "friends" were sure that I would have walked out simply because of my race, but contrary to what they deducted, I did not. By choosing to stay in school, I not only helped myself by keeping consistent with my school work and not falling behind in class, but also I showed that there are

212

other ways to challenge the system. Instead of appearing on television and being portrayed as a misinformed child, I wrote letters to Congress. Although I didn't change the world and there was much ridicule from my classmates I didn't care. Being one who could attain the advantages of a paramount life led me to believe that the best way I could change the world was to become something in the world. By taking these privileged opportunities, I would have the chance that my parents lacked; the ability to cause change.

Therefore, ever since I have felt like something was missing. I told myself that one day I will be the voice for my people. Now, I understand that there has to be a reform for the sake of everyone, but after extensive consideration I have come to the conclusion that the best way to go about this is to have an international immigration reform. For that reason I made my project based on the question "If I should become an Immigration Lawyer for the United Nations."

Comment: HWICTMIY xpand on the ridicule?

c. Explain why you feel the writer found this response to be the most helpful, below:

I'm sure the comment I chose to highlight doesn't necessarily sound the most helpful at first, but I feel like this one is important because I said it to someone who is doing something similar to what I am with this project. Here's someone with a cause, who might have trouble reaching disinterested people if she gives no character to the paper. I think asking her to explain and unpack, especially on the parts that have to do with herself, help her become more relatable to the reader. In the end it could help her affect more change.

2) Look through your responses and find the least helpful or successful piece of feedback you gave.

    a. Highlight your least successful response in the document.

    b. Copy/Paste that ENTIRE DOCUMENT here. Seriously, I want to see it all.

William Banks (12:00 Class)

Med School or Not?

I used to be a young kid at one time. Those were the times where mom and dad asked me what I want to become when I grow up. The first thing I could ever think of every time was that long white coat with the clipboard in my hand. So I told those parents of mines that I wanted to become a doctor. Mom looked at me and said, "What a great choice Hun." My father on the other hand replies, "If only you knew." I laughed not knowing what the chunk of sarcasm was for.

> **Comment:** HWICTMIY turned this into even more of an anecdote? Connect us to the story. Describe the setting, play with it.

It is currently September 2010, and I am currently a Undecided PA Major at St. John's University. I am not into the major yet, but mother still insists that its best if we talk about future plans for my life.

I come home from school one day, and my phone begins to ring. I see my mothers on the caller ID and shrug my shoulders for the umpteenth time in laughter. Before I can even get a greeting out of my system, I'm hit with the question, "What are going to do with your life?" I simply replied to her, "I really want a white coat mom." She laughed and eventually figured out that I was talking about becoming a doctor.

214

I started to explain to her the different fields of medicine I wanted to go into. Anesthesiology and psychiatry were my two ultimate decisions at the moment. From Wikipedia to salary.com, I was everywhere. I had to make sure that these two fields were fulfilling both financially and stability-wise. Not that Wikipedia is the most reliable of all sources. But all I wanted was the general shindig of these career paths. Just a side note, but a job that pays 600K/yr is my type of pie. My mom thought about my decision and said "Oh lord, you really are a good one. A doctor is a very respected man in society and highly intelligent. But you must know that you can't be lazy as you are in your classes. These are one of those fields where you actually have to know *everything* you learn. There are no shortcuts, no lifelines and no easy way out. I believe you can do it with everything in my body. Just know that what you're doing is not like riding your bike."

I laughed most of the time. But I took every word that my loving mother said to me in utter seriousness. But no one could tell me to drop my dream so easily. So I gave my assurance and said goodnight. Before I hung up though, she told me something that could probably destroy my night. My mother says, "your fathers going to call you tonight" in such a quick manner. Right then and there, I knew my night was just getting started.

I decide to go home with my lo mein in hand and anxiously wait for the call. My father had been on vacation with my mother and left the house to me. Five minutes into my food, and my dad calls my phone. "What's going on son" he says. I greet the old man and then he starts the frenzy. "I'm hearing you want to become a doctor. That's a great career son. But I'm here to tell you the reality of

215

Comment: Don't hate me, but have you ever thought about the unfairness of American? Free enterprise and all that. Anyone making well over 50-60k a year is taking all the money the impoverished will never see. When you can live more than comfortably at 60k.

Comment: Is this an official citation, from an interview? Are we already into the sources move? Or is this like a warm-up?

Comment: Why is your father such a spark for anxiety? Is he a doctor, himself?

it. Being a doctor takes quite a while, *ten to eleven years minimum* to be exact. The exams are beyond difficult and the work hours are highly unstable. If you feel you can stand long hours, excruciating exams and sixty hours a week, go for it. If not, then you should consider looking into a better major for you son. I'm not trying to bust your bubble or anything. Well I'll talk to you when I get back." The phone call ended with me going to sleep halfway. When I heard the phone click, I was relieved.

But for some reason I heard some things he told me, like the emphasis on the number of years, that I was really concerned about. A question started to hit my head that I was completely oblivious to. What other career do I have in mind? With that question came a completely blank answer. I was set on the decision of becoming a doctor. For what reason, I still have yet to understand.

I loved the feedback I've gotten from the moms and pops. Their opinions were valid in my eyes. But if they thought I was going to quit and change my major, I'd slap both of them twice with a dirty sock.

I talked to my counselor, and said that I was sure of wanting to get into the PA program. It was not a surprise to find out that it was full. But hope was alive when she said that there could be an open spot next year. I'd just have to knock out some of my cores. I had no problem with for some weird reason.

So I re-examined the PA program on St. Johns' website. It seemed like a very rigorous program. It came to the point where all I could say was **SHIT.** Scary or not, I was a persistent dummy chasing a big dream. Unlike other, I wanted that dream to become reality.

216

Comment: Again, is this being used as a source?

Comment: What significance does it hold that you have no particular reason? Are there any professions you know of that you might actually have more motivation to persue?

Comment: Do you generally feel that they want you to quit?

Some people find a career in something they love. Others find it by how much income is coming in. People can major in whatever they want. Its up to them to know if they like it or not. Or if they like how much money they're getting. I am currently en route to being a PA Major. But I need some light flicker on top of my head giving me a reason why I want to do this. What do I find special with white lab coats? Why do I want to learn big words? Can I believe in myself enough to walk down this path? I've thought about this since I was running from the bullies in public school. Why should I change it now? Can my decision end at this step in my life? Or am I dedicated enough to see that being a doctor is what I want to become in the longrun?

> **Comment:** These sub-questions are great. HWICTMIY state your absolute question in a concrete way right after these?

  c. Explain why you feel the writer found this response to be unhelpful, below:

Here, I got caught up in my own activist thought. Instead of being the listener and giving him critical things to help his writing process, I forced my opinions on him. This is one of those ways I end up turning people off so they end up not hearing what I have to say at all. And in the workshop it got a little heavy, the speakers telling him that his values were all wrong. We probably could have helped him better than that.

II. REFLECT ON RESPONSES YOU RECEIVED:

1) Look through your responses and find the most helpful or successful piece of feedback you RECEIVED.

a. Highlight the response you found most helpful in the document.

b. Copy/Paste that ENTIRE DOCUMENT here. Seriously, I want to see it all.

Demi Elder
I-Search Paper

Nigger.
My *niggaaaa*!
Quit actin' like a fag, man.
Oh her? She's a *bitch*.

I've spent too much of my time letting these words fly pass me in everyday conversation, too many years letting oppression weigh on me without protest. Many of these years I walked in ignorance, using the same words to unknowingly oppress myself. My friends used to be "niggas" to me, something I thought was an endearing way to start a sentence. It took me a while to see that you can't really change the meaning of words.

I can't pinpoint exactly when my mindset did a 180, but I do know the final straw was somewhat recently. Going to Stuyvesant High School, with nearly 4,000 other kids, I experienced the worst of young budding racism. The population during my senior year was 1.97 percent black and the ignorance among the lot of my peers was kicking. They'd say the n-word as if it were nothing, and it wasn't until I saw it coming from foreign lips that I realized that these words and stereotypes coat-tailing them were not okay. Consequently, neither was the double standard that I could present myself in such a way and these other kids were not allowed to. This is where I began to wake up.

218

During the struggle of high school, I opened up to poetry, and workshops of other teens willing to use their pens. So many of these *young* people were enlightening. Dripping in culture and knowledge, far more socially aware than any people I'd ever met. These were the people who pushed me to quest for my heritage, always. I continued to network among this conscious people, starting a blog in February of my freshman year at St. John's University. This blog, where I jot down my thoughts and viewpoints, led me to more people with similar views. Following their blogs opened me to new politics I never took the time to know well. I cyber-met womyn with feminist fury, black men who studied their stolen heritage's and fought racial disparities, queer people banishing slurs and hate-speech from their worlds. These people fed me the fuel I needed to rage a fire against all injustices, their articles helped solidify a determination within me, to start identifying what's not okay, and fighting against these offenses.

It's impossible now for me to deny who I am, and that every part of these defining factors have been riddled with injustice. Black. Queer. Womyn. The militia of prejudice has shaped what my life experiences have been and going on any longer without recognizing them and fighting to effect change would be lying to myself.

When Professor Sikorski asked me for a question that had been itching to be asked, the only one weighing on me strong enough was obvious: *how can I make a living as a queer womyn of color in activism?* I know I want to be comfortable in life. I'm a writer, a graphic designer, I dabble in photography— there are many fields I've thought about going into, but what will keep me

Comment: I found this sentence a little confusing. Why did you emphasize the word? How would it change the meaning if you explained why you did that?

Comment: Is this spelling of "woman" a feminist term? How would it change the meaning if you explained why you did that?

Comment: Seeing that this question is complicated, will you break it down into different sections? For example, being "queer" and a "womyn of color."

passionate? What will make me feel full of purpose when I rise every morning? What is something I can c*are* about forever? I've worried about being able to make a living and bring about change simultaneously for some time now. How do I do both at once? The solution to these questions: I need to make activism my living, thus the I-Search for *how?*

Hi Demi,

I understand what you're trying to say in this set-up/intro, and I feel like this was very well written. My only concern is that you have a lot of things that other people may not understand For example, you state that you are a "queer womyn of color." I think that you should break it up and explain it to the reader. Being queer is one subject, then explaining what a "womyn" is, and then bringing race into the equation. Other than that, your paper was fine.

N.N.

  c. Explain how this response helped you revise, below:
     Instead of being utterly distracted and hound-like about my spelling of
     womyn, Noemia focused on my paper and suggested really helpful things
     for me to do. I understood what she was trying to suggest and where she
     was coming from, because she took the time to explain to me why she

220

thought what she did. I took most of her suggestions into account during

revision, because I took her comments seriously.

2) Look through your responses and find the least helpful or successful piece of

feedback you RECEIVED.

   a. Highlight the response you found least helpful.

   b. Copy/Paste that ENTIRE DOCUMENT here. Seriously, I want to see it

   all.

Demi Elder
I-Search Paper

Nigger.
My *niggaaaa*!
Quit actin' like a fag, man.
Oh her? She's a *bitch*.

I've spent too much of my time letting these words fly pass me in

everyday conversation, too many years letting oppression weigh on me without

protest. Many of these years I walked in ignorance, using the same words to

unknowingly oppress myself. My friends used to be "niggas" to me, something I

thought was an endearing way to start a sentence. It took me a while to see that

you can't really change the meaning of words.

I can't pinpoint exactly when my mindset did a 180, but I do know the final straw

was somewhat recently. Going to Stuyvesant High School, with nearly 4,000

other kids, I experienced the worst of young budding racism. The population

during my senior year was 1.97 percent black and the ignorance among the lot of

Comment: So true. I hear this all too much, and not just from any one community.

Comment: I disagree with this. You can never change a word's origin, yes. However, its use and its effect can greatly vary across time and location.

Comment: If the worst racist activity was words, I'd say it isn't that bad. Off the top of my head, I can think of several worse things. I'm not excusing it, but maybe this isn't the right word here.

my peers was kicking. They'd say the n-word as if it were nothing, and it wasn't until I saw it coming from foreign lips that I realized that these words and stereotypes coat-tailing them were not okay. Consequently, neither was the double standard that I could present myself in such a way and these other kids were not allowed to. This is where I began to wake up.

During the struggle of high school, I opened up to poetry, and workshops of other teens willing to use their pens. So many of these *young* people were enlightening. Dripping in culture and knowledge, far more socially aware than any people I'd ever met. These were the people who pushed me to quest for my heritage, always. I continued to network among this conscious people, starting a blog in February of my freshman year at St. John's University. This blog, where I jot down my thoughts and viewpoints, led me to more people with similar views. Following their blogs opened me to new politics I never took the time to know well. I cyber-met womyn with feminist fury, black men who studied their stolen heritage's and fought racial disparities, queer people banishing slurs and hate-speech from their worlds. These people fed me the fuel I needed to rage a fire against all injustices, their articles helped solidify a determination within me, to start identifying what's not okay, and fighting against these offenses.

> **Comment:** Why was it such a struggle? Was it just because of the previously listed senior year experience, because it seems you connected with several others in a good way during this paragraph?

It's impossible now for me to deny who I am, and that every part of these defining factors have been riddled with injustice. Black. Queer. Womyn. The militia of prejudice has shaped what my life experiences have been and going on any longer without recognizing them and fighting to effect change would be lying to myself.

> **Comment:** Was this a factor in high school as well?

222

When Professor Sikorski asked me for a question that had been itching to be asked, the only one weighing on me strong enough was obvious: *how can I make a living as a queer womyn of color in activism?* I know I want to be comfortable in life. I'm a writer, a graphic designer, I dabble in photography— there are many fields I've thought about going into, but what will keep me passionate? What will make me feel full of purpose when I rise every morning? What is something I can c*are* about forever? I've worried about being able to make a living and bring about change simultaneously for some time now. How do I do both at once? The solution to these questions: I need to make activism my living, thus the I-Search for *how?*

> **Comment:** Great questions. I hope you find your answers.

Hey Demi,

You have one of the strongest writing voices of all the papers I've read so far. Your entire paper has the "this is the last straw, I'm putting my foot down" mentality, and I love it. The intro grabbed me and the paper held me. I may disagree with some word choices that I pointed out, but that may be simply opinion based. I also liked how you incorporated the class assignment into the paper, as it made it so much more relatable, since I am not a queer woman of color, lol. But, I think that is the best thing of all, as I am a straight, white male, and I related to the issues you presented just fine. Good luck, and I hope your paper turns out well,

223

~ Joe Arecchia

c. Explain how this response could have been better, below:

These comments didn't do anything for my writing process. Joe did
exactly what I did to William, inject his opinion instead of doing what he
was asked to do, and critique the writing. It didn't help me, my opinions
didn't change, and it did nothing for my paper.

III. REFLECT ON WHAT YOU LEARNED:

➤ List 1-3 things you've **learned about writing** from responding to your classmates
and participating in workshop:

  o When trying to help someone with their writing, think about their
    WRITING, not how your opinions differ from theirs.

  o Expanding can help someone understand where you're coming from
    better, which is extra important if you have message you want to convey.

  o Your work is never perfect! It can always be revised and revised and
    revised.

➤ List 1-3 things you **liked about workshop**:

  o Upwards amount of feedback, there's no way I'd get 20+ people to read
    my papers otherwise.

  o Noticing issues within other people's papers help us learn not to make
    mistakes.

- We got to be candid, we bonded, a lot of classes aren't like that at all.

➤ List 1-3 things you **would like to change about workshop**:

- No commenting on other people's grammar.

- Four comments per page—some of your students are good writers and I don't have anything to suggest for them to change!

- Nothing!

IV. ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO TELL ME ABOUT YOUR WORKSHOP EXPERIENCE?

Nope!

Response Confessionals

My most helpful Response Confessional, as I looked back on them, was the wrongfully titled, "Untitled 0005"[3]. I recorded that confession around the time I was starting to get over my own ego and take other people's comments and criticisms into consideration. At one point, I said: "I can say a lot of things that matter to me but it doesn't mean it's going to reach other people." Which is basically something I gathered from a lot of people telling me that I just sound 'angry' or that they weren't understanding my paper.

My *least* helpful response confessional is the one right before that, "DE Response Confessional after Response Partner"[4]. This response confession was recorded while I was still being a bit stubborn. I was very proud of the progress that I had made, and took any criticism to my set-up personally. I even said: "I'm so happy with the way the set-up came out that I kind of don't want to touch it." I basically didn't take anything from the class for that confessional, and the second half of it is just me rambling about oppression, not my actual writing process.

---

[3] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woJq5KmLyF4&feature=player_embedded
[4] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfwkQGFSrzQ&feature=player_embedded

Sideshadow Draft: From Safeera

> Nigger.
> My *niggaaaa*!
> Quit actin' like a fag, man.
> Oh her? She's a *bitch*.

I've spent too much of my time letting these words fly pass me in everyday conversation, too many years letting oppression weigh on me without protest. Many of these years I walked in ignorance, using the same words to unknowingly oppress myself. My friends used to be "niggas" to me, something I thought was an endearing way to start a sentence. It took me a while to see that you can't really change the meaning of words.

I can't pinpoint exactly when my mindset did a 180, but I do know the final straw was somewhat recently. Going to Stuyvesant High School, with nearly 4,000 other kids, I endured a highly oppressive atmosphere. On a normal school day in Stuy, any of these opening phrases was something I'd easily hear after turning a corner. Books in hand, the n-bomb would hit me without warning, straight from the mouth of one of my peers. This happened often. These kids knew what to expect of me—I was loud then. Their faces would twist to mimic the "*oops*" going on in their minds, their hands would raise hesitantly, palms facing my enraged face as if to fend off my verbal lashing. I'd break out in a rant, demanding them to realize their pale skin disqualified them from having the right to say such a word. They'd say sorry, without considering making the effort to remove the word from their vocabulary. All the while I'd reinforce a double standard that allowed me to say a certain thing, and denied others the allowance to. This had to change.

Ironically, most of the students identified as young democrats, but they were heavily and subconsciously prejudiced. The population, as reported by our school newspaper during my senior year, was 1.97 percent black—an incredibly low number compared to the 50% given to Asian students and the demographic of 46% assigned to whites. The lot of the school body would say the n-word as if it were nothing. It wasn't until I saw it coming from foreign lips continuously that I realized that these words and the stereotypes coat-tailing them were not okay. In Stuy, if you gave a kid an inch, they'd take a mile. One permission to make a blacks-like-chicken joke, and they'd soon be asking us what having food stamps was like. It became clear the error in my beliefs, this aforementioned double standard that I could present myself in such a way (i.e. drop the n-bomb) and these other kids were not allowed to. This is where I began to wake up.

During the struggle of high school, i.e. trying to find myself and simultaneously coming in contact with the precursors of prejudices to come, I somehow began to find positive outlets. I opened up to poetry through Urban Word NYC, a non-profit organization that held workshops consisting of other teens willing to use their pens. So many of these *young* people were enlightening, having wisdom far beyond most adults I had met prior. These poets were dripping in culture and knowledge, far more socially aware than any people I'd ever met. These were the people who pushed me to quest for my heritage, always. Most of these writers delved into the centuries of history stolen from those of us of African descent, and reflected that knowledge proudly in the words and themes they used. I began to see how important the knowledge of heritage is to who we are as a people.

Comment: Was the population always around this number for each group of individualizes or did it change yearly?

Comment: HWITCTMIY gave an example of some of the poetry which influenced you.

Comment: Great line, shows how insightful and passionate you are.

228

During my time at Urban Word, I met my current girlfriend of two years, Tramaine. When we first started dating she wouldn't allow me to wear rainbows or blatantly show any other form of gay pride. My sixteen-year-old self would ask her '*why?'* and she'd always reply with a different question. "*When is National Coming Out Day, Demi?"* She'd stare at me, the obvious oblivion on my face and eventually continue by saying something like "*Exactly."* She explained that I couldn't just *be gay*, it automatically made me a political citizen, and I had to own that. Her older sister, who is also a part of the LGBT community, attacked Tramaine as soon as she came out, telling her she knew nothing about being gay. That's how she learned and she wanted me to learn the same thing. Of course, I understand now, and I fight against homophobia and for our rights with every action I take.

As college neared and arrived, with my budding anti-racism and anti-homophobia in tow, I continued to network amongst the conscious people, starting a blog in February of my freshman year at St. John's University. This blog, Pussies & Ankhs[5], where I jot down my thoughts and viewpoints, led me to more people with similar views. Following their blogs opened me to new politics I never took the time to know well. I cyber-met black men who studied their stolen heritage's and fought racial disparities and queer people banishing slurs and hate-speech from their worlds. These people fed me the fuel I needed to rage a fire against all injustices, their articles helped solidify a determination within me, to start identifying what's not okay, and fighting against these offenses.

On top of the expansion of my new socio-political racial and queer identity, I came across my third cause—feminism. Amongst the heritage-embracing and queer

---

[5] http://sapphrikah.tumblr.com

rights activating people, I met womyn[6] through my blog. These specific womyn were ablaze with feminist fury. They spoke out against the over-sexualized and under-appreciated race of womyn. They were unapologetically against the patriarchy of America that places womyn on the lower totem of society. I remarkably identified with their outrage at sexist advertisements and stereotypes of what womyn should do, wear, say, and how they should speak.

Coming across all of these developed viewpoints and amazing people behind them, it's impossible now for me to deny who I am, and that every part of these defining factors that combine to define me have been riddled with injustice. Black. Queer. Womyn. The militia of prejudice has shaped what my life experiences have been. I am bound to be imposed upon by 'society'. Going on any longer without recognizing these prejudices and fighting to effect change would be lying to myself.

When Professor Sikorski asked me for a question that had been itching to be asked, the only one weighing on me strong enough was obvious: *how can I make a living as a queer womyn of color in activism?* I know I want to be comfortable in life. I'm a writer, a graphic designer, I dabble in photography—there are many fields I've thought about going into, but what will keep me passionate? What will make me feel full of purpose when I rise every morning? What is something I can c*are* about forever? I've worried about being able to make a living and bring about change simultaneously for some time now. How do I do both at once? The solution to these questions: I need to make activism my living, thus the I-Search for *how?*

---

[6] Often associated with feminism, womyn is an alternate spelling of 'woman' or 'women' that eliminates the word 'man' or 'men'.

First ruling out the fact that I'm going to need to sustain, I began my search by asking myself just how specific of a role I plan on playing in activism. Meaning, will I be comfortable if I end up working with an anti-racist group that minimally focuses on gender and/or sexuality? If I end up infiltrating the NAACP or starting a new age of the Black Panther Party, will I feel stifled as a queer feminist? Should I be looking specifically for a position that speaks to my queer, feminist, black identity? These are the questions running through my mind when I addressed one of my sources: "This Bridge We Call Home".

In this book, there's an essay called "Being the Bridge: A Solitary Black Woman's Position in the Women's Studies Classroom as a Feminist Student and Professor" by Kimberly Springer. Springer speaks directly to this question in the back of my mind with her declaration: "I straddled the fence of my identity and burned out quickly trying to bring an anti-sexist analysis to my 'race work' and an anti-racist sensibility to my 'gender-work'. Not surprisingly these two branches never met" (385).

On the contrary, I found this statement quite surprising. In my life I have found that I often run a conversation from one form of oppression to another, and they often come together with general ignorance and breed with each other. My opposition to her statement helped me realize that I'd most likely feel inadequate in a organization that only spoke to one of the injustices I stand against.

Before reading Springer's essay, I leafed through the book that inspired "This Bridge We Call Home" to be published. This holy grail of sorts is called "This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color" and is also a collection of essays

231

and poems that speak to my aspirations. In Cheryl Clarke's "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance", she puts a superb voice on my opposition to Springer's statement.

> *Black lesbians who do work within 'by-for-about-black-people' groups or organizations either pass as 'straight' or relegate our lesbianism to the so-called 'private' sphere. The more male-dominated or black nationalist bourgeois the organization or group, the more resistant to change, and thus, the more homophobic and anti-feminist. In these sectors, we learn to keep a low profile. (132)*

I don't want a 'low profile'! I don't want anyone to undermine my opinions and efforts in the LGBT community or towards feminism because it isn't the premise of that organization. And I certainly don't want to deal with anyone who would want me to keep my sexuality 'private' so to speak, in a world where we're constantly bombarded with heteronormative movies and novels.

That is not to say, that although I clearly want a concentrated and specific environment, I'd also want to be involved with an organization that is not opposed to reaching out. There's no way anyone can make progress that without doing so. Black feminists need to interact with white feminists, and lesbians should reach out for support from gay guys. Those who have similar struggles are most likely to support us in creating revolution. One of Audre Lorde's pieces, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master's House", also featured in the book, touches on the topic of feminists of different races.

> *Advocating the mere tolerance of difference between women is the grosses reformism. It is a total denial of the creative function of difference in our lives. For difference must not be merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary*

232

Comment: Another powerful statement which I really like.

Comment: I couldn't agree with you more here!

Comment: HWICTMIY explained the importance of reaching out.

> *polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialect. Only then does*
>
> *the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening. (99)*

    Lorde is attempting to tell the listeners that it is important to reach out to those educated on the same matters, with similar struggles, even in the situation where they are slightly different, even if that difference gives them a certain privilege. I certainly want to be a part of an organization willing to work with others. I am a minority in three different ways, and not one of these three communities can make a difference on their own, simply because they are indeed, minorities. Their numbers are substantially smaller than their counterparts, and will need support from others to effect change. As Pat Parker said in her speech featured later on in the book, "Revolution: It's Not Neat or Pretty or Quick":

> *Another illusion that we suffer under in this country is that a single facet of the*
>
> *population can make revolution. Black people alone cannot make a revolution in*
>
> *this country. . . Gay people alone cannot make a revolution in this country. And*
>
> *anyone who tries it will not be successful. (241)*

End Note: Demi I love how you took the feedback from class and expanded on your paper. The details you added were amazing and I personally think that you are a very strong and gifted writer. I think you ideas are great and you have a lot to offer to the world, the power of your paper is breath taking. I learned so much and you also made me think a lot about the words I use daily in my vocabulary, your use of quotes also added to the strength of your paper! GREAT JOB!

Annotated Bibliography

Akbar, Lala. Personal Interview. 11 Nov. 2010

Lauren Cheung, better known as Lala Akbar, is the head of Veuxdo Magazine. She is also a queer Asian-American artist and all-around socially-aware and dope being. She bases her aspiration around making a difference in society through art. When I realized that photojournalism could really be a medium for me, I figured she'd be the perfect person to interview.

Anzaldua, Gloria and Analouise Keating, eds. *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for*

   Transformation. New York, NY: Routledge, 2002. Print.

This book is a more up-to-date account of politically identified radical womyn of color, it being the collection of responses to *This Bridge Called My Back.* This work is also crucial to helping me map out my direction.

Anzaldua, Gloria and Cherrie Moraga, eds. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical*

   Women of Color. Watertown, MA: Peresphone Press, Inc, 1981. Print.

If nothing else, I should be able to use this book as a how-to on going about establishing my political identity. Most of these accounts are from well learned and politically experienced womyn, who make it their lives duty to fight for the same things I want to fight for. The book may be a bit old, but the premises still stand.

234

Williams, Tramaine. Personal Interview. 15 Oct. 2010

Tramaine Joy Williams is my girlfriend of two years. That being said she knows my goals just as well as I do. She know my plans and shares a lot of the same views as me. She is also more involved than I am in certain ways. She's incredibly well-read on the matters that I care about and should ultimately be good and helping me find my way. Her opinion matters to me the most, and there are a lot of opinions I don't care about.

Lala Akbar Interview Transcript

- I know you're an artist, but if someone asked me what kind of art you make, how would you want me to respond? (Is it all paint, or are you into all kinds of art? etc.)

I have a bit of trouble trying to stick with one type of art. I'm into a little bit of everything. My major in and of itself is a mix of Web Design, Print, Photography, Imaging, Sound, Video, Fine Arts... I also paint and draw on the side. I'm completely immersed in it. You might call it being a jack of all trades, but I think I'm just an Interested person.

- I've noticed that you certainly use your talents for good, and for political awareness, (such as at the Oscar Grant rally), is this something that happens often? When did social issues become a theme in your art? Has it always been that way?

The Oscar Grant rally was the first actual event I've done. Veuxdo Magazine has been more of an ongoing process, with which I'm trying to combine art with activism and cultural awareness. I feel like they fit together pretty organically. My art has definitely gained a more socially conscious purpose as I have developed a more socially conscious mind. This is something that's really taken off in recent years because I've come to realize that I can actually do something with my art. It sounds clichéd, but I want to make a difference. I want to reclaim art as major form of communication and growth within our culture. In recent years, the arts have been dismissed as something frivolous and budget cuts have rid them of our public schools, and it's wrong. Without the passion that art provides, I fear for where our society is headed. I think with the practice of art comes a certain awareness that one would lack otherwise.

- What makes it important to you, to be involved socially?

I believe in the people army. We need to stand together, grow together, and teach each other.

- Are there other ways that you are involved, or affecting change, that doesn't necessarily pertain to art? (If so, how did you get involved there?)

Art is my main medium, so I mostly work within that realm. I run Veuxdo Magazine, which is geared towards cultural critique, the arts, social awareness, music, and other aspects of urban and grassroots movements and culture. That involves a lot of organization, recruiting, writing. But even at that, I promote artists and try to raise awareness within the community.

- I've just decided to change my major to photojournalism, do you think that's a wise field for me to go into, being that I'm so set on activism?

I think photojournalism is a great thing to get into. I'm not sure how fiscally productive one can get in that field, but it will definitely be rewarding if you're passionate about it. I know admire people who are able to capture parts of history and emotion in that field!

- What makes taking your art to a political level fulfilling for you?

I've always had this sense that equality and awareness was important. With art, I'm hopefully able to capture some attention and shed light on what needs to be seen. Just knowing I'm working towards something I feel passionately feels right. Like Lauryn said, "Until you do right, everything you do's wrong."

I hope this has helped! let me know if you need anything else.

Re: Interview for my project   Full View
From: lauren cheung <asalamalala@gmail.com> Add to Contacts
To: Demi Elder <demielder@yahoo.com>

I give you consent. Lol.

On Mon, Nov 29, 2010 at 9:46 PM, Demi Elder <demielder@yahoo.com> wrote:
I almost forgot! Before I can submit the final portfolio I need an email or a facebook message from you saying "I give you consent", to prove that you are willing to let me use any of the words in this transcript.

I mean, don't slander my words or anything. Okay, *now* I give you consent.

On Mon, Nov 29, 2010 at 10:57 PM, lauren cheung <asalamalala@gmail.com> wrote:
  I give you consent. Lol.

Tramaine Interview Transcript

Are there any orgs around nyc that you think I should get involved with? That are accessible?

>>>I do not believe there are any you and haven't discussed in regular conversation like The Audre Lorde Project, Butch Voices, Urban Word, and Brooklyn Boihood. You should check in to Housing Works, the organization I intern for. I suggest them because while their focus is not on queer womyn of color they do have a program within their organization that focus on the concerns of a lot of Trans-womyn; and many of these womyn are womyn of color.

You have a lot of friends, many of which are righteous. Do you think any of them can help me find my gateway activity? Help get me started?

>>> You know of all of my friends. What I might suggest is to find some people queer woymn of color with different backgrounds. Womyn who are poor, womyn who are rich, womyn who are in the military, womyn who are service workers, womyn who are dancers, lovers, mothers, cancer survivors. The more the better.

Do you have any suggestions for work that would be suitable for my plans to travel internationally?

238

>>>Flight Attendant lol! Um international business law. You can create non-for profit organizations around the world for ALL womyn of color and help keep them afloat.

Do you think I'm being too specific in wanting to work with queer issues for people of color? Should I settle if I find a position in a queer org that doesn't focus on race at all?

>>>If there were enough organizations in recognition of our struggles you wouldn't have to seek out this specific group.

Tips? Do you have tips for finding organizations? Do you stumble upon them? Or do they come up in conversation? Where should I be looking?

>>>I mostly stumble upon them while I look for places to meet womyn of color trying to make a difference in the world. The one tip I will give you is to take every person you come in to contact with as a potential door opener.

how can I make a living as a queer womyn of color in activism?

>>>Don't try. We live in a racist capitalistic world and I do not see how anyone can make a decent living trying to better the plight of the queer people of color, without sacrificing everything they have physically and emotionally.

I love you, terribly!

Tramaine

Consent   Full View

From: Tramaine Williams <tramainewil@hotmail.com> 😊 Add to Contacts
To: Demi Elder <demielder@yahoo.com>

Hello Demi,

    I do hereby give thou consent.

Tramaine Williams.

Reading Log 1: Objectivity & Subjectivity

Quotes	Notes	Reflections
1. Research is "careful, systematic, patient study and investigation in some field of knowledge, undertaken to establish facts or principles." 2. Rigamarole 3. The observer, or subject, was thought to be naturally subjective (prejudiced, partial, self-centered) and the observer, or object, was just there, challenging people to see it exactly as it was, nothing more, nothing less. 4. The difficulty is that reporters may	1. If that's the case, Webster, I've done a lot of researching, but never for an assignment, really. 2. So that's how you spell that? 3. Keeping this quote to remember the explanation. 4. Ooooo. Okay, so I'm one of these people I'm sure. Is that bad? I don't know, but I'm	1. Still true, but not so much lately because I've been so busy at this rigorous end of a semester. 2. I have been meaning to use that word, and I still haven't. 3. This is something I should have remembered during the workshop. I injected my opinions a few times when I should have been helping people with their work. I'm sure I could have been more helpful than that.

240

communicate their disapproval of what they're writing about in such subtle ways that they're not aware of doing it

5. If the observer cared passionately about the object, their vision might blur, or their hand tremble as a surgeon's would if while operation on a child's brain, he thought of how endearing a human being she had been when he visited her in the ward the day before the operation. For the surgeon, detatchment is necessary, but not so much that he doesn't

such an opinion-geared person, and so outspoken at times that I feel it's impossible to NOT express how I feel.

5. Right, so don't get overly passionate in presentation, but there must be a sense of caring.

6. WHAT IS "IT"?! He's totally breaking the rules here! Jk.

7. She has way more lines in her quotes that

4. Opinions are good when applicable, I've realized.

5. Check!

6. Haha!

7. She still broke the rules.

8. I should have had more respect for William. And if I really felt the need to give him my opinion, I could have done it somewhere else than the track changes I left on his page.

care at all what happens. Some sense of urgency must be felt 6. To find it wholly, at times we must lose ourselves in it, as well as let it enter us. Are we it? Is it us? 7. Carmen… 8. Objectivity does not mean detatchment; it means respect; that is the ability not to distort and to falsify things, persons, and oneself	in her interpretations of the quotes… just sayin. 8. Ahhh, see! That's what I was saying! Good word for that, "respect".	

Reading Log 2: Chapter 11—"Interviewing"

Quotes	Notes	Reflections
1. "Skilled interviewers make their subjects feel like opening up… Questions that can be answered yes or no should be used sparingly because they close off the flow of experience you want from your subject."	1. Open ended questions, got it.	1. This just reminded me I have no interviews done. Failure.
2. "If you try to play authority yourself, and talk as if you know as much or more than the experts you're interviewing, you'll probably stop them from opening up."	2. You should probably limit showing the ground you've already covered on the topic, let them open up about all that they know. Don't necessarily play stupid, but don't be a show-off either.	2. I'm going to say something here.
3. "He captured her individual voice—an informal talker, lively and honest."	3. Try to be informal, comfortable. For better content.	3. I'm including this for a reason.
4. "being sure to inform their subjects that they are being taped."	4. Don't act like the FBI.	4. To show myself that I am behind and I haven't done what I'm supposed to do.
	5. Cut the fluff! If it's about puppies and your paper is about becoming a dentist, it's irrelevant.	5. Demi, get on

243

5. "Choose the strongest parts of the dialogue and omit the weakest." 6. "Sometimes a strict adherence to the question-answer format misrepresents the subject and stops his flow of words or ideas. There's no hallowed formula for presenting interviews." 7. "If you're using quotation marks… you should know that the conventional way to punctuate that sort of speech is to use quotation marks at the first of several paragraphs spoken by the same speaker to but omit the closing quotation marks on those paragraphs so as to indicate the same speaker is still talking."	6. Don't jam in questions if the interviewee is on a roll. Listen. 7. Oh man, is that for real?! Cause for a long time I'd read books where that was done and it would annoy me! If you're gonna open a quotation, close it! I hate that that's grammatically correct. Annnoooyyyiinngggg.	your shit! 6. No, seriously, I'm very disappointed in you. 7. Oh, but that quotation thing I talked about over in those other two columns for number 7 is really annoying!

244

Free Skate #1: On The Topic of Trey Songz

In response to the following conversation:

Person 1: "Ya'll can't tell me that he [Trey Songz, professional R&B singer] is 100%

hetero. That nigga dabbles.

Person 2: "That's what I've been trying to tell chicks..He is fruity as hell."

I'm not even gonna speak on the topic of Trey Songz, because frankly, I couldn't give any

less of a shit. But this language, this we need to talk about. I'm not trying to put the

spotlight on anyone, at all, but this is a perfect example of what I'm about to say. This is

homophobic language. People are so quick to point the gay finger at any black man who

shows any sign of femininity. In turn, straight black men constantly feel the need to

prove how macho and straight they are by continuously using hateful language towards

the gay community and reiterating how much they love vagina. Our men have adopted

society's association between emotional awareness and femininity, and the association

between femininity and being gay, thanks to those of us that like to witch-hunt for

queer people. (I've got news for you, feminine =/= gay.) How do you expect them to

mature to a level of knowing themselves well enough to be secure emotionally if we

automatically make such a thing a protocol for questioning their sexuality? It's

immature. It's immature that people still say things like this, and go around labeling

people "fruity". It's ridiculous. Ridiculous and unnecessary, and it breeds hatred.

Free Skate #2: "Hey you!"

Hey you, the caucasian, straight person, male, or cisperson! I'm gonna need you to do me a favor. Recognize your privilege. Recognize that the country we live in is built around your lifestyle. Recognize that you have the upper hand in society because of your skin color, orientation, sex, or gender expression. Don't tell me that you're against prejudice and therefore have done your part. RECOGNIZE your privilege, know that it's unfair, and eliminate all of the choices you make that widen the gap between your world and mine. KNOW what things you have that I'm stuck fighting for. Speak against those things freely. And most importantly, stop the hate-speech. DO NOT make a racist, homophobic, sexist, or transphobic remark and wave it off as a joke. Our lives are not jokes, and our oppression is the farthest thing from a limerick. You cannot claim to be "cool with it" or an "ally" or "not racist/homophobic/sexist etc" if you spew all that nonsense for shits and giggles. Try being a decent human being.

No. Wrong. Don't fool yourself, you're oppressing *yourself* by using the word, period.

And the whole concept that you can separate our people and place yourself in the

implied better category of 'black people' and leave the others behind is not okay. And

you are giving anyone not directly affected the go-ahead to analyze each and every one

of us to see if they come across behavior that is "dirty, disgusting…" etc. to see if they

can go ahead and use the n-word to describe that person. That it's okay to call some

people that if they're somehow not as virtuous. I don't condone. This is why I try to re-

evaluate how I approach those with processed hair. Like, seriously, I hate the fact that

you're fucking oppressing yourself and I need to work on how to accept you without

wanting to scold you every five minutes. I don't want to separate our "community" but I

don't condone whitewashing. (It's obviously a conundrum I'm having.) But I digress. I

247

don't condone of this. How can we stand divided? I do not condone.

Nigger.
My *niggaaaa*!
Quit actin' like a fag, man.
Oh her? She's a *bitch*.

> **Comment:** I'm confused as how this relates to your question.

I've spent too much of my time letting these words fly pass me in everyday

> **Comment:** Can you elaborate on this? How?

conversation, too many years letting oppression weigh on me without protest. Many of

these years I walked in ignorance, using the same words to unknowingly oppress myself.

My friends used to be "niggas" to me, something I thought was an endearing way to start

a sentence. It took me a while to see that you can't really change the meaning of words.

I can't pinpoint exactly when my mindset did a 180, but I do know the final straw

was somewhat recently. Going to Stuyvesant High School, with nearly 4,000 other kids, I

experienced the worst of young budding racism. The population during my senior year

> **Comment:** Where did you get your statistics from?

was 1.97 percent black and the ignorance among the lot of my peers was kicking. They'd

say the n-word as if it were nothing, and it wasn't until I saw it coming from foreign lips

that I realized that these words and stereotypes coat-tailing them were not okay.

Consequently, neither was the double standard that I could present myself in such a way

> **Comment:** I'm really confused by this statement. Can you revise it?

and these other kids were not allowed to. This is where I began to wake up.

During the struggle of high school, I opened up to poetry, and workshops of other

teens willing to use their pens. So many of these *young* people were enlightening.

> **Comment:** This statement also confused me.

Dripping in culture and knowledge, far more socially aware than any people I'd ever met.

These were the people who pushed me to quest for my heritage, always. I continued to

network among this conscious people, starting a blog in February of my freshman year at

St. John's University. This blog, where I jot down my thoughts and viewpoints, led me to

more people with similar views. Following their blogs opened me to new politics I never took the time to know well. I cyber-met womyn with feminist fury, black men who studied their stolen heritage's and fought racial disparities, queer people banishing slurs and hate-speech from their worlds. These people fed me the fuel I needed to rage a fire against all injustices, their articles helped solidify a determination within me, to start identifying what's not okay, and fighting against these offenses.

Comment: Is there a significant reason why you spell women differently? If so, you should explain. Not everyone will catch on it instantly.

Comment: Confusing.

It's impossible now for me to deny who I am, and that every part of these defining factors have been riddled with injustice. Black. Queer. Womyn. The militia of prejudice has shaped what my life experiences have been and going on any longer without recognizing them and fighting to effect change would be lying to myself.

When Professor Sikorski asked me for a question that had been itching to be asked, the only one weighing on me strong enough was obvious: *how can I make a living as a queer womyn of color in activism?* I know I want to be comfortable in life. I'm a writer, a graphic designer, I dabble in photography—there are many fields I've thought about going into, but what will keep me passionate? What will make me feel full of purpose when I rise every morning? What is something I can c*are* about forever? I've worried about being able to make a living and bring about change simultaneously for some time now. How do I do both at once? The solution to these questions: I need to make activism my living, thus the I-Search for *how?*

Hello Demi,

250

I had a hard time understanding your paper. You jumped around a lot and a lot of statements that you wrote were confusing. You should add more details, and more emotion. Throughout the entire paper you sound angry and stiff. Also explaining the significance behind spelling womyn, not everyone will understand it. You can't assume that everyone knows you.

Name:	Demi Elder

If you got a copy of this exam, you have accrued 3 (or more) absences this semester. This is your final exam. It is worth 5% of your final course grade. You can take this home and get as much help on it as you want. Remember: merely completing this exam does not guarantee you earn all 5%. Make sure your answers are thoughtful and complete. *Although it is not required, I really suggest that you type the answers to this exam into the MSWord.doc downloadable from the "Final Exam" link (on the Final Portfolio page).*

INCLUDE THE COMPLETED EXAM IN YOUR FINAL PORTFOLIO DOCUMENT, DUE UPLOADED TO PBWORKS BY 1PM ON DECEMBER 13TH. LATE EXAMS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

1. **Describe the purpose of the search project.** What writing concepts were you working with in the Search Project that carried over to the Final Portfolio or other writing (in and out of April's class)? Why did (April ask) you (to) do this project? What did it help you learn about writing? (These three questions are designed to springboard your thinking. You don't need to answer them one-by-one. Please use them to help you figure out how to address the main question: "Describe the purpose of the search project.")

    The main purpose of the search project is to answer a question that you've been dying to have the answer to—to scratch an itch. A question chooses *you,* a personal question that involves you on a first person basis, a question that will ultimately have you as its audience, and you search for the answer. You search, not re-search, because it is the first time someone is looking for this specific answer. Whether the question is old or new, as long as it pertains to you directly, and you have no answer for it in the beginning, it can be your search question. I personally believe that the question needs to be something that can leave you fulfilled after you search for its answer, something that means you'll walk away with progress towards something, or with more than you came with. Now, you don't need to necessarily have found the full answer, as long as you've searched and made progress towards *something*.

2. **What is the purpose of a set-up to a piece of writing?** Use (quote) your search project to develop a short answer to this question. That is, use your search project to show (1) what a set-up is and (2) what is the purpose of a set-up to a writing project? Asked another way, how does a set-up make a piece stronger? What happens when a piece doesn't have a developed set-up? (These last two questions are designed to springboard your thinking. You don't need to answer them one-by-one. Please use them to help you figure out how to address the main question: "What's the purpose of a set-up to a piece of writing?")

252

The first purpose of a set-up is to explain why you're asking your search question. In my set up, I explain the reason for my questioning in the following few statements: "The militia of prejudice has shaped what my life experiences have been. I am bound to be imposed upon by 'society'. Going on any longer without recognizing these prejudices and fighting to effect change would be lying to myself." These sentences mimic the itch of the question, and are the culminating statements for the longer explanation that comes before them, all explaining my question. The second purpose of the set up is to explain the question that's being asked. I do that by adding: I know I want to be comfortable in life. I'm a writer, a graphic designer, I dabble in photography—there are many fields I've thought about going into, but what will keep me passionate? What will make me feel full of purpose when I rise every morning? What is something I can c*are* about forever? I've worried about being able to make a living and bring about change simultaneously for some time now. How do I do both at once?" I used the common method of sub-questions. Little mini-questions that reiterate my reasoning for asking the question help the reader understand what the question really means. A third purpose of the set-up that doesn't always apply is to announce the sources, but this method is only needed if you are organizing your paper thematically.

3. **Why do writers use quotations?** You were required to use quotation in the Search and Portfolio projects, but why? How do quotations help you make your writing stronger? What would happen if you didn't have quotations in your piece? Please refer to a moment in your work to make this answer more tangible.
(These last two questions are designed to springboard your thinking. You don't need to answer them one-by-one. Please use them to help you figure out how to address the main question: "Why do writers use quotations?")

Writers use quotations to help support and show the things they find in their searches. They especially use quotes from actual people, or from interviews, because people are the most up-to-date sources you can find. Once you've planted a quote, you can work around it, interpret it, put some buns on the patty. If you didn't have quotations… no one would believe you. Your thesis, your search, would be laughable. No one would ever believe a paper written without quotes, if it is in the nature of a search. Also, you can't really speak for your sources. For example, I have a quote in my search that says: "My art has definitely gained a more socially conscious purpose as I have developed a more socially conscious mind." If I were to have just written that Lala Akbar has a developed a socially conscious mind and has caused her art to develop as well, it would be weird. I can't speak for her, on such a personal basis.

4. **Describe how you have considered AUDIENCE in the search project.** The Results project may have been the first time you've been asked to write to a direct audience for a class. In the search project, you didn't write to a direct audience. That project was for you, but you did have to consider the audience of your classmates and other responders. <u>For this question, describe how you have you have considered the needs and expectations of your AUDIENCE when writing your search project. Use quotations from your project to help you develop this answer (when/where necessary).</u>

253

Well, with the title of the project being the I-Search, I have been constantly reminded that the project was directed at myself. With that constant reminder, and the notion that it's not so much about finding the definitive answer, but to have made progress, I have always tried to make some type of difference by the time the search is over. I knew that, for my audience, me, I needed to have made some kind of change, some kind of progress. I needed to have felt somewhere closer to my answer. I needed to reap the benefits of putting effort into something as extensive as this search. Near the end of the search paper, I make a note that: "[I've] realize[d] that although organizations are great, I don't necessarily have to be part of one. I can cultivate my talents to help me portray the messages I want to put out into the world." I had been searching throughout the project for a niche within an organization, or something of that sort. I realized that that was not necessarily the kind of answer that was right for my audience (me), and that there were other ways to be a moving activist.

5. **Describe the purpose of the Results Project.** What writing concepts were you working with in this results project that may apply to other writing you do in other classes? Why did (April ask) you (to) do this project? What did it help you learn about writing? (These last three questions are designed to springboard your thinking. You don't need to answer them one-by-one. Please use them to help you figure out how to address the main question: "Describe the purpose of the results project.")

The purpose of the Results Project is to use the information you've learned since beginning your search, and to direct it at other people that may find it helpful. You should find a specific audience that is finally not yourself, and share your findings with them. This project can be virtually in almost any form. The results project can be almost like what you do after you re-search something… except you're using things here that you gained while doing an original search. It lets us truly apply why we've learned, so that all of that searching doesn't go to waste or get lost in the oblivion of an ending semester.

6. **Why are ambiguous pronouns (this, it, they, those) bad?** (1) Quote a moment from your writing where an ambiguous pronoun was a problem. (2) Describe why this pronoun is a problem. (3) Show the revision of this sentence. We discussed how to eliminate ambiguous pronouns from our writing, but why? What is the problem with having these pronouns in your writing? (These last two questions are designed to springboard your thinking. You don't need to answer them one-by-one or at all. Please use them to help you figure out how to address the main question: "Why are ambiguous pronouns bad?")

Pronouns turn bad when they are used to take the place of entire concepts, much larger than one single word. The can cloud the interpretation of the meaning. It could make the reader confused or taken longer to decipher your paper than necessary. In my last sideshadowed draft of my search, I used a sentence that read: "It took me a while to see you can't really change the meaning of words." When that sentence stands alone, you can't tell what the 'it' is referring to at all. I

254

can barely tell you what the 'it' stands for. I ended up changing the sentence to: "The realization that you can't really change the meaning of words took a while to come to me." This sentence is much less ambiguous and can stand by itself without dispute.

7. **Describe the role of feedback to your writing process.** How has feedback helped you? How has feedback confused you? What role has feedback played in your writing process this semester? Feel free to quote feedback and/or your drafts to answer this question. (These last three questions are designed to springboard your thinking. You don't need to answer them one-by-one. Please use them to help you figure out how to address the main question: "Describe the role of feedback to your writing process.")

Feedback plays a massive part of the writing process, especially in a class where you've got like 30 peers and a professor all reading your project for you, with criticism in mind. No matter how many times you re-read your own paper, you have biases eyes, and you will always be familiar with your own work. While you may be keen on working in quotations, someone else may be good at transitions and catch the places where your paper can be bettered in ways you never noticed. And when you have so many people reviewing, you get so many different ways to better your paper. Now, what can be confusing about feedback is that people can feel quite differently about the very same lines. I've had Nary tell me my opening was "badass" and Arielle telling me it was "scary". Whether I would keep it or omit it I had to leave up to my own judgement.

8. You won't have workshop, speed dating, or my office hours next semester. And you might not like the Writing Center. **How will you get feedback on your writing in the future? How will you make sure this response addresses the questions and concerns you have?**

Pshhhh! Are you kidding, Grapes? You tellin' me you don't think I'll be stopping by your office just to bother you and talk about myself and be all vain and discuss every new Tegan and Sara song?! Wait, so are you saying you'll refuse me since I won't technically be your student? D; ← You know what that is? It's a crying in despair emoticon. No but seriously, if I decide against the writing center I will definitely ask my girlfriend to read it. Or an English major friend. Or someone who had this class with me who I know personally like Noemia. Ask friends! I think that's a good answer. Or ask someone who hates you! I'm sure they'll point out every mistake you make.

9. **If feedback is essential to your revision, and the Writing Center is the only option, how can you be sure to get good feedback there? Describe how you would go about requesting feedback in the WC.** What would you bring with you? What questions would you ask? What context (about the class, the assignment, etc) would you provide? (These last two questions are designed to springboard your thinking. You don't need to answer them one-by-one. Please use them to help you figure out how to address the main question: "Describe how you will go about requesting feedback in the Writing Center.")

First you need to make an appointment. You go there and get on the computer, register if you haven't, log in, and select a slot with four boxes consecutively empty at a date and time where you will be available and prepared. Make sure you have a copy of what it is you need help with and any supporting important documents. Make sure you also know what you need help with, that's the most important thing. (Like, "hey, I suck at conclusions! How can I suck less?!" No kidding, that's what I went for help with.) Ask the person if they have any suggestions for fixing the thing you feel insecure about and for tips to avoid that problem in the future.

10. *******BONUS***** WHAT COLOR ARE APRIL'S BOOTS? *****BONUS*******
<div align="center">(Earn back the points lost from one wrong answer.)</div>

BURGUNDY. Burgundy Doc Martens 1460s to be exact. And you've been wearing the same make and color of boots since like, 1991, right? Am I close? Jumped out of a plane? Played clarinet or something like that on stage in them, right? Okay this is getting creepy. Don't be freaked out. (But that's worth at least two answers, just sayin'.)

INCLUDE THE COMPLETED EXAM IN YOUR FINAL PORTFOLIO DOCUMENT, DUE UPLOADED TO PBWORKS BY 1PM ON DECEMBER 13TH. LATE EXAMS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Writing Center Reflection
(When you make your appointment, be sure to send a report to me by checking the provided box.)

1. What were your concerns? What did you want the consultant to help you with? What questions did you have for the consultant/about your project?

   I went to the Writing Center wanting help with the conclusion on my Search Project. I asked him how I could make a better conclusion, because mine always fall so flat. I'm just so bad at them. They either sound extremely redundant or make my paper come to a startling and sudden and unfulfilling halt.

2. What is the most important change you will make in your paper as a result of this conference?

   The conclusion! Now, this consultant guy was pretty freakin' helpful. My Search Project, something he's never seen before, came out to 14 pages and change when printed double spaced. He sped-read it, gathered most information, and gave me some great feedback. He said it seemed that my search itself seemed to correlate with one of my sources, in being that it wasn't "neat, or pretty, or quick". That my paper and search proved that revolution really wasn't neat or pretty or quick.

3. How did the session help you?

   It helped me gain a new method for conclusion. I mean maybe this is a no-brainer for everyone else but I've learned that I should just look back into the text I've already written, not just try to recall it on my own, but look through it and search for something to properly close with.

4. Additional Comments and Reactions:

   Sometimes I feel like I probably won't go back on my own, but then again, I'll probably have a "wow this paper is sucky" moment, and it'll be important, and I'll be too proud to ask my friends to review something for me. So, you never know!