

“I GET TO CHOOSE WHAT I WANT TO BE DONE WITH MY PAPER”: TEACHER REVISION PEDAGOGY, STUDENT REVISING PRACTICES, AND STUDENT AGENCY

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Most university English departments feature a bookshelf where they keep the books that instructors may use for freshman composition courses. If one were to peruse these books, one would find that the majority of them contain at least some information on revision and peer review. Indeed, revision and peer review have become such a part of the pedagogy of composition studies that to publish a writing textbook *without* addressing those issues would be strange. In “What’s in a Textbook?”, Robert Lamphear points out that revision is “usually embedded at the end of a discussion of the writing process” (88). Revision is thus important enough to include in a textbook, but not necessarily important enough to spend any substantive time on.

The idea that revision is a necessity also permeates writing pedagogy. Teachers are expected to teach revision; students are expected to practice revision as part of their writing process. However, as teachers and as students, we each bring different perspectives to the revising process. While many instructors value revision in their own work, they may not necessarily use their own revising practices as the basis for their pedagogy. For instance, some instructors may teach revision as more of an “editing” process that is linear rather than a “re-seeing” process that is recursive, even if the latter is how the instructor might define it. As teachers, we should consider how we value revision,

and how to package that value for students. Ultimately, how do we get students to understand a more complicated perception of revision, one beyond editing and fixing grammar? And, how do we get them to enact it as well?

This essay presents a case study of one classroom, which was taught by an instructor named Ray, and an analysis of how Ray teaches his definition of revision, which he described to me as a metaphor:

It's rebuilding the house, taking out what doesn't belong, adding what's needed, making connections. Sometimes, it involves the entire structure; sometimes, just a room or two.

In order to teach his students this definition, Ray's pedagogy includes revision as part of the daily class schedule. Through surveys and interviews with both Ray and his students, this case study examines the extent to which Ray's revision pedagogy had the desired effect on students—whether or not they saw revision as process, as a building and rebuilding of a text. Furthermore, it explores the connection between Ray's definition of revision and his use of daily peer workshops, and the effect that connection had on student perceptions of writing and revision. Based on these findings, I argue that the tension between how we as instructors understand revision and how we enact that understanding in the classroom affects our students' revision practices. Because writing instructors continue to see revision as an important pedagogical framework for writing, instructors need to make explicit for themselves—and their students—the connection between their own beliefs on revision and their pedagogy. Students hear what we say, and watch what we do, and if we model thoughtful revision practices in our speech and our actions, we can help students develop revision practices that strengthen their own agency as writers.

Revision, Peer Review, and Student Agency: Common (Mis)Conceptions

Peer review is one of the most frequently used methods for mobilizing students' revision of their writing. It is also one of the more researched and discussed topics in the field of writing studies—how to get students to successfully enact peer review for revision has been a topic of discussion for scholars such as Anne Ruggles Gere, Thomas Newkirk, Alice S. Horning, and countless others. However, while much of the literature focuses on *how* to teach revision effectively (such as through peer review), it doesn't emphasize teaching students how to value that practice, or how to use revision in other ways, such as to forward their agency as writers. The literature often presents exercises in revision, but does not discuss how those exercises might change students' understanding of revision as a process. The case study presented in this essay, of Ray's class, hopes to address this question of how students come to value revision, and the extent to which instructor pedagogies impact that reflective process.

There are several revision and peer review concepts that we aim to impress upon students.¹ One is the idea that revision leads to better, more interesting, and more complicated written texts. Scholars in composition studies have historically debated the accuracy of that statement;² more currently, scholars have offered specific teaching strategies for helping students generate that “better writing.” In her essay “Practical Guidelines for Writers and Teachers,” Cathleen Breidenbach draws on the work of Donald Murray to argue that not only does revision lead to better writing, but that revision itself is what sparks inspiration and creates knowledge. For Breidenbach, “Sometimes, the words we write reveal truths we didn't know we knew; language can create knowledge; revision can facilitate discovery” (200). According to Breidenbach, revision can foster writing to learn as much as drafting, if not more: “the business of revising can be revelatory, inspiring, and deeply satisfying” (200). Breidenbach offers some specific strategies and metaphors to help students “fan [the] feeble flame” of revision (200), such as asking

students to make rhetorical decisions and consider point of view. Her essay includes advice similar to Ray's in this case study; she has a clear idea of what she believes revision to be, and offers writers and teachers strategies on how to enact that idea beyond editing.

Although we may value revision as writers and teachers, as Breidenbach and other scholars do, it is something that many of us struggle to teach effectively. Even if instructors feel they understand the goals of revision, they might still worry that students will not grasp why it is an important part of the writing process. More specifically, writing instructors may worry that, despite encouraging students to use the drafting process as a vehicle to think through one's ideas in new ways, students will see revising simply as editing in order to get a better grade. In short, final drafts look much like first drafts, with only minor grammatical and spelling changes made (if that). Or, instructors may worry that students will simply continue adding to their writing, as opposed to including new material, cutting material that is no longer relevant, and gaining an understanding of revision as a recursive process. Catherine Haar and Alice S. Horning argue that students who are trained to focus on grammar and style will "sometimes notice a symptom of a problem, like an obtrusive repetition of a word, but rather than deal with the underlying coherence and sequence-of-ideas problem, they replace the offending word with a synonym here and there" (4). According to Haar and Horning, students tend to opt for the "safe" route—instead of looking for the reason behind repetition, they will simply swap out the word. Rather than looking closely at the meaning behind their sentences, "if a passage seems disconnected ... [students will] add in a transition word like *moreover* or *however*" (5). Students are likely to avoid taking risks, and are inclined to follow the instructor's feedback, adding if necessary, but mostly just correcting the grammar. Haar and Horning give several reasons for this: students may worry that taking a paper completely apart will make it "worse," instead of "better"; or, students see the instructor's comments as closely linked to a "good grade," and so they make only the changes the instructor suggested, in hopes of achieving that "good grade," and not in hopes of improving their

writing. This is typically because they are either not invested in the writing itself, or because they feel little agency to make changes that reflect their own writing goals.

Although instructors may include peer feedback as part of the revision process and may value feedback in their own writing lives, that value may or may not transfer to students' understanding of writing and revision, even as peer feedback is often considered a vital part of the composing process. Muriel Harris has argued that peer collaboration helps students craft "evaluative responses or suggestions for revision while sharpening their own critical reading skills" ("Collaboration" 375), while Carol Trupiano adds that peer review "encourages students to participate in the conversation of writing and revision" (184). In both instances, Harris and Trupiano make clear the importance of peer feedback in students' composing and revising processes. We also see the significance of this belief in learning outcomes for first-year writing programs; for freshmen composition courses at the midsize Midwestern university where this study takes place, one of the rhetorical competencies students must fulfill is "Respond to and assess student writing rhetorically." This includes objectives such as:

- Learn to develop their own ideas in relation to the ideas of others.
- Identify and understand their peers' rhetorical purposes, audiences, and situations and the relationship among these throughout the drafting and revision process.

Scholars have also noted the importance of peer response to the development of a student's agency as a writer, because students are developing an understanding of writing as a social act through peer review practices. Trupiano notes that dialoging in peer review groups can help students "also become more aware of their audience" and thus "become aware of their strengths and weaknesses in writing" (185). As students recognize their writing abilities, they also understand how to better use their abilities to reach their audience. Scholars add that instructors must be careful to foster this feeling of agency;

Bruce Horner argues that in English Studies, we have typically perceived the Author as a “quintessentially autonomous (masculine) individual” (508) and that “to recognize writing as a social practice would be to undermine the autonomy of both the author and the ‘work’ of writing” (509). Despite the belief that the Author is a lone individual, writing pedagogy encourages writing as a social act. Students see this disconnect and may feel confused about their own agency as writers if they are continually writing and revising in the social space of the classroom. In Candace Spigelman’s case study of a freshman composition writing group, she argues that instructors need to “give students textual authority by encouraging them to invest in their compositions and to develop their texts according to their own authorial intentions” instead of trying to please the teacher (70). The four students in the writing group all had fraught notions of textual ownership, Spigelman contends, largely because of institutional and discipline-specific values, such as good grades and the privileging of individual work. Spigelman notes that the students in her study, and students in general, often perceive themselves as “novices without real authority, commitment, or confidence in their writing” who are “more ambivalent about their own authority as readers and writers who could offer or accept helpful feedback” (110). The mixed messages that students receive from their instructors about revision can lead students to have complicated relationships with both their own texts and their peers’ texts. This can make it difficult for students to assert agency over their writing.

This lack of ownership may further have its roots in writing pedagogy itself. Kelly Ritter adds that “even strategies such as process pedagogy, which clearly privileges the trajectory of work toward a more cohesive end, may backfire in debunking the myth of ‘perfect’ writing” (86). This may especially happen when students are being taught to write in social settings while the instructor demonstrates preference for the Author as individual, completing final drafts, not Author as inspired by dialogue and conversation, who constantly writes and revises. This dichotomy between how the students are taught to write (social) and what they are taught to

value about writing (individual) leads to what Spigelman calls “complicated theories of textual ownership” (111) that can impact a student’s ability to effectively write and revise.

Further complicating student agency in writing is the role of the instructor. Chris Gerben notes that “[a]lthough peer review is designed to value student experience, and to support student feedback and critique, the final role of authority and expertise is almost always perceived as belonging to the instructor” (33). When instructors try to encourage students to take ownership for their writing, students recognize that instructors have the ultimate authority, and so may revert back to doing whatever it takes to get that good grade. Laurie Grobman adds that in order to foster student authority, we as teachers and scholars need to help students see themselves as experts on a subject; for Grobman, that means including undergraduate research on a continuum of scholarship (from undergraduate to graduate student to experienced researcher). As Grobman argues, “attributing authorship to student scholars means that even though all discourse is social, writers *do* write and have agency. Further, student writers, like others whose voices have been silenced from knowledge-making, deserve to be *authorized*” (179). According to Grobman, part of the instructor’s job is to help surface student voices, not silence them, or make them secondary to the instructor. When instructors allow students to share in the power of knowledge-making, this helps students assert agency over their writing and revising processes.

In the following study, Ray clearly believes that revision leads to better texts and that peer feedback is an important step of the revising process. He also advocates for student writers as authors (as opposed to an Author) who make decisions about their writing based on peer feedback, their understanding of that feedback, and their own ideas that are inspired by their revising processes and evolving knowledge bases. He asks students to share in the knowledge-making that is writing. We will explore how he applies those concepts to help students better understand the purpose of revision and approach their own writing with greater agency.

Methods

This essay is based on the analysis of a case study of one freshman composition class at a midsize Midwestern university. Students take one first-year composition course in order to fulfill their first-year composition requirement. In each section of this first-year writing course, students must demonstrate the rhetorical competencies established by the English Department in order to pass. The first-year composition course has a class size of 20 students; the size of Ray's class approximately matched that number.

The observation of Ray's class is part of a larger study that I conducted in which I examined six first-year writing classrooms. For the overall study, I collected a variety of materials from both students and instructors.³ From the students, I collected pre- and post-surveys, first and final drafts of student essays, and taped interviews. The surveys were a combination of single-answer multiple-choice questions, multiple-answer multiple-choice questions, and short-answer questions. The multiple-choice questions on the student surveys were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS). I coded the short answer questions by focusing on key words in order to derive patterns in the students' responses. Question one on both the introductory and concluding surveys (How would you define "revision?") was coded according to the definitions of global and local revision from John D. Ramage, John C. Bean, and June Johnson's *Allyn & Bacon Guide to Writing Concise Edition*. This text defines global and local revision as follows:

You revise *locally* whenever you make changes to a text that affect only the one or two sentences that you are currently working on. In contrast, you revise *globally* when a change in one part of your draft drives changes in other parts of the draft. Global revision focuses on the big-picture concerns of ideas, structure, purpose, audience, and genre. (275)

I coded student definitions of revision based on their similarities to Ramage, Bean, and Johnson's definitions of global and local revision. The other short answer questions were similarly coded by

identifying and categorizing key terms appropriate for the question. In this article I will refer to the students' survey short answers by their instructor's first initial (R) and the subject number generated by the students to protect their anonymity. For example, R3164 refers to the student from Ray's class whose subject number is 3164 (see Appendix A for the beginning and end of term student survey). Finally, I recruited students for interviews by asking instructors to give recommendations and by visiting classrooms and asking students to volunteer. The students recommended could choose whether or not they wanted to participate; although the faculty supplied me with students' names, they did not know which students I contacted, nor did they know which students agreed to be interviewed. This further helped to insure the students' anonymity.

For this study, I also collected materials from the instructors. I collected surveys, classroom materials such as syllabi and peer review forms, and taped interviews. The instructor survey is similar to the student survey distributed at the end of the course term so as to determine the extent to which students and instructors share similar beliefs on revising practices by the end of the term (see Appendix B for the instructor survey). Ray was an instructor who answered a call of participants via email. One student from Ray's class, Stella, was chosen for her interview based on Ray's recommendation (see Appendix C for interview topics).

Ray's class stood out among the others because his students demonstrated the greatest difference in their understanding of revision from the beginning to the end of the course. Students in Ray's class made more changes to their writing beyond grammar than any other class, and a greater percentage of Ray's students claimed that their definition of revision changed from the beginning to the end of the course. As I investigated by reading the surveys in greater detail and conducting interviews with Ray and Stella, I began to see a clear connection between Ray's beliefs about revision, how he enacted those beliefs in class, students' perception of Ray's beliefs, and the influence of this perception on their writing. The interviews with Ray and Stella further illuminated the connections that Ray asked his students to make between his theory of revision

and their own writing, and the students' ability to make that connection and develop agency over their writing.

“Separate [the Bad Advice] from the Good Advice”: The Benefits of Whole-Class Workshops

Ray's classroom pedagogy fully integrates revision by creating a discourse community centered on revising. Ray's classroom practice aligns closely with what George Hillocks calls “environmental instruction,” where instructors “select and organize materials and activities which can engage students in the processes which are important to prewriting, writing, and editing” (393). In line with Hillocks' definition, based on the needs of the students, Ray creates class activities designed to help students become more engaged in the composing process. According to Ray, the most important of those connections were the whole-class and small-group workshops, which took place over a week of class (class met five days per week) several times during the semester. For each class, students first spent time in a whole-class workshop where Ray modeled the kind of feedback he wanted students to provide each other. Then, students moved into a small-group workshop enacting the same principles. The students' open-ended survey responses, combined with Stella's interview responses, show that Ray's whole-class and small-group workshops allowed for freedom of conversation and feedback that enabled students to develop a sense of agency. Because Ray dedicated a week of class to revising each essay, students were able to have some aspect of each essay workshopped in either the whole-class or small-group workshops.⁴ In order to overcome student skepticism and create a non-threatening environment where students felt safe sharing their work, Ray asked for volunteers to participate in the whole-class workshops. He also modeled both praise and constructive feedback for students to show them how to create this safe space themselves.

At the time of this study, Ray was an adjunct faculty member with about ten years of experience teaching writing. He is a former high school science teacher and a current fiction writer; the focus

on revision in his class suggests that much of his teaching practice is an extension of his creative writing practice. Ray brought revision explicitly into the classroom through the whole-class and small-group workshops, and he required revision to be a major aspect of the students' thinking and writing processes. In order to show how this class resulted in an increased alignment between instructor and student values regarding revision and granted students agency over their own writing, we will look at student survey data and student essay drafts, my interview with Ray, Ray's course syllabus, and my interview with his student, Stella, a first-semester college student who, despite having taken AP English in high school, did not feel prepared for college writing.

Examining Ray's teaching practices during the peer workshops in conjunction with student survey responses and one student interview (Stella) reveals how Ray created a collaborative atmosphere for writing in his classroom that made his students more receptive to revision as beneficial to their growth as writers. This seems to be especially true because Ray's class was structured around writing as a collaborative, social act. As indicated in their survey responses and Stella's interview, the collaborative atmosphere helped Ray's students demonstrate the largest change in their perspective on revision of any students who participated in this study: 77% of students who submitted pre- and post-surveys claimed that their definition of revision changed towards a collaborative, recursive process. Using what I have identified as a series of five steps, Ray built a community of revisers where students worked socially on their writing and revised their own intellectual practices as writers, thinkers, and even as students. Although the students may have felt skeptical on their pre-surveys with regards to the value of peer review when beginning the class, through the following steps, we will see how Ray created a non-threatening environment through the whole-class workshops, which enabled students to find value in the peer review process. As they learned to listen to their peers and assess the extent to which their peers' feedback aided in the revising process, students in Ray's class also learned to assert more agency over their writing.

Step One: Overcoming Skepticism

Student and instructor skepticism about peer review exists across the teaching and practicing of revising strategies. Scholars have argued that student skepticism can lead to poor student feedback; for example, Haar and Horning note that “untrained peer reviewers in a classroom peer review session may produce impressionistic and vague responses on whether a topic per se is interesting and use badly-understood and vaguely conceived terms of criticism” (5). If we listen to students like Stella from Ray’s class, we learn that students’ struggles with giving and getting effective peer feedback lead to student skepticism on the value of peer feedback. Through modeling and the whole-class and small-group workshops, Ray was fairly successful at helping his students appreciate peer feedback.

Stella was a student who appreciated the whole-class workshop because of her skepticism regarding small-group peer review. When I asked her about the difference between the small-group and whole-class workshops, she stated:

It’s kind of mean but ... you don’t know how good of a writer these two people you get are [in small group workshop], and they could tell you something that actually isn’t what the teacher would want you to do. And it’s easier to get the whole room and say, I think you should do this, and then somebody else will say no, I don’t think that’s right, you could do this instead, and then I get to choose what I want to be done with my paper.

Stella expresses the idea reflected by Haar and Horning that other students may not be good essay readers. Her main concern is pleasing the teacher, and in this case, she worried that in small peer review groups, other students’ advice could lead her away from what the teacher wanted.

As the instructor, Ray did not disagree with Stella’s concerns. He admitted that students probably come to the peer review workshops skeptical; however, he encouraged students to take in the multiple perspectives offered by their classmates. Ray asked the

students *not* to dismiss ideas, or simply dislike peer review because of their lack of faith in their classmates. Ray elaborated:

I think one of the hard things about peer editing . . . is that some people give bad advice! And you have to sit there and listen to it and separate that from the good advice, and your feelings about having to do something that to you sounds stupid, although it may turn out to be a good suggestion. So I think that's sometimes frustrating. I try to address that in class. I do let them know, you're going to get different advice, and some of it is not always good.⁵

Ray's idea of surfacing the concept of "bad advice" for students is related directly to his students' peer review workshops. Instead of ignoring student skepticism, Ray chose to discuss it in class and offered suggestions for his students to critically engage with peer feedback.

Ray attempted to move students beyond simply going through the motions of peer review. Instead of the typical grumbles about the quality of the feedback, Ray encouraged his students to listen to *all* feedback, to get a sense for how *all* readers might experience their texts, and to think about their revision choices from a reader's perspective:

I tell them to be open minded: don't judge the advice just because the person isn't what you would consider to be a good writer, or because they have a personality conflict. You have to listen to the advice. When one person is saying something, really consider it. Maybe even rewrite the paragraph or the page to try and take that advice and see how it works. But also, don't just take advice. What's the reason behind it? Does that reason make sense? Because . . . if I say, cut this sentence, there's got to be a reason I'm saying "cut it." If you don't see why, you better ask. If it makes the paragraph stronger, then okay. If it's a confusing sentence, redundant, try rewriting it. And if they have no idea why someone suggested something, don't do it.

Ray's comments demonstrate how he invited students to think critically about the feedback they received. Ray connected listening to all feedback with the students' abilities to make choices about their writing. Instead of rejecting comments from peers whom students might consider "weaker" writers, he asked that students consider all comments in order to see how those comments might work. This mirrors the practice of writing to a real audience; not every reader is a "strong writer," yet those readers' opinions matter to our written work. Ray believed that students needed to not take all advice blindly; instead, they needed to carefully consider the "why," or purpose, of a comment, and think critically about their own work. He also aimed to empower his students by asking them to try out, and either accept or reject, peer comments. In this way, students could perhaps overcome their skepticism about peer review, and assume agency over both their own writing and the feedback they received.

This approach seems to have helped alleviate student skepticism toward peer review. On the survey at the end of the course term, students in Ray's class averaged a 4.36 (between "Somewhat" [4] and "Very Important" [5]) for the survey question of how useful peer review is in the revising process; this number was up from 3.93 at the beginning of the course term (between "Neutral" [3] and "Somewhat Important" [4], albeit closer to "Somewhat Important"). In response to Question 12 on the survey distributed at the end of the term: "What classwork have you found beneficial to your revising process and why?", 13 out of 17 students mentioned peer review. Students responded:

R1172: *Looking at my paper on the projector [Blackboard] is beneficial. I can see the problems with my paper.*

R9120: *I really enjoyed going over each other's papers on the overhead [Blackboard]. It showed me others' mistakes and how to correct them. It also encourages me to work harder on my own piece.*

R9850: *Having other people read my essay so we can compare ideas [is beneficial]. I am fairly skeptical of other students reading my work; however, their comments can be helpful. I'd rather have a closer friend (with better writing skills) edit my paper.*

R9672: *Peer editing, by far. It gives other voices to my paper and lets others see what I fail to notice is wrong.*

R1813: *Any time we've looked at a paper as a class and revised it, I felt like it helped. Seeing other papers being revised gives me better ideas about my own paper.*

R6811: *Having the entire class/teacher give positive and negative feedback [is helpful].*

These student voices show that the students did find the peer review workshops beneficial to their revising process; R1813 notes that “*seeing other papers revised gives me better ideas about my own paper,*” while R9120 states that going over others’ papers on the overhead “*encourage[d] me to work harder on my own piece.*” This focus on ideas, not editing, suggests a shift in their understanding of revision from fixing grammar to a more global concept. Note, however, that R9850 still holds onto their skepticism, showing ambivalence in the response. As R9850 states, they would “*rather have a closer friend (with better writing skills) edit my paper,*” as opposed to the students in class, even though students can give “helpful” feedback. R6811 also mentions both the “entire class” and the “teacher” in their response, thus demonstrating concerns in the literature that students will always privilege the teacher’s voice most. While the students overwhelmingly found peer review helpful and useful, some skepticism did still exist.

Steps Two and Three: Ask for Volunteers and Give Praise

One way that Ray helped students overcome their skepticism was to ask for volunteers. This was Ray’s attempt to create a safe place for students to both share their work and comment on the

work of their peers. Ray created what he called a “non-threatening” environment for the students, so that they felt comfortable volunteering for class workshops. During the workshop, all of Ray’s students could express their ideas; the students whose essays were workshopped were invited to consider the ideas of all their peers, and choose the advice that seemed to work best for their intentions in writing the essay. As both Stella and her classmates expressed above, they did find it beneficial to listen to multiple perspectives about their work.

In the workshops, Ray employed Donald Daiker’s classic idea that teachers need to praise their students’ writing. Daiker argues that “an instructor should use praise and positive reinforcement as a major teaching strategy” (104); this is exactly what Ray did in his class workshops. In our interview, Ray stated that he always tried to praise the students who volunteered to have their papers workshopped for some aspect of their essay, whether it was the formatting, the strength of the introduction, or something else. This praise did seem to positively benefit the students. For example, when the class reviewed the introduction to Stella’s second essay (a summary and rhetorical analysis paper on Richard Wright’s “The Library Card”), the praise she received was beneficial to her confidence writing the essay. Stella recalled:

This [essay] is another one that I got put up on the projector, and I was told that it was amazing, and that I didn’t need to change it, so, I was like, I’m good!

I included an exclamation point to indicate Stella’s excitement when she discussed her summary. Knowing that she had a strong summary allowed Stella to focus on heavily revising the rest of the paper. This was especially helpful because she did not feel comfortable with the skills she needed to employ in this particular assignment. Stella admitted that she didn’t know how to write a rhetorical analysis:

I feel like I didn't really know much about rhetorical analysis, so I was just sort of writing down what I felt ethos and pathos were. And at the time, I was like, do I have to use logos?

Even though she had a strong summary, Stella revealed that she had difficulty applying the rhetorical strategies of ethos, pathos, and logos. The high praise her summary received gave her encouragement with the rest of the essay; for example, when she didn't know if she needed to use logos, she asked her instructor. She also listened to the comments from her peers. As a result, she did some intense revising before submitting a final draft to Ray. Stella reflected:

As you can see, my final draft is much longer than my first draft. So once it was explained more what ethos and pathos and logos were, I was able to incorporate it more and use more examples from the essay.

The praise Stella received for her summary allowed her to focus more on the elements of the essay she was less sure about—in this case, the rhetorical analysis. Stella moved paragraphs and ideas around, wrote a new conclusion, and moved her old conclusion into the body of the essay. Ray's idea of revision as “rebuilding a house” is certainly applicable—to quote Ray, Stella is learning to “tak[e] out what doesn't belong, add what's needed, [and] mak[e] connections,” gaining both confidence in and agency over her writing.

Step Four: Use the Whole-Class Workshop as a Space to Model Revising and Peer Review Practices

Ray's use of praise and the impact it had on students is an example of the modeling he used in whole-class workshops to teach students how to ask questions of both their peers' and their own writing. Ray's most important goal in modeling was to get students to constructively critique their peers' papers. He wanted students to think about the higher-order concerns of a paper, such as focus and use of evidence, as opposed to lower-order concerns, such as word choice. Here Ray describes his framework for modeling:

Initially it seems that the students will almost always say, it looks good. Or if they find anything, it will be, shouldn't there be a comma after that word, or before that conjunction? ... [I want them to say] well, let's take a look at the whole paragraph. Maybe there is a need for a comma there, but this whole paragraph can get talked about. You may want to rewrite the whole thing, so let's worry about that first. [I want] to sort of shift their thinking towards the big issues. You know, like the paragraph form.

Ray's comments identify several issues that are vital to the whole-class workshop process. He addresses the idea that students are usually reluctant to give any kind of substantive feedback; they would simply say, "it looks good," or situate their comments in a grammatical context, neither of which serves the whole-class workshop. At the beginning of the class term, Ray's students didn't have the knowledge base from which to craft constructive comments. His goal in modeling was to try to give his students that knowledge so that they could discuss "the big issues" in their peers' writing.

Stella's discussion of the feedback she received on her essays seems to exemplify the impact Ray's modeling could have on the students' ability to effectively respond to papers in both a whole-class and small-group workshop. As Stella discussed her first two essays in our interview, she hinted at peer feedback's importance to her revising process. With Stella's first essay, a response to the prompt, "Why do people need art?", she related how the class workshop helped with her thesis statement. However, she completed most of the revision for that essay without relying on small group peer feedback, even though, as Ray described earlier, small group feedback was where students implemented the techniques learned in the whole-class workshop. Stella described the changes to her essay as ones facilitated by personal realizations:

I realized that the two paragraphs for each section was sort of childish, in a way, so I tried to incorporate at least some of it into one big paragraph. The one I really changed a lot was the music part, which was the second part. I realized that I didn't really know the

differences between some of the things that I said. Like, I was sort of just making stuff up for jazz because I know very little, actually. And then I started to look more up, and I decided that I needed to make jazz and hippie music go together.

Instead of using feedback she received from her small-group workshop peers, Stella critiqued her first essay on her own; outside of the thesis statement, revising the first draft was a personal experience. Stella's knowledge formed the basis of her revisions; she commented that the concrete examples she used, such as Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* and the work of Alvin Ailey, were either her own ideas or examples from other classes she was taking at the time. Once Stella began to research her examples, she found more relevant information and discovered how the examples she used fit into her argument. For example, she realized the origins of jazz and hippie music were similar, and that she "needed to make jazz and hippie music go together." Stella did this revision on her own; the only mention she made of peer review was the whole-class workshop, which she said helped her with the "opening paragraph" and the "thesis statement."

As the semester progressed, the students' integration of Ray's modeling into their feedback on their peers' writing became more apparent in Stella's reflection of her revising practices. As I have noted, Stella preferred the whole-class workshops to the small groups; however, with her second essay, her small group gave her valuable advice. While she was told that her summary was well-written in the whole-class workshop, Stella was having difficulty with the rest of the essay. For the second essay, a rhetorical analysis of Wright's "The Library Card," Stella's small-group workshop helped her figure out how to revise:

We pretty much looked at the summary when it was up on the screen, but then we went into our little groups and we looked at it. And I was really told that I needed more examples, more analysis of what I was talking about. And then I decided ... I just needed to fill the

paragraphs, really. When I think about adding more examples, I need to make them longer. That's really how I think about it . . .

For Stella's summary and rhetorical response essay, she was not sure how to proceed after the summary. However, in her small group workshop, where all the students were writing on Wright's essay, Stella received some good advice. Her first draft of this essay was less than two pages; as a result, her peers suggested that she use "more examples" and provide "more analysis." These suggestions inspired Stella to revise further. She moved her conclusion up into the section of the essay analyzing Wright's use of pathos, and included some researched history on Jim Crow laws to give her analysis some historical context. Here, though, instead of coming up with these changes on her own, Stella acknowledged the more focused feedback of her peers; by this point in the term, it is possible that Ray's modeling of peer review during the whole-class workshops was impacting the students in their small groups, and students were asking more effective questions and giving stronger feedback.

Ray's use of modeling in the whole-class and small-group workshops influenced the students in several ways. First, it allowed students to observe an "expert" giving feedback in the whole-class workshop, and second, it demonstrated how to model that "expert" in the small-group workshop. Third, students could see an "expert's" writing practices when Ray showed the class his own revision practices. By showing them how he revised, Ray hoped that students would see "the way the process works":

Once in a while I'll bring in something I've been writing that I've marked up, to show them that I'll scratch out an entire page. Then I'll pass it around—a white page that has a red line through it, sentences are crossed out, so that they can see that revision is not just putting in punctuation, and that I have to revise too. And I'll tell them that this is the 8th or 9th draft, whatever it happens to be. And [it] usually surprises them that I revise something that many times.

This aspect of modeling may have also helped students shift their definition of revision. In response to Question 12 on the survey distributed at the end of the class term, “What classwork have you found to be beneficial to your revising process and why?”, one student specifically referenced Ray’s modeling of revision:

R4536: *Seeing the prof[essor] revise helps. He has showed [sic] me that sometimes you have to delete large sections of a work and rewrite them.*

As this student described, seeing Ray model revision for the students by bringing in revisions of his own writing helped them understand that revision is, as Ray said, “*not just putting in punctuation.*”

Based on these modeling processes, the students also learned a variety of methods for offering feedback. They learned to praise, they learned to look beyond grammar to the whole paragraph (and the whole essay), and they learned to give specific feedback to their peers. As Stella’s example illustrates, by following Ray’s model, the students seemed to be improving not only as writers, but also as readers of each other’s writing. Trupiano notes that through modeling, “students ... learn how to approach and talk about a piece of writing” (194). When an instructor models peer review sessions, students learn “how to focus on a draft that needs revising by learning what questions students should have about their writing and how to respond to those questions as peer reviewers” (194). Ray’s modeling how to respond to student essays “provide[d] [that] needed information” (Harris “Modeling” 80) during the whole-class workshops that enabled students, who may have been unsure how to respond to their peers’ writing, to give constructive feedback.

It is important to note that Ray’s practice of modeling may not work for all instructors; not all instructors may feel comfortable sharing drafts of their own writing with students and using those drafts as models for revision. Instead, by highlighting this particular practice and the impact it had on students’ abilities to provide focused, constructive feedback to their peers, I would argue that

we should all look more closely at our own writing and revising processes, and how we might best use those in teaching students. For instance, we might show students how we take notes on a text and offer a metanarrative of how those notes took shape; or, we might walk students through the way that we use evidence in an essay. Regardless of the direction we choose, as Ray's class shows, the process of modeling our own writing and responding processes for students can be very beneficial to their understanding of writing and revision.

Step Five: Students Assert Agency over Their Writing

Students in Ray's class also asserted that revision gave them more power over their writing. In response to Question Two on the survey distributed at the end of the class term, "Do you believe that your definition of revision has changed? Why or why not?", students gave the following responses:

R9105: *Yes, I think revision is very important to developing a well written paper. I learned that revision is one of the key ways in catching your mistakes.*

R6811: *[My definition has] probably [changed], because I've become so used to revising my paper and not just making mechanical changes, but really taking things apart and reading them.*

R1813: *I believe [my definition of revision did change] a bit. When I used to think of revision, I used to only think of the small things to fix such as spelling, grammar, and mechanics. Now I think about revising the paper as a whole.*

Ray's students seem to indicate that they see a connection between revision, peer feedback, and agency. Because Ray structured the whole-class workshops around certain parts of an essay each day (e.g., one day students focused on introductions, and another day, their conclusions), students became accustomed to, as R6811 says, "taking things apart and reading them." The students practiced

deconstructing and analyzing texts during each peer workshop, both as a class and in small groups; these practices seem to have translated across to students' abilities to effectively critique their own writing.

Ray also acknowledged that it was important for the students to transfer the skill of reading others' work critically to reading their own work critically. Ray stated: *"I really want them to get to the point where they're making these judgments on their own, what works, and they see the reason for it. That's the big thing."* Ray accomplished this reflective process by encouraging the students to think rhetorically about their work and to listen to the thoughts of others (and to his own feedback), but ultimately, to take agency over their writing. Like Joseph Harris in "Revision as a Critical Practice," Ray hoped his students would *"carve out [spaces] for [themselves] as [critics]"* that rely on *"a style of assertion, of close and aggressive reading"* in order to *"set [their] own agenda[s] as writer[s]"* (587). My analysis of Stella's essay drafts, and subsequent discussion of those drafts with her, demonstrates that she developed as a critical reader of her own work who learned to *"set [her] own agenda as a writer."* For example, for her first essay in defense of art, Stella recognized that she needed to create a more sophisticated argument and organization for her essay. She *"realized that the two paragraphs for each section was childish"* and organized her paragraphs more around ideas, and less around single, isolated topics. As a result of her revising practices, she *"felt really good about this [essay]. It was just something new, and [she] could see how it got better."* Stella's reflection on the process of composing her first essay shows her, even early in the course term, developing into a writer who possesses agency. Her second essay reveals a continuation of that agency, now with the ability to carefully consider the advice of others and apply it to her own work.

Empowering Students and Student Writing

In this observation of Ray's class, four important findings emerge. First, teaching practices influence students' perspectives about revision and whether or not they value social versions of it; second, teaching practices influence students' valuing of peer feedback and

revision; third, teaching practices can help students to see revision as a key element in helping them improve their writing; and finally, teaching practices can aid students' development of agency over their own writing. While this study looks at Ray's pedagogy in particular, I would argue that a range of different teaching practices can accomplish these goals if the teacher attends to the connections between his/her definition of revision, pedagogical practices, and how students experience those practices.

Ultimately, this study shows that students are savvy interpreters of instructors' teaching practices. In his essay "Academic Work," Walter Doyle acknowledges that students "face the initial problem of understanding what task a teacher expects them to accomplish, and they are typically sensitive to task-related information" (181). Students thus look for "hints" that reveal to them what instructors expect. The findings of this study suggest that instructors need to be aware of how students read *all* their teaching practices as indicative of teachers' expectations. For example, if a teacher begins class with a focus on correctness and style, the students might predict that the teacher values style and correctness most and perform accordingly. This could happen whether or not the instructor attempts to get students to value revision as a global re-seeing of their work; the seeds of correctness are already planted. In contrast, instructors like Ray might integrate collaborative learning and global issues in writing and revising into daily class activities, such as whole-class and small-group workshops. The students would then be able to apply the theories of collaboration and global revision into their own writing practices. Instructors thus need to be aware of how all aspects of their pedagogy might influence students' perceptions of revision and the writing process. As teachers of writing, we can consider the strategies that speak most to our own core beliefs about writing and revision, and how these strategies can best be used to express those beliefs to our students.

Notes

¹ The scholarship on revision reached its heyday in the 1970s and 1980s with the work of researchers such as Nancy Sommers, Linda Flower, John Hayes, Anne Ruggles Gere, and Peter Smagorinsky. Revision largely shows up only in peer review scholarship, and then it's not until 2006 that we get Alice S. Horning and Anne Becker's edited collection *Revision: History, Theory, and Practice*.

² See, for instance, the debate between Sharon Crowley and Barbara Hansen, who doubt revision's value, and Sommers and Betty Bamberg, who advocate for its worth.

³ This study received IRB approval.

⁴ Over the course of the semester, all students had their essays workshopped in the whole-class workshops at least once.

⁵ It is important to note that Ray calls his peer review workshops "peer editing"; however, his workshops much more closely mirror revision work writers do on the global level, as opposed to the work writers do on the editing, or local, level. To honor Ray's terminology, I will quote Ray's use of the term "peer editing" as appropriate.

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APPENDIX A
BEGINNING AND END OF THE TERM SURVEY—REVISION

Please answer all questions as honestly and as fully as you can.

1. How would you define “revision?”

2a. Please describe your previous experiences with revision:

[Beginning Survey Only]

2b. Do you believe that your definition of revision has changed? Why or why not?

[End of Term Survey Only]

3. On average, how much time do you spend revising a paper? (all drafts included)

0 hrs. 1 hr. 2 hrs. 3 hrs. 4+ hrs.

4. How many drafts do you typically write (including the one you turn in for a grade)?

1 2 3 4+

5. What kind of prewriting do you do? (circle all that apply)

None Outlining Webbing/Mapping Freewriting/Notetaking

Thinking Aloud/to Self Other (please specify):

6. In general, how much time do you spend prewriting?

0-15 min. 15-30 min. 30-45 min. 45 min.-1hr. 1hr.+

7. When you write a first draft, how would you describe your writing? What are your goals when you write a first draft?

8. What areas of your writing do you focus on when revising from a first → second draft? If you typically don’t revise your first draft, please note that as well. (Please circle all that apply.)

Ideas Thesis/Focus Evidence Analysis/Development

Organization Grammar /I don’t revise Other (please specify):

9. What areas of your writing do you focus on when revising from a second → third draft? If you typically don’t revise beyond one draft, please note that as well. (Please circle all that apply.)

Ideas Thesis/Focus Evidence Analysis/Development

Organization Grammar /I don't revise Other (please specify):

10. How important are peer review comments as feedback for your revising process?

5 – Very Important 2 – Somewhat Unimportant
4 – Somewhat Important 1 – Very Unimportant
3 – Neutral

11. How important are teacher comments as feedback for your revising process?

5 – Very Important 2 – Somewhat Unimportant
4 – Somewhat Important 1 – Very Unimportant
3 – Neutral

12. What classwork have you found to be beneficial to your revising process and why?

13. Outside of the classroom, what services do you utilize in your revising process?
(Please circle all that apply.)

My Own Ideas Friends/Peers Writing Center

Spellcheck Family Member/Guardian Other (please specify):

14. When you submit a draft for a grade, how satisfied are you with your writing?

5 – Very Satisfied 2 – Somewhat Unsatisfied
4 – Somewhat Satisfied 1 – Very Unsatisfied
3 – Neutral

15. How helpful is the multiple-draft process in allowing you to produce your best work?

5 – Very Helpful 2 – Somewhat Unhelpful
4 – Somewhat Helpful 1 – Very Unhelpful
3 – Neutral 0 – I Don't Write Multiple Drafts

16. After this quarter, how likely are you to continue the drafting process in writing essays, even if it is not required?

[End of Term Survey Only]

5 – Very Likely 2 – Somewhat Unlikely
4 – Somewhat Likely 1 – Very Unlikely
3 – Neutral

17. Please circle your gender.

Male Female

18. In order to use this survey for my research, I would appreciate you reading and marking the following statement. (All results will be kept anonymous.)

I agree to allow the researcher to use my answers to this questionnaire in future presentations.

Yes No

APPENDIX B
END OF THE TERM INSTRUCTOR SURVEY – REVISION

Please answer all questions as honestly and as fully as you can.

1. How would you define revision?

2. For this class, how many drafts do you require students to write per paper (including the one they turn in for a grade)?

1 2 3 4+

3. Are students allowed to resubmit a paper after receiving a grade?

Yes No

4. On average, how much class time (in hours) do you spend per paper covering the subject of revision? (from first to graded draft)

0-1 hrs. 1-2 hrs. 2-3 hrs. 3-4 hrs. 4+ hrs.

5. What kind of prewriting exercises do your students do? (circle all that apply)

None Outlining Webbing/Mapping Freewriting

Other (please specify):

6. In general, how much class time (in hours) do you spend per paper prewriting?

0-1 hrs. 1-2 hrs. 2-3 hrs. 3-4 hrs. 4+ hrs.

7. What kind of in-class revision exercises do you and the students do?

Workshops Peer review Scaffolding Informal Writing

Other (specify):

8. Are there certain assignments where you spend more or less time covering revision than others? If so, which ones?

9. What are your goals when students submit a first draft? What do you ask students to achieve, and what do you look for?

10. What areas of student writing do you focus on when revising from a first → second draft? If students don't revise, please mark that as well. (Please circle all that apply.)

Ideas	Thesis/Focus	Evidence
Analysis/Development	Organization	Grammar
Students Don't Revise	Other (please specify):	

11. What areas of your writing do you focus on when revising from a second → third draft? If students don't revise, please mark that as well. (Please circle all that apply.)

Ideas	Thesis/Focus	Evidence	Analysis/Development
Organization	Grammar	Students Don't Revise	
Other (please specify):			

12. How important do you believe peer review comments are as feedback for the revising process?

5 – Very Important	2 – Somewhat Unimportant
4 – Somewhat Important	1 – Very Unimportant
3 – Neutral	

13. How important do you believe teacher comments are as feedback for the revising process?

5 – Very Important	2 – Somewhat Unimportant
4 – Somewhat Important	1 – Very Unimportant
3 – Neutral	

14. Outside of the classroom, what services do you encourage students to utilize in the revising process? (Please circle all that apply.)

Their own ideas	Friends/Peers	Writing Center
Spellcheck	Family Member/Guardian	Other (please specify):

15. How helpful do you believe the multiple-draft process is in allowing students to produce their best work?

5 – Very Helpful	2 – Somewhat Unhelpful
4 – Somewhat Helpful	1 – Very Unhelpful
3 – Neutral	

16. How likely do you think students are to use the multiple-draft process independently in future classes?

5 – Very Likely	2 – Somewhat Unlikely
4 – Somewhat Likely	1 – Very Unlikely
3 – Neutral	

17. In order to use this survey for my research, I would appreciate you reading the following statement and checking the appropriate box. (All results will be kept anonymous.)

I agree to allow the researcher to use my answers to this questionnaire in future presentations.

Yes No

APPENDIX C INTERVIEW TOPICS FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

- Demographic information: student's year, major, etc.
- Previous experience with writing before taking course
- Previous experience with revision before taking course
- How the student arrived at the final definition of revision on the post-survey
- How much time the student typically spends working on a paper and what process the student goes through in writing the essay (for example, does the student write a full draft first, or work on the essay in bits and pieces?)
- The extent to which the student feels revision is a valuable asset of his/her writing practices—that is, how much does the student rely on revision to aid him/her in writing, and what other practices does the student utilize?
- How much does the student anticipate writing to be part of his/her college career: what kinds of writing does the student anticipate doing, and how much does the student think revision (or other) writing strategies will be part of that writing?

INSTRUCTOR FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW: INTERVIEW TOPICS

In the instructor follow-up interview, I aim to gain some feedback from professors on the results of their class study, and to ask instructors to discuss why they think the results came out the way they did. In order to do this, we will cover the following topics:

- Discussion of the results of class study: what are the instructor's reactions to the results? (For example, if the results show that students still rely heavily on local revision practices, and the instructor taught revision on a global level, what is the instructor's response to this?)
- Comparison of instructor's survey with results: based on the way revision was taught in the class, what insights can the instructor provide further about the results?

