INTENSITY IN TEACHING:
DEVELOPING AN AFFECTIVE FRAMEWORK FOR WRITING INSTRUCTORS

By

Cadaxa Chapman Ball

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Critical Studies in Literacy and Pedagogy—Master of Arts

2022

ABSTRACT

INTENSITY IN TEACHING:
DEVELOPING AN AFFECTIVE FRAMEWORK FOR WRITING INSTRUCTORS

By

Cadaxa Chapman Ball

This qualitative research project aims to develop an affective framework for writing pedagogy through analyzing narrative data collected over the course of one semester teaching MSU's first-year writing course, WRA 101: Writing As Inquiry. The narrative data consists of journal entries and reflections remarking on my own affective states in the writing classroom. Through analyzing these writings, this thesis reveals how and why affect theory has useful applications in writing pedagogy; namely, that instructors who attend to their own affective responses have the opportunity to better understand the changes they need to make to their teaching practices as well as the systems in which they teach.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Any worth that I produce in this piece is in part due to the nurturing and collaborative relationship I have with my MA cohort. Those of us who taught together for the first time that fall of 2021, Julia Ludovici, Imari Tetu, and Emma Harris, have supported and carried each other through this brand new experience. I am immeasurably grateful to them. I also must thank my thesis committee: Dr. Michael Ristich, Dr. Kristin Arola, and Dr. Danielle DeVoss. Without you all, I never would have gotten this far. In particular, I must thank Mike Ristich for his consistent availability and stellar feedback. My conversations with you are the backbone of this project. Last but not least, I must thank my cat, Chicken, for never failing to curl up on my lap while I wrote.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 1: Introduction

During the early, precious first weeks of teaching, I encountered a barrier between me and my students. This barrier became most obvious during a group activity. Usually, my students sat at tables, four or five at each. One day, instead of sitting at the tables, I had my students roll their chairs into a circle. I placed a chair in the circle for me to sit at, then went back to stand at the monitor to add some instructions to the slide presentation. When I returned to my seat, I noticed that they had placed themselves apart from me. Instead of creating a seamless circle, my students had blocked me off with a table and the cart monitor. The configuration looked like this:

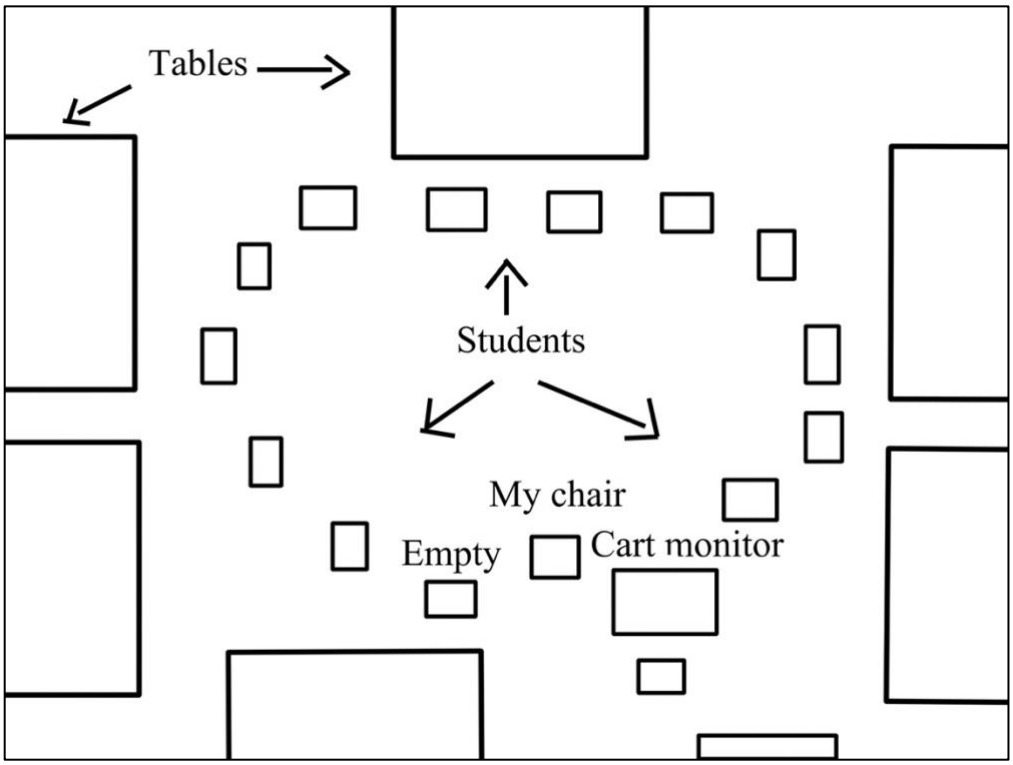

Figure 1: Digital illustration: This figure shows the layout of my classroom

My students marked me as separate. I remember when I was a student in a circle, I always felt discomfort when I sat directly beside my instructor. Now, I am the instructor, and there was a discomfort I felt from the separation. Where and why does discomfort, or any

affective reaction, arise for writing instructors? What can we learn from a close inspection of teacherly affect? This project aims to answer these questions.

To do so, I have gathered experiences from my first time teaching, which was fall of 2021. I taught a first-year writing class, WRA 101: Writing as Inquiry. This opportunity was one of the reasons I came to Michigan State University (MSU) for my MA. Two years at University of Oregon's (UO) writing center made me curious about what it would be like to design a curriculum, to be the one writing assignment directions instead of helping students follow them. Often, I would notice my tutees struggling with vague prompts, or on the flip side, overly complicated prompts, along with rigid course policies, and antiquated language and grammar standards. I took note of all this information and used it to guide my research in an undergraduate thesis, titled "Othering Us: Breaking Down Ideology to Establish Inclusive Communities in the Writing Classroom." At the time, I was new to the field, learning the norms and landmark ideas that led to the state of rhetoric and composition today. There was so much I wanted to know. I was primarily interested in how theory and praxis mix. In the case of "Othering Us," I wanted to discuss how neoliberal ideologies could not foster inclusive classrooms, and in fact more often create hostile environments for marginalized students. This is a broad topic that I struggled to narrow. I wanted to have it all, to say everything in one paper. In many ways, the thesis you are reading now is an extension of that first attempt. I am still concerned with inclusivity in the writing classroom, but I am taking a breath and a step back. The focus of this piece is my own affective experiences in the writing classroom. I aim to show how the nuances of affect produce snowballing reactions that may be difficult to reign in, and how an affective framework can work to manage these reactions before they may snowball.

More than ever, the emotional state of the world is intense, to say the least. Thus, attending to affect is uniquely important now. The mental and emotional toll of wearing masks and fearing for the lives of ourselves and others made this semester a more exhausting one. In some ways, this afforded me a unique opportunity. I did not enjoy the added pressures of teaching for the first time in such circumstances, but it did mean that it was difficult to establish a "normal." I had little to compare my classroom experiences to. My students were unknowns to me, both in the usual way regarding their hearts and minds and in the new way of being masked. Being a "good" teacher was an unknown in such a time and place. I argue that an affective framework for pedagogy has the capacity to tackle these many and varied unknowns, and how instructors feel and deal with them.

Prior to the 21st century, scholars of writing pedagogy neglected emotion and affect. In Kia Jane Richmond's 2002 article, "Repositioning Emotions in Composition Studies," Richmond writes that "despite the existence of a large body of work in composition studies dedicated to how students and teachers interact with each other and with knowledge, there seems to be less research that focuses on affective aspects of the student-teacher relationship" (67). Here, Richmond is referring directly to the writing classroom, arguing that scholars before her had not properly considered affect regarding students and teachers. Other scholars of the 90's and 00's share similar sentiments (Lindquist, Worsham). In recent years, affect has exploded in the field of rhetoric and composition. In 2016, *Composition Forum* released a special issue on emotion. Current work on the topic no longer introduces affect and emotion as new, unexpected theories for consideration and study.

Affect theory has thus become a useful tool for scholars across disciplines to attend to pedagogical concerns. Jonathan Alexander, Karen Lunsford, and Carl Whithaus write in "Affect

and Wayfinding in Writing after College" that "the scholarly literature on composition and emotions consists of three large categories of thought and inquiry: working with emotions in the classroom, understanding emotions as a rhetorical resource, and thinking of the relationship between emotions and dispositions that foster writing development and knowledge about writing" (565). My project concerns the first category, "working with emotions in the classroom." Alexander et al. do not specify *whose* emotions scholars attend to in the classroom. Usually, scholars focus on *student* affect and emotion (Lindquist, Passwater), and for good reason. We all want our students to thrive, and to do so, being able to attend to their emotional states is a crucial part of the job. However, I posit that instructor affect is just as important to student welfare.

Before I go any further, it seems necessary that I define affect. Affect is the pre-conscious experience that leads to emotion, which is consciously understood as emotion. I take from Brian Massumi's "The Autonomy of Affect" in defining affect as separate from emotion. Massumi describes an emotion as

> a subjective content, the socio-linguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized. (88)

Massumi goes on to argue that "it is crucial to theorize the difference between affect and emotion. If some have the impression that it has waned, it is because affect is unqualified. As such, it is not ownable or recognizable, and is thus resistant to critique" (88). Here the difficulty in studying affect is laid bare: once affect is identified, it should be categorized as emotion.

The reason why I'm focusing on affect is because when we focus on emotion, and when we focus on pedagogy in general, we do not look far or deep enough into the experience. We look at the causes of emotion, and we look at the effects of emotion, but we rarely look at the moments in between. What happens there? During orientation when I was being trained as a new instructor, I learned how to develop assignments how to develop lesson plans, but not so much the actual work in the immediacy of teaching. I was not prepared for being *in* a moment and reacting to students in that moment. I don't blame the first-year writing team. This is something that is really hard to address. Those moments where I react to students are often affective, meaning that I react out of intensities that I am not aware of. Affect is essentially an intensity that the affected person hasn't identified and classified as an emotion yet.

In Cory Holding's review essay "Affecting Rhetoric," Holding discusses Sharon Crowley's assertion that beliefs are rooted in affect (and therefore the body), which we have little to no control over (324). As such, the liberal tendency to respond with rationality does little to sway those whose beliefs are the result of affect. Holding writes, "it would seem a solution need be posed, a common ground on which to establish democratic communications between the groups: an interruption. One provisional solution surfaces: attend to guts in making your argument" (325). My hope here is to attend to guts; specifically, my own. I hope to develop an affective framework by looking at my emotions that have come up in the classroom and asking, what did I need? How can I develop a framework where I can intervene and be more self-aware in those moments?

I'll use an example from my class. During one of our discussions, I asked a question, and about five or six hands went up. This was somewhat unusual, and I was caught off guard. I quickly called on the student that I liked the most. Almost immediately I felt bad about this. I had

felt pressure to be quick in choosing who to call on. This wasn't something I was aware of in the moment. In the very moment of affect, I couldn't have told you what was going on. I realized it after a second—a second too late. The impulse to call on one of my favorite students is not bad or wrong. It's human nature to connect with some people more than others, and also to want to engage with them more. It doesn't mean that I was right in calling on her, though. I can't expect myself to have perfect impulses, but I can expect myself to make equitable choices regardless of my impulses. The key to this is to either allow myself space between impulses and reactions and/or to quicken my awareness of my impulses (affective states).

An irony of the field is the way in which our common practices of discussion make this process of awareness more difficult. In recent years we push to notice it, in the form of noticing embodiment, race, queerness, gender, ethnicity, and every other embodied, emotional state of being. Yet, classroom discussion is still fast-paced, still lacking attention to affect. Why did I feel the pressure to respond so quickly? Because it's the norm. Teachers respond quickly and don't let silences hang. The expectation of responding on the spot, of back-and-forth discussion, makes it difficult to notice our impulses and reactions as we have them. Writing instructors are good at incorporating new theories into their lesson plans, not so much their in-class behavior.

I hope that my framework will provide a starting point for writing teachers in their own affective development. In my time as a graduate student in rhetoric and composition, I have noticed the paradox of ethical praxis in writing pedagogy. Radical writing pedagogy theories show how developing any concrete, prescriptive structure for teaching will always leave some students out, will never appropriately address the needs of all students; and yet, we must deliver some structure. But how do we do this if there is no "correct" way of teaching? My hope with this project is to develop an approach that writing teachers can take toward creating their own

philosophy of teaching based on the context of their own classroom. This will deepen our ability to create inclusive classroom practices, as well.

My approach will be imperfect, but I believe that writing instructors need some support in addressing the specific contexts of their classes. Affect theory is a good lens for this project because it requires attention to context. The affects I experience in my classroom will not be the same affects that other instructors experience, but we can all use similar methods for paying attention to those affects and for responding to them. Left to our own devices and told to be inclusive, writing instructors like myself will inevitably fall into patterns of habit that are often not inclusive, regardless of our intentions. Affect theory provides a framework for noticing, understanding, and dismantling the unwanted habits.

Because affect is preconscious, scholars of affect have to choose from where to approach affect. Usually, the approach is to look backward. For example, Lindsay Stephens in "Becoming Acrobat, Becoming Academic" notices the feeling of anticipation and energy directly proceeding an aerial drop, and she works backward to uncover the closest possible moment to experiencing the direct affect. In a sense, looking backward is all we can do, as affect is necessarily past. This process of backward orientation toward affect differs from an orientation toward emotion, though both look to the past. Sarah Ahmed in "Queer Phenomenology" notes that "the starting point for orientation is the point from which the world unfolds: the here of the body and the where of its dwelling" (545). We experience affect as cyclical, as our positionality as individuals makes us aware of affect only in our own selves. In reality, affect is rhizomatic in nature, spanning outward into ourselves and through others, back and forth in complex patters. So where do we place ourselves in the rhizome? In the context of my project, it is important to place myself *at* emotion looking *back* at affect. This proved difficult when employing my methods,

which I will discuss later in the methodology section. However, my failures and successes in starting from emotion to look at affect have helped me develop my framework nonetheless.

I use narrative inquiry to tell a story about my affective experiences. The range of affect displayed is therefore limited, which will help contain the study but will not lead to any definitive conclusions about the experiences of my students. The specific results of this study are not intended to be generalizable, but the framework should be. My experiences in my particular classroom in the fall of 2021 have revealed the need for internal examination of my own biases as well as an understanding of how institutions manifest particular affective experiences. I have found this project personally useful in understanding the way I as an individual need to communicate with and respond to my students. Another instructor might find that their attention to affect will uncover something else, like a changing definition of community, or a personal insecurity to overcome. My writings that serve as data for this project do not constitute the methods I will use to practice this framework. Instead, they reveal why an affective framework is necessary and what it could look like.

Some limitations and problems in this study are time and compartmentalization. I only had one semester to collect data, so the degree to which my study of affect is successful has been difficult to measure. There are additional concerns regarding compartmentalization. I am currently teaching a different class now, in the spring of 2022, and I do not intend on using my experiences in that class as data in this project. As such, I will attempt to stay close to the writings from the previous semester's teaching without supplying new insights that I have gained from my current experiences. Since the purpose of this project is to develop a pedagogical lens that will be applicable regardless of the particular affects in different contexts, this should not pose an issue if I am successful.

A greater concern is of supplying well-intentioned words with hollow or even oppressive results. In "Going Postal: Pedagogic Violence and the Schooling of Emotion," Lynn Worsham argues that

> dominant pedagogy develops a system of subordinate educational ideologies that serve to mask its truth: philosophies and practices that claim to be non-violent and non-repressive are particularly useful in promoting misrecognition, such as pedagogies […] that focus on the erotics of teaching and learning; or pedagogies […] that are premised on decentered authority in the classroom; or even pedagogies that emphasize affective understanding […] that exert power through a subtle instrument of coercion, the implied threat of the withdrawal of affection. (222)

Oppression threatens to infect radical work. Worsham details how the education system has suppressed emotional development to tailor affect for capitalist purposes. Citizens with no tools for understanding emotion are easily manipulated and susceptible to propaganda and fear-mongering. I do not intend on developing a practice which suppresses emotion, which is why I want to be very careful in my explanations here. Awareness of one's own affect as a writing teacher is a necessary step in developing affective consciousness for students. My framework is not the end goal—it is only the beginning. I hope that after learning and practicing affective awareness, instructors will go on to teach it to their students.

In the following chapters, I will begin by explaining my methodology in detail. Alongside describing my overall methodology, I'll explain the methods I used to collect and analyze data. The bulk of this paper will contain my analysis of that data. This analysis examines two affectively rich topics, race and student engagement. These topics may not seem related, but they each provide a key insight into what an affective framework should look like and what it

can do. The first data chapter deals with race and how attention to affect can help writing instructors, specifically white writing instructors, do the necessary internal work of anti-racism. The second data chapter examines why student engagement (or lack thereof) can have such an impact on the mental well-being of instructors, the ultimate conclusion being that oftentimes what needs to change is not students or teachers, but institutions. In sum, these two chapters show how attention to affect can help instructors determine where internal *and* external work needs to be done. This study concludes with explanations on how and why to implement the affective framework, along with recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 2: Methodology and Methods

A Methodology Story

A positive side-effect of studying affect for the past few years is that I can no longer suppress an expression of it in my work. I write in a creative manner throughout this project to embody and elicit affect while I discuss it. This strategy not only yields an academic prose which argues for awareness of affect within its very structure, but also which is more fun to read. While reading Lynn McAlpine's 2016 article, "Why might you use narrative methodology? A story about narrative," I skipped over the abstract at the beginning, but read every word of the following paragraph, which was a personal narrative on how McAlpine came to use narrative methodologies. She then writes of the narrative portion, "the italicised text above, stands in contrast to the abstract, though it achieves, I would argue, much the same purpose, to invite, you, the reader into the text" (33). I smiled, because the language of the piece itself was evidence supporting the argument for the validity of narrative methodologies. I hope that in the same way, you will find this narrative equally compelling.

Both my methodology and my research methods were inconsistent and imperfect, but also personal and a product of passion and care. To pretend otherwise or to flatten the experience under a monotone "challenges and limitations" chapter would be disingenuous. In all honesty, the mess was part of the fun. In addition to McAlpine, I take from Esther O. Ohito's "Some of us must die" to describe the research practices I value and hope to emulate. Ohito's rejection of self-commodification and turn toward anchoring herself in her own creativity and memory is inspiring to me. Her research is self-aware, and it is for herself as equally as it is for others. Her work is "for others" in that it is liberatory. It presents herself and her knowledge to be incorporated into a greater community knowledge. This is the kind of research I hope to do. I

identify my community to be a community of writing teachers, especially those who are new to teaching like myself.

An appreciation of narrative, creativity, and self-awareness became the ground on which I developed my research methodology. There were some bumps along the way. Early in my first year of my MA program, I became fascinated with autoethnography, which I later discarded as an approach. However, elements of autoethnographic research remain part of this story and part of how I viewed my work at the beginning. Barbara Schneider's "I am Cleaning Out My Attic" was an inspiration; I wanted to write in a creative-critical fashion to utilize my own personal experiences as research data. In fall of 2021, I was to teach my first class, a first-year writing class. That classroom became the place of study for this research. For the entirety of that fall semester, I assumed I would use autoethnography as my research methodology.

While preparing my course materials to teach WRA 101 again this semester, I made some revisions to one of the projects that led me to question my own use of autoethnography. I realized that my thesis research was not, in fact, autoethnographical. Autoethnography is a research method in which one examines one's experiences within a cultural context to develop further knowledge about that cultural context.. The writing classroom is a culture of sorts, but the purpose of this project is not to make a claim about classroom culture, or even teacherly culture, but to utilize my affective experiences to propose an affective pedagogical framework. Other instructors may use this framework to understand their own affective experiences and make conscious decisions about how to react to these affective experiences. The goal is not to contribute to cultural knowledge but to suggest how to implement a critical theory in pedagogical praxis.

In a research methods course I took one semester prior to teaching, I learned about narrative inquiry, which I later decided to use as my methodological framework instead of autoethnography. Narrative inquiry is another qualitative research methodology used to construct collective stories. To conduct a narrative inquiry, a researcher collects narratives (in the case of this project, journal entries and reflections), then analyzes them and presents the analysis in the form of the researcher's own narrative. An example of a successful narrative inquiry is Gordon et al.'s article, "Defying the Narrative of Black Girls' Literacies," wherein the authors use their own experiences as Black women to situate their research findings from the event they hosted, "Black Girls Read!", to empower young Black girls and their literacy practices. Narrative inquiry was and is intriguing to me because it puts a focus on human experiences and stories. Stories by their very nature invite you in. I appreciate the aspect of narrative inquiry that includes the author, since many research methods leave out the researcher as a part of the process. Since my project is an exploration of my own writings, it makes the most sense that my voice be the center of the product of my research.

I did not consider using narrative inquiry initially because of the community emphasis central to the methodology. Narrative inquiry often invites community collaboration with an attention on how research affects the community involved in the research. McAlpine as well as other scholars such as Michael F Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin make note of the collaborative nature of narrative inquiry, emphasizing the relationship between the researchers and the participants. I am deviating from this tradition in order to take a deeper dive into the mind of one person: myself. For the purposes of this project, my narrative inquiry is an inward process instead of an outward process. Despite the inward nature of this study, I argue that there are more research participants than just myself. When discussing limitations, McAlpine writes, "we are

mindful that identity construction as represented in narrative is only one aspect of identity-as-action. It stands in, as it were, for engagement in practice and it is important to avoid the reification of identity (someone 'is an identity') and instead emphasise someone 'acting an identity' (Sfard & Prusak, 2005)" (46). While McAlpine introduces the concept of identity in order to caution against researchers developing fixed identities for their participants, there is another implication which is pertinent to my study: I am not the same person as I was when I wrote the journal entries and reflections that serve as data. My identity has never been and never will be fixed. As such, I had the difficult task of sticking to the data, of avoiding placing narratives retrospectively upon my past selves.

Taking the perspective of multiple selves as multiple participants allows me to consider how to better represent research participants (who are not me) in other studies, but I cannot claim that it allows me to center community in this particular study. As a result, my methodology is more so an adaptation of narrative inquiry than narrative inquiry as researchers usually use it. If I have the opportunity to continue my work in a PhD program, I imagine this changing. I want to expand this research to include student perspectives by asking first-year writing students to mirror my own work and write their own journal entries that track affect. The data from these entries would reflect a classroom affect that I would analyze to discover what students experience from the affective framework for teaching that I propose here. Within the limited scope of a master's program, however, I aim to reveal a need among writing instructors for an affective framework.

A Methods Story

The former story is a story of the broader view; this is a story of the details. Like the former, it is a story of change and adaptation. All of my methods decisions were experimental baby steps. Laid out, they could form a TV show plot in which a motivated graduate student begins her thesis with the utmost of confidence and finds out by the end of the first episode that she has made a number of errors that mess up the whole timeline. With the clock ticking, she only has a half a semester to figure out how to work with the data she has. Despite the dramatization, the beginning of this project was rather undefined and undramatic. I began with a simple plan; I would write a handwritten journal entry for each day I taught, which would be twice a week. After meeting with my committee a few weeks in, Professor Kristin Arola suggested I write weekly reflections as well. Simple, right?

As my committee met during week four, I did not want to try to catch up on 3 weeks' worth of reflections. As a result, I wrote the weekly reflections for weeks four through 15. Despite my desire not to write reflections too long after the week was over, I eventually fell behind on writing weekly reflections. Some of the later reflections were written a week or two, or even three, weeks after the week they described. This became an issue because I did not focus so much on the specific affective moments in the classroom. Having the extra time to think through and process my experiences led me to too much abstraction. I wrote in my week four reflection that "I wish I had been doing [these reflections] from the start, and I wish I had had a better plan from the start." While my original plan had been to hone in on specific affective moments, the reflections provided me with a different kind of data to work with. I was able to learn more about how I process and reflect on affect, which helped me determine what I needed to improve that process. That is what became the foundation for my pedagogical framework.

Ultimately, I had workable material: 14 weeks' worth of entries and 11 weeks' worth of reflections (there's a week missing because I decided not to use writings from week 8, in which I canceled class and met with my students for one-on-one conferences).

The criteria for both the entries and reflections was only to focus on affective in-class experiences, but after re-reading a few after the end of the semester, I found that I did not follow this criteria for the reflections at all. I had planned to avoid discussing grading, lesson planning, student conferences, or any other course-related experiences outside the classroom. The journal entries do follow this plan, but the reflections contain insights on a variety of topics. As a result, I decided not to include reflection data that references experiences outside the classroom.

My thesis chair, Dr. Michael Ristich, told me to encode my data with descriptive codes. I was skeptical of coding, having very little experience with it. I did not understand what I would gain from coding that I hadn't already accomplished through some rudimentary theming work I had done. There was a lot I could gain, apparently. In the first chapter of *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, Johnny Saldaña explains that I should have been utilizing descriptive coding from the start. Saldaña suggests to "start coding *as* you collect and format your data, not after all fieldwork has been completed" (17). *Oh well,* I thought. It *probably won't be that much of an issue.* Reader: it was. At this point in the process, I had thought I would only use the reflections, as I hadn't realized they were so different from the journal entries. However, since I didn't have reflections for the first three weeks, I decided I'd supplement the journal entries for those weeks. I coded the first three weeks' worth of journal entries without incident. Then, when I moved on to the week four *reflection,* I found that none my coding criteria made any sense anymore. This is because my reflections contain much more analysis and do not detail as much raw, real, affect in the classroom.

On page 10 of the *Coding Manual*, Saldaña includes the following figure to illustrate how codes relate to theory:

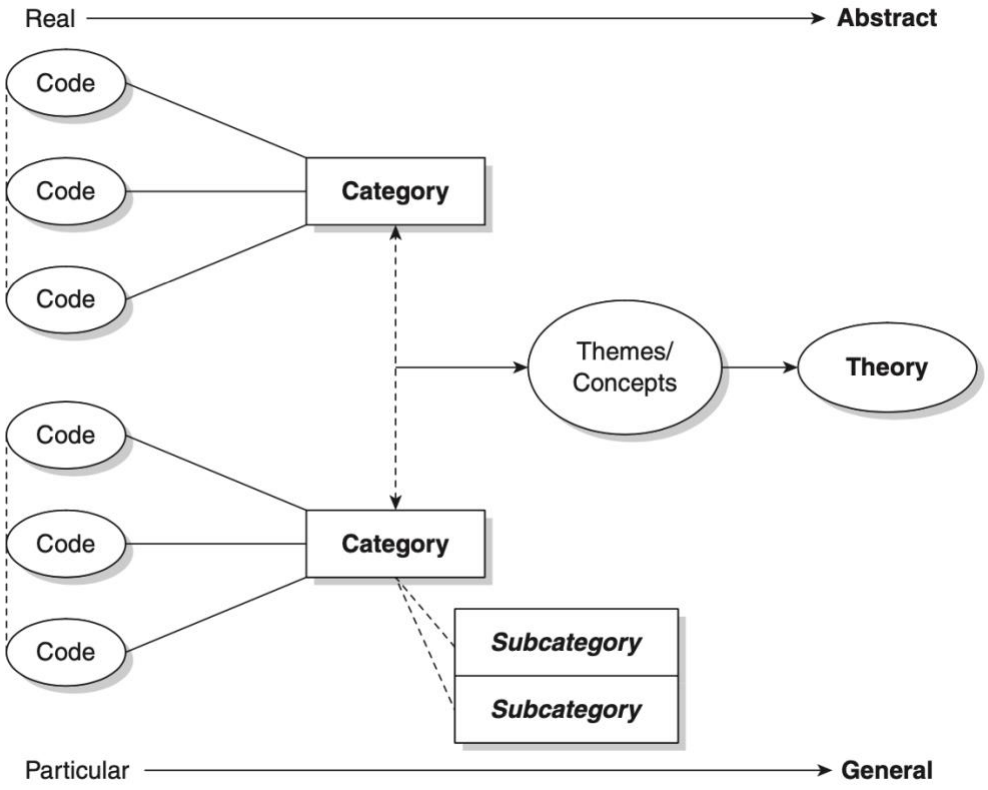

Figure 2: Model: "A streamlined codes-to-theory model for qualitative inquiry" (Saldaña 10)

On the left are the codes, which are more "real." On the right is the theory, which is more "abstract." The data in my journal entries is more real, and the data in my reflections is more abstract. As a result, when I tried to code the reflections alongside the journal entries, the codes did not overlap in the same way. Coding the journal entries yielded descriptions which I could sort into themes to later analyze. Coding the reflections yielded descriptions of analysis of the journal entry data, meaning that if I were to theme and analyze these codes, I would be accomplishing something different; I would be discovering how I go about analyzing my affective experiences instead of discovering what my experiences reveal about my attention to affect.

Now, the project at this point was by no means unsalvageable. Instead of wallowing (okay, I did a little wallowing), I decided to transcribe *all* of my handwritten journal entries and encode them as well as the reflections. Instead of a disaster, I had the opportunity to develop more complex insight. The analysis in my reflections was based on thoughts and conversations I had after teaching, often honing in on a particular idea or theme extracted from my affective experiences. It was fascinating to find which affective experiences I had "dropped" during this process. Descriptive coding helped me salvage these lost patterns, many of which I did not have the time or focus to even notice in my reflections.

I did three rounds of coding. The first round was a first impressions round, where I just created a code for every affect, idea, and pattern I came across. As stated earlier, the reflections yielded a lot of codes related to loftier ideas, such as "fantasy as emotional regulation," whereas the journal entries produced more concrete, affective codes like "anxiety" and "sleepy." 38 journal codes and 46 reflection codes later, it was time to sort and condense. I decided to disregard codes related to student reactions and the student/teacher relationship in favor of just my own affective teacherly reactions in the classroom. For the reflections, I had to make a choice as to how I would code them, since they were so different from the journal entries. Many of the same themes were still there, although more often buried in stuffy analysis. This meant that I could feasibly use the same codes as the journal entries. I made this choice to more easily compare the journal entries and reflections, to see which themes I was most prone to analyzing and which themes I brushed aside.

For my second round of coding, I used five codes: Confidence, Unknown, Presence, Power, and Fatigue. However, upon closer inspection, I found that the "Unknown" code was too

broad, and I had only applied it to negative reactions to the unknown. As such, I did a third round of coding with 7 codes, this time splitting the unknown code into three separate codes.

Code Definitions:

- Confidence: mentions of confidence, understanding, calmness, serenity, and authenticity
- Negative reactions to the unknown: mentions of not knowing something, insecurity, anxiety, discomfort, assumption, regret, fear, defensiveness.
- Positive reactions to the unknown: mentions of excitement, pleasant surprise, delight.
- Neutral reactions to the unknown: mentions of the unknown/uncertainty with no emotional language.
- Presence: mentions of embodiment, conscious decision-making, emotional regulation, attention to the present.
- Power: mentions of power or the lack of it, responsibility, agency, performance/roles.
- Fatigue: mentions of burnout, lack of sleep, hunger, emotional or mental fatigue, physical weakness.

Each code was applied to each unique mention. For example, if I discussed feeling confident about a particular activity for an entire paragraph, I only coded it once because it's discussing one incident. However, if I mentioned feeling confident about a particular activity and later discuss feeling confident about a different activity, then the confidence code was used twice.

Data Chart:

	Journal entries	Reflections
Confidence	11(.79 mentions/week)	7 (.64/week)
Negative reactions to the unknown	19 (1.36/week)	6 (.55/week)
Positive reactions to the unknown	6 (.42/week)	2 (.18/week)
Neutral reactions to the unknown	5 (.36/week)	0 (0/week)
Presence	6 (.43/week)	4(.36/week)
Power	4 (.29/week)	7 (.64/week)
Fatigue	10 (.71/week)	8 (.73/week)

Table 1: This table shows the instances of each unique mention of qualitative codes ascribed to both the journal entries and reflections used for this study

In the following chapters, I examine this data to learn more about teacherly affect. My approach is to compare the data from the journal entries to the data from the reflections. This comparison allows me to learn more about my current process of attending to affect in order to develop a new process. As you read, I invite you to develop your own.

Chapter 3: (Re)orienting Affect Theory as an Anti-Racist Tool

Data Analysis: Racial Affects

Following affect is sort of like walking backward along a path you have no memory of taking. Also you're blindfolded. In "Orientations" Sara Ahmed writes, "orientations are about the directions we take that put some things and not others in our reach" (552), later pointing out how heteronormativity is a force which puts only certain things within reach in order to orient everyone down a particular path (a heterosexual one) (554). By "things," Ahmed means anything from the concept of lineage and bloodlines (556) to wedding photos (559) to any object that affirms a heteronormative path. Affect theory is uniquely suited to reveal how these objects act on us and how we respond to them. Ahmed's Queer Phenomenology shows us *that* and *how* we are oriented; affect theory can show us specifically *where* in our own lives we are oriented and *what* we can do about it. Throughout this chapter I will show you how I traced my path backward and found the moments I was set on it.

After looking closer at the occurrences I coded as relating to the unknown, I noticed an interesting pattern. Reflections four, five, six, 14, and 15 contain no references to the unknown at all, while journal entries four and five contain three unique mentions each. While reading the week four journal entries and reflection, I discovered that I was preoccupied with race. It makes sense that race would come up in relation to the unknown. Being both a white and a new instructor, I had concerns about how to address race in the classroom. When I am uncertain about something, my inclination is to study the subject and analyze my own thoughts and actions. Over time, however, I have learned that there are some things that I cannot learn or know simply because I am white. Regardless of how much antiracist scholarship I had studied or could have studied, I didn't know what was best for my students of color, I didn't know about potential

racist tendencies in my white students, nor did I know about all of my own contributions to white supremacy. I didn't originally intend on this project to cover race, but affect led me here, which is a good thing.

Affect may seem like an abstract theoretical concept, but it sprouts at the very base of our human experience: the body. As such, to study affect is to study all our bodies and all the politics therein. Through analyzing my writings, I found that race was heavily affective. The ways that I, as a white instructor, interacted with my students, became a consistent source of interrogation and uncertainty. My awareness of and attention toward race was important in my teaching. If I had ignored race, I may have felt much more comfortable, but the affective undercurrent would have remained, and unexamined at that. In "The Myth of the Colorblind Classroom" by Pimentel et. al, the authors discuss the consequences of a colorblind approach to teaching. The colorblindness myth is the idea that the solution to racial harmony is to pretend that race does not exist (Pimentel et. al 109). From a naive perspective, it makes sense that if you don't see difference in others, then you can't discriminate against any particular group for those differences. There are numerous issues with this. Racism is systemic, so individual changes in behavior is not enough. Additionally, ignoring race means ignoring racism, which silences people of color.

The reason that is important for this chapter, though, is that human beings are not rational creatures. We cannot tell ourselves to simply not see color. Unconscious bias and internalized prejudices run rampant if we do not examine them. Pimentel et. al write that "to begin the process of examining whiteness, white instructors must first deconstruct their own privilege before leading students in a discussion on race as a social construct. Just because white educators are in authoritative positions does not mean they can escape the scrutiny of their own racial

position and privilege" (113). The process of deconstruction is also an ongoing one; "antiracist pedagogies are never simple or complete" (120). Without acknowledging this, we may encounter two unwanted results: white instructors who never feel ready to discuss race and therefore never do, and white instructors who, after reading a few books and attending a few workshops, feel that they have done "enough" antiracist work. One of my first affective reactions falls into the former category, with my inexperience and worry holding me back. I hope to reveal how an affective pedagogical framework can lead instructors to examine difficult tendencies and responses within themselves: in this case, concerning race.

During the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, I had concerns about whether or not it was ethical of me to pursue a graduate degree and teach. The last thing that the field of rhetoric and composition needed was another white woman's perspective. And yet, who *does* need a white woman's perspective? If the issue exists across professions, I might as well do what I can within the one I'm passionate about. I care about writing and teaching writing. I cannot claim that I have anything novel to say about race; in fact, I can assure you that I don't. That is not the point of this chapter. Instead, I will take you through my anxieties and meditations on race to show how affect theory can be a tool for instructors to examine and understand their own biases and complicity in systemic oppression. Additionally, to avoid discussing race altogether would not only ignore a crucial topic, but it would be cowardly. In arguing for an embodied pedagogical approach, Christina V. Cedillo calls for teachers to center race and disability (What Does It Mean to Move?). She notes that "in many circles that might still get you pegged as 'that political teacher' rather than 'that meticulous rhetor,' but stresses that "some of us have no other choice than to be political because our lives have been politicized" (What Does It Mean to Move?). We need more white scholars to politicize their classrooms, to be vulnerable and to admit mistakes.

There may be repercussions to doing so, as there are repercussions to all mistakes. Too often do white people get away without facing them. I recognize that I have made mistakes in my teaching, and I have probably made mistakes in discussing race in this chapter. Those who choose to explain my mistakes to me do me the greatest kindness, as they give me a chance to change, but they can only do so if I let myself be vulnerable in the first place.

To address race in my class, I had decided to assign Vershawn Ashanti Young's "Should Writer's Use They Own English?" to develop a discussion around Black linguistic justice and racist dialect policing. In the weeks leading up to this discussion, I introduced my students to post-structuralist and deconstructionist ideas of the subjectivity of language. I wanted them to first grasp how language cannot ever fully represent reality. It followed naturally that since this was true, it meant that no language or dialect could be "correct" or "right." I did not receive any pushback from the students, and many were able to reiterate these points back to me, so I consider the lesson a success. It helped that they were grateful that I used a labor-based grading scheme and made it clear to them that I did not hold them to the dominant American English standards.

My students read Young's piece in week seven. Much earlier in week four, I wrote in a journal entry, "I wasn't sure if I should bring up race. I teetered on the edge of the subject. I'll bring it up when we talk about Vershawn Young for sure. I'm not sure if I should have brought it up. I mostly talked about 'other people' and 'communities' in a broad sense. I'm worried that I didn't explain clearly enough that advocating for others needs to come from the knowledge that you are not the expert." The feeling of uncertainty I experienced is one based in a discomfort to discuss race. My teetering "on the edge of the subject" reveals a reluctance on my part to lead a discussion on race without the helpful guidance of an assigned reading to center myself. The last

sentence is a helpful indicator as to *why* I struggled to start the conversation on race. I was worried about properly explaining good advocacy to my students. I was worried in particular that I did not stress "enough that advocating for others needs to come from the knowledge that you are not the expert." I know that I do not consider myself an expert on race. My education on race has been largely focused on internal work. Thus, it was difficult for me to introduce the topic of race with my students, especially considering my place of authority in the classroom.

As I mentioned earlier, only my journal entry for week four for contained instances of the "unknown" code. Did I suddenly become confident about discussing race in the future? No, of course not. Without the constraints of focusing on specific affective moments, my reflection contains mostly analysis, sans the attention to the feeling of hesitation and anxiety. It contains the sort of internal work on race that I tend to do in private. Curiously, while the reflection focuses on race as well, my writing details an entirely different affective moment than the one I mentioned in the journal entry. Instead of reflecting on the question above of why I struggled to discuss race in the classroom, I focused on a moment in which one of my students had laughed at a joke I made in class. It had made me feel good and validated in my teaching. This student was a Black woman, and I was concerned that my positive reaction came from a desire for Black people in general to validate me. Which is, well, racist.

To explain, in my week four reflection, "in the past year, I have been trying to unlearn and unpack my desire to be validated by people of color. It's an ugly desire, rooted in white fragility and white supremacy. It centers my white feelings. I know that people of color do not owe me, a person of no color, anything, especially validation. And yet, those feelings still appear sometimes. Less so the more I speak about them and consciously redirect them. That is why I am writing about this." Why do these fragile white feelings develop, and how can white instructors

combat them? For me, a passing glance seems to indicate that they are a product of wanting to be a "good ally." In the reflection, I wrote that my student's "engagement makes me feel as if I am providing a safe space for people of color, as if I am doing something right by her. I say that this is how I feel because I know that these feelings are not necessarily 'true.'" To elaborate on this last bit, the feelings of being a "good ally" are egoic instead of compassionate. The focus is on *me.* The engagement made me feel like *I* was a good person instead of making me feel happy that my *student* was having a positive experience. Of course, I was happy for her, too. But that wasn't the immediate feeling.

An issue that came up in my reflection was whether or not I was really having a reaction to my student's race. I wrote in the reflection that

> it is also difficult for me to distinguish between my desire for validation from my students in general and my desire for validation from my students of color. Because of this difficulty, I think it would be most useful to work against desiring any kind of validation from my students. I want to be very careful in what I mean here. I am not saying that instructors should not receive or respond to student feedback. Encouraging feedback and taking it seriously is crucial in establishing trust and tailoring a class to students' needs. However, there's a difference between encouraging feedback for the purpose of improving a course and encouraging feedback for the purpose of receiving validation. Sometimes students will validate my choices, but that does not mean I should take it personally. It means that I know how the course is working well.

I go on to develop a plan of action for making this change in my mind. The gist of it is to allow myself to look at ugly reactions without shaming myself. I write that "I need not get angry at myself for existing in a rainstorm, but it would be helpful to pull out the umbrella." This is a

reference to the way that affect circulates largely beyond our control. Growing up in a racist society will circulate racist affects. When I have a racist reaction, it is not always my *fault*, but it is always my *responsibility.*

I mentioned avoiding "shaming myself" in the previous paragraph. This directive contains powerful affective significance and helps point toward the path to responsibility. Eve Sedgwick's chapter of *Touching Feeling* entitled "Shame, Theatricality, and Queer Performativity" is a good place to start analyzing these affects. Sedgwick claims that shame and performativity are, in a sense, one in the same (38). Living with shame becomes a way of performing, of expressing oneself (regardless of intent). Instead of taking a moral stance for or against shame, Sedgwick is interested in shame as a component of identity (63). In the context of queer identity, she writes, "asking good questions about shame and shame/performativity could get us somewhere with a lot of the recalcitrant knots that tie themselves into the guts of identity politics—yet without delegitimating the felt urgency and power of the notion of 'identity' itself" (64). Shame molds us, as emotions do, but does so in a continuous, changing way, dependent on context. That is why the study of shame is uniquely suited to untangling the "knots" Sedgwick speaks of.

I mentioned earlier that I did not want to shame myself. I'd like to examine that a bit. If we take Sedgwick's idea that shame is performance, than what does it mean to shame oneself? Once again, this feeds into the idea of wanting validation from others. The initial affective response to the laughing student was happiness, was feeling validated. Then, I had another affective response to that happiness: shame. No one inflicted the shame on me. The shame was for myself to use as a motivator to work toward not desiring validation. Was this useful? Did the shame help me define myself, or did it make me reluctant to face myself? Let's turn back to

identity. Sedgwick's discussion of shame is situated within the context of marginalized identity, so how might it apply to this discussion, one of privileged identity? In my personal experience, I have noticed that people with more privileges tend to be more susceptible to a victim-mindset in which they believe *they* are the truly marginalized, the truly oppressed. I'd hypothesize that one reason for this is that they feel they have been asked to feel shame. Many conservative American politicians have decried Critical Race Theory (CRT) for "shaming" young white children for being white (ignoring the fact that CRT is first and foremost an academic theory rarely discussed in K-12). This is interesting to me, as I have been taught CRT and have never felt shame as a result. CRT is not what causes me to feel shame, *I* am. My morals and values allow shame to affect me. Overdoing it may be unhelpful, but allowing myself to feel shame when I have thought, said, or done something I regret, is not an insignificant aspect to my taking responsibility.

Building the Framework

As you can see, my reflective process contributed to a greater understanding of myself as an instructor through examining myself as a person: a whole person, with flaws, imperfections, insights, personal beliefs, and experiences. Even with these positive results, I do not think I was implementing an effective affective framework (say that three times fast). Upon looking closely, my reflections moved carelessly away from the affective moments themselves. I made immediate connections without centering my embodied experience. The two affective moments discussed are still unexamined for their contribution to the framework. As such, I will go back to each of these moments in an attempt to better understand what they felt like, what the choices were in those moments, and what methods would have helped me better make those choices.

First, let's discuss the moment of hesitancy when it comes to race. Let's get as close to that moment as we can. Unfortunately, the journal entry really doesn't allow me to get as close as I wish. The line "I teetered on the edge of the subject" implies that I felt fear. There was an impulse to leap forward contradicting an impulse to step back. To get closer, I'll have to stray from the text, and bring forth the most unreliable of data sets: my memory. I close my eyes, and I remember standing in front of my class, shifting my weight. I had not planned to discuss race, but it was on my mind. The stakes felt high. My students of color would suffer if I fumbled the topic. I didn't know what kinds of reactions my white students would have, or if they would be damaging to the class community.

But what was the *feeling?* Was I really thinking about all of those things? Yes and no. Mostly, I felt a slight constriction in my chest, the embodied feeling that usually accompanies my feelings of anxiety. I also held my breath for a moment—a product of indecision. My class was waiting on me. I made the decision in the moment without taking the time to properly investigate whether or not it was the right one. In retrospect, I believe it was the right decision to wait until I had more preparation and had given my students time to think about race through the Young reading. This may seem to counter my reflections earlier about my hesitancy to discuss race. Shouldn't I have pushed my white discomfort to the side? No, because in this case, while there was definitely discomfort due to my own whiteness, there were genuine risks to my students of color that I should not have taken in that moment. Did I make my decision for the right reasons, then? Honestly, I don't know. It's possible that if the situation were different, I would have made the wrong decision out of discomfort. If I had been in a situation where there were fewer risks and I needed to make a split decision and chose not to discuss race, that would have been the wrong decision.

It doesn't really matter whether or not I made the decision out of the "right" discomfort, because I didn't have time to differentiate between the discomforts. There was just the constriction in my chest, the catch in my breath, and my students waiting expectantly. On the one hand, it indicates that preparation for difficult discussions is necessary. I did not shy away from race when teaching my class about Young, even though I experienced some discomfort then as well, because I had prepared ahead of time. Instructors *need* to discuss race in the classroom, but they also need to educate themselves and prepare.

On the other hand, the issue of responding to affect in the classroom comes from the immediacy of teaching. The culture of education is fast. We expect instructors to speak fluidly, to answer quickly, and to pack as much educational content in the allotted class time. Who in the world can make good decisions in an instant? In their article "Precarious Spaces, Institutional Places," T Passwater investigates "safe spaces." They posit that safety is conditional and contextual; they ultimately advocate for a pedagogy in flux. Near the end, they provide a rundown of some strategies in their pedagogical "toolkit," including a section on breathing which argues that "we need to acknowledge our limitations and check any impulse to "fix" the problems around us. Assigning ourselves or our students a breath can be an act of recentering. Even in short class-periods, why not try a 5-10 minute break? Pause a discussion. Admit you don't know how to answer or respond to something" (Precarious Spaces). These moments of pause can provide a space for instructors to notice affect as it affects us, to have the time to identify it, to bring it into the world of feeling.

This is precisely why I am writing about affect and not emotion: affect acts upon us pre-consciously, and we often react to affect without knowing that's what we're doing. To discuss emotion is to limit the conversation to the conscious after-effects of affect. An emotional

framework for writing pedagogy would seek to help instructors analyze and reflect on their emotions, whereas my affective framework seeks to help instructors pinpoint moments of action that they themselves don't even necessarily understand so that they may *later* do the work of analyzing and reflecting emotion. My point is that focusing on emotion only is incomplete. To include affect in praxis, instructors must take note of classroom experiences that we don't understand. We must pay attention to confusion, uncertainty, and split-second decisions. How to do that is up to you. It was helpful to me to keep a teaching journal, but I've learned in hindsight that I need to write more details about my embodied states, especially if I did not understand them.

With this in mind, let's look at the second affective moment, the one discussed in the reflection. I made a joke and a student laughed. In that moment, I felt a flip in my stomach—a pleasant one. I was pleased. In remembering that feeling, it reminds me of performance. It was the same feeling I have felt on stage getting an audience to laugh, clap, or cheer. An academic and an acrobat, Lindsey Stephens describes moments of affect in her aerial practice, writing that "if you have a pressing, nagging, less than fully conscious sense that you might not be safe before you drop from 20 feet, then you don't drop . . . you might be wrong, but you need to attend to those early sensations as sometimes you are right" (267). Having spent a few years learning aerial acrobatics recreationally, I recognize this "sense." Again, performance elements play a role. Much of the time, my ability to trust my pre-subjective sense is reliant on rehearsal. I never became a skilled acrobat, but once I did the same motion over and over, a catcher's hang became pure muscle memory. What's important here is that I had to train myself in this way—it didn't come naturally. In the same way, teachers react based on past reactions.

Is it so bad that I felt pleased when a student laughed at my joke? What does this reaction indicate? Other students of mine have laughed at my joke, but this one stuck in my mind. She was one of my favorites. She was engaged, and wrote beautifully. I appreciated her engagement. Yet, in my reflection, I tied all this back to race. How did I get there? I didn't mention this moment in my journal entry at all. Enjoying the social reward of laughter is fairly innocent, but the attention my mind paid to that particular student was troubling. Noticing inequalities in one's thoughts and reactions to others is important. The only reason I came to the conclusions I did, which I still largely stand by, is because I think about race a lot. While teaching, I was on the lookout for white fragility. I began thinking about race in high school when I had to read *Beloved* for my AP Literature class. I loved it. During undergraduate study, I took a class on Black Marxism. We read Cedric Robinson's book of the same name, as well as scholarship from Terrion L. Williamson, Franz Fanon, W.E.B. DuBois, among others. As I entered the field of rhetoric and composition, I learned about antiracist pedagogy through Young, Victor Villanueva, Scott Lyons, and Asao Inoue. I owe them many of my breakthroughs. Nowadays, I spend a lot of time in online activist spaces and a lot of time consuming material on race.

This reveals that in order for an affective framework to work, instructors have to spend considerable time learning about affect and emotion, particularly the affects and emotions that accompany bias, prejudice, and systemic oppression. It's not enough to pursue one's own self-actualization. Teachers can only understand their own feelings and reactions within the context of the social systems in which they exist. In this particular case, I did not react out of the feeling that came up in my class, but the affects we do not immediately notice or react to can be even more dangerous than the obvious ones.

Both of the affective moments I've discussed here show that internal work is necessary for instructors, and affect theory is a useful tool in this work. Affect theory directed me to moments of uncertainty. However, much of my analysis of these moments is post-mortem. I am grateful for the conclusions I have been able to make, but the affects themselves are long lost to time. My recommendation for future use of affect theory in teaching would be to develop a classroom culture of slowness, of sitting longer in silences. Even taking more time outside the classroom would be of benefit, as my realizations about race exemplify. Spending more time to educate myself and then sit and unravel affective encounters gave me the ability to more quickly intervene on those in-class moments, even if I'm not perfect at it. Attention to affect requires time and patience.

Chapter 4: Institutional Pressures and Student Engagement

Sometimes, internal work is not enough to properly address affect. Sometimes, it is not we who must change, but the institutional systems that confine us. This is the second conclusion I came to through analyzing the discrepancies between my journal entries and reflections. When discussing negative reactions to the unknown, many of my journal entries reference silence. In contrast, the reflections rarely acknowledge this. A line from my week four journal entry reads, "I think the hardest thing about teaching is the silence. It's so difficult to discern what students are thinking. I try my best to give them agency and tailor the course to their needs, but it's so difficult when many of them do not voluntarily voice their needs." There are many similar statements that echo throughout the journal entries. Why did I not explore this in my reflections?

In a way, I did, although from a different affective experience: low attendance. While coding, I thought of my reactions to silence and my reactions to low attendance to be different, although I coded both as "negative reactions to the unknown" because they produced a lot of anxiety and frustration for me. However, I now see that they are connected. In the first several weeks of the semester, the attendance of the class wasn't perfect but it wasn't terrible, either, especially considering they were showing up for an 8am class during a global pandemic. Although, I could not tell you what normal attendance should even look like in that circumstance, something that contributes to the unknowable aspect. In the beginning, around a quarter out of the class of 22 would be absent each day (not usually the same students, though). During the last third of the semester, half the class would regularly be absent. Still, I felt that there were enough students to have engaged discussions. I tortured myself a lot about what "engagement" meant to me. My students were always pretty quiet, at least compared to classes I've taken. They didn't speak to each other unless directed to, and even then, they were quiet.

About four or five students often contributed to discussion. In retrospect, I don't think this is a big deal. Now that I'm teaching a class at 10:20am, the vibe is so, so different. My current students are so talkative.

But, I had no frame of reference in the fall. I was brand new at this. So, I began to slowly grow more uncomfortable with the silence. I didn't know what to do with it. I didn't want to *make* them talk, but I also felt like I was doing so much work to try to make the class engaging to no avail. When attendance began to drop, I was surprised by how much it bothered me, but now I understand. The feeling had been building up from the start. The anxiety and frustration I felt due to the silence snowballed as students stopped coming to class.

I started referencing low attendance in my week 10 journal entries. On November 1st, 2021, I wrote, "I decided to start class at 9:00 am instead of 8 because I figured that, after Halloween & the big game, not many of my students would be going to bed early. I was right about this. 10 out of 22 students showed up." At this point, I displayed no negative reaction to the low attendance. I had expected low attendance because I knew the circumstances that might make it difficult for my students to attend. In my reflection for the following week, I mentioned the aforementioned circumstances again, writing,

> I don't remember much about how I was feeling Monday of this week, other than the frustration I was beginning to feel about the low attendance. The previous week had low attendance, which I expected because of Halloween weekend and the game, but attendance did not go back up this week. I began to feel nervous about it. It's hard not to feel like low attendance reflects poorly on me.

Nobody told me that the low attendance was my fault, but I couldn't find an answer to it that was acceptable. When I surveyed my students to ask them what about the course was difficult for

them, many responded that they struggled to get up early enough for an 8am class. Every time I felt frustrated with attendance, I reminded myself that it was mostly a product of the time, and that's all.

However, it wasn't so easy to change my feelings. Every time I walked into class and there were fewer and fewer students, I felt stress. I was tired, too. There's a reason why I had to develop a code for "fatigue" when coding all my entries and reflections. I am what you would call a night owl. While writing this, it's spring break, and I'm trying to resurrect my sleep schedule from the 6am bedtime hell it's been in. So, forcing myself to get up to teach at 8am was not my preference, but I did it anyway, because I loved my students. But most of them probably didn't love me, and those that did didn't have the same kind of responsibility to me that I had to them. Because of my attendance policy, they could afford to miss class, even if they ended up with a slightly worse grade. Many of them missed many, many classes and still left with A's and B's because I have a flexible attendance policy. I don't regret being flexible, either. There were points where I was tempted to "lay down the law," but I am an abolitionist and don't believe in policing, so I never quite got there.

Why does this matter? What does this have to do with developing an affective framework? The problem here is entirely affective and requires an affective solution. The reason why this problem persisted the whole semester is because I let the feelings guide me outward looking for solutions. They wouldn't go away, so I couldn't accept the reality that their causes were out of my control. I made the mistake of ignoring the affect because I thought I knew where the feelings came from. Silence and low attendance, duh. I thought the silence was difficult to deal with because I didn't know what my students were thinking. I wrote in my week 11 reflection,

> obviously, I was struggling a lot with silence. I had told my students to talk in groups and they barely said anything. Usually they do what I tell them to, so it was very weird that they didn't. I wrote in my journal entry about figuring out how to try to know my students without feeling owed that intimacy. It's a really strange balance. I try my best to give them opportunities to express themselves, give feedback on my teaching, ask questions, and be comfortable, but at the same time, they aren't necessarily going to take any of these opportunities, and it's not my fault if they don't. It's the old 'you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink' thing. It's just hard because what if I could be doing something better, leading them better? I could definitely drive myself crazy.

I did drive myself crazy.

Teaching is a type of interaction with which I was unaccustomed. Speaking one on one with a conversation partner has specific rules. You speak, they listen, they speak, you listen, and so on. Speaking in a group is similar, although there exists the tendency for some members to become lost. As a student, I was a talker, and I always had a response guaranteed from the instructor. As a teacher, I never have a response guaranteed. The rules are: I must speak. There are no other rules. My students may speak and/or listen if they wish. I can, of course, force them to speak, but nobody wants that. In recent years, scholars of writing pedagogy have pushed for dispersed authority and rigidity in the classroom, and for good reason! I am not entitled to my students' thoughts, something I was always aware of. I ultimately cannot decide what is good for them. Some students may benefit if I force them to speak, to engage, and to come to class, but this benefit is not worth the turmoil it may cause other students.

Forcing students to bend to our authority is not only unkind, it is unjust. Disability justice advocates in particular note that strict attendance policies, forced engagement, participation

points, and many other common pedagogical strategies are ableist. Melanie Yergeau et. al in "Multimodality In Motion: Disability and Kairotic Spaces" remark on ableism in pedgagoy, explaining that "disability studies reminds compositionists that our programs, curricula, and classes are designed to work for only some bodies, not for all bodies: This applies to both our students and our professional colleagues" ("Over There" Tab). Requiring that students engage in the ways that able-bodied instructors find acceptable will punish disabled students. Asking that a student speak out in front of other students may exacerbate an anxiety disorder. Adopting a strict attendance policy may guarantee that a student with chronic pain or fatigue cannot pass the class. These are just a couple examples among many. To better serve disabled students, instructors must bend, must be generous, and must not wield authority like a weapon.

Over the course of my first semester teaching, I struggled to navigate my new authority and power. "Power" became one of my descriptive codes because I spent a lot of time thinking through the feeling of power. In contrast to the "unknown" code, "power" was more heavily represented in the reflections. I got carried away in my week 2 journal entries, wherein I began reflecting on the previous week instead of focusing on those specific affective encounters. I wrote, "in the first class session, I was able to notice how power felt, which ended up being mostly neutral. That desire that people have to "do good" with their power/privilege is ultimately just as misguided and selfish as those who explicitly use power for their own personal gain." The feeling over power being "neutral" was surprising to me, and it's what led to this sense that wielding power for any purpose is "misguided." This conclusion suffers from the same leaps in analysis that I noticed in my reflections on race. How did I get from "power feels neutral" to "nobody should wield power with an agenda" (something I would not say I agree with now)?

The week 2 journal entries does not provide much insight. I wrote, “I still don’t feel entirely like myself up there—more like a conduit. I was much less anxious today though.” Here we can see that I set myself and my identity apart from the “conduit.” While developing strategies for attending to students with working-class backgrounds, Julie Lindquist in her article, “Class Affects, Classroom Affectations: Working Through the Paradoxes of Strategic Empathy,” notes that a turn toward the “pedagogical work of emotion” leads instructors “to a pedagogy of strategic performance, in which teachers work to tactically position themselves as conduits for students' affective responses to the paradoxes of nostalgia and ambition in working-class experience” (189). Lindquist’s use of the word “conduit” mirrors my own, although she is calling for an intentional teacherly orientation toward emotion which results in becoming a conduit, whereas I fumbled into a similar experience on accident.

My interest in emotion and affect led me to develop a strategic openness in which I listened and responded based on my students emotions. I didn’t “feel entirely like myself” because I was allowing my students to guide my “performance,” as it were. This was often disconcerting to me, as evidenced by my repeated references to anxiety surrounding not knowing what my students wanted or thought. In my week 13 journal entry I wrote, “I’m discovering that it’s hard not to take lack of attendance personally. I get into this state where I feel like a court jester—hopping and dancing around trying to get a reaction (not literally, of course).” The lack of attendance gave me the fear that I wasn’t performing well enough, and the unknowable insides of my students minds made it impossible for me to be a good conduit. Positioning myself as an affective conduit can only work if there’s something to channel. I could not reflect anything back to my students if they did not give me anything to work with. This positioning puts instructors in a very unnatural position of investing a lot of themselves into their work with little to no

reciprocation. My students were often blank, staring faces. Unbearably quiet. This got worse and worse for me as my students stopped showing up, and the minor frustrations and anxieties I had kept pressed down boiled down into anger and resentment. How could they leave me hanging?

My first observation is that we all know teachers and students have an unbalanced relationship because teachers have the power and students do not. However, I am suggesting that there is an additional imbalance, one which requires that teachers invest much more emotional energy than students. You might say then, doesn't it equal out? The power imbalance equals the emotional investment imbalance, right? Well, maybe, but they don't *feel* equal, especially if, as an instructor, you have given up some of the more authoritarian tactics of teachings, like forcing students to come to every class and engage in specific ways. So, if we are to embrace kinder teaching methods, we put ourselves at more of an imbalance. How do we cope? Therapy seems an inadequate an option. Another unbalanced emotional investment, but you get to be on the other side of it! Yay! In all seriousness though, teachers are expected to "figure it out," or better yet, "not talk about it." I know that I will struggle with this, but there aren't a lot of other options.

Which leads me to the other option: institutional change. Some affects cannot be changed through internal work, but must be changed through institutional restructuring, like the issue at hand. Part of the usefulness of the affective framework that I'm developing is this ability to help instructors discern between when attending to affect must be internal work and when it must be external. My heuristic for utilizing the framework for this purpose is as such: first, trace the affect, as discussed in Chapter 1. Second, if there is no clear internal work to be done, ask others for advice. Third, if others remark something along the lines of "that's normal," or "there's no need to worry, everyone feels that way," then you know that the issue is systemic, and the particular affect in question will not go away.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Over the course of this research, I have been explore first-hand how affect works upon my body and mind as a writing teacher. When I began this project, I thought I was implementing an affective framework. I was not doing this at all. My attempts at being present in the classroom and detailing my affective experiences were inconsistent. What I was really doing was gathering data to develop an affective framework. What I hope to leave you all with is this framework. Perhaps in a few short years, I'll present my findings from implementing it. What does the framework look like practically? Here are some guidelines condensed from the previous chapters:

1. Think of emotion as a starting point to orient yourself toward affect (Ahmed).
2. Take note of the unknown. Some suggestions:
    a. Keep a teaching journal with detailed descriptions of embodied moments of uncertainty, confusion, anxiousness, stress, etc.
    b. Take time to think about the unknowns of your students and classroom. When you make a conclusion about a student, ask yourself how much of your conclusion is based in assumptions.
    c. Make notes while you teach.
3. Take time in general. Some suggestions:
    a. Allow yourself to pause before answering questions or calling on students.
    b. Plan breaks into your lesson plan—long and short breaks.
    c. Don't busy yourself so much when students are working/engaged in group activities.

4. Educate yourself on the affective realities your students experience (pertaining to identity, embodiment, etc.)
5. Use the heuristic in the previous chapter to determine whether or not working through a particular affective experience requires internal or external change.

These suggestions are not all-encompassing, but they provide a starting point for diving into affect.

In a sense, I have developed this framework for myself: a version of myself who lives in August of 2021, who has never taught before. I think she would have liked it. During my time at MSU, my cohort has endlessly discussed our frustrations with the theory vs. praxis problem. It seems that too often, statements of change are just that, statements. It comes down to an issue with language itself. Language isn't understanding nor is it action. In *Touching Feeling,* Eve Sedgwick echoes this through her reference to Tibetan Buddhist sutras, which "often admonish us to rely on meaning rather than on mere words….Readers should bear in mind that it is not the words themselves but the attachment to the words that is dangerous" (170). Anyone invested in words must take this to heart. There will never be a definitive statement (or framework, for that matter) that does the justice we wish to do, that builds the sort of utopia we long for. Sedgwick references a common aphorism in Buddhism about how if a person points their finger to the moon, their dog will look at the finger, not the moon (168). Every word on a page is a finger pointing at a moon somewhere.

I can't make any promises to you if you make it to the moon I'm pointing toward, but I can offer some ideas as to what you may see there. It may be overly idealistic, but I envision a future classroom in which teachers have time in their classrooms. I also envision a balance in emotional investment. Let me take you on a tour of my fantasy world. As with all fantasies, there

are plot holes and inconsistencies, but bear with me. It begins with a restructuring of society itself. Universities are not businesses that sell career-preparing courses; they are free, public hubs for knowledge, community, and exploration. Students don't earn grades; students learn for the sake of learning, for the sake of taking knowledge back to their communities. There are certain professions that require demonstrations of skill levels, such as the medical field, but I'm getting a humanities degree, so that part of my fantasy is fuzzy. Let's not worry about it. In the writing classroom, students take writing classes because they want to, but also because they have more time to develop relationships with instructors and peers. Most of the students who take a class together know each other and the instructor well. The momentum that brings everyone together is the affective investment itself—the desire to communicate authentically with one another. Also graduate instructors get paid more.

Okay, so maybe that fantasy is far-fetched, but academics spend so much time trying to come up with careful, practical solutions. There is no room for dreaming because we've placed such a high importance on our words to the point where we worship the finger and we've forgotten about the moon. Affect theory is a useful counteragent to this issue because of its unknowability. The trouble is when scholars misuse the term "affect." Massumi writes, "in the absence of an asignifying philosophy of affect, it is all too easy for received psychological categories to slip back in, undoing the considerable deconstructive work that has been effectively carried out by poststructuralism. Affect is most often used loosely as a synonym for emotion" (88). Massumi equates affect with intensity, arguing "that emotion and affect—if affect is intensity—follow different logics and pertain to different orders" (88). It is crucially important that we do not conflate affect with emotion. It may seem like a minor error, but when made, affect loses its critical significance. To research something which arguably cannot truly be

researched forces the researcher to continually acknowledge the limitations of communication and knowledge. I do not want readers to come away from this project with a sense of satisfaction or closure. My framework is vulnerable, as it should be.

I'd like to return to the configuration of the circle when my students separated me. Recall Figure 1 from the introduction. The separation between me and my students was such a powerful moment for me. I remember feeling too big in my body. As I sat at eye-level with my students, I did not know how to behave. I struggle to maintain eye contact as it is, but here the demand felt urgent. They were all looking at me—I couldn't just look at the floor in shame (Sedgwick). I had to perform. In a way, it was like walking into the class again for the first time. What would it have felt like if a student had sat next to me? I was fortunate enough to find out. At the end of the semester, during my very last class, "I spent most of the class talking with my students in a circle, which felt more intimate and appropriate for a goodbye class. Something I noticed was that instead of boxing me off the way they did in the first circle, I actually had a student sit right next to me. It was such an interesting gesture. Perhaps it didn't mean much, but I felt closer to them" (Week 15 Reflection).

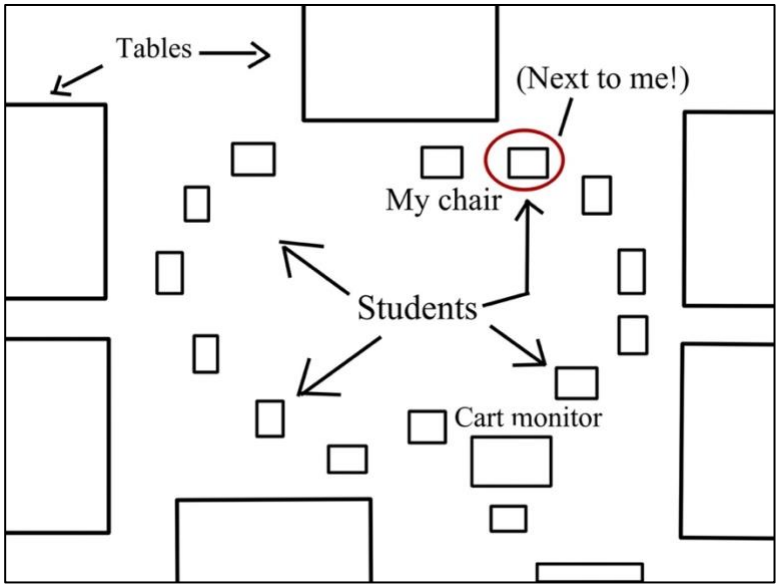

Figure 3: Digital illustration: This figure shows a similar layout as Figure 1

I felt much more at home in this circle. I had gotten to know my students a lot better at this point, for one, and I had the sense to design this activity to be more casual. As it was the last day of class, we had an informal conversation about the class, my students' other classes, MSU in general, and their lives. There was an aspect of performance to this moment as well, but it wasn't the same. I wasn't in the middle of the first act; I was bowing at the end of the show. My students made some nice comments about my class—that was my applause.

WORKS CITED

WORKS CITED

Ahmed, S. "ORIENTATIONS: Toward a Queer Phenomenology." GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, vol. 12, no. 4, Jan. 2006, pp. 543–74. DOI: 10.1215/10642684-2006-002.

Alexander, Jonathan, Karen Lunsford, and Carl Whithaus. "Affect and Wayfinding in Writing after College." *College English,* Vol. 82 No. 6, 2020, pp. 563-590.

Cedillo, Christina V. "What Does It Mean to Move?: Race, Disability, and Critical Embodiment Pedagogy." Composition Forum, vol. 39, Jan. 2018, compositionforum.com/issue/39/to-move.php. Accessed 27 Dec. 2021.

Connelly, Michael F, and D. Jean Clandinin. "Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry." *Educational Researcher,* vol. 19, no. 5, June 1990, pp. 2–14, DOI:10.3102/0013189X019005002.

Holding, Cory. "Affecting Rhetoric." *College English,* Vol. 59 No. 2, 2007, pp. 317-329.

Lindquist, Julie. "Class Affects, Classroom Affectations: Working Through the Paradoxes of Strategic Empathy." *College English*, vol. 62, no. 2, 2004, pp. 187-209.

Massumi, Brian. "The Autonomy of Affect." *Cultural Critique,* no. 31, 1995, p. 83. DOI: 10.2307/1354446.

McAlpine, Lynn. "Why might you use narrative methodology? A story about narrative." *Eesti Haridusteaduste Ajakiri,* vol. 4, no. 1, Apr. 2016, pp. 32–57. DOI: 10.12697/eha.2016.4.1.02b.

Ohito, Esther O. "Some of Us Die: A Black Feminist Researcher's Survival Method for Creatively Refusing Death and Decay in the Neoliberal Academy." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education,* June 2020, pp. 1–19. DOI:10.1080/09518398.2020.1771463.

Passwater, T. "Precarious Spaces, Institutional Places." Composition Forum, vol. 41, Jan. 2019, compositionforum.com/issue/41/precarious-spaces.php. Accessed 27 Dec. 2021.

Pimental et. al. "The Myth of the Colorblind Writing Classroom: White Instructors Confront White Privilege in Their Classrooms." *Performing Antiracist Pedagogy in Rhetoric, Writing, and Communication,* edited by Frankie Condon and Vershawn Ashanti Young, The WAC Clearinghouse, 2017, pp. 109-122.

Richmond, Kia Jane. Repositioning Emotion in Composition Studies. *Composition Studies* 30.1, 2002, 67-82. Print.

Saldaña, Johnny. “An Introduction to Codes and Coding,” *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. SAGE, 2009.

Schneider, Barbara, and Ashley Pryor. “I am Cleaning Out My Attic.” *The Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2016.

Sedgwick, Eve K. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Duke University Press, 2003. Print.

Stephens, Lindsay. “Becoming Acrobat, Becoming Academic: An Affective, Autoethnographic Inquiry Into Collective Practices of Knowing and Becoming.” *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, vol. 19, no. 4, Aug. 2019, pp. 264–74. DOI: 10.1177/1532708618784332.

Worsham, Lynn. “Going Postal: Pedagogic Violence and the Schooling of Emotion.” *Journal of Advanced Composition-JAC* vol. 18 no. 2, 1998, pp. 213-245.

Yergeau, Melanie et al. “Multimodality In Motion: Disability and Kairotic Spaces.” *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy* vol. 18 no.1, 2013, kairos.technorhetoric.net/18.1/coverweb/yergeau-et-al/index.html. Accessed 9 Dec. 2021.

Young, Vershawn Ashanti. “Should Writers Use They Own English?.” *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* vol. 12 no. 1, 2010, pp.110-118.