ABSTRACT

APPROACHES FOR COLLABORATION: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS ON WRITING TOGETHER

by Ellen Marie Cecil

For my thesis, I conducted a teacher-researcher study which focuses on first-year composition students’ perspectives on team writing. In this study, I examine two different pedagogical approaches for teaching team writing. In both of my first-year composition sections, I used two different methods for grouping students: one where students kept the same team throughout the semester (Class A) and one where they formed different teams for each of the two team-writing projects (Class B). My study examines student views through a collection of different student generated data. My thesis answers the following interrelated questions: what are first-year students’ experiences with collaborative writing? what suggestions do they have for improving pedagogy for composition? what practices may best facilitate collaborative writing? And what grouping method for team projects seemed to work best for them? My thesis concludes by offering instructors suggestions for improving student collaborative writing based on my findings.
APPROACHES FOR COLLABORATION:
STUDENT PERCEPTIONS ON WRITING TOGETHER

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Dedication

I dedicate my thesis to my husband-to-be, Alexander Lemkin. Since the very beginning, you’ve always supported my dreams and education, and that has meant everything to me. Thank you for your love, kindness, laughter, encouragement, and support both these last two years and now, as I’m about to start my Ph.D. program. I look forward to everything life has to offer us in the years to come.
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Chapter One: An Introduction

Like many researchers of collaboration (Hunzer; Kittle and Hicks), my interest in the topic of collaboration stems from my own experience with collaborative writing during my undergraduate career. Whenever collaborative writing projects were assigned I would wince inside, I knew it would be a month-long ordeal trying to get my group members to contribute material and put as much effort as I was into the assignment. The professors who doled out the collaborative projects—all from the English department—universally expounded the desire of employers for collaborative writing experience and they used this to justify the universally hated projects. Although they hit upon the capitalistic reason to engage in collaborative writing, they never delved into the other benefits of collaborative writing, benefits such as raising student awareness of audience (Howard; Newkirk), promoting better writing (Bruffee; Foote), promoting increased understanding of the topic (Bruffee; Wolfe), and developing crucial social skills (Bruffee; Foote; Smith and MacGregor; Trimbur).

However, successful collaboration does not happen all on its own, something my undergraduate professors were not able to thoroughly explain or assist with. There was never scaffolding put in place to address any of the problems that might arise. Instead, we were told to make it work—or else. Thinking back on these experiences after conducting my own research on collaboration, I realized that I dreaded teamwork, not because teamwork itself is bad, but because unstructured teamwork rarely works. The research I reviewed and conducted argues for considerably lengthy team building activities that address concerns of students, provides direct instruction on group dynamics, and helps develop strategic planning (Alexander; Gergits and Schramer; Hunzer; Moline; Wolfe). Unfortunately, far too often there is a disconnect between research best practices and actual pedagogical practice.

After surveying the research on collaboration, I believe a main contributor to this disconnect is a lack of student perspectives on collaboration. A common thread in collaboration scholarship is to focus on teacher perspectives and lore (e.g., Gonzalez; Janangelo; Kittle and Hicks; Mitchell; Murphy and Valdez). While these studies can be extremely helpful, our writing studies research also needs to incorporate empirical scholarship that bring student perspectives and voices to the forefront, such as the studies by Joanna Wolfe, Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede, and

1 The work of Kenneth Bruffee, Joanna Wolfe and Kara Poe Alexander, and Gretchen Vik discuss the ways in which teachers need to be experienced in collaborative pedagogy in order to successfully implement it.
Julia Gergits, James Schramer, and Kathleen Hunzer. These researchers use the perspectives of students (and of professional writers) to provide educators with strategies for facilitating collaborative writing. I aim to continue their tradition of putting collaborative writers’ voices in the forefront with my thesis research, because I believe this gives us the best chance at developing successful pedagogical practices.

Therefore, I’ve conducted a teacher-researcher study which heavily relies upon and incorporates student perspectives. Specifically, I conducted a teacher-research study of team writing in first-year composition. In this study, I examine two different pedagogical approaches for teaching team writing. In each of my first-year composition (FYC) sections in Fall 2014, I used two different methods for grouping students: one where students kept the same team throughout the semester (Class A) and one where they formed different teams for each of the two team-writing projects (Class B). In order to better understand students’ experiences with teamwork, team-selection, and team-duration processes, I collected a variety of data, including: pre- and post-surveys, students’ written reflections on team-work, student coursework, and interviews with students conducted by colleagues during the semester. From this data, I attempt both to better understand the ways students collaborate in different collaborative environments and to offer strategies we might deploy as writing instructors to facilitate more productive teamwork.

**Literature Review**

In order to track the ways the field has discussed collaboration and how that research has influenced by own research, I first review some of the conversation surrounding collaboration. In this literature review I trace the histories of both collaborative learning and collaborative writing scholarship. Although these two areas—learning and writing—intertwine, they follow different historical paths that support their varied pedagogical approaches. At the juncture of both these areas is, of course, collaboration.

Although this may seem like a simple enough term, collaboration scholars have been grappling with definitively defining collaboration since the conversation first began. The definitions of collaboration are varied, but some include: two or more authors working together to write one document (Dale; Howard; Lunsford and Ede), all writing is collaborative (Thralls), a single writer reading and researching (Stratman). These descriptions cover a wide range of
activities which leads to a convoluted definition and trivializes the term. Lunsford and Ede ask, “What is to be gained by blurring the distinctions between coauthorship (a specific, material practice where one or more persons collaboratively draft a document) and the inherently collaborative or social nature of writing and learning in general?” (“Collaboration and Collaborative” 193). Kathleen Blake Yancey and Michael Spooner answer by critiquing the field’s failure to craft a strong definition in their article “A Single Good Mind: Collaboration, Cooperation, and the Writing Self.”² I too worry about the implications of loosely defining collaboration. However, I think it’s beyond the scope of this thesis to truly provide an unambiguous definition of collaboration. Instead, I rely upon the work of Lunsford and Ede and define collaboration as two or more writers working together to create a text where each team member is involved in every (or nearly every) step of the process from brainstorming and drafting to revising and final editing.

**Collaborative Learning**

Scholarship into collaborative learning lay the foundation for our field to consider collaborative writing more explicitly. In the mid-1980’s, Kenneth Bruffee released his influential article “Collaborative Learning and the ‘Conversation of Mankind’” which changed the way many in the field viewed the writing classroom. Bruffee’s article positions a rationale for collaborative learning within the Humanities through tracing its history throughout the disciplines and locating it within higher education since the 1970’s.³ To position it within the Humanities, specifically Writing and English studies, Bruffee asserts internalized thought is directly related to external, social conversation. To put it simply, “To think well as individuals we must learn to think well collectively—that is, we must learn to converse well” (“Collaborative Learning” 640). Bruffee furthers his claim by stating that writing is an extension of internalized thought, “If thought is internalized public and social talk, then writing of all kinds is internalized social talk made public and social again. If thought is internalized conversation, then writing is internalized conversation re-externalized” (“Collaborative Learning” 641).

² Here, Yancey and Spooner review the ways we conceptualize collaboration, which reflects the forms of collaboration we value. In doing so, they ask us to reconsider how we identify the authors and question if a unified text is ideal or if we should reconceptualize the genre of collaboration
³ Bruffee participated in the conversation on collaboration since the 1970’s with the publishing of his article “Collaborative Learning: Some Practical Models” in 1973.
Therefore, Bruffee sees it of critical importance to have students, even as they draft single-authored pieces, collaborating and conversing throughout the writing process, not just the end.

In Bruffee’s follow-up article, “The Art of Collaborative Learning: Making the Most of Knowledgeable Peers,” he continues to challenge the hegemonic pedagogical practices of composition classrooms. In this article, Bruffee suggests that education should focus on building a community of knowledgeable peers rather than focus on rote memorization. As such, he identifies two goals which collaborative learning scholars hope to accomplish: “increase their students’ ability to exercise judgement within the teacher’s field of expertise […] and] to raise their students’ level of social maturity as exercised in their intellectual lives” in order to prepare students for experiences outside of the classroom (“The Art” 45).

Additionally, Bruffee expounds upon the difference between classroom collaboration and professional collaboration, “classroom collaborative learning is inevitably no more than semi-autonomous, because students don’t usually organize their own groups or chose their own tasks,” while professionals, at times, have the option to do so (“The Art” 46). Collaboration in the classroom is additionally complex because in order for autonomous collaboration to run successfully there must be a “willingness to grant authority, willingness to take on and exercise authority, and a context of friendliness and good graces” that isn’t organically occurring in teacher-formed groups (“The Art” 47).

Naturally, collaborative learning received its fair share of criticism. One critic, Andy Fox, challenged Bruffee’s notion that collaborative groups automatically create a space of equality among students. Instead, Fox believes collaborative groups recreate hegemonic norms and power structures of gender and race. Fox offers several suggestions for improving equality within collaborative learning groups. These include, rapport built on “mutual obligation” and the ability to evaluate power structures within groups (119).

A more radical opponent to collaborative learning, Andy S. Johnson, wrote that collaborative learning classrooms are “peer indoctrination classes” which subdue “differences, and enforces conformity” rather than foster dialogue (76). John Trimbur tackles this criticism by revising the notion of consensus. Trimbur contends that we must think of collaborative consensus in terms of dissensus, because collaborative learning is “a process of identifying differences and locating these differences in relation to each other,” which allows students to
unpack their difference (610). Ultimately, this can offer students a way to understand the ways power and communication interplay in day to day communication (615).

**Collaborative Writing**

Despite the critics against collaborative learning, collaboration studies continues to be embraced and developed by composition scholars. As such, collaborative writing developed into a field of inquiry and one of the first major explorations of the field in compositions studies was by Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede in *Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing*. Their text veers away from collaborative learning and instead emphasizes collaborative writing in the professional workplace. Ede and Lunsford surveyed over 1,400 members from various professional associations “to determine the frequency, types, and occasions of collaborative writing among members of these associations” (8). Their results show that collaborative writing, within these associations, is a frequent occurrence. Such evidence pushed against the notion “that writing is inherently and necessarily a solitary, individual act” (5). Such assumptions on the nature of writing left Ede and Lunsford frustrated when they continuously faced adversity for their co-authored texts. Lunsford and Ede state, “What seemed natural to us, however, seemed anything but natural to our English department colleagues. Some in our field caution us, for instance, that we would never receive favorable tenure decisions or promotions if we insisted on publishing coauthored articles” (6). Their experience was not an isolated one. Indeed, a large portion of the initial work on collaborative writing had to first deal with the erroneous notion that writing is a solitary act.

Judith Entes, for example, wrote about the institutional disregard for co-authored manuscripts, specifically in relation to tenure. In her article, Entes describes the resistance she encountered by her department when she tried to seek recognition for co-authored work, instead she was urged to focus on producing work alone. Entes constructs an argument against the disregard, by pointing to large numbers of co-authored articles published in journals to suggest that collaborative writing is not as anomalous as one is led to believe. The work of Lunsford and Ede, Entes, and others have helped the field of writing studies make large strides towards validating collaborative work as appropriate for tenure. However, Lunsford and Ede note that “resistance to collaborative writing has proven much more entrenched than we imagined,”
suggesting there is more work to be done to provide equitable evaluation of collaboration ("Collaboration and Collaborative" 195).

Since faculty still struggle with collaborative writing, it should come as no surprise that students struggle with writing collaboratively. Bruffee noted that students often conceptualize their writing as a solo, isolated act, rather than continuing a conversation with knowledgeable peers ("Collaborative Learning"). Rebecca Moore Howard traces the challenges associated with collaborative writing to the cultural assumption that single authored texts are the only legitimate product of writing. This ideology is associated and reinforced through students’ fears of plagiarism. One way teachers can familiarize their students with collaboration, according to Bruffee, is having students reconceptualize writing with a focus on audience. Students focusing on audience attunes them to the conversational nature of texts and reveals the true connected nature of collaboration and writing. This, however, can only go so far. To further our understanding, David Bleich argues for the development of greater knowledge about “how groups work,” because “[e]xcept in the most general sense, we do not understand how individual interact with one another in groups, and we generally do not know how to textualize group interaction in order to study it in depth” (281). Since then, scholars have been theorizing the ways in which groups work.

Research on the topic of collaboration has offered many different approaches to building groups within the classroom. For example, researchers have suggested to group students based on their writing processes (Hunzer), interests (Kittle and Hicks; Murphy and Valdez), and rapport building exercises (Howard; Moline; Murphy and Valdez). Each of these methods for grouping students have their benefits and weaknesses, but no comparative study has been conducted in order to better evaluate these methods. Grouping students to work together as teams comes with its own unique set of challenges. However, numerous researchers found that rapport between students was key in building successful groups (Bruffee; Gergits and Schramer; Gonzalez; Howard; Hunzer; Kittle and Hicks; Murphy and Valdez), although how to do so was varied. Some suggested building in small activities before the major project so that team members have time to become adjusted to the work style and ethic of their groups (Howard; Moline; Kittle and Hicks; Murphy and Valdez). In addition to providing approaches to collaboration, the pedagogical articles all made reference to a dissonance that created tension and resistance in the collaborative environment. Depending on the author’s experience, the
dissonance was identified in multiple ways: lack of student rapport (Murphy and Valdez; Kittle and Hicks; Moline; Hunzer), writing seen as a solitary act (Ede and Lunsford; Entes), time management (Kittle and Hicks), inability to deal with conflict (Gergits and Schramer), undefined roles (Alexander; Wolfe), and power dynamics based on gender and race (Howard; Wolfe and Alexander).

The research on collaborative writing has extended our understanding and ability to teach team writing, however a noticeable trend within this research is a reliance on teacher perspectives. Teacher perspectives are useful for understanding collaboration in the composition classroom; however, it leaves me wondering as to what we are missing from the collaboration conversation. One researcher in particular, Joanna Wolfe, has worked to bring student perspectives in to collaborative writing studies. After receiving a grant from the National Science Foundation, Wolfe conducted a multiyear study that examined collaboration in STEM classrooms. From her work, she has written several articles on collaboration and a textbook on how to facilitate successful collaborative writing. In the articles she’s written, Wolfe states that she’s collected questionnaires (“Computer Expert”), video recorded sessions of group meetings (“Gesture;” “The Role;” Wolfe and Powell), student exchanged emails, copies of drafts, biweekly process diaries (“Gesture”), and private interviews (“Gesture;” “The Role”). This wide collection of data allowed Wolfe to offer empirically grounded suggestions to improve collaboration.

In “The Role of Writing in Effective Team Projects: Students and Professionals Differ,” Wolfe found that student teams and professional teams greatly differ in approaches to collaboration. While professionals created documents throughout the collaboration process to communicate decisions and track progress, students relied primarily on verbal communication. The professional documents helped keep teams organized, while the reliance on verbal communication often left many student groups unfocused. The lack of written communication led to many complications for student teams. Wolfe offers a variety of suggestions to help improve student collaboration, which is later expanded into her textbook, Team Writing.

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4 Her textbook, Team Writing, offers students a practical guide for writing together. It addresses important organizational documents students should create, various methods of writing together, dealing with conflict, and communication. I used this text to provide my students various readings on collaboration and used its organizational structures to format my class collaboration.
Additionally, Wolfe research has provided insights into the gendered dynamics within teams. Her article with Kara Poe Alexander, “The Computer Expert in Mixed-Gendered Collaborative Writing Groups,” examined mixed-gendered teams’ multimodal composing. They found that men typically take on the role as computer expert, seen as more visible and valuable than writing tasks, which were largely taken on by women. The invisibility of women’s roles within groups contributed to them being undervalued in their teams. The devaluation of women’s roles in collaborative groups was also reported in another articles by Wolfe, “Gesture and Collaborative Planning.” Here, Wolfe reports that hand gestures influence students’ perceptions of authorship (308). This is of particular relevance because men typical move around more—through fidgeting and gesturing—than women, which could suggest “that such movement might give men an advantage in certain work settings” (328). Additionally, Wolfe and Powell examined the stereotype that women complain more than men in mixed-gender groups. Their research found women and men in class projects complain an equal amount, but often for different reasons. For example, women will “use complaints as an indirect request for action, while men were more likely to use complaints to excuse behavior or to make themselves seem superior” (17). Their findings suggest that, “stereotypes linking women with complaining and other expressions of dissatisfaction may have less to do with the actual number of complaints men and women utter… and more to do with the different purposes that seem to motivate men and women’s complaints” (18). As is clearly evident, Wolfe and her collaborators research have all provided scholars with a better understanding of the dynamics of team environments.

*Remaining Questions*

I find the previous research on collaboration invaluable, due to the many ways it advances our knowledge on collaborative pedagogy. As I have stated, many authors focused on teacher lore or their own experiences as undergraduates to frame their claims. Their experience provides teachers with a much needed lens to understand the collaborative process. However, with the rare exceptions of a few studies—such as Wolfe’s work, we do not hear enough student voices and perspectives on collaboration in writing studies scholarship. When our scholarship relies primarily upon teacher experience, we lose a large portion of valuable insight from our students. Therefore, I believe that we need to widen our gaze to include other types of lenses to better understand student collaborative writing processes.
Our understanding of student experiences with group writing is underdeveloped, which leaves us with many questions on the nature of collaboration. To continue to improve our pedagogy, we need to consider students’ lived experiences with team writing and provide them with the space to offer suggestions on ways to better their collaboration experience. With a focus on centralizing student perspectives, my current research hopes to offer additional insight into their experiences. My study examines student views by collecting a variety of different student generated data on their experiences in a comparative study on team grouping methods and team duration. I hope to answer the following interrelated questions: what are first-year students’ experiences with collaborative writing? what suggestions do they have for improving pedagogy for composition? what practices may best facilitate collaborative writing? And what grouping method for team projects seemed to work best for them?

**My Study**

*Previous Pilot Study*

Before I began working on this project, I conducted a pilot study in Spring 2014 that focused on students’ and tenure-line faculty’s experiences with collaboration. I sent out anonymous surveys to select composition and rhetoric faculty at Miami University whom I knew participated in collaborative scholarship. I sent the same survey to first-year composition students by contacting instructors I knew who taught Miami’s first-year composition courses ENG 111 and ENG 112. Students and faculty were asked to select emotions they associated with collaboration and answer a few questions about their experiences with collaboration. In a nutshell, what I found was students and faculty have very different experiences and emotions associated with collaboration. This study piqued my interest to learn even more about students’ perspectives on collaboration. Thus, for my current project, I have conducted a teacher-research study of team writing in first-year composition. I implemented two different pedagogical approaches for teaching team writing, and in what follows I will describe my research site, participants, methods for data collection and data analysis. Because I recognized that all research is, of course, shaped by the researcher, I also reflect on my positionality as a researcher in this study.
During the time I enacted the study on collaboration, I was teaching two sections of ENG 111: Composition and Rhetoric. This course is part of the two course sequence of first-year composition at Miami University. As such, there are set goals, outcomes, and inquiries—which instructors need to facilitate in their classrooms in order to encourage consistency throughout the sections. The Composition Director, Jason Palmeri, provided new instructors on set language to define these goals for our students:

- Develop flexible and effective strategies for generating ideas; researching topics; composing drafts; revising, peer responding, editing, and proofreading writing via print and digital media
- Conduct research-based inquiries, use invention techniques effectively to explore your own ideas, engage different perspectives, and develop findings into sustained arguments or narratives.
- Locate, evaluate, integrate, and cite secondary sources of information effectively and ethically, using appropriate academic citation methods.
- Produce effectively organized writing that is stylistically appropriate, demonstrating careful attention to proofreading and meeting conventional expectations for particular audiences in specific contexts.
- Write effectively and persuasively for diverse contexts, audiences, purposes, and genres
- Develop critical awareness of the unique affordances and limitations of diverse writing technologies and modalities of communication, both digital and non-digital.
- Reflect critically on your own writing practices and rhetorical decisions.

As a Miami Plan Foundation course, English 111 meets the broad goals of a liberal education: to nurture your intellectual capabilities to think critically, to understand diverse contexts, to engage with other learners, and to apply knowledge and skills learned through effective reflection and action.

For my own classes, I added a final outcome, “Learn to work with peers in a successful collaborative environment” (see Appendix A for full syllabus). This additional statement did not drastically change the goals of the course, but added a supplementary component that complimented and extended the aims of the course. In order to achieve these goals, there are five inquiries that are outlined in the Miami Composition Teacher’s Guide:

1. Initial Reflection — this assignment is a project that asks students to write about their present or past rhetorical and/or composing experiences
2. Rhetorical Analysis — this inquiry asks students to apply fundamental rhetorical principles—ethos, pathos, logos, and kairos for example—to analyze texts
3. Public Issue Argument — this inquiry asks students to take a position on a topic
and defend those positions publicly using rhetorical devices and the writing of others.

4. Remediation — in this inquiry, students will remediate a piece of writing they have done previously in the course into a new medium, adapting and revising their message for the medium.

5. Final Reflection — this inquiry asks students to compose a portfolio where they reflect on their semester of writing, their writing process, and what they have learned about writing and communication. (Saur and Leckie)

The Composition Director welcomes instructors to craft their own assignment prompts as long as they meet the goals and outcomes of the inquiry as defined by the *Miami Composition Teacher’s Guide*.

For my study, I chose to adapt Inquiry Three: Public Issue Argument and Inquiry Four: Remediation into collaborative writing assignments. The *Miami Composition Teacher’s Guide* outlines the basic purpose of these two inquiries as such: Inquiry Three “asks students to take positions on a topic and defend those positions publicly using rhetorical devices and the writing of others” (Saur and Leckie 134), while Inquiry Four asks students to “remediate a piece of writing they have done previously in the course into a new medium, adapting and revising their messages for the medium” (Saur and Leckie 145). For Inquiry Three, I had my students write a research essay on a topic that dealt with writing in some capacity and incorporated primary data (see Appendix B). Inquiry Four built off of the research from Inquiry Three and allowed students to remediate their projects into any medium they saw fit (see Appendix C).

I chose these two inquiries for my students to collaborate on for a few reasons. In the past, I had noticed that some of my students struggled with certain aspects of writing a formal research paper at the college-level. Some students felt uncomfortable branching outside of the five-paragraph essay format and a long research paper with a preliminary annotated bibliography seemed daunting. Others, however, had a variety of experiences with research writing, including several who had extensive experience, which made them key resources for other students to draw from. Since Inquiries 3 and 4 are challenging assignments, I thought my students would benefit from having teammates to draw knowledge and expertise from.

**Methods of Grouping**

I used two different methods for grouping students. In Class A, students kept the same team throughout the semester. I grouped these students together on the second day of class based
on their writing processes, a method adapted from Kathleen Hunzer (“Connecting Writing”). To accomplish this, on the first day of class students responded to a prompt asking them to discuss their writing process (see Appendix D). Then I grouped students with like responses together.

In Class B, students were grouped together each day for the first six weeks of class using a variety of different methods. This way, the students had the chance to work with a variety of different students on smaller class activity project, which would later help with their team selection process. A week before the major team projects began, I used an adapted method from Mialisa Moline to create teams. Students posted an “ad” on our class course site, which advertised themselves as a potential team member (see Appendix E). Students read through all of the ads and created a team preference list of the top five students they wanted to work with. In this document, which was only shared between myself and the writer, they could also denote any students they did not want to work with. Based off of the preference lists, I grouped students together so that every student had at least one person from their preference list.

Once Inquiry 3 began, students in both classes worked in a team every day class was held. The assignments varied, but usually included discussion questions and/or a small project. My intended goal was to have the students acclimate to collaboration through a variety of low stakes exercises. I attempted to have all of my students grouped into teams of three, however there were two groups in Class B that had four members.

Participants

The students selected for this study were participating in one of my two first-year composition (FYC) sections. The majority of these students were first-year students who just started their first semester at Miami University. I did not collect any specific data on my students’ socioeconomic backgrounds because I felt that this type of data collection was too invasive for my position as a teacher researcher. However, in general terms, the undergraduate student body population at Miami University is largely homogenous, with the majority coming from White, upper middle class families. In total, there were only two students of color in both sections of my course.

My thesis advisor, Heidi McKee, solicited student responses by attending the class, discussing the research project, and handing out consent forms. In total, forty-one (41) students
were asked to participate and thirty-four (34) students agreed to participate by participating in interviews and/or allowing their class writing to be quoted in this thesis.

**Researcher**

Because my own positionality shapes the research questions I ask and the answers I find, let me take a moment to discuss my own positioning. I am a new instructor—having taught five sections of first-year composition at Miami in two years. Although I don’t focus as much in this thesis on these aspects of identity, I am white female raised in the middle class.

One of the earliest readers of my thesis asked me how my collaborative pedagogy impacted me as an instructor. Although I had been constantly thinking about my pedagogical approach to collaboration, I never really stopped to think how it was shaping me both as an instructor and a scholar. But, it seems clear to me now that collaborative pedagogy has shaped me a great deal.

Take, for instance, when I first started teaching. I jokingly threatened my students with a collaborative project. I still saw collaboration as punishment because I remembered how much I hated them in my undergrad career, and I assumed many students felt the same way. I thought, I’m now chagrined to admit, collaboration would be a good threat and thus a good motivation for individual students to stay on task and focus during class. I thought that forcing students to write together was a cruel punishment, doomed to fail from the start. If you had told me then that I would later develop a love for collaborative pedagogy, I would have laughed.

However, something changed for me when I was taking one of the required teaching seminars. In this class, I worked closely with my fellow graduate teaching assistants to develop stronger teaching practices. I looked forward to working with and learning from my classmates and I soon realized I didn’t harbor the same resentment against collaboration as I did in the past. Intrigued by my change in opinion, I started to do some research on the differences between expert and novice collaboration as well as collaborative pedagogy. By the time I had finished my initial research, I was willing and eager to build collaboration into my own classroom.

But, I’ll admit, I still feared a mass revolt when I first introduced the idea that they would be working together. However, no one said a word. Nevertheless, I continued to worry

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5Some, in their reflections, expressed that they were not too enthused about working together, but seemed resigned to give it a shot.
about my students becoming disgruntled with the collaboration. I think my knowledgeable novice position added to my anxiety of failing my students. Not only was I a relatively new teacher, but I was taking on a teaching method that none of my peers were doing. In some ways, it was a very isolating experience. Here I was, this young collaboration scholar attempting to do something radically different (at least in my mind) without much guidance. It seemed like no matter how much I read, I never knew enough. And, I worried that my students would see right through me. But, I was excited. I wanted it to work. I really felt that I could make a difference in my students’ learning by introducing collaborative learning and writing in my class.

So, I made sure I sold collaboration to them. Many of my students were interested in getting ahead in the business world, so I talked up how being able to work collaborative is the number one skill employers seek (Adams). Additionally, I told them about how collaborative writing could improve their own writing and how their peers were valuable learning assets.

To insure they had the support they needed to succeed, I spent a week discussing various aspects of collaboration using Joanna Wolfe’s *Team Writing*. We went over common problems that students encounter in teams, communication styles, and organizational tips to keep the team on track. I also had the students create Team Charters and Task Schedules, which Wolfe recommends in *Team Writing*. The Team Charter helps students vocalize their goals and concerns for the project ahead of time. Having students create a formal document addressing their concerns and goals, provides a low-stakes space to talk about any worries they may have. The Task Schedule has students create a game plan for when things are due and who will be responsible for them. The ultimate goal of this document is so that every student knows what they will be doing and when they’ll need to have it completed by. Ultimately, I think these two documents really helped my students communicate early on and establish set expectations.

In some regards, I think I may have gone overboard with collaborative pedagogy. There was hardly a time when students weren’t working collaboratively in some capacity. I had my students working and talking in a group every day the class met. I devoted time to each class period so that they would have the opportunity to work with their teammates during class time. While I think the time they spent working together before the team project was good for building rapport and understanding of collaboration, I think some of them began to feel team fatigue. One student came up to me and told me they wished we could do more individual class work. While
there will always be students who are not on board with your brand of pedagogy, I think it is important to find balance between collaboration and individual work.

Although I’ve spent the past year and a half studying collaboration, I feel that I have much to learn. As a teacher, I have yet to feel completely settled with my collaboration pedagogy. It feels like there is still more to learn and discover in regards to collaboration. But, I think that has something to do with being a new teacher. Through more experience, I feel that I continue to develop my pedagogy, but I think there will always be an unsettled feeling. Perhaps that’s a good thing, because it will encourage me to continue developing strategies for collaborative learning and writing.

Data Collection

In order to better understand students’ experiences with teamwork, team-selection, and team-duration processes, I collected a variety of data, including: pre- and post-surveys, students’ written reflections on team-work (four in total), team assessments, student coursework, and interviews with students conducted by colleagues during the semester.

Students took the pre-survey on the first day of class as a way for me to gauge their knowledge and perception of team writing and various subjects relating to the course. The post-survey was taken the last week of class and used the same questions in the pre-survey. Students were allowed to see and compare their own results for a final reflection paper on the course. Many students opted not to use this data in their final course reflections. The reflections were designed to provide me with insight on how each team member felt about the process. They were tailored based on when students responded to them in relation to the project. The team assessments were completed after the two collaboration assignments (see Appendix F). I adapted the team assessment from the work of Kara Poe Alexander, asking students to comment on a variety of their experiences during their team projects.

My graduate peer colleagues, Joe Franklin and Beth Saur, conducted the interviews throughout the team writing project. In total, they conducted six interviews with four different students. The questions that they asked the students depended on where in the project process the team was at the time (see Appendix G and H). The questions were designed to prompt students to discuss their perceptions of team work. Each interview lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes.
and, although there were some set questions, each interview was also shaped by the interviewer’s style, particularly in terms of follow-up questions asked.

**Analyzing Data**

To analyze my data, I pulled from the work of Ellen Barton to develop a thematic inductive analysis. Barton describes the usefulness of inductive reasoning as such:

> First, and most important, it captures the circularity of the process of bottom-up (or data-based) discourse analysis: Discourse analysis involves looking at texts, inductively identifying their rich features and salient patterns, and then using these features and patterns as examples in an argument in support of some generalization(s) or claim(s) about the meaning relations between features, texts, and their contexts. (23)

Barton uses inductive reasoning to support discourse analysis, and while I acknowledge that I am not conducting a discourse analysis, I find her analysis method particularly useful. Her work recognizes the importance of focusing on the participants’ voices and texts and using these as a guide to develop themes for analysis, rather than subscribing a set code to decipher meaning. Using this methodology, after the semester was over and I had transcribed the interviews, I read through interview transcripts, student reflections, and student writing and I noted what students discussed and ways they discussed different issues. I then re-read and re-read the material, refining themes that I noticed. Ultimately I focused on the following themes that emerged from the data: grouping method, personal reflection, interpersonal relationships, team contributions, recommendations for teacher improvement, anxiety, teacher involvement, communication, assignment description, writing styles, quality, accountability, control, time management, and compromise. These codes were developed and revised as they emerged in the students’ texts and interview transcripts.

**Looking Ahead**

Before going much further, I think it is important to note that my findings are based primarily on neurotypical students. Although researchers of collaboration position their subjects

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6 Although it is certainly possible that some of my students identify as neuroatypical, that is not something I considered in the course of this study.
within a variety of identity markers (education, race, gender, class, etc.) very few have acknowledged that, what seems most often, their research reports the findings from abled students. I feel uncomfortable with any indication that these findings and pedagogical suggestions would apply to all classrooms, both because my study is a small semi-experiment with a particular body of students. That being said, I think instructors will find my research helpful in considering experiences students encounter during collaboration.

In Chapter Two: Student Voices, I detail the results from my students’ writing and interviews. Moreover, I look at the most prominent themes that emerged from the data analysis. These include: student anxiety associated with collaboration, the impact of preexisting friendships on groups, and group members learning from their peers. My findings affirm other studies’ findings that collaboration can create a space where students feel comfortable learning from their peers and using them as valuable resources, but that specific scaffolding and team activities could be implemented to improve collaboration.

In Chapter Three, the final chapter, I draw from the data in Chapter Two to offer recommendations to improve collaborative writing experiences. I conclude the chapter with recommendations for future research into collaboration. I examine the major gaps in collaboration research as a whole and the ideas and questions I carry forward from this study.
Chapter Two: Student Voices

At the beginning of this study, I hoped for clear black and white delineations between the two classes. I felt confident that Class A—the students grouped together based on writing processes at the beginning of the semester—would prove superior to Class B—the students who were grouped later on in the semester based on team preferences. However, the results provide no clear cut answer and instead offered shades of grey, which, for many experienced scholars in writing studies probably comes as no surprise. Many of the students in both classes encountered similar challenges, such as anxiety associated with collaboration, while there were also some unique challenges faced by one, such as conflict with friends. And, while no one class truly proved to be superior to the other, some aspects of the grouping and duration for each did have their advantages in terms of collaboration.

In this chapter, I will go over the major findings of this study by first giving an overview of the noteworthy differences and similarities between the two classes. Then, I will discuss three key themes that emerged from the students’ reflections and interviews. These themes include: student anxiety associated with collaboration, conflict that arose between friends in groups, and peer-to-peer learning.

Grouping Students

As a teacher and researcher, I thought that Class A would clearly be the stronger class and, for a while, it was apparent to me that Class A was excelling in group work far beyond that of Class B. I believe my initial perceptions of the differences in the classes was because of my own biases going into the study. I believed more students would be comfortable working with the same people every day, rather than having to constantly adjust to new people. As a student, I had found I was most comfortable working with the same teammates and felt resentful against instructors who constantly forced me into new groups. Additionally, I had read a compelling article by Kathleen Hunzer on the merits of grouping students based on writing processes, so I had high hopes for the grouping method. It only became clear after analyzing all the components of data that the two classes shared more similarities than differences.
Opinions on Group Work

Based on several questions from the post-survey and responses from the team assessment, it appears that students from Class A and B have similar opinions on group work. In the team assessment, I asked students to rank how happy they were with their collaboration experience. Satisfaction levels were extremely high, with 100% of students who completed the team assessment (n=33) indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied (see Figure 1). In the post-survey, when asked if they enjoyed working with a group 88% of Class A reported agreeing or strongly agreeing and 69% of Class B reported agreeing or strongly agreeing. When asked if team writing was a worthwhile skill, 84% of students in Class A agreed or strongly agreed and 94% of Class B agreed or strongly agreed. These results indicate that students in this study were satisfied with their overall collaboration experience.

Team Selection
One major difference between the classes resided in opinions on team selection. Each of the classes were clearly influenced by their grouping method. When the classes were first surveyed, responses regarding preferred grouping methods varied greatly. However, the largest reported response class was random selection of teammates, with 42% of Class A students and 50% of Class B students referencing this choice (see Figures 2 and 3). Fortunately, some participants chose to elaborate in the open text box on the survey as to why they thought this was the best
method for grouping students. Several students, in both classes, stated a benefit of this method is it forces students not to work with their friends. Take, for instance, Aaron’s response “I believe that the best method to group students into teams is to randomly create groups because I think that working with your friends encourages more slacking and talking about different subjects that doesn't relate to the topic.” As seen in this response, these students recognize the potential challenges of working with teammates they are friends with. And, as a later section will show, these concerns appear to be valid.

Figure 2: Class A's pre-survey results regarding their opinions on grouping methods.

Figure 3: Class B's pre-survey results regarding their opinions on grouping methods.
In the post-survey responses, I noticed a dramatic shift away from randomly selected groups. The percentage of students selecting this option dramatically decreases to 5% of students in Class A and no students in Class B. I believe this shift is due to students’ experiences with the grouping method implemented in their class. In the post-surveys, we see students selecting methods that are similar or the same method implemented in their classes. In Class A’s post-survey results, 55% of students reported a preference of being grouped based on their writing.

Figure 4: Class A’s post-survey results regarding their opinions on grouping methods.

Figure 5: Class B’s post-survey results regarding their opinions on grouping methods.
processes, which was the method used for their class (see Figure 4). Class B’s post-survey results show the vast majority preferring some variation of self-selection, which references the methods used to group them (see Figure 5).

One way to read these preferences for grouping methods is, of course, that students are just reporting to me what they think I want to hear: that they prefer the method I used to group their classes. But another way to read these preferences is that they reflect students’ satisfaction with their collaboration experience and grouping method in their class. This interpretation would indicate that students in Class A were more satisfied with their group selection method than Class B. However, I think the satisfaction levels are not as drastically different as the pie graphs suggest. For Class B responses, I think it is important to recognize the self-selection method is not drastically different from the mixed mode method, as it might appear at first glance. Class B students may have been advocating for mixed mode collaboration (the method we used in class), but were unable to adequately articulate this. Take, for instance, Beth’s response: “Let the students pick. The system we picked our partners for Inquiry 3 and Inquiry 4 worked decently.” Here, Beth claims she wants students to self-select their groups, but then she indicates that the system we used for class, mixed mode (a combination of student and teacher selected groups), worked well. If she had not written the last sentence, it would not be clear that she preferred the mix-method style, which was used in her class. Beth’s response, and others, suggests some students incorrectly identified their preferred method of grouping.

Students also voiced their opinion on the grouping methods in Reflection Four when I asked them their opinion on the grouping method. Many students responded that they liked how they were grouped. These two responses are typical examples of how students answered this prompt:

I like how you chose our groups. It made it so we had a say in our group members. And by having us work together before the group projects started let us get a feel for each other. -Nancy (Class B)

I think the way the groups were chosen was smart. It made sense to split it up by how everyone works. I can’t think of another method that would be better. -Lacey (Class A)

These responses, I believe, show that students in both classes enjoyed their collaboration experience and grouping and duration did not sway their opinion one way or the other.
Team Relationships

From the studies that I have read, there has not been much formal discussion on whether to keep teams together or to force students to work with new teammates. One scholar, Andy Fox argues against switching up groups because it “prevents the kinds of relationships that encourage reconsidering ideas and assumptions, halting the learning for a time” (119). As a student, I would have agreed with Fox. I preferred to work in the same group of students because I would develop a level of comfort with them. However, in the past, experienced teachers have advised me to place my students in rotating groups, which change every day, so they can have the chance to participate with a wide variety of students. The conflicting advice with my personal experience as a student made me pay careful attention to the dynamics in the groups within the two different structures of Class A and Class B.

In this study, I identified a distinct difference between the two classes on how they framed group work before working with their teams for the group projects. In the first reflection, I found that students in Class A reported stronger bonds to their teammates than Class B. During the completion of this reflection, Class A was working with the same teammates and Class B was rotating teammates every day. Many students in Class A talked about the gains in their relationships with their teammates in specific ways, while Class B talked about their teammates in a more general sense. To show what I mean by this, I’ve provided two examples of typical responses from the two classes. From Class A students:

The small group work is going really well! I think it’s a great idea to have small group collaborations. I personally love my team that I have been working with, I have absolutely no complaints about that! I do like working with the same members every day because it builds a relationship between us, and we feel more comfortable just saying whatever we think about a topic. -Allison

I really enjoy the small groups. I think grouping us by writing styles was a great idea and my group functions very well because of it. I enjoy working with the same members because we’re getting to know each other well and have a better understanding of the others’ writing styles, opinions, etc. I think that feeling more comfortable with your group members definitely helps with being able to freely discuss your thoughts. –Alexis
As you can see in these examples, students report positive feelings associated with their teammates and discuss ways they are building relationships and becoming comfortable with their group. In comparison, here are two typical responses from Class B students:

I think the group work has been going great and I have gotten along with everyone I have worked with and I like meeting new people and cannot wait to keep working in different groups. -Eric

I think the small group work is going well. I’ve liked the teams I’ve worked with because we have all contributed and got the work done. I do like working with different people each time because it helps you get to know your classmates a little better. -Janet

Similarly to Class A, these Class B students report positive feelings in association with group work. Allison and Alexis, however, talk about their bonds with their teammates in concrete ways, such as feeling comfortable with their teammates, getting to know their writing processes, and being able to freely share their ideas. To me, it seems that these two students have gotten to know their group members a great deal. On the other hand, Eric and Janet enjoy working in a variety of different teams, but their responses are more generalized and therefore they don’t talk about their rapport with their teammates in the same way Class A students do.

As a teacher, it appeared to me that Class A had stronger attachments to their groups, resulting in livelier group discussions and, in turn, stronger whole class conversations. In my teaching journal I kept during the semester, I wrote:

It’s becoming increasingly apparent that the two classes are at completely different levels in terms of skills and commitment. I’m not sure how much this is the groups and how much this is just the dynamics of the class. Class A is by far the stronger class, the discussions are more in-depth and they ask more questions about the material. Their grades seem to be higher as well. Class B seems to be struggling-- they seem to only scratch the surface with the material that I have them complete. I often have to prompt them to go a bit more deeply in their analysis and responses.

As my reflection indicates, it appeared to me that Class A was the stronger class in terms of focused group work and strength of discussion. While I would have to push Class B to thoroughly think through some concepts introduced in the class, Class A seemed to more easily
grasp these same ideas. I am still not sure how much this is rooted in the grouping methods and how much this just the dynamics of the class. As many teachers know, each class has their own distinctive identity that forms without much influence from the teacher. And, again, my observations could be rooted into some of my own biases. As I stated previously, I went into the study believing Class A would be the stronger class so I could be seeing more of what I wanted to see than what was truly there.

All in all, it seemed that Class A was much more comfortable in the classroom than Class B. In some regards, this makes sense because students in Class A have had time to get to know each individual on their team, while Class B students have not spent extended periods of time working with the same people. These responses and my own experiences indicate the students in Class A formed stronger, more concrete bonds than those of students in Class B before they started working together for the team project. This suggests, at least for the students in this study, working with the same classmates on a day-to-day basis helps build rapport and community.\footnote{I found that as Class B regularly worked with their teams on their assignment, the classes’ reflections became more homogenous in regards to their relationships with their teammates. In both classes, students tended to talk about their teammates in a positive manner and they appeared as if they were equally close in terms of rapport.}

**Anxiety and Distrust**

In the pilot study I conducted in 2014 (see Chapter One), students identified a wide range of emotions that they associated with collaborative writing, everything from excitement to despair, anxiety to determination. The two highest reported emotions were anxiety and nervousness, with fourteen students (51.9% of participants) selecting anxiety and twelve students (44.4% of participants) indicating nervousness. Although this previous pilot study can in no way represent all students’ experiences with collaboration, I have found that many students who walk through my classroom doors experience anxiety associated with collaboration. Unfortunately, in this study I did not prompt my students to talk specifically about anxieties they might be experiencing in association with collaboration. However, I had several students who identified themselves as being anxious about teamwork through their reflections and conversations with me.
In the first reflection, which was written before the start of the team writing project, I prompted students to reflect on their in-class experiences with their teams. At this time, Class A\(^8\) did not specify that they had any worries about working together for their group project. In fact, many students discussed the strong interpersonal relationships they had built with their teams. In Class B, however, there were four student voices who raised concerns about the upcoming project:

**To be honest, I wish we could choose our own groups because some of our classmates are not as serious and studious as I am. So when doing editing I would rather have the option to choose reliable group mates to edit my work then people I do not know. But keep in mind, I have trust issues.** -Grant (Reflection 1)

**Group work is the bane of my existence. Nothing scares me more than doing all the work on a project that is designed for 4+ people and everyone else getting credit for my work. This hasn’t happened yet but I know that group work is part of the curriculum so I’m nervous.** -Ryan (Reflection 1)

**I am not really a fan of the peer editing for our inquiries. I personally think it can make your thoughts more confusing when hearing from others if they don’t like them or whatever. Some people have different ways of writing and they may not understand the point and just comment ‘delete’ or ‘this doesn’t make sense’. It would be best if people asked what the context is to get a grasp of the text.** -Tom (Reflection 1)

**It would be nice to have the opportunity to choose my own group every once in a while. That way I can avoid the people who drag the group down and I can work with people that I am more comfortable with. [...] However, sometimes I find myself having to do most, or all of the work. A fault of mine with a group of slackers is that I can’t allow us to just do nothing, so I do everything myself. It’s pretty frustrating.** -Ron (Reflection 1)

Each of these student voices focus on distrusting their peers.\(^9\) Grant focuses on his potential teammates letting him down because they don’t share the same work ethic he has. He freely admits that he has trust issues which play a heavy factor in his ability to believe in his

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\(^8\) As a reminder, Class A is the class where the students worked together from the beginning of the semester and Class B began working together a week before the team project started.

\(^9\) Although gender isn’t a focus of this study, I thought it was interesting that all of these students were male. A future study which focuses on gendered expressions of collaboration anxiety may be useful in better understanding gendered responses to collaboration.
future team members. Ryan is worried his teammates will not contribute the same amount of work he’s willing to put in and he will end up with the majority of the work. Tim’s concerns rest on his present situation and his struggles with communicating his thoughts in writing. Before reading their reflections, I would not have thought of these students as particularly anxious about working with their peers. None of them approached me to discuss their concerns with team writing, so the reflections became a useful tool to gage student perceptions.

In the subsequent reflections and team assessment, Grant and Tom’s concerns about their teammates do not manifest themselves. Ron and Ryan’s, however, linger during their collaboration process. Ryan, in particular, faces issues with trust extensively throughout the process. Although he doesn’t reflect on his concerns in Reflection 2, they appear again in Reflection 3:

I enjoy our group and think everything is going ok. We seem to be crunched for time sometimes but all seems well. We work well together and there is good chemistry. Everyone seems to be contributing equally and doing a good job. I’ve learned that other people are dependable but that my anxiety will prevent me from trusting them to do work well.

Ryan acknowledges that his affiliation with his teammates continues to be a healthy working relationship. He states that they “work well together,” have “good chemistry,” and “are dependable” and yet he doesn’t trust them to follow through. His worries do have some merit to them. His group did not read the instructions for one of the organizational activities and received a poor grade on it. His reflection on the instance is, however, framed positively: "[I] am content with the 0/20 on the task schedule. It was a simple misunderstanding of what the assignment entailed so we will resubmit that in order to receive the full credit" (Reflection 2). Ryan is willing to repeatedly frame his teammates positively in his writing, but still hold on to his mistrust of them.

In class, he privately expressed his exasperation with his teammates when he would request extensions for uncompleted work. This could have been a tactic to gain sympathy and persuade me grant the group “special privileges” by allowing them to revise work or turn in late work. However, in the case of the task schedule, I allowed many groups to revise them and, if other groups would have asked, I would have granted extensions to them too. As someone who’s
worked in teams where a teammate has not turned in their work on time (regardless of multiple reminders), I understand that sometimes keeping track of deadlines and quality of work can be especially challenging. And, having an understanding instructor can help lessen the stress of group work. It is possible, Ryan and his team didn’t expect this type of leniency and therefore used tactics they thought would be most successful. Or, these interactions could indicate Ryan’s struggle with balancing work and friendship.

Perhaps as a way to accommodate his anxiety for working in groups and his teammates’ early missteps with the assignment, Ryan chose to take on the responsibility of writing the entire assignment by himself. Given his earlier reflections, it did not surprise me that Ryan decided to take control over the document, however I cautioned him against it and encouraged him to work with his teammates. His teammates, on the other hand, seemed more than willing to allow Ryan to take on the bulk of the work. Ryan’s final reflection on his collaboration experience sheds some additional insight onto his concerns with group work, and offers some insight into why he might have decided he needed to write the document:

I would still much rather work on things myself. Group projects aren’t really for me but it went well and I have no complaints. In my opinion a group is successful if everyone contributes which is rarely the case. The most challenging part of working with a group was getting people to actually do work. This is because humans are inherently lazy animals.

Here, Ryan’s concern from the previous reflections—unequal workloads—is repeated and his noncommittal attitude towards his collaboration remains; he has “no complaints,” but his teammates are “lazy.” This reflection suggests Ryan’s framing of humanity as “lazy animals” may prohibit him from being able to trust anyone that he works with. These notions of humanity are both challenged and reinforced in his team experience, with teammates both failing and exceeding his expectations. This is complicated by the fact that Ryan seems to genuinely like his teammates, and so collaboration continues to reside in an ambiguous place for him, which is clearly expressed in his reflections.

Another student, Leslie, a student in Class A, encountered similar anxieties while working with her team. In the first reflection, her concerns with the group seem manageable and focused on time management:
I think our small group is going well...however sometimes a bit difficult if certain members don’t always participate or give effort in the work. I think our team works well but sometimes we have difficulty since some finish things early and some leave it to the last minute.

As the semester progresses and she writes her second reflection, her concern with her teammates begins to grow in earnest. This primarily has to do with inability to take up the slack of her teammates, because she sustained a concussion during one of her soccer games. The concussion was serious, with the effects lasting several weeks. Leslie privately talked to me about how frustrated she felt with being behind in her work for her classes. Her second reflection delves into some of the struggles that she faced during this time as well:

Our group is doing okay. It is difficult because of my injury and situation right now. With my concussion, I can’t stay on top of everything by myself and I feel like if I wasn’t injured I would have been doing most of the work. I think we are going to struggle with getting things done on time and with a high degree of efficiency/performance level because our group is not very coordinated or passionate about this research project. I think we will all contribute it will just be different levels depending on personal ability. I like the people, I just find it difficult working in a group that has very different mentalities and wants. I think the task schedule grade was quite good considering we were missing a lot of the information needed [...] I didn’t personally check over the task schedule because I wrote the research proposal so I take responsibility for not checking that we had everything. [...] With my concussion, I am finding it very hard to keep up with all of my classes - labs, papers, exams, projects, quizzes. I am not the type of student to get behind or make excuses for not having work done and it is very frustrating that I cannot complete things the way I usually would. Unfortunately there isn’t anything I can do at this point and am trying to stay on top of everything.

This entry shows Leslie’s anxiety with her teammates is positioned aside her inability to control the project and the quality of work that her teammates produce. She takes personal responsibility for any shortcomings of the group work stating, “I take responsibility for not checking that we had everything” even though she admits that it was not her job nor was she really capable of doing the work at that time.
In the third reflection, Leslie’s concern with her teammates’ ability and her own place within the group continue to be a problem that she addresses:

Our group work is going a lot better once I created a much more detailed task schedule. We are struggling a bit with our dedication and timing of things, but once we start on a role I think it will start getting better. Everyone is equally contributing. I like that we are all friends and work together. I don’t like how each person has different ideas about when things need to be done by or how much effort needs to be done for each one.

I have learned that collaboration can be difficult, you have to accommodate a lot of different ideas. I have also discovered it is difficult to be patient with those who do not have the same work habits as you do or are not as dedicated to the project as you are. [...] I am a bit worried completing inquiry four with the same group because of our differing schedules and wants for this class. I think it would be really nice to work with other people than those who we have not worked with all year. The fact that we do not contribute the same want to the group and have very different work habits is what is influencing me to not continue working with my group. I find it kind of difficult to work in groups since I am always the one who has to be in charge, and sometimes that can be difficult position to be in as you have to delegate to the rest of the group (and I don’t really enjoy that!).

I have just found this project to be quite a lot of organization on my part to make sure everyone else is doing what they need to do.

Similarly to Ryan, Leslie writes about how she’s friends with her teammates and believes they are contributing equally. However, she is still struggling with collaboration. Although it seems to be control over the group project which is Leslie’s main cause of anxiety, ironically she writes about how she doesn’t enjoy always having to be in charge and delegating work. But, as Team Manager of her group, she is required to provide detailed oversight over the project, a fact outlined from the beginning. Additionally, Leslie points out that she would prefer not to work with her group in the next assignment, an option that I provided for any student that was feeling overwhelmed with the collaboration. I am not sure what changed her mind—maybe her friendship with her teammates swayed her to stay—but Leslie decided to work with her team again for the next assignment.10

10 Surprisingly, all of the groups decided to stay together to work together for the next assignment. I had originally thought several of the groups would disband, since several students expressed a heavy dislike for group work.
In her final reflection, Leslie echoes many of the same sentiments that she expressed in her earlier reflections. Leslie begins her reflection by thinking through the working conditions that would need to happen in order to have a successful collaboration experience:

I think working in groups is interesting. It can either go really well or not so well... I think it depends mainly on who is in your group and what kind of people you are working with (work ethics). It was challenging working with a group for the research paper because everyone has very different styles of writing so writing a 12 page paper with three people was hard. I do think with different projects (I4) it was nicer working with a group because everyone gave their different inputs and opinions - there was creativity and the project built off of each other's ideas. I think working in a group is successful when people have similar work ethics and are interested in the work they are doing. Even if that means each person is interested in a separate aspect of the project, if everyone gives their best the project is successful. It also helps when everyone is dedicated and on time with work/completes the work they are supposed to. You also need a leader in the group to keep things organized but it shouldn’t be the leader’s responsibility to do the whole project.

This section of her reflection projects an aura of hopefulness: she can envision what a positive collaboration experience for her would be like and it seems that Inquiry Four provided her with some positive, generative experiences. However, although Leslie identifies what can contribute to a successful collaboration experience, she doesn’t directly connect this with her experience in this class, suggesting her experience fell short. In the final half of her reflection, Leslie returns to discussing the problems she faced in her group and critiquing her teammates:

I think the most challenging part of the group project was getting work done on time and making sure people actually do what they were supposed to. We had two really hard working people and one who didn’t do as much as that was a bit frustrating. It was also really challenging to organize our schedules. [...] [M]y group seemed to have quite differing styles and approaches to writing. I suppose that is good and bad because we would have different interests but when it came to the group project it made things difficult because some people wanted to do really well, without putting in effort and some were willing to put the effort in. I think it would have been good to look at the way the first few

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11 Her group created a remix of their first assignment (Inquiry Three) by creating an Instagram feed, which showed the effects of online bullying through a progression of increasingly hurtful comments and morose pictures.
inquiries and assignments were written and reflected upon, and then group people based on their feedback or their writing style from the inquiries. With the letter on the first day, some people may underestimate their writing ability or strengths and weaknesses therefore the letter may not reflect perfectly.

Here, Leslie suggests that her teammates—one in particular—may not have been truthful in their original statement on their writing abilities, which ultimately hurt her team’s ability to produce the quality of work she prefers. Additionally, she strongly recommends that students should only be paired up based on writing ability and work ethic, implying that other methods would bring down the group. Considering that Leslie’s anxiety around group work is primarily focused on producing high quality work, I find her final thoughts unsurprising.

As I think through Leslie’s reflections and concerns over collaboration, I see her as primarily concerned about her grade rather than what she can learn and gain from a team writing assignment. From my private discussions with her, she’s a very driven student who wants to consistently produce the highest quality of work that she can. I believe that her focus and dedication to grades produces her anxiety and stress over her team project.

This is something that you don’t usually see with smaller, low stakes assignments. However, once a project has a grade attached to it, students become anxious about collaboration. This is not something that is easily remedied through collaboration discussion, because concerns over grades has been consistently reinforced for our students. Especially for the students who attend Miami University, where their ability to perform well in class has gotten them to this point. Additionally, writing is traditionally framed as an individual pursuit with no place for collaboration. In order for collaboration to be fruitful, many students may need to reframe their understandings about school and writing.

Control seems to be a reoccurring theme for Leslie and Ryan. As a means to gain control over the situation, Leslie decides to take on the role of Team Manager, while Ryan decides to write the entire paper by himself. As shown in Leslie’s response, she ultimately regrets her decision to become team manager because she dislikes having to delegate work. Ryan’s decision to write the entire paper alone, resulted in some unnecessary hardship. He struggled with completing it on time and turning in a high quality paper. His final draft had the feeling of being rushed, which contributed to his grade of a B+. For these two students, it appears that when they
attempted to compensate for their anxiety that they ended up taking on roles which were too much for them.

This can also be seen in Leslie’s Team Assessment, where she writes on her tendencies to control the writing assignment:

Personally, I think I could improve on my perfectionism. After Lance wrote the final paragraphs of the I3, I deleted parts and added others, which was unfair to him after all of the effort he put in. Although it wasn’t written formally, I shouldn’t have changed all of what I did as it was a collaboration paper and not my paper. The I3 paper was not so much a collaborative effort as we procrastinated and finished at the last minute, so I ended up writing most of it. I took responsibility for it but could have trusted my group members to write as well.

Leslie admits to taking on too much work and doing work that undermines the collaborative nature of the project. Instead of working with her group, Leslie frames her experience as working against them: redoing their work and taking over the majority of the writing. Her reflection acknowledges the push and pull nature of her collaboration experience and the unfair treatment she’s given her teammates.

Developing Trust

Leslie and Ryan’s experience with anxiety and trust throughout the collaboration process is not typical for the majority of students. There were many more students who reported feeling anxious or uncomfortable around their teammates during the start of the process who later developed into feeling comfortable with their teammates, particularly in Class A. Lisa’s experience, a student from Class A, exemplifies a student who becomes comfortable with collaboration:

At first, I didn’t like the small group because I’m always embarrassed when talking to people I don’t know. Now I feel comfortable with my group. I think the groups really help. The group I have works well together, however at a later point it would be nice to with other people to gain different perspectives.

(Reflection 1)

I find Lisa’s reflection exciting because it shows her growth from a student who was extremely uncomfortable with talking and working with new people to developing into a student who
would enjoy the opportunity to work “with other people to gain different perspectives.” I think that if Lisa had to work with new students every day in class that she would not have developed into the feeling comfortable working with new students. By building our students comfort levels with collaboration through consistency, we can then support them to engage in more challenging aspects of collaboration.

**Friendships and Conflict**

Work on collaboration has spent a great deal of time talking about the importance of rapport within teams (Bruffee; Gergits and Schramer; Gonzalez; Howard; Hunzer; Kittle and Hicks; Murphy and Valdez). I too believe that rapport is an essential ingredient to the success of collaboration, however I question the importance of friendship, particularly preexisting partnerships, in student collaboration in this section.

Throughout my students’ reflections and team assessments, they discussed their relationships and friendships with their teammates. Many groups talked about how close they had become to their teams after working with them for an extended period of time\(^{12}\). One student in Class A, Andy, spoke frequently of the friendship that he had built:

> Our group is wonderful. I’ve thoroughly enjoyed working with Terry and Alexis they are great group members. Yes I like working with the same group every day because I’ve gotten to know them as individuals as well as their writing strengths and weaknesses. [...] I just need to upload my dialectic notebooks earlier so I stop causing my group members stress. (Reflection 1)

Andy, a self-identified procrastinator, shows the importance of developing rapport with his group. It is because he cares so much for his teammates, he is motivated to become a better student for them, as shown in his last sentence.

However, I worry about students placed into groups together who enter into the class as friends. During my study, I had two pairs of friends—Ron and Grant, Mary and Donna—who entered Class B together and who ended up being grouped together for the team writing assignment. Although they were initially excited to be placed together—they indicated each other high on their preference lists—it later developed into hurt feelings over perceptions of

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\(^{12}\) I did notice that Class A, the class that was grouped together throughout the semester, seemed to be closer in the beginning of the semester than Class B. These bonds continued to develop as they worked together.
work ethic. Examining these two pairs of students’ experiences with friendship can help us to make a more informed decision about whether or not to allow friends to be grouped together.

The first pair, Ron and Grant, started off as friends before the class started. Before they were grouped together, I would frequently see them entering and leaving the classroom discussing life outside of ENG 111. When I saw them request each other on their preference lists, I was a little hesitant about putting them together. My worries were they had not thoroughly read through each other’s ads and had decided to be grouped together because of their friendship. However, I decided to give them the benefit of the doubt and place them together.

Everything seemed to be going smoothly, in Ron’s interview he talked positively about who he was paired with, “I got two of the three people that I put I would like to work with in my group, so pretty satisfied with that, and everything has gone pretty well so far.” His reflections also indicated that he was satisfied with his group, but generally has a dislike of group work because he has a hard time trusting his teammates to complete their work. On this, Ron writes, “I have realized through this group work that I prefer to work alone. It has nothing to do with my team members, I just prefer to be accountable for my own work rather than worry about my team members potentially forgetting an assignment, or doing it poorly” (Reflection 3). Ron’s reflection echoes many of those who struggle with anxiety and trust associated with group work, however his concerns about accountability and equal workloads (stated in a previous reflection) is something that he is later confronted with by his teammate and friend, Grant.

In Ron’s interview he talks about the work that he’s contributed to the team, and there’s an obvious indication of pride:

I know personally I did a lot of work with the primary data, so I gathered all of the participants for the SurveyMonkey, analyzed the data, put it all in Excel documents, and made some pivot tables and charts. I knew I could do that and my teammates didn't. So I worked on the methods section, results section, where the other two worked more on the introduction and the secondary data that we had and I think it helped just to break up, you know. I would generally work with the primary data and they would work with the secondary data and I think that was kindof beneficial to have. I think those probably a good thing for the group.

A lot of the work that Ron discusses is more behind-the-scenes than some of the other portions of the group work. Occasionally, teammates might underestimate the amount of work that it
takes to gather data and analyze results, which is perhaps what happened when Grant confronted Ron about not doing his share of the work.\textsuperscript{13} In Ron’s Team Assessment, he describes the conflict within his group:

\begin{quote}
I wrote the methods and results sections, as well as pitching in to help with the discussion section of inquiry three. Usually I was working alone. Grant and Michelle handled the introduction and the conclusion and they disagreed a few times on where to take the introduction. Due to their personalities, Grant typically got his way and it turned out how he wanted it to. We were unable to turn this into a positive in all honesty. Grant felt as though he was doing more work than I was, and I disagreed which was a point of contention in the group. I think he felt this way because he wrote a lot of the final draft and tied in various sources, but I worked with the primary data.
\end{quote}

Ron seems to have taken this criticism rather harshly, later writing that it was “demoralizing” to hear that from Grant. He also followed up with: “When you are working hard and doing everything that your team assigns to you, it makes you feel like your hard work is not appreciated when someone says something of that nature. At times, it can be challenging to work with people like that.” This experience of working with Grant and having his teammates undervalue his work, negatively impacted Ron’s experience.

Ron’s teammates’ Team Assessments provide some additional insight into this conflict. Michelle does provide criticism of Ron in her assessment: “Ron was never extremely motivated to do work, it eventually got done, but many times my group did not use our class time wisely was because he was ‘well we can work in this in our meeting.’” Michelle’s concerns regarding Ron seem to focus on time management more so than equal workloads. However, she does link these two together.

Grant, on the other hand, speaks highly of the work that he does and comments on how willing Ron was to complete any task assigned to him. Although Grant does rank Ron’s contribution value as the lowest of the group, he does not elaborate why in his assessment. It seems that, for the most part, Grant values the work that Ron contributed to the group. I wonder if Grant didn’t say anything too negative about Ron in order to protect his friend’s grade.

\textsuperscript{13} Wolfe and Alexander report writing often goes undervalued in teams. They theorize this happens because the writing process is often less visible than other responsibilities, such as duties of the computer expert. This leads me to believe that Ron’s work may have been undervalued because of its “hidden” nature.
Similar concerns regarding time management and work ethic are voiced in Mary’s Team Assessment in regards to her teammate Donna. Mary mentions that although she is good friends with Donna, she is ultimately upset with her:

I think Donna has a lot to improve on. She missed our meeting where we wrote the entire first half of the paper because she went out of town and didn’t tell either of us, and she came late to every other meeting. I feel like she did things on her own time and did not really take into consideration the fact that we were working in a group. She missed lots of due dates and often had no idea what we were doing in the group because she would spend our meeting times on Buzzfeed. She helped a lot more with I4, however she was still always late and always on Buzzfeed. (I’m sorry this seems really harsh and she is one of my closer friends in college but I was just really upset that she didn’t seem to care that she would bring the entire groups grade down if she did not turn things in on time)

Mary’s main concerns with Donna is that she wasn’t a team player, did not communicate well, and missed due dates. Even after some time has passed since she worked with Donna, Mary is still upset about the low work ethic that Donna exhibited. Although, based on Mary’s writing, it doesn’t appear that she ever confronted Donna on her lack of focus and time management.

Janet, Mary and Donna’s other team mate, rated Donna’s work highly and awarded her with A-, because “she still did help a lot, but did not do the most difficult of things,” suggesting that Donna displayed some level of social loafing. Additionally, Janet states, when asked what each team member needed to improve upon, Donna needed to “Make sure to stay on track when we are all working together,” suggesting Mary’s complaint of Donna’s unfocused attention have some validity.

Donna, however, seems completely unaware that there was any animosity in the group towards her. She consistently expressed how well she thought everyone got along and how great they worked together as a team. She did rank herself slightly below the others in terms of quantity of work (.5), but other than that she gave no indication of unequal workloads. It is very possible that Donna recognized that she did not produce as much as the other students did, but was unwilling to acknowledge this in the Team Assessment for fear that it might hurt her grade.

The common characteristics between both of these instances is that collaboration suffered because of the pre-existing relationships. Mary, it appears, did not want to risk her friendship outside of the classroom by calling Donna out on her social loafing. Ron was surprised and hurt
by his friend’s inability to see and value his contributions, which ultimately led to a less positive experience. Additionally, we see that even when there are perceived instances of social loafing—whether true or not—these friends were unwilling to compromise their friends’ grades by scoring them low on their team assessments. Friendships in student collaboration can lead to unnecessary conflict, which may otherwise be avoided.

**Students Teaching Students**

In “Collaborative Learning and the ‘Conversation of Mankind,’” Bruffee argues that peers can be invaluable resources in collaborative learning, which can lead to students teaching students. In Bruffee’s own words:

> [N]o student is wholly ignorant and inexperienced. Every student is already a member of several knowledge communities, from canoeing to computers, baseball to ballet. Membership in any one of these communities may not be a resource that will by itself help much directly in learning to organize an essay or explicate a poem. But pooling the resources that a group of peers brings with them to the task may make accessible the normal discourse of the new community they together hope to enter. Students are especially likely to be able to master that discourse collaboratively if their conversation is structured indirectly by the task or problem that a member of that new community (the teacher) has judiciously designed. (644)

Students, in Bruffee’s opinion, will work with one another to improve their grasp of a topic. However, Wolfe and Alexander’s research on a scientific and technical writing class showed that students “did not have time to learn skills and that they realized that the project would get finished faster if the person who knew how to complete the task did it” (159). They suggests students “failed to share skills because it was simply easier for people to complete tasks with which they were already familiar than to take time to learn a new skill” (160). So, while Bruffee suggests that students have the potential to grow and learn from their collaborators, Wolfe argues students do not take advantage of the opportunity.

My research findings on student learning lean more strongly on Bruffee’s hypothesis. Although, I did not directly ask students to write or talk about the things that they learned from their peers, I found that students positively mentioned various instances of learning from their
teammates. This featured prominently in their responses to a question which asked them what they learned in collaboration that they would not have if they did not work in groups. In total, there were 16 students (47% of participants) who mentioned teaching or learning from their peers in their reflections and/or team assessments. Some of these instances were general references, such as the comment Dean (Class A student) makes: "I think it easier in a group to learn how working together really matters because one person could be struggling and other group members can help" (from Reflection 3). However, many students reference particular instances of learning as well.

A few students talked about how the bonds that they had built in their groups made them feel comfortable asking questions and receiving help from their teammates. Take, for instance, these two students from Class B:

> With this particular project, I really liked that we were put into groups. I had written research papers prior to this, but never in this format so it was nice to be able to ask my group members questions if I got confused. [...] Another thing that made this positive for me is that I had two other people I could I always felt comfortable asking for help whenever I needed it. -Janet (Team Assessment)

> I really liked being able to put my trust in other people when working on these papers. I was able to ask questions and for help when I need it which made me less stressed. -Nancy (Team Assessment)

Nancy specifically mentions trusting her teammates, which suggests that, for her, there’s an absence of comfort asking an unfamiliar student in her class for help. Janet’s response also indicates a similar sentiment of support received from her teammates. Because they were able to build bonds with their teams they were able to successfully ask for and receive help from their teammates.

The rapport students built with one another transfers over to trusting one another when encountering an unfamiliar writing situation. Many students talked about how they used their teammates’ experiences and expertise to the benefit of the group:

> I thought learning from my group members’ strengths was extremely positive. Ron was really good at working in excel and Jacob was well organized, which are two areas I need help with, so it was great to see their strengths and learn from
them. Another positive experience I had was learning different key strategies to write a successful research paper. -Michelle (Team Assessment, Class B)

Group worked allowed us to split up the work amongst the members. This gave us the chance to shine at what we were outstanding at. Once this was complete, we gathered as a group and edited the work. Looking to see what others did allowed for different viewpoints on the topic, as well as teaching members new writing. For example, Marge was magnificent at creating annotated bibliographies, and at the time I had no idea what this was, but she was able to teach me which will help greatly in the future. -Albert (Team Assessment, Class A)

As these experiences show, some groups split the work up based on their expertise, suggesting the other students will not learn these tasks. However, these students—and others—indicated they learned by seeing examples of successful written products and by taking the initiative to ask their teammates questions about the work. Having students with a diverse set of skills and knowledge sets can help students who struggle in those areas by providing them with a peer literacy sponsor. Since most teammates want their group to be successful, they are willing to teach their peers the skills they need to accomplish the assignment.

When students talk about teaching or learning from their peers, they usually frame it in terms of the successes (as seen above). However, students are bound to encounter instances where they struggle with teaching or learning from their peers. Lacey, a student from Class A, reflects on a challenging moment when she tried to teach her teammates about writing their research paper:

For the discussion part of the I3, my partners didn’t really understand that we had to analyze our data in the discussion and tie it with our sources. I kept trying to explain it to them but they couldn’t comprehend what we had to do. I brought this topic up during the tutoring session at the Howe Writing Center, and then our tutor helped explain it a little better. And I just ended up doing that part of the discussion and interpreting it in their part of the discussion as well since I was more familiar with doing it. (Team Assessment)

Students teaching their peers is not always a successful venture, however they are also aware of the various resources available to them such as the teacher or, in this case, the writing center. Although these resources can also prove unfruitful, and a teammate may decide to step up and
take control of the portion, as Lacey did. Lacey’s experience demonstrates the need for teachers to be available to help teams, since there is only so much students can teach on their own.

Out of all the reflections and the team assessment, only one student wrote about having to assist his teammates in a negative way:

I don’t think anything is particularly easier in a group, in fact it may be all harder because all information has to be shared and chewed by every group member rather than the much more efficient and classic style of doing work by yourself. - Ryan (Reflection 3)

As discussed in the section on student anxiety, Ryan suffered from collaboration anxiety throughout the entire time he worked with his group. His struggle with working with his teammates could contribute to his belief of the individual writer being stronger than team writing. However, based on the numerous positive responses regarding student based learning, I don’t believe Ryan’s perceptions are the norm for the students in this study. I believe the majority of students in this study enjoyed the opportunity to teach and be taught by their peers, however there may always be some who feel resentful of being held back by their teammates.

Although Ryan may have felt frustrated with having to share expertise with his teammates, the vast majority of the students identified positive moments of knowledge sharing. These findings call into question Wolfe and Alexander’s reports that students do not take the time to assist their teammates. All in all, I think my students found their teammates as valuable resources to improve comprehension.
Chapter Three: Recommendations for Pedagogy and for Research

As I hope is clear, collaborative learning is beneficial for students in the learning of writing. I hope it is equally clear that teachers need to support their students in order for collaboration to be successful. To continue to promote successful collaboration, we need to continue to examine and reexamine the ways in which we teach and support collaborative writing and learning. Although there is only so much that can be inferred from my study, since the findings are limited in scope, I still think it is beneficial to consider the possible pedagogical implications of my findings. Therefore, in this chapter, I will articulate ways to improve collaborative pedagogy from my study’s findings. Additionally, I will offer some suggestions for further research on collaborative writing.

**Grouping Students**

The data I collected on student satisfaction with their collaboration experience indicates that participants in both classes found team writing to be a valuable experience. This suggests students are capable of adapting and thriving in both grouping methods and duration. The results from this study can help us better understand how successful groups operate. At the same time, I recognize the limitations of my study and see the need for additional research into my observations. However, based on these preliminary results, I have a few insights into best practices for collaborative pedagogy.

For those who wish to implement collaborative learning into their classrooms, I advocate for instituting stable groups. In my study I found distinct differences between the two initial reflections. The students in Class A, both in their reflections and in their classroom interactions, were more connected to their teams than Class B. This comes as little surprise since Class B students were constantly changing teammates while, Class A students consistently worked with their teammates. As such, Class A students had more time to develop relationships with their teammates than Class B students.

Building strong bonds between students can lead to many benefits. One such being that stronger rapport between students can help to build trust and mitigate student anxiety (I discuss this in-depth, shortly). Even if an instructor chooses not to incorporate collaborative writing into their syllabus, rapport building can positively influence collaborative learning. As I observed in
my own classroom, students were more likely to actively engage with their teammates on in-class assignments and discussions. Deeper engagement in class can promote meaningful student learning.

Many instructors, like myself, may worry about student responses to implementing collaborative pedagogy into their classroom. My study finds that these worries can be mitigated, if the instructor takes the necessary steps to build collaboration into their classroom, then students will be willing to attempt collaborative writing with little resistance. Therefore, I encourage instructors to build collaborative writing and learning into their classrooms, since the benefits to student learning is so great.

**Anxiety**

My section on student anxiety may have left some questioning what role we as teachers can play in alleviating collaboration anxiety. Leslie and Ryan’s experience show the pervasive nature anxiety can play in a group project, which can lead to some poor decision making. However, it is important to note that although some students will suffer from anxiety and nervous throughout the collaboration process, many students can grow out of these worries. And, the concerns that Ryan and Leslie voiced can be managed through various organizational structures implemented by the instructor. As Kathleen Hunzer reminds us, “Collaboration is a reality in almost everyone’s lives. Because of this, writing instructors cannot back down from using collaborative learning and writing in fear of upsetting students who face emotional and social challenges” (“Anxiety Disorders” 223). However, I think it is important that we consider the ways we can lessen student anxiety associated with team work. Many of the approaches translate to best practices for collaborative pedagogy. So, not only will this help our more nervous students, but it will also provide a solid structure for all of our students.

My first recommendation is to start team work early in the semester. The sooner, the better. As I discussed in Chapter Two, there was a great deal of difference between Class A and B’s reflections before Class B began working steadily with their teams. Students’ reflections in Class A showed stronger levels of comfort and rapport with their team than those in Class B. Additionally, having teams begin working early can give them the chance to warm up to one another and to get to know each other on a personal basis, instead of just a working relationship. Knowing who your teammates are can contribute to feeling more comfortable with individuals...
they have not worked with before. An added bonus of early rapport building could lead students to feel more responsible for their group, which may encourage students to contribute to their group rather than relying on social loafing. This leads me to believe that having stable, long-term groups can contribute to higher comfort levels.

As we consider building our groups early on, as instructors we will also want to consider how best to form our teams. Providing our students the agency to choose their groups can help some students manage their anxiety. As with the case with Leslie, some students may struggle with working with students whom they do not feel match their work ethic or ability. When we offer them the opportunity to choose who they work with, the responsibility to select the appropriate teammates is placed on them. Nevertheless, I do have some reservations. As we know from Ron and Mary’s experience, when students have the option to select their teammates, sometimes they will select their friends, which can lead to unnecessary conflict down the road. Additionally, for students to pick teammates they feel strongly about, they have to have the chance to work with a variety of their classmates and this takes time. Time that could be used in building rapport and familiarity with their teammates.

One way we could balance this out is by making sure the teams are selected at least three weeks before any large team writing assignment begins. This will allow instructors to build in a variety low stakes collaboration exercises before the groups start working on a major project. There is a wide variety of ways to incorporate low-stakes assignments into lesson plans. For me, I use a combination of collaborative homework assignments and in-class projects. During the course of ENG 111, students created asynchronous dialectic notebooks on select homework readings using Google Docs. This assignment asked students to select two prominent quotations from the reading and comment on them, then they would have to comment on two of their teammates’ entries. The assignment was intentionally open ended, so I provided them with few restrictions on what they could write about. This helped build the students’ understanding of each other’s work habits and writing in a low-stakes environment. Additionally, if conflict occurred—such as students not posting early enough for others to comment—students communicated with one another, which developed necessary skills for the major assignments. When it comes time to work on the collaborative assignment, allow students the option of revision. Establish this as an option early on in the project, because, for students, knowing that you can go back and correct some of the mistakes that were made can help perfectionist students
feel less anxious about a project. Of course, it is important to consider what documents are appropriate for revision, how much time they will have for revision, and what counts as revision. For me, revision goes beyond making surface level changes to a document, such as correcting MLA formatting. Instead, revision addresses higher order concerns such as organization and argument support.

As teachers, we need to be aware of the emotions that students bring into the classroom and how that might affect their ability to collaborate. Therefore, we need to make conscious, thoughtful decisions about how to mitigate student anxiety and nervousness. And as a field, we need to continue to research various approaches to support our anxious students.

**Friendship and Conflict**

Based on my students’ writings on friends working together, it seems, for these students, working with their friends for their team project was not a helpful decision. These students found that working together in teams with their friends can be risky business. For Mary, she ended up working with someone who was not as focused as she was. And, since Mary lacked the desire or ability to stand up and tell Donna to be more attentive to the group, it resulted in an unsatisfactory collaborative experience. For Ron, he struggled with his friend’s inability to see the quality and quantity of the work he produced. As such, it put a strain on their friendship, which would not have happened if they remained in separate groups. These students both wanted to remain on good terms with their friends which then hindered their ability to confront or stand up for themselves. For both groups of friends, friendship within their teams led to unnecessary complications and hurt feelings.

Although many writers with extensive collaboration experience prefer writing with friends, it seems to me that FYC students struggle with this task. The difference between expert collaborators and novice collaborators experience with working with friends could be contributed to maturity. What I mean by this is that more experienced collaborators know who they work well with, what their strengths and weakness are as a writer, more fully developed research interests, and choose to work collaboratively. Students, on the other hand, may feel uncomfortable with collaboration and the prospects of working with peers they do not know. Therefore, they may feel more inclined to work with someone they know.
Given my students experiences with collaborating with friends, I am hesitant to suggest that students should be allowed to work with their friends. Camaraderie is important within a group, but I think developing it within the context of the classroom is important to establishing successful group dynamics.

**Students Teaching Students**

Overall, what we can gather from these student responses is teamwork can be beneficial for teaching and learning from peers. This both reinforces knowledge for the student helping the other, but it also gives the other student a guide as they attempt to practice new skills.

Although the students in this study talked positively about learning from and teaching their peers, I know some students might be resentful. At times, our students might see their less knowledgeable peers as holding them back or an obstacle keeping them from completing the project. And, in the case of Joanna Wolfe’s students, our students may prefer to do the work themselves rather than guiding their peers. In some ways, our students’ perceptions of collaboration are out of our hands, there’s only so much we can do to instill the importance and value of collaboration. However, we can build components into our projects so students are encouraged to teach and learn from one another.

One of the easier things we can do to encourage collaborative learning is to talk to our students about the benefits of collaboration. If our students know the reasons behind why they are asked to do something, they may be more likely to appreciate the importance of the assignment. Just as we as teachers like to know the reasons behind what we our teaching, our students do too. So, spending some time to discuss the benefits of collaboration can encourage our students to actively participate in the process.

Another way we promote collaborative learning is by making sure the collaborative writing project we assign our students is large enough in scope to be tackled as a team, rather than as an individual. As such, an appropriate collaborative assignment will have many components coming together to create a complex project. One student should not be able to easily complete the project and should have to rely upon others for support and feedback. It might be helpful to build in some “checks” along the way to see what tasks our students are completing and if they’re actively participating in the group. One way to do this is by first discussing with our classes what tasks will need to be done in order to complete a section of the
project. Then, by meeting weekly with our groups with quick in-class check-in meetings, we can
determine the level of involvement of each student.

And, finally, probably one of the most common ways composition teachers can support
peer to peer learning is by building in peer response sessions. These sessions set up a situation
where they have to help and be helped by their peers. Many students see the benefits of having
an extra set of eyes of their paper and they feel comfortable trading this support by supporting
another teammate. These interactions will create a norm of collaborative learning, which will
encourage collaborative learning in other sections of the class. All in all, there are a variety of
ways we as teachers can support collaborative teaching and learning.

Further Research Questions and Directions

This project has left me with what feels like more questions than answers, a position
many studies find themselves. I think my status as a graduate student contributes to my further
research questions because of the limitations of the work I can accomplish and my
underdeveloped knowledge on human research studies. The limitations of a thesis are great,
which greatly impacted the design of the study and subsequently, the findings. As such, I’ve
outlined several directions and questions that should be explored outside of the confines of a
thesis.

One of the major limitations of this study is time. I was only able to collect data from one
semester of observations, which makes it impossible to generalize my findings beyond the scope
of my ENG 111 courses. It is also unclear whether or not the observations I made would be
common over the course of many semesters or years. Therefore, a longitudinal study tracking
collaborative writing would prove invaluable.14 Additionally, if my comparative study was
expanded to include data from multiple semesters, subtle differences between the two grouping
approaches may become clearer than they are currently. Since there is such a lack in comparative
collaboration studies, I find this to be a particularly important avenue to continue exploring.

Another important longitudinal study, which needs to be explored, is on transfer of
collaboration. The participants in my study were primarily first-year students, several had never

14 Although Joanna Wolfe’s research examined collaborative learning and writing over several years, her focus was
on STEM students. Based on some of my findings which contradict her own, I believe that some of her observations
are more applicable to STEM collaboration than to all fields’ team writing.
participated in a collaborative writing assignment before. In the upcoming years, it is highly likely that these students will have to participate in collaborative writing again, especially if they major or minor in business. Knowing this, one of my goals in developing a comprehensive collaborative pedagogy was for my students to be able to use what they learned and apply it to new classrooms, which may not provide them with the preparation they need for successful collaboration. Since my study only tracks students during their time in my classroom, I have no idea if they will use the organizational and communication skills I taught in their upcoming classrooms. However, some students suggested that they will use what they learned in new assignments. Additionally, I wonder if their early introduction to collaboration will build them into better future collaborators. Therefore, I think that a longitudinal study focusing on transfer of organizational and communication skills is important area of focus.

Finally, and perhaps most pressing, is the need of studies that focus on the collaborative experiences of students who are neuroatypical. As I stated earlier in the introduction, the studies I read on collaboration take for granted the abled status of their students. We have woefully under theorized and studied the ways students experience neuroatypicality grapple with collaboration. We need to consider the negotiation between the type of support we can offer them and the accommodations they require. Additionally, I imagine that for many students who are neuroatypical, collaboration may have to be radically restructured in order to benefit them in the way abled students do. Indeed, in some cases collaboration might not even be a viable or helpful option. However, until we have more fully explored neuroatypical students’ experiences with collaboration it is impossible to make any conclusions.

**Last Thoughts**

The journey I’ve taken to better understand collaboration has been—for the most part—a solitary one. Even though I was studying a particular form of collaboration—collaborative writing—I was unable to practice what I preached.\(^\text{15}\) Academia has taken large strides in accepting collaborative writing as a rigorous and intellectual work, however there are still deeply rooted ideals of singular authorship—most notably on the writing of theses and dissertations. I

\(^{15}\) This is, in fact, the fourth project in my graduate studies on collaboration that I’ve written alone. However, I have plans to work and write collaboratively with several of my graduate peers after I have defended my thesis, something I am greatly looking forward to.
find singular versus collaborative authorship a false binary and thus see these ideals as naïve and outdated. All writing is collaborative. This thesis was shaped by my students’ voices, my readers’ feedback, my teachers’ guidance, and conversations with both friends and colleagues. Without their voices, this text would not be what it is today. As we look towards the future of collaborative writing, we need to consider the ways in which we continue to perpetuate the privileging of singular authorship and work to dismantle hegemonic structures keeping it in place. I hope one day I have the privileged of working with students who undertake collaboratively writing theses and dissertations.
Works Cited


Appendix A

English 111 FE: Composition and Rhetoric

Instructor: Ellen Cecil
Day/Time: T R 11:30am-12:50pm
Location: 117 Boyd Hall

Office: 363 Bachelor Hall
Office Hours: T R 3:00pm-4:00pm; and by appointment
Email: cecilem@miamioh.edu

Required Texts and Materials:
- A laptop computer with wireless access — bring to class every class period, fully charged

Course Description:
Welcome to ENG 111: Rhetoric and Composition! This course is designed to improve your writing, critical thinking, and collaboration skills in order to succeed both academically and professionally. Many of you will not have encountered the concepts that we will be engaging throughout the semester, however, through reading the assigned texts, completing homework assignments, engaging in classroom discussions, sharing your thoughts with your colleagues, and asking questions you will find that you will be able to successfully grasp the key concepts and produce compelling inquiries. Throughout the semester you will be engaging in many collaborative assignments that will help you develop and refine the key learning goals of ENG 111 and provide you experience with one of the top ten skills employers seek: the ability to work in a team. This class will require a lot of time and effort, but the workloads are manageable if you develop organizational skills from the beginning of the semester.

Course Goals:
Together in ENG 111 we will be exploring our writing processes and developing ways in which we can improve our critical analysis, composition, and revision skills through the study of rhetoric. If you decide to thoughtfully engage this class, at the end of this course your writing for academic, civic, social, and professional endeavors will improve.
In this class, you will learn to:

- Develop flexible and effective strategies for generating ideas; researching topics; composing drafts; revising, peer responding, editing, and proofreading writing via print and digital media
- Conduct research-based inquiries, use invention techniques effectively to explore your own ideas, engage different perspectives, and develop findings into sustained arguments
or narratives.

- Locate, evaluate, integrate, and cite secondary sources of information effectively and ethically, using appropriate academic citation methods.
- Produce effectively organized writing that is stylistically appropriate, demonstrating careful attention to proofreading and meeting conventional expectations for particular audiences in specific contexts.
- Write effectively and persuasively for diverse contexts, audiences, purposes, and genres.
- Develop critical awareness of the unique affordances and limitations of diverse writing technologies and modalities of communication, both digital and non-digital.
- Reflect critically on your own writing practices and rhetorical decisions.
- Learn to work with peers in a successful collaborative environment.

As a Miami Plan Foundation course, English 111 meets the broad goals of a liberal education: to nurture your intellectual capabilities to think critically, to understand diverse contexts, to engage with other learners, and to apply knowledge and skills learned through effective reflection and action.

**Major Projects and Course Requirements:**
Since English 111 is centered on five major writing inquiries, be prepared for a heavy workload. Each inquiry is comprised of a number of components, including class activities, shorter writing assignments, drafts, peer responses, proposals, research notes, reflective cover letter, and a major final essay (or the multimodal equivalent). For each major inquiry, you can expect to compose approximately 1000 – 2000 words of formal revised writing (or multimedia equivalent), including a reflective cover letter in which you discuss the rhetorical choices you made in composing your essay (or multimedia equivalent). You also will compose approximately 1000 – 2000 words of informal writing during each inquiry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inquiry</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I1: Writing about Literacies</td>
<td>Analyzing and reflecting on how you have become the reader and writer you are today.</td>
<td>80pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Rough Draft: 20pts, Writer’s Letter: 10pts, Final Draft: 50pts)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I2: Rhetorical Analysis</td>
<td>Using rhetorical analysis as a method to analyze a public argument.</td>
<td>120pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I3: Public, Research-Based Argument (Team Project)</td>
<td>Researching and making a rhetorical argument about a public issue.</td>
<td>200pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Proposal: 20; Annotated Bibliography: 50; Rough Draft: 20; Final Draft: 100; Writer’s Letter 10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Points</td>
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<tr>
<td>I4: Remediation Inquiry</td>
<td>Understanding how the medium affects the message by remediating a previous piece of writing (by changing the medium and/or modality of communication) to present your work to a new audience. (Rough Draft: 20; Final Draft: 75; Writer’s Letter 50)</td>
<td>145pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I5: Final Reflective Inquiry</td>
<td>Reflecting on your writing and rhetoric through analysis of your coursework collected in an e-portfolio. (Rough Draft: 10; Writer’s Letter 50; Commentary 25)</td>
<td>85pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>Designed to help you generate ideas for and explore revisions of your major inquiry projects.</td>
<td>240pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>In-class writing activities (e.g. invention exercises, free writes, revision exercises, peer response comments, etc.).</td>
<td>130pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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<td>1,000pts</td>
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**Classroom Policies:**

**Access / Accommodations.** I am committed to maximizing your learning potential and making this course as accessible as possible. If there is any way that I can adapt this course to better meet your unique needs as a learner, please let me know! If you have a documented disability, I am especially interested in providing any accommodations that have been best determined by you and the Office of Disability Resources (http://www.units.muohio.edu/oeeo/odr/; 513-529-2541) in advance.

**Attendance.** It really means a lot to me (and others in the class) that you show up each day ready to discuss the readings, share your writings, and engage with others in the class. Class time will be highly interactive — requiring frequent participation, discussion, team work, in-class writing, and responding to writing. For this reason, attendance at all class sessions is expected. That said, I will allow you to miss three (3) classes, after which point your grade will drop one tier (C+ to C or A- to B+). Your ability to participate is dependent on your attendance, so missing class can also affect your participation grade as well.

**Tardiness.** Three (3) late arrivals equal an absence. If you miss more than 25% of the class (20 minutes) you are considered absent.

**Distractions.** Silence your cell phone and refrain from texting. While we will regularly use laptops for in-class writing, research, and collaboration, refrain from using your laptop for non-class activities.
Profanities. Previously, you may have encountered institutions or classes that don't allow profanities (such as shit, fuck, ass, hell, etc.) in the classroom. Profanities, at times, do have their rhetorical benefits and therefore are allowed in the class. There will be times that our texts, you, your classmates, and I will engage in such language, which again is accepted. However, profanities that are directed at individuals with the intent to harm based upon individual person’s race, class, gender, sexuality, or disability will not be tolerated.

Respect / Community. While we will often engage in vigorous and lively debate in this class, personal insults or verbal attacks on individuals or groups of individuals will not be tolerated.

Assignment Policies:

MLA Formatting. All drafts and homework assignments must be submitted in proper MLA formatting. We will go over the basics in class, but here are a few quick reminders: double spaced, 12pt font, Times New Roman, and 1” margins.

Due Dates. All Reading Responses are to be posted on the appropriate Niihka forum before the start of class. Zero draft, rough drafts, and homework assignments are to be placed in your Google Docs folder before the start of class (or brought to class in print form when requested). The final drafts and reflections for your Inquiries need to be placed in your Google Docs folder by 11:59pm on the date it is due.

Late Work. All assignments must be turned in on time. Final grades on papers will be downgraded one whole grade for each day late (for example A to B) unless you have made prior arrangements for an extension with me (in exceptional circumstances). If you need an extension on a project, please notify me at least 24 hours in advance requesting extra time.

Zero Drafts. Although I do not expect you to have all of your paper drafted out, I need to see a clear outline of your paper. You don’t have to have an “official outline,” but there should be enough writing for me to see the main points of your draft. These drafts will receive feedback from me directing you on areas of improvement and revision, so you’ll want to be sure that I have enough material to provide you with thoughtful and helpful suggestions.

Rough Drafts. At this time, you’ll need to have at least 75% of your paper drafted. It does not have to be a completed draft, but it should be more put together than the Zero Draft. For the most part, your peers will be providing you with constructive feedback on how revise your draft.

Revisions. As you learn in the class, writing is a process that differs in many ways for each individual. Therefore, I welcome students to significantly revise your work. This being said, they must be major revisions for me to reread and regrade them. I will not look at a paper which only focuses on correcting surface level errors, such as grammar. You must show me that you worked to revision the paper and made major changes for me to consider your revision.

Backing up Work. Please make sure to have a plan for backing up all of your digital work in multiple places in case of computer failure. Please also make sure to save all of the writing you complete for class.
Academic Integrity / Plagiarism. The assumption in English 111 is that the writing you submit is your own original writing — that is, produced originally for this class. To copy someone else's writing without acknowledging that use is an act of academic as well as professional dishonesty, whether you borrow an entire report or a single sentence. The most serious forms of academic dishonesty are to "buy" an entire paper; or to have someone else write an assignment for you; or to turn in someone else's entire paper (or significant portions of an existing piece of writing) and call it your own. These forms of dishonesty constitute serious breaches of academic integrity. If you have doubts about whether or not you are using your own or others’ writing ethically, ask me. For further details about Academic Integrity at Miami University — including a detailed list of examples of academic dishonesty and procedures and penalties for dealing with instances of academic dishonesty — see http://www.muohio.edu/integrity/undergrads.cfm.

Niihka / Daily Schedule. The daily course schedule and more detailed assignment prompts will be available on Niihka. The course schedule is subject to change based on the needs and interests of the class. You are responsible for regularly checking Niihka for updates.

Grading Scale.

A  1000-940
A-  939-900

B+  899-870
B  869-840
B-  839-800

C+  799-770
C  769-740
C-  739-700

D+  699-670
D  669-640
D-  639-600

F  599 and below

Resources:

• Your classmates. Rely on one another for the questions you have regarding the readings, the work we’re doing in class, software we may be using, etc. You all, both individually and as a collective, embody a vast bank of knowledge and experiences.

• Your Instructor. I will do all I can to assist you in succeeding in this course. Feel free to meet with me during my office hours or another scheduled time. Email is a reliable way to contact me and I will try my best to respond in a timely manner.

• IT Support (513-529-7900; ithelp@muohio.edu; 317 Hughes hall) The IT support desk is the main point of contact for technology questions at Miami, including issues with connecting to MU wireless.
• *Howe (King Library) and Windate (18 Peabody) Writing Centers.* The Howe Writing Center is located on the main floor of King Library. The Center is staffed with writing consultants from many different academic areas. In a one-on-one workshop, a staff member will consult with you concerning work-in-progress, final drafts, research style, and many other aspects of writing. It is best to schedule an appointment ahead of time, but you may also walk in on days when they have consultants available. For further information, visit the student resources site at http://writingcenter.lib.muohio.edu/.

• *The Student Counseling Service.* Located in the Health Services Center, this office provides a wide range of counseling services. For more information, call 513-529-4634.
Appendix B

Inquiry Three: Collaborative Research
Research Proposal Due: Tuesday, October 14
Annotated Bib Due: Tuesday, October 28
Research Rough Draft Due: Tuesday, October 28
Research Final Draft Due: Thursday, November 13
Total Points: 230 (including drafts)

In the last Inquiry, we took apart someone else’s argument and argued whether it was effective or ineffective based on the rhetorical moves that they made. In this assignment, the tables are turning and you’ll be constructing a persuasive argument which will then be evaluated based on the rhetorical moves that you have made.

Assignment Overview: Digital technologies have had a huge impact on the way we write, communicate, and interact. Working in your team, pick some aspect of digital communications today and write a public, persuasive argument about it. For example, you might write about texting and driving and make an argument about the best policies states may adopt to limit texting and driving; you might write about whether or not young adults are less connected and more isolated today because of all the texting they do rather than talking; you might write about Facebook’s privacy policies and the impact of that on what we say, write, and do.

In sum, you will come up with a research question which you will explore through research. After you have completed research on this topic, you will take a stance and actively work to persuade your audience to accept your argument and your proposed solutions using rhetorical moves and textual evidence.

Research Paper Proposal
Points: 20

For this homework assignment, your group will write a brief outline of what you plan to research. No less than 300 words, 12pt font, Times New Roman, MLA format.

What to do:
- State what your research question is.
  - A few examples of research questions are:
    - How are digital communication technologies changing collaborations in school and/or the workplace?
    - Are young adults more or less connected now than they were before digital communications?
    - Is there a difference in the quality and quantity of reading on a Kindle versus a print book?
- Provide background information on your topic.
  - What do you already know?
  - Why is this important to you? (Why did you select this topic?)
- State how you plan on researching your topic.
What databases do you plan on using?
What keywords will you use to narrow your search?

- What primary data will you be collecting and analyzing?
  - If conducting interviews or surveys, you need to list out questions you will be asking.
  - If conducting observations state where, when, who you’ll be observing
  - See Primary Research handout in Niihka

- What difficulties do you expect to encounter during your research?
  - What do you need help with?
  - What questions do you still have about the project?

**Annotated Bibliography**
**Points: 50**

As a group, you will gather research together so that you can have a broad understanding of your topic. Focus your research on understanding the context of your research question.

This part of the Inquiry will require you to research, review, and annotate scholarly articles. We’ll discuss in class what makes for a scholarly article, as well as how to use them in your analysis. Gather at least 10 sources that look at all sides of your topic. 80% of your sources MUST be scholarly sources (ex: academic articles). You may have a MAXIMUM of 20% of non-scholarly sources (videos, interviews, newspaper articles, etc.).

We will discuss the formatting of annotated bibliographies, but the following should give you an idea of what an annotated bibliography will ask of you:

- Create a correct MLA works cited entry for each source
- Summarizes the source briefly—what is the source, where did it come from (journal, book, etc.), who wrote your source?
- Explains any shortcomings, weaknesses, or biases of the source—all sources are going to have an element of exclusion or bias—what are they? How will they affect your paper?
- Develops how you will use your sources in your paper. What is the rhetorical purpose of your sources?

**Helpful Hint:** It is a good idea for you to double check your annotations to make sure that you include ALL of the sections above. Failing to do so will lower your grade.

**Format:** each entry should be approximately 150 words, double spaced, 12 pt. font, Times New Roman (TNR), MLA style formatting

**Research Paper**
**Points: 75pts Group Grade & 55pts Individual Grade (determined from Team Assessment)**

Your team’s research paper will work to answer your research question. Additionally, you will propose how this knowledge should be used to teach writing or reading.

**What to do:**
- Clearly define your research question and argue why it’s important to answer this question
• Make claims and provide support to answer your research question
  o Focus on providing your audience will a clear context for understanding the topic
  o Guide your audience through your interpretations and argument through:
    ▪ Effective, brief use of summary to summarize the context and rationale of your argument
    ▪ Clear argumentative strategies and analysis of your claims that engage with multiple sources, including those that differ from your own (multiple perspectives)
    ▪ Purposeful elements—think about the broader claims you can make through your argument and why it’s an important argument to be making
  o In addition to using sources to make a claim, you will also need to bring in some of your own research to add to the conversation.
    ▪ You may conduct interviews, collect surveys, and/or conduct observations.
    ▪ Gather you data and analyze it.
      ▪ Consider how it challenges or supports the arguments that the sources you’ve read have been making.
  o When appropriate consider:
    ▪ Using graphics to support your claims
    ▪ Offering personal narratives grounded in your own experiences to support claims
• Use at least eight (8) sources (maximum 20% non-scholarly sources) to support your claims.

Format: Ten (full) to twelve pages (not including works cited page), double-spaced, MLA format, 12 point font, Times New Roman.

Writers’ Letter:
Points: 10

A very important and telling part of this inquiry is your cover letter. This Writers’ Letter should be written to your instructor, me, and should focus on the particular rhetorical choices that your group made for the paper. Consider how you appealed to your audience and employed ethos, logos, and pathos throughout your paper. This section of the paper should be used to justify the choices that you made and should work to convince me to side with you.

Your letter should be approximately 350 words and placed before the body of your inquiry.
Appendix C

Inquiry Four: Let’s Remix
Proposal Due: Tuesday, November 11
Remix Rough Draft Due: Tuesday, November 12
Project Due: Tuesday, November 25
Total Points: 120

Getting Started: For this Inquiry, you will compose a remix, which for the purposes of this assignment, can be defined as such: a remix consists of already-existing material(s) for the purposes of making a new argument. Your remix should seek to make an argument using the tools of remix (compilation, re-appropriation, juxtaposition, text/genre merging). Building on the analysis work we’ve done thus far, Inquiry Four asks you to consider the factors that go into making an argument through remix.

Constraints on Your Remix: You are remixing Inquiry Three. Although we are opening with a broad conceptualization of remix, to keep your inquiry manageable consider these questions:

- What purpose (critique/activism/creative exploration) should my remix serve?
- What argument do I want to make?
- How can I accomplish my purpose/what should my definition of remix be (i.e. digital mashup, Tumblr compilation, political video remix, etc.)?
- What source texts should I draw from?
- What associations do others make when using/remixing certain texts/genres?
- What tone should my remix seek to establish?

After doing extensive (in- and out-of-class) brainstorming on the argument you wish to make, you should start making decisions about what type of remix would best accomplish your goals. Should it be a digital video using clips from popular TV shows? Should it be an alphabetic text that blends different genres or writing styles?

Proposal Points: 5

Identify how you want to approach this assignment.
Convince me that your remix plan is well thought out, manageable, and purposeful.

- Answer the following questions:
  - What argument do we want to make?
  - What audience will we target with the remix?
  - What strategies will we use to engage our intended audience?
  - Which media (ex: pamphlet, Facebook group, Tumblr blog) will best reach the intended audience?
Remix
Points: 50

This Inquiry does not require you to have advanced technical skill in video/sound editing. You don’t even need to use a computer! What it does require of you is a substantial amount of remix literacy. In other words, it asks you be strategic in your choices as remix composer. Since we will be working in varying modalities with wide-ranging purposes, it’s difficult to universalize minimum requirements. However, my assessment of your remix will be roughly based on the following:

- Strategic Composing Choices (savvy use of modality, genre, source text(s), etc.)
- Critical Engagement/Purpose (moving beyond entertainment)
- Effort (as evidenced by amount of composing/rhetorical work put in)
- Responsible Source Use (adhering to Fair Use regulations)

In addition to the in-class rubric we’ll create, your remix will be assessed based on a written rationale.

Extensive Reflection
Points: 50

Your final remix should make an argument that you can articulate in a written rationale.

What to Do:
- Articulate the argument of your remix
- Explain the choices that you made.
  - Why was the medium you chose was the best approach for your purpose?
  - What design and content decisions did you make and why did you make them?
  - How does your project appeal to your specific audience?
  - What rhetorical devices did you employ in order to make your project successful?

In short, the rationale should explain your choices as a remix composer.

Format: 3–4 pages, double-spaced, MLA format, 12 point font, Times New Roman.
Appendix D

Everyone approaches writing in their own way. For example, some people may like to start planning and writing their papers a week ahead of the due date while others plan and write their papers at the last minute. Some people enjoy drafting out their papers with pen and paper, while others stick strictly to composing on the computer. The steps that you take to write a paper—or the writing process—are unique to you, no one has exactly the same method to writing a paper.

Take a few minutes to think about your individual writing process and why you think you have developed these strategies; after all, the writing process that you use related in some way to your habits, personality, beliefs, etc.. After you reflect on this connection, write an essay in which you analyze your writing process and what this process reflects about you. The essay should integrate both of these goals seamlessly. Remember to follow all of the elements of an effective essay that you practiced in your previous classes.
Appendix E

Team Application
At this point in the semester, you should have gotten the opportunity to work with a variety of classmates through small in-class group activities. It is my hope that you’ve met some peers that you would like to continue working with for the rest of the semester. This assignment is designed for you to learn more about the peers that you’ve been working with and decide who you’d like to “hire” as partners for the larger group assignment.

Part A:
You will need to construct an “ad” for yourself to show-off your strengths as a partner. Remember, just as you are looking for two (2) to three (3) peers to commit yourself to, so are they! Consider how you can best market yourself to them. You can make this as unique as you want to, but there are several questions that you need to respond to:
1. What is your writing process like? (Remember to be honest, because they can always go back and check the first posting you made in Niihka about your writing process.)
2. What are your writing strengths?
3. What are your writing weaknesses?
4. What topics are you interested in researching for Inquiry Three? (This can be a bulleted list.)
Post Part A onto Niihka in the appropriate forum.

Part B:
After reading through everyone’s application, consider who you would like to be on your team. How you chose your members is up to you, but you might want to consider similar topic interests, writing strengths/weaknesses, and personality. After you have chosen your top five picks, fill out the following information:
List, in order of preference, the top five students you would like to hire for your group:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

List any students you specifically would not like to hire for you group (optional):
1.
2.
3.
Appendix F

Team Assessment
This assignment is designed to help you reflect about your experience with your team. Each question will require you to respond in a different way but shoot for around three to five sentences per question. You may go into more depth as you see fit. What I’m really looking for is thoughtful, honest reflection about your group work.

This document will be placed in your personal Google Drive Folder.

1. How satisfied were you with the collaborative process? (Select one.)
   Extremely satisfied        Satisfied        Not satisfied
2. What were some positive experiences you had collaborating on this document?
3. What aspects of the collaboration process proved to be the most helpful in terms of keeping the team on track? Why?
4. What aspects of the collaboration process aided you in having a more positive experience? Why or how?
5. What proved to be the most challenging part of the collaboration part of this process? Do you have any suggestions on how this aspect might be improved (or not prove to be so challenging)?
6. Describe a point during this project when you and/or your partners constructively disagreed. How did you work through and use this disagreement to your advantage? If your group did not experience any constructive controversy, why do you think that was the case?
7. List all of the contributions that you made to this project. Be as thorough and specific as possible.
8. List all of the contributions each of your partners made to this project. Be as thorough and specific as possible for each of your team members. Mark an asterisk next to the single-most important contribution each of your partners made.
9. What were each of your partners’ strengths as collaborators? List several strengths for each partner.
10. Name some aspects in which each of your partners could improve his/her collaboration skills.
11. Rank yourself and your team members where 1 is the “most work” to 4 being “least work” in the amount of work each team member contributed. If some team members contributed equally, then mark them as the same number.
12. What letter grade would you give each team member based on the quality of their work? On their collaboration?
Appendix G

1. Please describe the process by which your groups were selected. What do you think about this process? Is there anything you’d change about it?
2. What do you think are the benefits or pitfalls of grouping students this way?
3. Before you began this project, what were your assumptions about group projects?
4. How have those assumptions been challenged or confirmed in your group work?
5. What do you think it takes to make a group collaborate successfully?
6. Do you think the time that you spent reading and talking about collaborative group work has helped your group work more effectively together? Why or why not?
7. How do you think students should prepare to work in collaborative groups?
8. How involved in the collaborative process do you think your teacher should be? Do you feel like Ellen is meeting your expectations?
9. Overall, how do you feel about your group’s collaborative project?
10. What do you think is going well in your group? Why do you think that this is successful with your group?
11. What do you think needs improvement in your group?
12. Do you think everyone is putting in an equal amount of effort? How do you know this?
13. What do you think you’ve learned from working in a group that you couldn’t have learned by working by yourself?
14. Have your understandings about yourself as a learner and writer changed because of the work that you’ve done with the group?
15. Any other thoughts or comments that you would like to make about your work with your collaboration group?
Appendix H

1. Overall, how do you feel about your group’s collaborative project?
2. What do you think is going well in your group?
3. What do you think needs improvement in your group?
4. What do you think of the contributions of your individual group members?
5. Do you think everyone is putting in an equal amount of effort? How do you know this?
6. What do you think you’ve learned from working in a group that you couldn’t have learned by working by yourself?
7. Are there any other thoughts or comments that you would like to make about your work with your collaboration group?