

THE WRITING PROGRAM

# interrupted

*Making Space for Critical Discourse*

Edited by Donna Strickland and Jeanne Gunner

*Foreword by John Trimbur*

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## Contents

Foreword by John Trimbur vii

Introduction Opening Up: Toward a Critical Discourse for Writing Program Administration  
*Donna Strickland and Jeanne Gunner xi*

### Part 1: The Cultural Work of Writing Programs

- 1 Conservative Writing Program Administrators (WPAs)  
*Jeff Rice 1*
- 2 Standards and Purity: Understanding Institutional Strategies to Insure Homogeneity  
*Tom Fox 14*
- 3 Feminisms and the Problem of Complicity in Writing Program Administrator Work  
*Laura Bartlett Snyder 28*
- 4 How We Do What We Do: Facing the Contradictory Political Economics of Writing Programs  
*Tony Scott 41*

### Part 2: Alternative WPA Discourses

- 5 Freedom and Safety, Space and Place: Locating the Critical WPA  
*Sidney I. Dobrin 56*
- 6 Redefining Work and Value for Writing Program Administration  
*Bruce Horner 72*
- 7 Queer Eye for the Comp Program: Toward a Queer Critique of WPA Work  
*William P. Banks and Jonathan Alexander 86*

- 8 Inviting Trouble: The Subversive Potential of the Outsider  
Within Standpoint  
*Jane E. Hindman* 99
- 9 Laboring to Globalize a First-Year Writing Program  
*Wendy Hesford, Edgar Singleton, and Ivonne M. García* 113
- 10 The Pragmatics of Professionalism  
*Thomas P. Miller and Jillian Skeffington* 126
- Part 3: Subjectivity, Identity, Reflection**
- 11 The Writing Program Administrator and Enlightened False  
Consciousness: The Virtues of Becoming an Empty Signifier  
*Joe Marshall Hardin* 137
- 12 “Acting Out” or Acts of Agency: WPA and “Identities of Participation”  
*Kathryn Valentine* 147
- 13 Analyzing Narratives of Change in a Writing Program  
*Margaret Shaw, Gerry Winter, and Brian Huot* 155
- 14 Writing Program Administration Outside the North American Context  
*Lisa Emerson and Rosemary Clerehan* 166
- 15 WPAs and Identity: Sounding the Depths  
*Christopher Burnham and Susanne Green* 175
- 16 Place, Culture, Memory  
*Suellynn Duffey* 186
- References 195
- Contributors 211

## Foreword

John Trimbur

Let's start in the mid-1970s. Jimmy Carter is a one-term president, and it feels like the country is going through a nervous breakdown—Watergate, the Iran hostage crisis, long lines at the gas pumps, stagflation, and unresolved memories of defeat in Vietnam weighing heavily on the national psyche. Now, everyone knows the outcome, how this sense of drift and demoralization was halted by Reagan's “new morning in America,” the dismantling of Great Society programs, revanchist foreign policy, and a wave of deregulation and privatization that led to the ascendancy of neoliberal market ideologies. Still, I want to dwell for a minute on the mid-1970s, to see it not just as the interlude between Nixon and Reagan, for this moment of national malaise during the Carter years is also the time when writing program administration became a recognizable form of academic work, differentiated from the earlier job of directing freshman English that had been assigned to junior faculty as a matter of paying their dues on the path to tenure.

Writing program administration, as I believe the contributions to this impressive collection reveal, continues to be marked by the date of its inception, in an era when open admissions programs and a “Why Johnny Can't Write” literacy crisis fashioned the prospects of writing programs in terms that book-ended the social upheavals of the 1960s. Of course, part of the Reagan strategy to resolve the national crisis of confidence was to rewrite the sixties—not the decade of the 1960s but the historical moment of the sixties, which ended, at least symbolically, in 1975 with the fall of Saigon—in a backlash against “permissiveness” and declining standards in national life, including literacy. But in the mid-1970s, the sixties remained a near problem and a source of tension. Open admissions and the goal of democratizing higher education grew out of popular pressure from below on the part of the civil rights and black liberation movements. By the mid-1970s, however, open admissions stood in uneasy relation to a then emergent back-to-basics movement and a newfound interest in writing among college and university administrators, state legislators, and business leaders. On the one side was Mina Shaughnessy's vision of a literate democracy that sought to extend the progressive politics of the sixties, while on the other were the cultural anxieties released by falling test scores, middle-class fears of downward mobility, and a desire for accountability and restoration of order that wanted to repudiate the legacy of the previous decade.

invited “trouble” before it occurred? Further, what if standard WPA practice didn’t simply invite but also integrated the standpoint of the outsider within which, by definition, would be the position most likely to recognize the unequal power relations that obtain in acts of colonization?

Of course, I can’t be sure about what might have happened in such a case. I am certain, however, that the invitation would have changed what the chair later described as his “misperception that this idea [of a common assignment] was not particularly controversial”; it would also have altered what Jim’s assignment described as his “nameless, faceless rage at his powerless position.” Perhaps between them those two may even have found an alternative method for meeting student need (the recognized principle informing the WPA discourse and policy) without impinging on faculty’s autonomy in curricular innovation (the recognized principle informing their affective response to WPA discourse and policy).

But inviting the standpoint of an outsider within need not result in any utopian agreement in order to offset the pedagogic violence of accepted WPA discourse. If, as Worsham contends, colonizing power depends on the dominant discourse’s capacity not just to keep people in their place but also to disallow their anger vis-à-vis their subordination, then welcoming the standpoint of the outsider constitutes an effective strategy of decolonization and the struggle for social change. If and when outlaw emotions are invited, heard, even welcomed, they can do the work that Worsham asks of the rhetoric of pedagogic violence, that is, “to open for examination the symbolic violence implied in teaching and learning” (215).

What better way, then, to address the editors’ challenge for us to “look not only at the outside forces but also at ourselves as participants in and contributors to an accepted WPA discourse?” Granted, demystifying the emotional colonization, appropriation, and partiality of our discourse may result simply in more open acknowledgement of the hierarchy of privilege and authority that informs our professional practice. I argue nonetheless that domination by an acknowledged autocrat engenders less pedagogic violence than a bureaucrat’s misrecognized tools of shame and fear. Furthermore, and if we are sincere about our professed commitment to social change, then we can in good faith trust that WPAs who come to recognize their previously mystified methods of conferring their own privilege and authority while colonizing others will, by the fact of that recognition alone, be moved to revise their accepted discourse and practice.

Worsham tells us that “the issue at stake in any of our appropriations is the ethos of intellectual work that will prevail in composition studies” (1999, 401). To understand how those appropriations are couched in the “rhetoric of theory,” in the rhetoric of pedagogical violence, in the arts of complying with bureaucratic necessities, we need to sustain a critical awareness of the ethos, the subjectivity, we’re creating for ourselves and for the Other. Relying on the epistemological power of the outsider within—inviting our own outlaw emotions, as well as those of our colleagues—may well provide the tool for such critical awareness.

## Laboring to Globalize a First-Year Writing Program

Wendy Hesford, Edgar Singleton, and Ivonne M. García

What is the relationship between the formation and direction of writing program administration and the globalization of literary, composition, rhetoric, and literacy studies? To what extent do public universities and hence their programs, especially their writing programs, function as consumer-oriented corporations whose missions, labor structures, and curricula are defined by the needs of the global market? How might a greater understanding of the interdependence of domestic and international cultural, linguistic, and economic practices shape composition studies and the material practices of the field within first-year writing programs? In what ways have writing programs responded to perceptions of the new global economy, notions of flexible citizenship, and corporate multiculturalism?

Multiculturalism continues to hold the promise of giving historically oppressed groups a sense of place, history, and voice in the academy. But its institutionalization in the university at large, and specifically in writing programs, has not moved much beyond corporate multiculturalism. Many university diversity initiatives have emphasized an attitudinal engagement with difference and ignored the potentially productive and reciprocal relations between U.S. English and other languages, and between U.S. English and the “Englishes” that arise within other national and cultural contexts. Also problematic are the often ignored but fundamental inequalities in the ways international and nonnative graduate teaching assistants are treated, and the institutional assumptions that all instructors of English begin from the same starting point on a level playing field. In endorsing a multiculturalism that merely celebrates a unidirectional and monolingual approach to language and difference, universities and their bureaucracies (see Fox in this volume) uphold problematic notions of a unified and coherent national culture and language that ignores the critical impact of transnational, cross-language, and cultural relations on nation-states and their institutions. How can and why must universities, including writing programs, counteract the reductive

yet prominent client-oriented approach to multiculturalism and subtractive monolingualism that, as John Trimbur has noted, dominates writing programs in the United States (2006, 584)? How can and why must we foster an active multilingualism and more critical perceptions of the materiality of difference in composition and writing program administration?

WPAs have been slow to respond to the scenes and legacies of globalization. Writing programs have responded to the globalization of cultural phenomena, in large part and significantly, through a curricular emphasis on postcolonial and transnational texts. Consider, for example, the growing emphasis on the inclusion of essays on global issues in first-year composition readers. A review of thirteen texts marketed as global by three major publishers, however, reveals them in most cases to reinforce the corporate multiculturalism that ultimately confirms for dominant-culture students and instructors the intractable "otherness" of those who differ linguistically, racially, socially, or geographically from them. These texts appear to fall into two categories: readers that include globalism or the "international" as a chapter or grouping of texts, and those devoted almost entirely to issues of globalism.

A text such as Jonathan Silverman and Dean Rader's *The World Is a Text: Writing, Reading, and Thinking About Culture and Its Contexts* (2006) is an example of the former, a reader that includes in its alternative table of contents a section entitled "International/Global Readings" (in addition to sections entitled "African-American Issues," "Arab-American Issues," "Asian-American Issues," "Gay & Lesbian Issues," and "Latino/Latina Issues"). Here the term *global* indicates a certain "international flavor" in the selection of anthologized works. The international section includes among its seven entries a Shakespeare sonnet, poems by Carolyn Forché and Pablo Neruda, and the first chapter from John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*. Berger's text has introduced a generation of college students to the idea that images are texts in themselves that can be read as such. And "My Mistress' Eyes are Nothing Like the Sun" challenges the genre through parody of the expected simile: the speaker's love is not like the beauty found in nature. However, the choice of each work presumes an audience to be on intimate terms with the genres and tropes of Western fine arts and popular culture. These assumptions presume that both instructors and students will approach this material from the perspective of members of the assumed dominant culture.

That perspective is underscored by the introductory remarks provided by the book's editors, which in the case of the sonnet amount to a Western culture in-joke: "We have gone against the grain and decided to publish a poem by a little-known author named William Shakespeare. You may have heard of him" (73). This choice of texts and manner of introducing them, which amount to a conversation between cultural insiders despite the stated goal of going "global," is perhaps most understandable in light of the marketing expectations for such texts. For the text to succeed, it must be adopted at large universities such as The Ohio State University, where 86 percent of all enrolled students identify

themselves as white, non-Hispanic and fully 90 percent of undergraduates are Ohio residents. The expectation is that the texts will be consumed by these "typical" American college students and presented by instructors who share much in common with their students culturally.

The significance is clear: the movement toward a global, multicultural curriculum does not yet demonstrate an understanding of the complex cultural collisions, transcultural negotiations, and power differentials within and across audiences and cultures. Sample texts within composition readers do challenge static notions of culture and audience; however, the general trend toward globalization in the pedagogical apparatus tends to reinforce monolithic notions of culture and context rather than seeing cultures and contexts as emergent, contested, fragmented, and dialogic even within the context of the U.S. experience.

Little attention has been paid not only to how these assumptions are made, naturalized, and promoted, but also to the pedagogical complexities and structural entailments raised by attempts to globalize the curriculum, and the "enormous industry of meaning making" that is the academy (Lipsitz qtd. in Lubiano 1996, 68). How, for instance, might we integrate transnational and cross-cultural texts and methods into the writing curriculum without colonizing the literature of the "other" or positioning certain writing teachers or students, namely international or nonnative English speakers, as objects of cultural consumption? In other words, how is the international, nonnative English speaker, and/or graduate teaching associates (GTAs) of color positioned in such a curriculum? And what are some of the issues that we as writing program administrators (WPAs) need to consider in light of such likely positions?

Indira Karamcheti has provided important insights into how minority instructors find themselves positioned within U.S. and Western academia. Karamcheti has likened the positionality of academics "blessed with the 'surplus visibility' of race or ethnicity" to that of being "Calibans in the classroom," who are perceived in the eyes of their (often first-year composition) students, not as powerful Prosperos wielding the magic of knowledge, but as "rough beasts slouching (maybe even shuffling) along the ivied Bethlehems of higher education" (215). Karamcheti's main concern is not only the fact that minority academics are cast in the roles of "native informants," but also that the fact of "visible difference" immediately problematizes their authority in the classroom (216). Karamcheti, whose own experience on a mostly white campus in California included students who remarked on her "amazingly good grasp of the language" (217), utilizes Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as the metaphor for identifying a number of positions in which minority instructors might find themselves in the U.S. academy. She concludes that while such instructors might be cast "as Calibans, Ariels, and impersonators of Prospero," minority teachers should engage in "a self-aware, deliberate performance of race or ethnicity [that] can provide a more powerful, more challenging authority" (225).

Recognizing the complex positionality of international and nonnative GTAs in the academy is important to the development of a global approach to

multiculturalism. This is not only because the visible differences of these academics make their classroom experience different and, arguably, more challenging, but also because such institutional recognition and inclusion is directly related to the type of multiculturalism that the academic institution ultimately practices, not just espouses. The problematic range of possible positions and the assumptions such projections and stances reflect onto these GTAs becomes particularly evident when international writing instructors and instructors from cultures in which standard U.S. English is not the primary dialect are placed in the position of instructing majority-culture students in writing. The approach until now has been to insist—with the goal of helping these instructors become more effective in the classroom—that international and multicultural instructors learn to better understand the needs and expectations of majority-culture students. This trend is evident in texts prepared by instructional assistance units, such as the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning at Harvard University and the Faculty and Teaching Associate Development at our own university. The introduction to Ohio State's *Teaching in the United States: A Handbook for International Faculty and TAs* states, "An understanding of culture can help you develop important skills to enhance your ability to teach in U.S. classrooms. As you fulfill your responsibilities as an international faculty member or teaching associate, you will learn and adopt some of the culture of this country both in and out of the classroom" (2002, 1). Though the text points to undergraduate students' unawareness of their own ethnocentrism as the basis for communicative and pedagogical challenges in the classroom, the responsibility remains squarely with international instructors to adopt strategies that will aid in their "adjustment" to their new surroundings. As Harvard's *Teaching American Students: A Guide for International Faculty and Teaching Assistants in Colleges and Universities* declares, "Most successful teachers in the United States begin by trying to find out as much as possible about the background and abilities of their students" (Sarkisian 1997, 18).

No doubt international instructors welcome advice on approaching their first teaching experience in the United States. The problem, however, is the implication in these materials that the "globalization" of the classroom will take place entirely on terms determined by institutions' perceived corporate responsibility to paying customers—the students—and a monolingual approach to language and writing instruction that ignores nonmainstream languages and dialects and rhetorical practices. In such an environment, alternatives other than the assimilation of international or multicultural instructors seem nearly impossible. Thus, such assumptions are based on the understanding that other than the international instructor's attempt to adapt and adopt the university's culture, there is no value in what the multilingual instructor brings to the writing classroom as an individual who is not a native speaker of English or a U.S. citizen. The challenges are magnified for writing programs by the perception that majority-culture students, in addition to defining the terms of any rapprochement between cultures, are also the wielders of greater authority in

terms of course content by virtue of their familiarity with U.S. idioms and subject material.

Thus we invoke the term *globalization* with full awareness of its idealization (e.g., the idea that all nations and individuals participate equally in an integrated economy) and its depredations worldwide, including widening of economic inequalities, ecological degradation, increased militarism, escalating religious nationalism, and the expansion of Western cultures. We turn our attention to how the *work* we do in composition, and explicitly in writing program administration, might be reformulated by looking at the relationship between cultural, linguistic, and economic exchanges—a relationship that has marked globalization studies. We argue that addressing such questions and recognizing the inseparability of labor conditions and curricular and pedagogical issues are vital to the progressive intellectual development and sustainability of writing programs.

We focus on the challenges and possibilities that a global and transnational approach to the teaching of writing pose for writing program administrators, and, more particularly, for instructors, namely international graduate teaching assistants and nonnative U.S. English speakers in the English department at Ohio State. Among the most prominent arguments about *why composition matters*, from those both inside and outside the field, have been that composition introduces students to the conventions of academic discourse and provides an institutional site for the training of graduate students as teachers. Such claims and skills easily get caught up in the rhetoric of consumption when divorced from the complexities of context and by construing first-year students as autonomous consumers and locating composition on the academic periphery. We share the common view that one of the major goals of first-year writing instruction is to introduce students to academic writing conventions. However, our goal is to teach the conventions with full awareness of how they are created and legitimated by use and cultural practices. Moreover, claims about composition as a benign training site for graduate students far too often ignore unfair labor conditions and the constitution of the teaching pool and power differentials among writing instructors, as well as between instructors and their students. Like Marc Bousquet and others, we align ourselves with a "labor theory of agency" that seeks to empower those who are disenfranchised, disempowered, and in minority positions within academia (2002, 494). Bousquet advocates for an "organized voice and collective action of composition labor" and includes managers/administrators among the category of workers, and here too we are aligned (494). But from that point on we part ways.

Bousquet argues that the success and survival of writing programs and writing program administrators have depended partly on the continuing failure of the labor struggle, namely the reduction of full-time faculty, and increase in adjunct and graduate student labor in the teaching of writing (500). The field has not conceded to unfair working conditions or the inevitability of the corporate university. Indeed, composition as a discipline has made significant

contributions to labor struggles across the academy in its documentation of contingent labor (Schell and Stock 2001), theorizing of the materiality of writing (Horner 2000), and articulation of issues of economic access (Fox 1999). Indeed, if a narrative of empowerment is to be constructed, it must take into account that the economic and cultural capital of English departments, and the humanities more broadly, have depended on the marginalization of the *work* of composition. Moreover, as Bruce Horner notes, "The economic capital [composition] ostensibly produces in the form of writing skills, for which it is valued outside the academy, serves only to secure the marginality of its status within the academy" (xxi).

But we are not interested in locating problems only *outside* of the WPA discourse and outside of writing programs and in the usual suspects, especially English departments. Indeed, faculty across the university experience and embody the contradictions and tensions propelled by academic capitalism, all of which benefit, though in varying ways, from exploitative labor practices, namely the hiring of adjunct and nontenure-track labor. The employment of graduate students and part-time instructors to teach first-year writing is not symptomatic of the failure of writing programs alone, but rather the reliance on contingent labor is symptomatic of the failure of administrators and faculty across the disciplines to resolve unfair labor conditions within their own domain.

Finally, we must not only look at outside forces but also at ourselves—at our insufficient attention to the role of international graduate students and nonnative speakers as teachers, labor subjects, and as agents of change, and to the relationship between curricular initiatives and labor practices. Hence, we argue that WPAs need to see their programs' curricular and pedagogical agendas and multicultural reforms in relation to the unidirectional monolingualism and national ambivalence about multilingualism, and the conditions and contexts within which graduate teaching assistants labor in composition. For instance, the Department of English at Ohio State has maintained the practice of recognizing GTAs as employees and giving new GTAs stipends to attend a two-week orientation workshop to prepare them to teach first-year writing. Our argument is that advocacy on behalf of fair wages and benefits for graduate teaching assistants needs to be coupled with greater consideration of the institutional and cultural roles into which GTAs, particularly international and nonnative speakers, are cast.

The identification of WPAs as corporate managers and the proletarianization of the labor of teaching are symptomatic of the partiality and selectivity of a materialist analysis that demarcates labor solely in economic terms. Such an analysis ignores relations among economic, cultural, and symbolic capital across the university, and disregards the links between labor conditions and curricular and pedagogical issues. Bousquet calls for the abolition of WPAs as "part of a more general abolition of the scene of managed labor in the academy" (2002, 519 n3). But the conditions of labor within the

academy and progressive change are more complicated than allowed by an exclusive focus on the "figure of the WPA." Writing programs are not isolated units of analysis—isolated from the institutional politics and imperatives of departments of English, which reap the benefits of high enrollments generated by first-year composition courses, particularly schools that operate under responsibility-centered management paradigms and tie resource allocations to enrollments. Troubling labor practices do structure the academy. We therefore share concerns over inequitable labor practices in our institutions. But we also want to draw attention to how labor struggles and conditions are linked to curricular and pedagogical reforms and symbolic capital.

Bousquet is worried, and rightly so, that the figure of the bureaucrat/pragmatist *boss* will "become the field's dominant subject-position and not the vexed and contradictory intentions and experiences of individuals" (519 n3). Yet, in the end, Bousquet's construction of himself as the "unofficial" or "outlaw hero"—the equivalent of Neo (the messianic character who leads the fight against the network that controls people's lives) in our discipline's own version of *The Matrix*—appears as reductive as the WPA who casts himself as the official hero—the heroic manager—teacher-trainer, or professional guru. What we would like to see, and where we have placed our efforts as WPAs, is greater documentation of and attention to these contradictions and vexed experiences.

Does this make us bureaucratic pragmatists? Boss compositionists? No. But neither do we see ourselves as the new proletariat within a composition economy. We embrace Horner's conception of the materiality of writing, which takes into account the socioeconomic conditions, including global relations of power. These power differentials contribute to the production and distribution of writing, and enable certain social relations among students and teachers, readers and writers that are shaped by race, class, gender, ability, generation, ethnicity, and so on (2000, xviii–xix). We argue for a critical return to the discourse on radical multiculturalism and turn to globalization studies that draw connections among political, economic, and representational practices as a way to frame the links between curricular and labor practices and to articulate the indispensability of rhetorical modes of inquiry in understanding our geopolitical and historical place(s) in the world. Our curricular work in the writing program at Ohio State, in collaboration with graduate students, foregrounds the *relationality* of symbolic, cultural, and economic capital; namely, how GTAs of color and GTAs who are international and nonnative speakers of English negotiate and claim authority in a multicultural composition classroom; how certain rhetorical, cultural, and linguistic traditions have been valued over others within GTA training; and how such values structure the economy of teaching at a large public university.

We do not feel any obligation to rescue the WPA as a representational figure, even though we might be a bit alarmed about making the WPA a metaphor and scapegoat! Rather, as administrators of one of the nation's largest public

first-year writing programs, we are more interested in contributing to the documentation of writing programs as contentious *worksites* from which we might intervene, shape, and interrupt the rhetoric of consumption and managerial materialism upon which both unfair labor practices and the commercialization of instruction thrive. These worksites of contention provide opportunities for WPAs, especially those from minority groups, to become agents of change for these underserved labor populations that have generally been approached as problematic in academia while their potential as contributors of more global and power-equalizing perspectives has been largely ignored.

Our response to such challenges has been threefold: (1) design curriculum that is comparative, cross-cultural, and enables transnational explorations, which prompts students to understand the value and significance of diversity and relationality in an era of globalization; (2) attend to the particular pedagogical challenges that teachers face, particularly international GTAs and GTAs of color, as they labor to teach first-year writing to predominantly majority populations, and to include these teachers in the design of the more globally focused curriculum; and (3) examine the multiplicity of identity positions that affect the application of a radical multicultural view. For instance, we are interested in highlighting not only how majority societies look at "others" but also how "others" look back. As one international first-year GTA from South Asia put it,

American teenagers are resistant to the idea of a global community. Having taught a political topic in the last two quarters, I have found that I have to first wean them away from very rigid ideas of patriotism, "saving the world" and democracy. It is difficult for them to accept a perspective that is different from the American one for they assume that anyone not agreeing with them is an "enemy." They also like to remain in their cocoons of safety and as teenagers feel more secure discussing pop-culture, music, advertisements, television rather than politics and the global community. While this may be a generalization, the challenge would be to get them interested and involved in the multicultural material. . . . To most of the students, [first-year composition] is after all a required writing course that they just need to pass. Thus, to make them passionate about global issues may require quite some effort [on] the part of the instructor.

### Globalizing Response: The Ohio State MMI Initiative

Our response to the challenges, opportunities, and demands created by incorporating a global outlook has been manifold, and it has been underwritten by our belief that multicultural, multilingual, and international (MMI) students, including GTAs of color, bring unique pedagogical assets to their teaching, at the same time that they face particular pedagogical challenges. The Multicultural Initiative in our program was informed by Ivonne García's own experience as a Latina nonnative speaker of English who teaches in a mostly majority

English department where beginning graduate students teach first-year writing to native speakers. The initiative also was influenced by our observations as administrators of how MMI graduate students have negotiated their adaptation to a different institutional environment and culture, especially at universities where students and faculty of color constitute a small percentage of the larger institutional population.

As Karamcheti points out, these GTAs face challenges that include, but are not limited to, negotiating issues of authority in a different cultural setting and language in their classrooms, and in their own performance as graduate students, especially when they come from institutional cultures where highly interactive pedagogical models are not the norm. In contrast, our program (like many others across the nation) relies on a critical thinking pedagogical norm that promotes and expects students' critical involvement and participation. A participant in the MMI from South Asia described his experience: "I have received little formal guidance for writing an academic paper. No one spent an entire lecture on a thesis statement, so in certain cases I was just a step ahead of my students." This GTA mentioned the "scary" feeling that a shift from "lecture-mode" learning to the "more democratic" U.S. classroom brought on because "the teacher is not impervious to blunt challenges of authority, and as an incoming international TA that can be very unsettling."

MMI GTAs face the sense of being "an outsider" not only as instructors but as students within an unfamiliar institutional culture. One second-year GTA from South Asia and another from China struggled with their classroom performance in literature classes where their professors expected active and assertive participation from their students. Although both said they had actively participated as undergraduates in their respective countries, they expressed difficulty in overcoming a sense that they were foreign to their classrooms in the United States. This sense of alienation transferred to their classroom experience, creating an anxiety about their ability to communicate the material, relate to their U.S. students, and "fit" in the U.S. academic culture. Yet the position also offers unique pedagogical opportunities that should be acknowledged and integrated into the teaching of English in the writing classroom. As a GTA from South Asia expressed, "The American classroom is an alien zone," but also a zone in which she strategically utilizes her position as an "outsider" to dis-identify with students' ethnocentric and nationalistic generalizations and narrow views about other cultures, creating the space for them to expand their cultural views. Another GTA from South Asia noted his ability to engage with U.S. students in discussions about their "place in the world," giving the class a geopolitical and cross-cultural structure aimed at de-centering U.S. students' normalized views of the United States as representing the majority perspective. This GTA also noted how instead of feeling unsettled when he was not aware of particular U.S. cultural values, he used those times to create a space where he could get the students to talk about things that mattered to them and teach him while reaching out to them.



Ever since I got here, and though this has varied, I am conscious of my own position as an outsider, though my students and my colleagues have given me no reason to feel so. The reason I say this is that multicultural instructors can use this position as a position of strength and they certainly need not put on an American accent. There are moments when you are ignorant, and at times even exaggerate and feign your ignorance of American cultural and family values. And this can be turned into a good pedagogical move.

Undeniably, any instructor's inability to place information within a particular cultural context in the U.S. composition classroom introduces a potential problem, because students may perceive this as an opportunity to promote their own personal views about national or other issues as "fact" rather than opinion, and the instructor would be unable to place such views in context.

A grant proposal we developed addressed the pedagogical challenges that international and nonnative U.S. English speakers face as instructors of composition and included their perspectives in our development of a more global and transnational composition pedagogy:

- How might GTAs' identities inform students' claims and assumptions?
- How is the issue of teacher authority complicated by GTA identity in the multicultural classroom, both in a classroom that includes a number of multicultural students and one where multicultural material is being taught to mostly majority students?
- How does the nonnative U.S. English speaker negotiate the position of teaching mostly native-speaker students in what is the instructor's second language?
- What can the writing program do to improve how it recognizes and addresses these challenges?
- How might the program address majority-culture students' perceptions of international GTAs, especially nonnative U.S. English speakers who are teaching English composition?

During the initiative's first quarter in autumn 2004, the program for the first time offered a peer mentoring group specifically designed for MMI graduate instructors in training, which Ivonne García led. The group was conceived as a support group that would meet biweekly, in addition to the peer groups that all GTAs are assigned to during their first quarters of teaching. Second-year MA or PhD students lead these regular peer groups. The first-quarter GTAs who self-selected into the MMI group included three dominant-culture students (one a first-generation Polish-American) and six international GTAs (one from China, two from Korea, and three from South Asia). Two second-year GTAs (from India and China) who had struggled during their first year of teaching were added to the group when they were invited to join in hopes that they would gain from, as well as contribute to, the enhanced mentoring experience.

The peer mentor group was modeled as a forum in which the first-quarter teachers would find support for balancing the three aspects of their lives that influence their participation in the program: their teaching, their graduate work, and their personal lives. The peer group focused on a different aspect each week and included personal experiences in and outside the classroom, discussion of how to teach specific assignments, teaching simulations, discussions and presentations on graduate school work, techniques and tips on how to deal with difficult students and teaching issues, social interaction among peers, and graduate curriculum projects. As one of the international students from India noted:

The MMI Peer Group was formed at a point when, as an international student and as a first-time teacher, I was at my most insecure. It was extremely reassuring to realize that there were others who faced similar problems of authority and confidence in the unfamiliar terrain of the American classroom. Not only did these discussions provide a cathartic experience, I also received a number of useful suggestions about my teaching. As we chatted about common problems, we came up with not only pedagogical strategies but also a sense of humor about our various challenges in class.

We did not expect that so many majority students would want to join the group, but their interest contributed to the peer group's successful implementation, and it showed us that majority students are interested in globalizing the focus of their teaching and in improving their understanding of how to teach in multicultural contexts. For one, our initiative was sensitive to the potential risk of tokenizing GTAs who are nonnative U.S. English speakers (and, for that matter, GTAs of color) as informants, whose primary role is to foster "native" understanding of multiculturalism. In evaluations of the initiative's peer group, the synergy between majority and international students was one of the greatest assets because the GTAs felt they could learn from each other. Participants also made suggestions for improving the peer group, including devoting time to addressing language barriers and teaching ESL students, more class simulations, presentations on particular topics, and a mock-grading exercise.

Another aspect of the initiative included the creation of a think tank that worked together between terms to develop more globally focused syllabi and to discuss the pedagogical challenges of globalizing the writing curriculum. This aspect of the initiative involved some GTAs who worked with the peer group during the previous autumn and other dominant-culture GTA interested in our efforts. One of the dominant-culture students described her participation in the think tank and her process of designing a more globally oriented curriculum as follows:

This process made me realize that my own syllabus was very America-centric, and I had to take a step back to really discover how to incorporate strong multiculturalism in the classroom. It also made me wonder how resistant

students might be to the kind of issues I want to discuss, and how to best present that material so that they actually learn from it and aren't so hesitant. [When asked to articulate the goals of such a curriculum, she said:] To expose students to strong multiculturalism in a supportive, inquisitive, educational environment so that they can begin to interrogate the dominant assumptions about multiculturalism, and in doing so conceive of their own identities and their relationships to other people in new ways.

One of the international GTAs who participated in the peer group and the think tank added this opinion:

Participation in the Think Tank has helped me crystallize and actually implement my desires of creating a multicultural, global community in class. I feel I have realized that being the Other in an American classroom is not a handicap and that I can now use my cultural difference in class as a strategic pedagogical tool. My independent syllabus and the new *Rhetorical Visions* textbook have given me more authority to address exciting issues of culture, identity and community in class.

One of the requirements of the grant was that elements of the initiative be made permanent in our program. Under the direction of Wendy Hesford, the specific results of the initiative included the following:<sup>1</sup>

- The MMI peer mentoring group became a permanent offering in the program every autumn.
- Syllabi with more transnational context was made available to all incoming GTAs, so they can choose to teach classes based on this material.
- The GTA training handbook was expanded to include a section that specifically addresses the challenges of international and nonnative-speaker GTAs.
- Workshops on multicultural issues in the composition classroom were offered on a yearly basis.
- The results of the final MMI initiative assessment survey were taken into consideration in the planning and execution of the next year's training program.

By globalizing the curriculum, by acknowledging and integrating the experiences of MMI GTAs into our institutional culture, and by making changes to our training program based on the initiative's results, our program further enhanced its training. We are aware that challenges remain, such as making

<sup>1</sup> Wendy Hesford directed first-year writing at Ohio State from 2003 to 2007; Ivonne García was a WPA from 2003 to 2004, a senior WPA from 2004 to 2005, and a writing program consultant and peer mentor in 2006; Eddie Singleton continues to serve as associate director of the first-year writing program at Ohio State.

efforts like these more appealing to minority or GTAs of color who in this case did not choose to participate, and the need for a qualitative study of the pedagogical challenges of integrating global texts into the writing curriculum. But we believe that by applying the precepts of a radical multiculturalism committed not just to celebrating difference but to recognizing and addressing global power differentials, university communities can establish initiatives that respond to a theoretical and pedagogical worldview that advocates transnational, geopolitical, and postcolonial approaches to the study and teaching of English composition in the U.S. academy and beyond. As Xiao-ming Li states, we can gain much by engaging the "pedagogical, linguistic, and cultural knowledge that only between-the-worlds residents are privy to" (1999, 44). We agree; the status of the "outsider" should be a "source of authority rather than an indication of incompetence" (51). The field of composition also needs to broaden its multicultural focus on the study of differences within U.S. culture to study processes of transnational exchange within economic, cultural, political, and pedagogical spheres.