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Reverberating Words and 'Becoming Other than the Other' in Adult Literacy:

Bakhtinian Reflections on a Powerful Literacy-Influenced GED

Academic Writing Framework

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Abstract

Reverberating Words and 'Becoming Other than the Other' in Adult Literacy: Bakhtinian Reflections on a Powerful Literacy-Influenced GED Academic Writing Framework

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While adult literacy programs have historically been marginalized within the US educational system, there is growing interest in making these programs more academically effective. Because of this, the General Education Development (GED) exam was recently revised to be more rigorous, especially in its assessment of writing. Although these changes provide the adult literacy field with new opportunities, they also now require the field to engage with the inherent complexity of teaching academic writing. This dissertation is my attempt to help the field engage with this complexity by 1) articulating a design for a multi-theoretical GED academic writing curriculum framework influenced by Gee (1996) and Lankshear's (1997) concept of powerful literacy, and 2) using a Bakhtinian lens – a lens that centralizes the complexity of language and celebrates conflicting perspectives – to study the framework's curricular implementation within an adult literacy GED course. Specifically, data analyses focused on the curricular implementation's pedagogical tensions, as well as on how these tensions affected the teaching and learning of academic writing. Both qualitative and quantitative findings suggest that the two most salient (and related) tensions were between dialogic and monologic discourses and between

centrifugal and centripetal forces. These tensions seemed to affect students by both promoting and constraining ideological becoming, as well as by inhibiting and improving academic writing skills. In addition, qualitative findings from a case study of a student who experienced the lessons revealed that lessons 1) encouraged multivoicedness, leading to productive revising, 2) fostered internally persuasive discourse, fostering ideological becoming, and 3) reified authoritative discourse, complicating critical literacy.

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Dedication

To my Mama

I wish I had the right words to express my gratitude and love. In their absence, this will have to do: Thank you – forever and ever – for being my patient, supportive, loving, and inspiring Mama. This is for you.

Reverberating Words and 'Becoming Other than the Other' in Adult Literacy: Bakhtinian Reflections on a Powerful Literacy-Influenced GED Academic Writing Framework

Contents

LIST OF TABLES **11**

OVERVIEW **12**

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS 13

CHAPTER 1: SITUATING U.S. ADULT LITERACY, THE REVISED GED, AND POWERFUL LITERACY **16**

ADULT LITERACY HISTORY: CONFLICTING PURPOSES, LITERACY CONCEPTIONS, AND POLICIES 17
A cursory history. *17*
Conflicting purposes. *17*
Conflicting literacy conceptions *18*
Conflicting policies *19*
RECENT ADULT LITERACY: THE GED GENESIS, EVOLUTION, AND CONTROVERSY 19
The GED genesis and evolution *20*
The GED controversy *22*
CURRENT ADULT LITERACY: A NEW ACADEMIC FOCUS AND NEW CONFLICTS AND POSSIBILITIES 24
A new academic focus. *24*
The GED's evolving focus on assessing writing. 25
New conflicts and possibilities *26*
New conflicts 26
New possibilities 27
INHERITED CHALLENGES: TEACHING THE LANGUAGE OF THE ACADEMY 28
THROUGH A CATCH-22 LENS: CRITIQUING PAST GED WRITING INSTRUCTION 31
Skills-based *31*
Process-based *32*
Strategy-based *35*
PERSISTENT BINARIES: CRITIQUING NEW GED WRITING INSTRUCTION 37
New GED writing instruction *37*
Persistent binary choices *37*
BEYOND BINARIES: POWERFUL LITERACY 38
EXPLORING AND LEARNING FROM POWERFUL LITERACY: PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS 40

CHAPTER 2: TRAVERSING BOUNDARIES AND COMPLICATING POWERFUL LITERACY: BECOMING OTHER THAN THE OTHER **42**

PART 1: TRAVERSING BOUNDARIES: DESIGNING A POWERFUL LITERACY-INFLUENCED GED ACADEMIC WRITING FRAMEWORK 42
Brief descriptions of theoretical perspectives. *43*
Writing to learn. 43
Systemic functional linguistics. 43
Academic language 44
Academic literacies. 45
Orchestrating powerful literacy through a focus on the word. *46*
Word-doing in a writing to learn/expressionistic perspective 46
Word-doing in SFL and academic language perspectives. 47
Word-doing in an academic literacies perspective 48
A co-existence of word-doings *49*

Complicating co-existence and powerful literacy. ... *50*
PART II: COMPLICATING POWERFUL LITERACY THROUGH A BAKHTINIAN LENS: BECOMING OTHER THAN THE OTHER ... 50
Introducing Bakhtin ... *50*
Unpacking Bakhtinian Theoretical Concepts ... *51*
Heteroglossia ... 51
Centripetal and centrifugal forces. ... 52
Dialogue. ... 53
Authoritative and internally persuasive discourse. ... 55
Ideological becoming. ... 55
REVERBERATING WORDS AND BECOMING OTHER THAN THE OTHER IN ADULT LITERACY ... 56

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY: DESIGNING TO UNDERSTAND ... 59

THE CONTEXT ... 59
DESIGN EXPERIMENTS ... 60
STUDY DESIGN ... 60

METHODS ... 61

PART 1: GED CLASSES ... 61
Setting. ... *61*
Procedures. ... *62*
Participants. ... *62*
Curriculum Elements ... *63*
Freewrites ... 63
Readings ... 63
Morphology activities ... 64
Sentence combining activities ... 65
Critical language awareness activities ... 65
Data Sources and Data Collection ... *67*
Class transcripts. ... 67
Pre- and post-sentence-combining assessments ... 67
Student writing assignments ... 68
Data Analysis ... *68*
Analysis of class transcripts. ... 68
Analysis of sentence combining. ... 70
Analysis of student writing assignments ... 71
Freewrites ... 71
Pre- and Post- Essays ... 71
Limitations. ... *73*
PART II: CASE STUDY ... 74
Procedures ... *74*
Participants. ... *74*
Measures and Data Collection ... *74*
Post-class Semi-structured interviews ... 74
Post-class writings. ... 75
Data Analysis ... *75*
Analysis of post-class interviews ... 75
Analysis of post-class original and finalized freewrites ... 77
Limitations. ... *77*
MY POSITIONING AS A RESEARCHER ... 77

CHAPTER 4: BAKHTINIAN REFLECTIONS – PART I ... 79

PARTICIPANT REINTRODUCTIONS ... 79
Phyllis ... *79*
Zaria ... *79*
Tameka ... *80*
Samantha ... *80*

Mesalit *80*
Michael *80*

FINDINGS 80

INVITING AND RESISTING DIALOGUE 81
Inviting dialogue *81*
Foregrounding the heteroglot word, shaping curriculum 81
Unearthing linguistic complexity, unearthing the nonbasicness of basic skills 86
Resisting dialogue *91*
Focusing on answers, perpetuating banking pedagogy 92
HOSTING CENTRIFUGAL BUT MAINTAINING CENTRIPETAL FORCES 95
Hosting centrifugal forces *95*
Defending ‘non-standard’ English 96
Maintaining centripetal forces *97*
Reifying ‘standard’ English, inhibiting critical literacy 97
FOSTERING AND CONSTRAINING IDEOLOGICAL BECOMING 100
Fostering ideological becoming *101*
Constraining ideological becoming *104*
Michael 104
Tameka 107
INHIBITING AND IMPROVING ACADEMIC WRITING 110
Inhibiting academic writing *111*
Improving academic writing: Sentence Combining *112*
Mesalit 112
Zaria 113
Samantha 114
Phyllis 115
Improving academic writing: Essay revisions *115*
Mesalit 116
Zaria 116
Samantha 118
EVOLVING THOUGHTS 118

CHAPTER 5: BAKHTINIAN REFLECTIONS - PART II 121

BACKGROUND CONTEXT 122
Life and educational experiences *122*
A love of school, reading, and writing *124*
FINDINGS 125
Encouraged multivoicedness, leading to productive revising *125*
Fostered internally persuasive discourse, fostering ideological becoming *130*
Reified authoritative discourse, complicating critical literacy. *134*
EVOLVING THOUGHTS 140

CHAPTER 6: ADULT LITERACY: CONTINUING TO BECOME OTHER THAN THE OTHER 142

DISSERTATION SUMMARY 142
INFORMING FUTURE GED ACADEMIC WRITING PEDAGOGY 144
Acknowledge the non-basicness of basic skill instruction *145*
Confront the Bakhtinian challenges of critical literacy. *146*
Experiment with culturally sustaining pedagogical counter-spaces. *147*
Invest in dialogic professional development. *149*
LIMITATIONS 150
SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH 151

REFERENCES 153

LIST OF APPENDICES 189

APPENDIX A: SENTENCE COMBINING ACTIVITY ASSESSMENT 190
APPENDIX B: PRIMARY CODE EXAMPLES (CLASS LESSONS) 192
APPENDIX C: EXAMPLE CODEBOOK FOR CLASSROOM ANALYSIS........ 194
APPENDIX D: ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE COMBINING ASSESSMENT 195
APPENDIX E: REVISION ASSESSMENT TOOL 197
APPENDIX F: EXAMPLE CODEBOOK FOR CASE STUDY ANALYSIS........ 198
APPENDIX G: VOCABULARY EXERCISE 199
APPENDIX H: STUDENT ESSAYS – MESALIT........ 200
APPENDIX I: STUDENT ESSAYS – ZARIA........ 201
APPENDIX J: STUDENT ESSAYS – SAMANTHA........ 202
APPENDIX K: SAMANTHA'S STRONG VS. WEAK REVISIONS ATTEMPTS 203

List of Tables

Table 1: Research Questions One and Two 61

Table 2: Participants 63

Table 3: Planned Curriculum Description 66

Table 4: Primary Code Examples (Abbreviated) 68

Table 5: Revision Assessment Tool 73

Table 6: Mesalit's Sentence Combining Scores 113

Table 7: Zaria's Sentence Combining Scores 114

Table 8: Samantha's Sentence Combining Scores 114

Table 9: Phyllis's Sentence Combining Scores 115

Table 10: Mesalit's First and Second Draft 116

Table 11: Zaria's First and Second Draft 117

Table 12: Samantha's First and Second Draft 118

Table 13: 'Strong vs. Weak' Activity's paragraph to be edited 135

Table 14: Strong vs. Weak Original Paragraph, Samantha's Revision Attempt #1, Samantha's Revision Attempt #2 138

Overview

Although adult literacy programs predate public schooling, they have historically been marginalized within the educational system. Yet, as adult literacy is increasingly tasked with serving the educational needs of both older and younger adults in a knowledge-based economy, there is growing interest in making these programs more academically effective. Because of this, the General Education Development (GED) exam -- an exam originally developed in 1942 to credential World War II veterans without a high school diploma -- was drastically revised in 2014 to measure career- and college-readiness Common Core Standards (GED Testing Service, 2013; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). While the exam has undergone numerous changes, one of the greatest is its focus on academic writing, a change reflecting increased attention to writing skills in a global information economy that continually raises the bar for "what counts as literacy" (Juzwik et al., 2006, p.453).

These changes, while controversial, do provide adult literacy GED programs with opportunities. In the past, adult literacy programs have primarily existed on polarities: Many programs -- especially those funded by work-first initiatives -- have focused on teaching students decontextualized test-taking skills, helping to realize (whether unconsciously or not) education's potential to reproduce inequality (Sandlin & Cervero, 2010, p.250); other programs --especially those based on a transformative model -- have solely focused on raising student consciousness, trying to realize education's potential to engender social change (Freire, 1970). With the new GED's inclusion of academic writing, however, adult literacy programs may now have the opportunity to try to simultaneously play varying educational roles, such as preparing students

for a high-stakes academic writing test *and* enabling students to take advantage of academic writing's unique educative potential to bring forth new understandings (Males, 1997).

However, in attempting to use academic writing as a way to get beyond polarities in the adult literacy field, GED adult literacy programs are now joining polarizing conversations from another field: the field of academic writing pedagogy. For decades, scholarship has wrestled with negotiating the inherent complexity of teaching academic writing. Yet, since academic writing pedagogy continues to necessitate the foregrounding of language, and language is a living, social phenomenon filled with culture (Bakhtin, 1986), this complexity endures, especially within an increasingly US multilingual society.

This dissertation is my attempt to help the adult literacy field engage with this complexity as it evolves into a legitimate third branch of the US education system. I do this by 1) articulating a design for a multi-theoretical GED academic writing curriculum framework influenced by Gee (1996) and Lankshear's (1997) concept of powerful literacy, and 2) using a Bakhtinian lens – a lens that centralizes the complexity of language and celebrates conflicting perspectives – to study the framework's curricular implementation within an adult literacy GED course. Data sources included qualitative and quantitative findings from GED academic writing lessons I taught, as well as a case study of one student who experienced the lessons. Specifically, data analyses focused on the curricular implementation's pedagogical tensions, as well as on how these tensions affected the teaching and learning of academic writing. These analyses were used to reflect on future GED academic writing pedagogy.

Overview of Chapters

In the first chapter, I set the stage for the study by articulating the historical tensions within the adult literacy field, arguing that these tensions need to be better understood - especially as GED programs begin teaching academic writing, which is replete with tensions of its own. The chapter concludes by reflecting on how a powerful literacy-influenced (Gee, 1996) GED academic writing pedagogical framework studied through a Bakhtinian lens might allow the adult literacy field to better understand and learn from these tensions.

I divide the second chapter into two sections. In the first section, I articulate the design of a powerful literacy-influenced GED academic writing curriculum framework, which 1) pulls from four broad theoretical views: *Writing to Learn, Systemic Functional-Linguistics, Academic Language Development, and Academic Literacies* and 2) is word-focused, allowing for multiple writing pedagogical perspectives to co-exist. In the second section, I introduce Bakhtin and unpack five Bakhtinian concepts: heteroglossia, centripetal/centrifugal forces, dialogue, authoritative/internally persuasive discourse, and ideological becoming, specifically focusing on how these concepts have been used to better understand classroom environments. The chapter ends by generatively connecting the adult literacy field to past academic writing scholarship, reframing the derived power of a powerful literacy-influenced adult literacy pedagogy.

The third chapter includes the study and research methodology, describing the study's evolution and the research methods. These components included: 1) qualitative and quantitative analysis of a five-week GED class (meeting three times a week for two hours a day) and 2) qualitative analysis of interviews with one student who experienced the classes. This chapter also includes the limitations of these approaches and describes my positioning as a researcher.

Chapter 4 presents both qualitative and quantitative findings from a five-week GED academic writing class, illustrating -- through a Bakhtinian lens – pedagogical tensions and their

effects. Analytic findings suggest that the two most salient (and related) tensions were between dialogic and monologic discourses and between centrifugal and centripetal forces. These tensions seemed to affect students by both promoting and constraining ideological becoming, as well as by inhibiting and improving academic writing skills.

Chapter 5 delves deeper into understanding the framework's curricular implementation by presenting findings from a case study of a student who experienced the lessons. Qualitative findings revealed that for this particular student the classes encouraged multivoicedness, leading to productive revising; fostered internally persuasive discourse, fostering ideological becoming; and reified authoritative discourse, complicating critical literacy.

Following this, Chapter 6, after briefly summarizing the previous chapters, uses findings from Chapters 4 and 5 to reflect on future adult literacy academic writing pedagogy. Reflective findings suggest the need to 1) explore the non-basicness of basic skill instruction, 2) address the challenges of critical pedagogy, 3) experiment with culturally sustaining pedagogical counter-spaces, and 4) invest in dialogic professional development. The chapter ends by describing the limitations of the study and by advocating for a Bakhtinian-inspired 'powerful' adult literacy research agenda.

Chapter 1: Situating U.S. Adult Literacy, the Revised GED, and Powerful Literacy

This chapter describes the multiple tensions within the context of this study and argues that the adult literacy field -- as it teaches to the new GED -- needs to resist simple binaries in order to learn from tension. My critique is that the historical tensions within adult literacy have not been adequately explored, hurting the field's ability to generatively develop. As adult literacy GED programs incorporate academic writing pedagogy, adult literacy practitioners and researchers must acknowledge both the field's conflicting ideologies as well as the GED's controversial evolution; this is especially important as the field inherits academic writing ideological and pedagogical dilemmas. By acknowledging and understanding conflict as an inevitable part of the education process, the adult literacy field will be better able to engage in knowledge making, contributing not just to the adult literacy field, but also to the educational field as a whole.

Although cursory, the following briefly describes the historical and ideological context of the adult literacy field, unearthing the tension between a workforce adult literacy paradigm and a transformative adult literacy paradigm. It then describes how two recent developments in the adult literacy field -- the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the revised GED -- require the field to negotiate both these existing tensions, as well as an inherited tension: the tension involved in teaching the language of the Academy. The chapter concludes by reflecting on how the design and study of a powerful literacy-influenced (Gee, 1996) GED academic writing pedagogical framework studied through a Bakhtinian lens might allow the adult literacy field to better understand and learn from these tensions.

Adult Literacy History: Conflicting Purposes, Literacy Conceptions, and Policies

A cursory history. Since colonial times, some form of adult literacy programming has existed in the United States. While many adults learned reading and writing through apprenticeships in the 1700s, more standardized adult literacy programming emerged with elementary and secondary schools in the 1800s when schoolhouses served non-working youth during the day as well as working youth and adults during the evening (Brandt, 2004; Rose, 1995; Sticht, 2002). Settlement houses, such as Hull House in Chicago, provided basic education, reading, writing and English-language training for newly arrived immigrants in the late 1800s (Sticht, 2002), and Cora Wilson Stewart's Kentucky "Moonlight Schools" taught basic reading and writing skills to thousands of adults in the early 1900s (Rose,1995; Sticht, 2002).

In the mid-1960s and early 1970s, adult literacy programs became federalized, evolving into credentialing preparation programs for students 16 and older. With the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, federal grants could be used to develop adult literacy pilot programs and instructional materials (Rose, 1995). In 1970, amendments to the Adult Education Act of 1966 allowed these programs to prepare adults without a high school credential for the General Educational Development (GED) exam, a multiple-choice exam originally developed in 1942 for WWII veterans (Hutt, 2014; Rose, 1995; Smith, 2003; Sticht, 2000).

Conflicting purposes. As in most areas of US education, the purpose of adult literacy education has been debated: One perspective argues that adult literacy should primarily contribute to America's workforce; another argues that adult literacy should provide transformational experiences, contributing to social justice.

Workforce adult literacy programs emerged throughout the 1900s, with the goal of creating productive American workers. For example, the Depression's adult literacy Conservation Corps programs were created specifically to address the functional-skill needs of "unemployed illiterate and undereducated young men" (Sticht, 2002, p.17). And in 1957, the Commission on Adult Literacy was formed to find a government solution to the adult 'illiteracy' problem in order to "develop and preserve the nation's human resources" (Rose, 1995; Sticht, 2002, p.18).

Transformative adult literacy programming also emerged in the 1900s, with the goals of empowering the poor, creating community change, and providing social justice. From 1911 to 1920, Stewart's Moonlight Schools provided classes for the very poor in Kentucky, "uplifting" poverty-stricken communities (Brandt, 2004; Sticht, 2002) and supporting working-class activism (Greer, 2015). In the mid 1950s, the Highlander Folk School taught civic literacy skills to thousands of African-Americans in South Carolina, raising political consciousness and securing "rights already gained" by preparing students to pass the literacy test needed to vote in the Jim Crow South (Ntiri, 2014). And the 1970s saw the emergence of grass-roots Freirian-inspired adult literacy programming, with the mission of helping those in poverty create critical community changes by transforming consciousness (Freire, 1970).

Conflicting literacy conceptions. Underpinning the conflicting purposes of workforce and transformative adult literacy programming are vastly different conceptions of literacy. A workforce paradigm is driven by an autonomous model of literacy, which – at its extreme -- views literacy as a universal, technical, and neutral skill (Street, 1984). Through an autonomous lens, adult literacy learners are conceived as incomplete adults with "specific deficits that

programs have a responsibility to remediate" (Lytle, 2001, p.381) in order to ensure their successful community participation (Hillier, 2009).

On the other extreme, a transformative model's underpinning conception of literacy aligns with an ideological model of literacy, which takes a sociocultural view of literacy as socially situated: An individual's higher mental functioning derives from social life (Wertsch, 1991); literacy is historically and culturally influenced and occurs through interactions with others. Through an ideological lens, adult literacy students are already successfully participating in communities involving a range of literacy practices.

Conflicting policies. Although these different adult literacy paradigms and their underpinning conceptions of literacy seemed to take turns in the policy spotlight throughout most of the 20th century, this turn-taking expedited in the 1990s, resulting in the long-lasting privileging of one paradigm over the other. In 1991, the National Literacy Act – which "had a broad notion of adult literacy as both knowledge acquisition and personal growth" (Demetrion, 2005) -- replaced the 1966 Adult Education Act. Yet, just seven years later, the 1991 Act was replaced by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) and incorporated into the less-holistic Workforce Investment Act of 1998, which served as the backdrop for adult literacy policy and practice into the early 21st century.

Recent Adult Literacy: The GED Genesis, Evolution, and Controversy

Currently, adult literacy programs serve over two million students in settings as diverse as local education agencies, community-based organizations, community colleges, and correctional institutions (Lesgold & Welch-Ross, 2012). Demographically, Latinos represent the largest group of adult literacy students (40%), followed by European-Americans (26%), and

African Americans (22%) (US Department of Education, 2007). Of these students, about 35% are employed, 37% are unemployed, 10% receive public assistance, and close to 10% are in prisons.

In order to serve such a broad demographic, adult literacy programming is divided into three areas: English Literacy (EL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and Adult Secondary Education (ASE). Roughly 42% of adult literacy students enroll in EL programs, which provide instruction to adults who lack proficiency in English (as determined by autonomous standardized assessment measures) and who seek to improve their literacy and competence in English. Another 46% of adult literacy students enroll in ABE instruction, which provides basic skills to adults assessed to be functioning at the lower literacy levels to just below secondary level (US Department of Education, 2007). And 12% enroll in ASE programs, which provide instruction to adults assessed at approximately the high school level who are seeking to obtain a high school credential or an "equivalency," such as the GED.

The GED genesis and evolution. Developed in 1942, the GED exam was originally designed at the urging of university leaders to solve a short-term problem: how to absorb and properly place WWII returning veterans who had not graduated high school, allowing them to take advantage of the GI Bill (Hutt, 2014; Smith, 2003). While universities after WWI had enrolled returning veterans without high school degrees, WWII-era college educators were concerned about repeating this policy; instead, they sought a tool to allow for the scientific measurement of veterans' educational experiences (Hutt, 2014). They found this tool in the form of a ten-hour, five-part test-battery titled the "Tests of General Educational Development (GED)," which was created by E.F. Lindquist, a renowned testing expert from the University of Iowa, and especially designed, according to Lindquist, ". . . to provide a measure of general

educational development which results from . . .the general educational growth incidental to military training. . ." (as cited in Hutt, 2014, p.6).

Although many educators at the time contested the GED as an "extreme narrowing of the purpose of high school" (Hutt, 2014, p. 9), the GED has had lasting appeal. In the late 1940s, states began offering the tests to civilian high school non-completers, and, by 1959, more civilians were taking the test than were veterans. In 1970 [as already noted], amendments to the Adult Education Act of 1966 provided funding for adult education programs to start offering GED preparation programs to adults needing a secondary education credential (Sticht, 2002), and by 2009, one in every seven secondary school credentials was issued in the form of a GED (Hutt, 2014).

A reason for the GED's long-lasting appeal is that it (seemingly) provides a simple solution to complex, ongoing societal and educational problems. For example, when the Welfare Reform Act of 1996 was passed, welfare recipients without high school degrees were mandated to attend GED programs, theoretically enabling them to easily: 1) 'get' a GED, 2) 'get' a job, and 3) 'get off' welfare (Sheared, McCabe, & Umeki, 2000). When Texas high schools needed to account for failing students under the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills measurement in the 1990s (before the No Child Left Behind Act prohibited schools from counting GED students as graduates), they simply transferred those students into GED programs (as uncovered by Hanney in his 2000 study "The Texas Miracle in Education").

The appeal of the GED continues into the 21st Century. Currently, there are over 40 million American adults without a secondary credential (Rose, 2012), and, although there is debate over the calculation of dropout figures (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006; Mishel & Roy, 2006; Warren & Halpern-Manners, 2007), many studies are reporting that almost 30% of

all students, and nearly 50% of African-American, Latino, and Native American students, are dropping out of high school (Bridegeland, Dilulio, & Balfanz, 2009; Glass & Rose, 2008). As governments and foundations, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, seek to "double the number of youth who earn a postsecondary degree" (Bloom, Thompson, & Ivry, 2010), these high school 'dropout' statistics are problematic.

To help remedy this, policy-makers have turned to the GED (Levin-Epstein & Greenburg, 2003; National Commission on Adult Literacy, 2008; Barton, 2005; Southern Regional Education Board, 2005). For example, the Schuyler Center (2009), in its report "Getting Serious about the GED", states "There must be an effective alternative to proceeding through life without a high school degree…," and "…the GED is a series of tests . . . that should be that alternative" (p.1). Similarly, Bloom, Thompson, and Ivry (2010), in their report "Building a Learning Agenda around Disconnected Youth," state that in order "to re-engage and re-direct young people who leave the public school system, the nation . . . will need 'second chance' systems and programs [such as the GED]" (p.90).

The GED controversy. Researchers, however, have questioned the GED-solution. Studies reveal that GED recipients have worse labor market, post-secondary completion, and health outcomes than do high school graduates (Ou, 2008). Because of this, many scholars criticize GED programs, likening them to peripheral sorting programs for students perceived to "have deviated from the norm" (Frattura & Topinka, 2006, p.328). Of particular concern is the GED's ability to allow the education system to pretend to meet its goals of equality of educational opportunity (Smith, 2003), with the possible dangerous consequences of even further raising the education debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006) since minority and low-income students are

significantly more likely to drop out of high school and enroll in these programs (Pluviose, 2006).

Yet, despite the reality that the GED has not been an equitable alternative to a high school degree, it has -- at the same time -- provided needed alternatives in an inequitable society. In addition to providing currency in a system that increasingly commodifies education (Labaree, 1997), giving the 40 million American adults without a high school diploma access to future educational and career paths, some GED programs have been able to continue adult literacy's transformative legacy. For example, research on GED programs for youth, as well as for adults, has found that GED programs can serve as supportive, healing, and regenerative counter-spaces. Davis (2014), in her study of young adults in GED programs, found that students felt more cared for in adult literacy programs than they did in traditional high schools, and Schwartz (2014), in her study of African-American and Hispanic male GED students, found that GED programs "fostered spaces where the men could use [a] liberatory voice," allowing them to experience education as the development of critical consciousness (p.40).

Therefore, while promoting the GED as an effective solution to the education debt is dangerous, it seems equally dangerous to do away with these programs and solely focus on prevention, as more conservative scholars advise. For example, the economist James Heckman (2012) argues that education policy should prevent rather than remediate because children's malleability and plasticity declines with age, making educational investments in "disadvantaged, low-skilled young adults less effective" (p.3). "Current policies to reduce achievement gaps," Heckman maintains "ignore these *simple truths* [emphasis mine]" (Heckman, 2012).

This complexity presents critically-engaged adult literacy practitioners with the dilemma voiced by Branch (2007): "By working to serve individual students, do we suggest the

correctness and justness of the institutions and systems that they find themselves in and that we support with our work?" Or, conversely "by working to address the manifest injustices in such a system, do we neglect the individual lives presently caught within it?" (p.xi). I write this as an adult literacy educator and researcher caught up in these questions, and this project is my attempt to get beyond dangerous "simple truths" (Shulman, 2005) and challenge binaries as the field attempts to foster academic learning.

Current Adult Literacy: A New Academic Focus and New Conflicts and Possibilities

A new academic focus. Within the last few years, the adult literacy field has been tasked with providing students with a more academically rigorous education. In 2014, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) was subsumed under the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (replacing the 1998 Workforce Investment Act (WIA)) in order to keep pace with changing economic conditions. While the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) continues WIA's explicit link between adult literacy and the economy, it is also doing something novel: expecting adult literacy programs to prepare students for postsecondary education. "WIOA recognizes that the core purpose of adult education is to prepare individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in postsecondary education and the workforce" (US Department of Education, 2014).

Also in 2014, the fifth version of the GED was released. Completely reconfigured, this version is based on Common Core Standards -- rigorous college and career readiness expectations initiated by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers (2010) -- with the goal of "empower[ing] a generation of educated and employed

adults," allowing adults to demonstrate critical career and college-ready skills and knowledge (GED Testing Service, 2014), especially in writing.

The GED's evolving focus on assessing writing. Driven by a national focus on improving writing skills (Brown & Conley, 2007; College Board, 2006; Graham & Perin, 2007; Oppenheimer et al, 2017; Rogers & Graham, 2008), the GED's greatest academic evolution is its new emphasis on academic writing. Originally, the GED assessed writing through its test titled "Correctness and Effectiveness of Expression," which consisted of multiple-choice grammar-based questions (General Testing Service, 2009). In 1987, the "Correctness and Effectiveness of Expression" test was renamed "Language Arts," and a narrative essay prompt was added to the multiple-choice questions, which continued to be the only means of measuring writing skills in the 2002 edition (Gillespie, 2007). On the 2014 version of the GED, however, test-takers need to demonstrate evidence-based, analytic writing on the newly renamed "Reasoning Through the Language Arts" (GED Testing Service, 2013).

In order to better understand the differences between the GED's recent "Language Arts" section and its new "Reasoning through the Language Arts" section, a closer comparison is helpful. The 2002 GED Language Arts exam consisted of 50 multiple-choice questions to measure grammatical knowledge and one essay prompt, which students answered using only their personal observations, experience and knowledge; students were assessed on their ability to write with well-focused main points, clear organization, specific development of ideas, and control of sentence structure, punctuation, grammar, word choice, and spelling. Examples of past writing prompts include:

- **If you could change one thing about your childhood, what would it be and why?** Give specific details to explain your views. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge.
- **What has been the happiest day of your life so far?** Give specific details to explain your views. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge.

By contrast, the new GED exam is composed of: multiple-choice, drop-down, fill-in-the blank, extended response, and drag-and-drop style questions to measure the conventions of standard English grammar and usage. And the new writing prompt requires students to produce essays analyzing and critiquing other writers' arguments. For example:

- Read and use the passages that follow to construct an extended response to the prompt: "***The editorial gives reasons for not labeling genetically modified foods; the letter to the editor presents the other side of the issue and argues for the importance of such labeling. In your response, analyze both the editorial and the letter to determine which argument is stronger.*** Use relevant and specific evidence from both sources to support your response. Be sure to develop answers fully (Sharpe & Reddy, 2014).

New conflicts and possibilities. These changes have caused strong reactions in the adult literacy field. And while some of these concerns are warranted, I argue that others -- especially those concerns relating to academic learning -- limit the evolution of the adult literacy field by maintaining an "either/or" binary, eschewing the opportunity to explore a "both/and" (Bakhtin, 1986).

New conflicts. In addition to the GED's common-core alignment changes, other major changes have also occurred, potentially hurting GED students. The GED, previously owned by the nonprofit American Council on Education (ACE), is now partially owned by Pearson, a for-

profit corporation; also, the once paper-and-pencil test is now fully computerized, and the cost to take the GED has increased from $70 to $120, with previously free "re-takes" now costing up to $20 for each module (with some states, such as Texas, charging an added $13.75 retake fee (GED Testing, 2015)).

These changes have fostered critical questions: Should Pearson and states profit from GED students (many of whom have limited financial resources)? Is it fair to require that all GED students take a computerized version of the exam (especially when many GED students, as well as programs, have limited access to computers)? While it is easy for me to answer those questions (no, and no unless there is a major influx of technological funding), other questions -- particularly questions from adult literacy student advocates, give me pause.

In his article decrying the unfairness of the new GED, McGraw (2015) asks: "Do they [GED test-takers] really need to master algebra to work as a laborer in the construction trade or a shelf stocker at Walmart? Do they really need to demonstrate close reading skills to get an entry-level job to support themselves and their families?" (p.3). Although McGraw seems to ask these questions out of fairness to GED test-takers --"Why erect a barrier so high that large numbers of people will be trapped in poverty, unemployment, and unskilled low-wage jobs?" McGraw rhetorically asks -- these questions, I argue, continue to segregate the purposes of adult literacy, obscuring educative possibilities.

New possibilities. With a greater focus on academic content and academic writing, Common Core-based adult literacy GED programs for youth and adults now have the chance to move beyond past polarities. Instead of having to focus on solely preparing students for work (in a workforce paradigm) or solely on transforming student consciousness (in a transformative paradigm), common-core based GED programs can now prepare students for meaningful work

and dynamic participation in society (Allen, 2016). For example, past GED students -- such as the 1996 welfare recipients ordered to get a GED to get a job to get off welfare (Sheared, McCabe, & Umeki, 2000) -- were taught the concept of democracy by learning how to pick the "best" answer presented on a multiple-choice question (the *relative* best answer: Ancient Greek civilization was democratic because it allowed males with land to vote). In contrast, present GED students are now asked to use reading and writing skills to examine "contemporary thinking, policies, structures, and major events that have shaped democratic values" (Steck-Vaughn, 2014).

By developing and using academic skills to reflect on democratic values within a credentialing context, adult literacy students now have the opportunity to *get* both a GED and a job, as well as the chance to experience learning as the taking up "of new information, acquir[ing] and deepen[ing] conceptual understandings of subject matter, and com[ing] to understand the natural and social worlds in new ways" (Nasir, Snyder, & Shaw, 2013, p.286). And by integrating these academic skills within programs, the adult literacy field has more of an opportunity to foster Allen's (2016) vision -- as explained in her essay "Education and Equality" -- of an education that serves as the social practice of human development, potent with possibilities for awakening the efforts that mark us as human (p.50).

However, in order to work towards realizing this opportunity, the adult literacy field must now join other fields in pedagogically wrestling with a primary mark of being human: language.

Inherited Challenges: Teaching the Language of the Academy

While there are inherent affordances that come with academic writing, these affordances are not neutral or absolute. As Gunter (2012) explains, although the standard features of

academic writing reflect the cultural preferences of the most powerful in the community, "the demographics of the powers-that-be often stand in stark contrast to the students-that-be in our classrooms" (p.69). Teaching the language of the academy involves the teaching of a "set of grammatical paradigms, rhetorical practices, and usage conventions" which have ideological and identity implications (Burgess, 2012, p. 234; Ivanic, 2004; Lea, 2004; Lillis, 2001). This is especially true when teaching the vocabulary and grammar of academic discourse, as these can be used as tools to both consciously and unconsciously privilege Standard English (Myhill et al, 2013).

Because of this, many students face a conflict between using their own cultural linguistic systems and using standard academic written language (Ball, 2002, p.99), potentially hindering students' academic engagement and performance. Several ethnographic studies (Fingeret & Drennan, 1998; Heath, 1983; Labov, 1970; Street, 1984; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988), including the seminal studies by William Labov (1970), *The Logic of Nonstandard English,* and Shirley Brice Heath (1983), *Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms*, detail the severe consequences that can occur when classrooms ignore the reality of this conflict.

Since there are such possible costs associated with teaching students (those-that-be) to acquire the word of a dominant discourse (the-powers-that-be), some academic writing teachers have been hesitant to do so. Delpit (1992) highlighted this hesitancy (as well as her concern about such hesitancy) in her seminal article "Acquisition of Literate Discourse: Bowing before the Master?" by describing her encounters with well-meaning college educators who were concerned about acting as agents of oppression by teaching students to use academic language: "Does it not smack of racism or classism to demand that [students] put aside the language of

their homes and communities and adopt [an alien discourse]?" (p.296). Similarly, Shafer (2001) describes how he stressed meaning over syntax in his developmental college classes in order not to subjugate students to "the cumbersome drone of the grammar guardian filling the air" (p.52).

Yet, there are problems with "dethron[ing]" form and "crown[ing]" meaning (Myers, 2003, p.55) in academic writing, and deliberately not teaching form may subjugate students to frustration, as well as to subjection. One of the affordances of academic writing is that it enables learners to develop and contribute to subject related literacies; doing this, however, necessitates a knowledge of syntax and lexis (form), allowing students to decipher and express meaning in subject-related literacies (Scheleppegrell, 2007). Without making this knowledge explicit, writing students may be "harried by a vague sense that there is a club of formal grammar out there somewhere into which they have not been granted access" (Dombek & Herndon, 2004, p. 20). They also may ultimately be denied access to power (Delpit, 1992; Siddle Walker, 1992), exacerbating – as Gunter (2012) reminds us – the stark contrast between the "powers-that-be" and the "students-that-be" in our classrooms (p.69).

The pitting of meaning versus form in composition and education studies has a long history. For example, during the open university movement, many liberal-minded CUNY professors -- conceiving of grammar as superficial "manners" -- deliberately chose not to teach grammar to their basic writing students (Molloy, 2012, p.117); on the other extreme, more conservative professors criticized basic writing instructors for having their students focus on the "injustices in society" rather than on the proper use of punctuation (p.115). The complexity of this debate was captured by Shaughnessy in 1971 when she wrote (as cited by Molloy): ". . .by completely distinguishing writing from mechanics, [students and teachers] can be caught up in a Catch-22 dilemma": in using up energy to master the mechanics of Standard English, a student

misses the chance to learn how to write; yet, if he doesn't master the mechanics, he may not have the chance to write (p.117).

Almost 50 years later, this dilemma still endures (Foltz-Gray, 2012; Horner, 2011). And although some K-12 and postsecondary educators have worked throughout these years to pedagogically wrestle with this dilemma, it is a new frontier for adult literacy GED educators, who – until very recently – taught within their field's polarities. In the next section, I explore how these polarities have influenced past GED writing instructional approaches, adopting Shaughnessy's "Form vs. Meaning Catch-22 Dilemma" as a lens to help inform the development of new GED academic writing.

Through a Catch-22 Lens: Critiquing Past GED Writing Instruction

Due to the adult literacy field's historically conflicting purposes, literacy conceptions, and policies, it is not surprising that GED programs have approached writing instruction differently. Small research studies and textbook analyses reveal that the three predominant GED writing instructional approaches have been skill-based, process-based, and strategy-based.

Skills-based. Since earlier GED programs prepared students for a writing exam entitled "Correctness and Effectiveness of Expression," the majority of GED writing instruction -- especially workforce adult literacy programs – solely focused on grammar and mechanical skills. For example, Padak and Padak (1988) reported that writing instructors spent the majority of class time teaching students about writing mechanics (cited in Gillespie, 1998); Young's 1997 study (cited in Gillespie, 1998) found that most GED writing classes consisted of a drill-and-practice software program; and likewise, in their 2001 study of 20 adult literacy classes in eight states,

Beder and Medina identified skills-acquisition as the most prominent pedagogical approach (cited in Cheville & Finders, 2008, p.426).

Such a focus on form epitomized the oppressive pedagogy that many basic writing instructors resisted during the open-university movement, and research reveals that such an approach has little to no effect on improving student writing. Earlier studies by Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer (1963) and by Hillocks (1984) found no evidence that isolated grammar instruction improved student writing. More recently, Graham and Perin's (2007) meta-analysis found a small, yet statistically significant, negative effect of grammar/usage instruction on the quality of students' writing when compared to other instructional methods. In addition, qualitative reviews also revealed the ineffectiveness of skills-based instruction: After assessing hundreds of GED essays during the skills-based era, a former GED writing specialist described most as a "blueprint for mediocrity" (Gillespie, 2001).

Since equating writing with mechanical perfection constrains composing, this mediocrity was to be expected. For example, in her study of GED writing students, Russell (n.d.) found that students strongly believed that effective essays had everything to do with mechanics and nothing to do with composition. When she asked a student to describe what makes someone a good writer, the student answered "Knowing how to punctuate things. And not having to have so many mistakes on a paper and everything just being fine the first time" (p.5). As current GED students practice the craft of academic writing, they will need to make many 'mistakes' on paper, allowing them to experience one of academic writing's greatest educative possibilities: discovery.

Process-based. In contrast to a skills-based paradigm, many transformative adult literacy practitioners – those committed to a more ideological view of literacy -- embraced a process-

based approach to writing instruction (Hanson & Wilson, 1998). Broadly conceived, a process writing approach refocuses writing from end-product to process, focusing on what happens while students are writing and encouraging cycles of planning, drafting, and revising (Tomkins, 2008). In theory, a process-orientated approach emphasizes "invention and revision" in contrast to organization and correctness (Whitney et al., 2008, p.201), emphasizing composing and meaning rather than static form and mistake-less papers.

Such process-writing approaches were no doubt influenced by research examining what writers do as they compose (Emig, 1971; Graves, 1983; Hayes & Flowers, 1980; Perl, 1994; Zamel, 1982), all of which indicated the nonlinear nature of writing. Although many models for teaching writing processes have been developed (Emig,1971; Faigley & White, 1981; Graves,1983), the process approach to writing based on Calkins' (1986) writing process workshop -- an instructional model that views writing as an ongoing process in which students follow a given collaborative set of procedures for planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing – seems to have most influenced GED writing pedagogy. For example, Contemporary's GED writing preparation textbook covers the four steps of the writing process— "gathering ideas, organizing, writing, and revising" (Frechette & Collins, 2002). And Steck-Vaughn's textbook organizes its GED writing preparation text into distinct chapters devoted to prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (Steck-Vaughn, 2001).

Yet, despite the hope of emphasizing writing as a humanistic rather than a skill-based activity, it is difficult to find evidence of the effectiveness of this approach with adult learners. Research on process-based instruction with adults primarily consists of holistic descriptions instead of specific instructional details or empirical evidence. For instance, Bryan (1996) describes how she improved the quality of writing in her developmental class by allowing

students to "discuss the process of writing, which is far more important than making superficial changes" to a final product (p.190). Similarly, Street (2005) describes how refocusing his remedial writing course from text-centered to process-centered allowed his students to grow and develop as writers, but clear evidence of student growth was not provided.

Additionally, one of the few studies of a process-based GED writing class revealed an overall lack of empirical effectiveness. In their 1999 study, Stino and Palmer explored the effects of an 18-week process-based writing intervention within a collaborative literacy-learning circle for adolescent and adult women attending a GED preparation program. Writing instructional activities included journaling and narrative essay writing in which students were guided through writing process steps: prewriting, drafting, sharing, revising, editing, proofreading, and publishing. Although some skill instruction was included during these phases, the instructor did not dwell on these "because she felt this would overwhelm and discourage these women" (Stino & Palmer,1999, p.289). Yet, although results indicated small statistically significant improvements in student essays from pre-test to mid-test, there was no statistical difference between the mid- and final essay. Therefore, while the women claimed to feel more confident as writers, they ultimately made only incremental progress toward passing the gate-keeping GED.

With the GED's recent gate fortification and emphasis on academic writing, dwelling on skills will be necessary. In order to have the chance to write for academic purposes, GED students need the tools (the skills) to compose within an academic context. While adult literacy students need the opportunity to use their own linguistic resources to think and discover on paper, they also need the opportunity to develop grammatical resources, helping them to academically represent their thinking as well as pass gate-keeping points (Delpit, 1993).

Analytical writing, for example, requires an analytical vocabulary, experience with manipulating word forms, and facility with clauses. A lack of explicit instruction will constrain, rather than protect, adult literacy students, limiting the educative potential of the academic composing process and justifying McGraw's (2015) concerns about the unfairness of the new GED for future Walmart shelf stockers.

Strategy-based. More recently, GED writing programs -- especially those alive during the height of the "No Child Left Behind" empirical era (McCarthey, 2009) -- sought to give GED students the keys to the GED gates by using strategy-based instruction. Writing strategy instruction, which was developed to meet the needs of K-12 students with learning disabilities, systematically teaches students how to carry out the writing processes of planning, drafting, and revising. In strategy instruction, teachers provide students with mnemonics, helping students remember detailed writing steps, as well as cue cards and goal sheets, helping students memorize the steps and remember their specific writing goals. For example, *The GED Essay*, one of the most widely used textbooks for former GED writing preparation (Steck-Vaughn, 2008), describes and reviews a step-by-step approach to the writing process through the POWER program, a mnemonic in which each letter stands for a writing process step: P (Planning your essay), O (Organizing your essay), W (Writing your essay), E (Evaluating your essay), and R (Revising your essay).

Unlike skill-based pedagogy and process-based instruction, strategy instruction has proved empirically effective in both K-12 settings as well as in adult literacy settings. In their meta-analysis of 39 studies of strategy instruction in K-12 settings, Graham and Perin (2007) found that strategy instruction improved students' writing quality, schematic structure, and revisions. In addition, De La Paz and Graham (2002) found that seventh- and eighth-graders

who were explicitly taught how to use strategies produced qualitatively better essays than those not taught the writing strategy. And Olson et al (2010) found that strategy instruction effectively prepared high school students to pass state writing assessments.

Similar to these studies with children, scholars evaluating the effectiveness of writing strategy instruction with adult literacy students have also found positive results. McArthur and Lembo (2009) conducted strategic writing instruction with three adult literacy students, focusing on strategies for planning, evaluating, and revising persuasive essays. In their similar study, Berry and Mason (2012) helped four participants prepare for the GED by teaching the steps of POW (Pick my idea, Organize my notes, Write and say more) + TREE (Topic sentence, Reasons, Explanations, Ending) + COPS (Capitalization, Organization, Punctuation, Sense). During instruction, students were taught to develop positive self-statements such as “I’ve got good ideas,” “I can do this,” and “If I practice, I will get better” (p.130). Overall findings from both studies indicated that all students improved their ability to independently write expository essays.

Since strategy instruction has proven to be empirically effective with adult learners, it also proves more difficult to critique than skills- and process- based instruction; however, in order to allow GED students to take advantage of academic writing affordances, a critique is important. Specifically, an overreliance on strategy instruction underestimates the sophistication of adult literacy students, denying them the chance to experience learning as a deepening of conceptual understandings (Nasir, Snyder, & Shaw, 2013). For example, at the end of their study, McArthur and Lembo state that -- unlike the middle and high school students (many with learning disabilities) with whom they had worked before -- the adult students in their study “had strong opinions about the issues that [were selected] for writing, and they had quite a lot to say

about them" (p.10); instead of self-convincement of their 'good ideas', they wanted discussion of their ideas. Yet, because discussion (both external and internal) was not within the scope of the strategy, these GED students -- adults with much lived experience (Lytle, 2001) -- did not get the chance to fully and authentically engage and develop their ideas. As the adult literacy field incorporates academic writing, both the advantages -- as well as the constraints -- of strategy-based instruction must be attended to, especially if students are to benefit from the GED's new academic learning opportunities.

Persistent Binaries: Critiquing New GED Writing Instruction

New GED writing instruction. Fortunately, with the new GED's inclusion of academic writing, less simple writing instruction -- instruction beyond a strictly skills-based, process-based, or strategy-based approach -- is recommended. Instead of pitting meaning and form against each other, new GED writing pedagogy encourages multiple approaches to writing instruction. For example, the Teaching for Excellence in Adult Literacy [TEAL] recommends specific product goals, strategy instruction, and process writing approaches, as well as summarization, collaborative writing, word processing, sentence-combining, prewriting, inquiry activities, study of models, and writing for content learning (US Department of Education, 2011).

Persistent binary choices. Unfortunately, however, oppressive and dangerous 'simple truths' still remain, potentially continuing to foster division in the adult literacy field. Despite a both/and of heteroglossic instructional approaches, an either/or monoglossic approach to language and literacy still lingers, thwarting potential educative possibilities. While the title of the GED's writing assessment has changed from "Correctness and Effectiveness of Expression"

to “Reasoning through the Language Arts,” the sentiment has not: Barron’s textbook, “How to Prepare for the GED 2014 Test,” advises students that “*As a rule of thumb, you should always elevate your language when you’re writing. Likewise, you should be looking for choices with elevated language that is also grammatically and mechanically correct”* (Sharpe & Reddy, 2014, p.105); in addition, an explanation of one of the traits on the GED writing rubric begins with “*Trait 3 is about how well you use Standard English, or the English that educated people use in formal situations”* (New Readers Press, 2014, p.10).

By equating standardized English to elevated and educated language, the new GED continues to burden the adult literacy field with a binary choice. Programs can either subscribe to an autonomous (and oppressive) model of literacy, prioritizing prescriptive form and the ‘getting’ of a GED over learning; or, programs can resist by exclusively subscribing to a Freirian-based adult literacy model, prioritizing personal meaning and the “process of conscientization” over the learning of academic skills.

Instead, I am seeking a third option. I want to reflect on how to develop an academic writing pedagogy that simultaneously emphasizes form and meaning, providing GED students with transformative academic learning experiences while also challenging dominant beliefs about language and literacy.

Beyond Binaries: Powerful Literacy

In reflecting on how to develop a pedagogy of both “access and dissent” (Morrell, 2012) -- a pedagogy that allows adult literacy students to both decode the word *and* read/act upon the world (Freire, 1970) -- I am not starting ‘ex nihilo’ (Falmouth, 2008). Many have considered a pluralist approach to writing instruction that values dialectical and meaning-making diversity but

also acknowledges that giving learners access to Standard English form may help them in gaining access to powerful discourses, allowing for hegemonic challenge. Several scholars, such as Delpit and Moje, advocate this approach. Delpit (1993) argues that minority students need access to the "tool" of academic language in order to access the dominate discourse as well as to "transform dominate Discourses for liberatory purposes" (Delpit, 1992, p. 300). And Moje (2007) argues that -- in order to create socially just academic language pedagogy for social justice -- students need to develop:

> The ability to analyze how others have represented knowledge and therefore to assess truth claims, and with that analytical power in hand, the ability to challenge long-standing – even mainstream – claims to knowledge and ultimately to produce new knowledge that will benefit society" (Moje, 2007, p.33).

Likewise, Gee argues that students need to develop "powerful literacy," which he defines as the "control of a secondary use of language used in secondary discourse that can serve as a meta-discourse to critique the primary discourse or other secondary discourses, including dominant discourses" (as cited in Cruddas and Watson, 2001, p.169). Lankshear (1997) further argues that such knowledge empowers in at least three ways:

> First, it enhances the individual's level of performance within the discourse and increases the chances of access to social "goods." Second the ability to control secondary language use provides the means through which a discourse can be analyzed to see how skills and knowledge may be used in new ways and directions within that discourse. Finally, the meta-level knowledge of a secondary discourse makes it possible to critique and transform a secondary discourse. To be enabled to critically choose among discourses

rather than simply to acquire or to reject discourses without such learning and understanding is to be empowered: it is the essence of powerful literacy (p.169).

Exploring and Learning from Powerful Literacy: Purpose and Research Questions

Designing for powerful literacy, however, is a tension-filled endeavor. Scholars, such as Ivanic (2004), who advocate for a multifaceted view of the nature of writing that accounts for a comprehensive view of language and literacy, acknowledge that teachers will inevitably face tensions in orchestrating such integrations (p.241). In addition, although both Gee and Lankshear promote a powerful literacy framework as one that enables students "to critically choose among discourses rather than simply to acquire or to reject discourses" (p.169), scholars have long argued that there is an inherent complexity and tension for students in mastering the language of a secondary discourse, leading to possible internal conflict and struggle (Lu, 1992).

Therefore, the goal of this dissertation is to describe an attempt at orchestrating such an integration in order to better understand possible tensions, providing insight to the adult literacy field as it teaches to the new GED. The attempt consisted of designing and teaching a word-focused writing curriculum, which pulls from four broad theoretical perspectives: *Writing to Learn, Systemic Functional-Linguistics, Academic Language Development, and Academic Literacies*. The analysis of the attempt employed a Bakhtinian perspective on the nature of language and meaning-making. Specifically, I employed the Bakhtinian concepts of heteroglossia, centripetal/centrifugal forces, dialogue, authoritative/ internally persuasive discourse, and ideological becoming -- concepts that celebrate conflicting 'truths' inherent in language use, allowing me to generatively understand the inner-workings of a heterogeneous adult literacy GED academic writing pedagogy.

The research took the form of a classroom design experiment (Brown, 1997), enabling me to design and study a learning environment as well as generate richer understandings. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis focused on understanding how design elements and their engendered instructional tools and activities contributed to pedagogical tension, and on how this tension contributed to the teaching and learning in a GED academic writing class.

This study has two parts. The first part consists of an analysis of a powerful literacy-based GED academic writing that I designed and taught; the second part of the study consists of an analytic case study of a student who experienced the lessons. The main research question that this study sought to answer was: *How can studying a powerful literacy-influenced GED academic writing framework through a Bakhtinian lens inform the teaching of academic writing within adult literacy?* To help answer this overarching question, my analysis focused on addressing the following questions:

1. What pedagogical tensions emerged from the curricular implementation?
2. How did these tensions affect the teaching and learning of academic writing?
3. How can answers to questions one and two contribute to future adult literacy academic writing pedagogy?

Chapter 2: Traversing Boundaries and Complicating Powerful Literacy: Becoming Other than the Other

This second chapter has two parts. The first part articulates the design of a multi-theoretical adult literacy academic writing curriculum inspired by Gee and Lankshear's conception of powerful literacy. Many scholars (as indicated at the end of the first chapter) have theorized the need to combine academic writing pedagogical frameworks; however, it has been difficult to find a template. *How, specifically, might a GED instructor design a curriculum framework in order to help a student control academic language while also critiquing and transforming it?*

In the second part, I articulate the theoretical framework I used to study the enacted design. Due to his emphasis on the dynamism of language and the word, the theoretical framework informing this analysis draws from Bakhtin. Specifically, the Bakhtinian concepts of *heteroglossia, centripetal/centrifugal forces, dialogue, authoritative/internally persuasive discourse, and ideological becoming* emerged as especially useful in understanding the instructional enactments. They provided both a lens to generatively study the combining of different academic writing theoretical perspectives, as well as a link to generatively connect adult literacy to academic writing scholarship by unearthing conflict and struggle in the education process (Lu,1992). The chapter ends by both reframing the derived power of a powerful literacy-influenced adult literacy pedagogy, as well as by acknowledging the need for a deeper understanding of conflict and 'becoming' in adult literacy.

Part 1: Traversing Boundaries: Designing a Powerful Literacy-influenced GED Academic Writing Framework

Designing a Powerful Literacy GED Writing Curriculum requires traversing theoretical

boundaries (Weis et al., 2009) in order to integrate perspectives on academic writing. My traversing involved pulling from four broad theoretical perspectives (*Writing to Learn, Systemic Functional-Linguistics, Academic Language Development, and Academic Literacies*) to create an integrated word-focused curriculum that emphasized i) idea-generation, ii) academic craft, iii) identity, and iv) discursive-positioning.

I lay out this framework in steps. First, I give a brief overview of the four perspectives, focusing on the specific elements used in the framework. Second, I describe how these elements may be united through a focus on the word. And lastly, I explain how these elements are theoretically intended to work together to nurture powerful literacy. This section ends, however, by acknowledging the reverberating nature of learning, which needs to be better understood in order to generatively reflect on how to most fruitfully design GED academic writing pedagogy.

Brief descriptions of theoretical perspectives.

Writing to learn. Although a 'Writing to Learn' theory of writing development has a long history, for the purposes of this framework, I am specifically interested in bringing in the ideas of the early process theorists, such as Perl and Elbow, who sought to "return the text to the student composer" (Trimbur, 1991, p.110) through expressionism. Inspiring former transformational adult literacy process-based writing instructors, these theorists saw writing as the process of exploring one's thoughts (Zamel, 1982). Unlike skills- and strategy-based GED instruction, expressionistic writing does not give form to a preconceived and well-formed idea; instead, it fosters discovery: "Through the act of seeing their ideas on paper, students are enabled to reflect upon them and develop them further" (Perl, 1980, p.9).

Systemic functional linguistics. Because of the complexity involved in understanding Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), a comprehensive description of SFL is beyond the scope

of this study. For the purposes of this framework, I am using a very simplified SFL perspective that draws from the theories of Halliday (1993) and Martin (1992), allowing for a curriculum to focus on what people 'do' with language and how language structures a text for particular uses (Ryan, 2010, p.102).

SFL can help students better understand what texts are doing and how they are doing it by focusing on genre (Martin & Rose, 2008) and metalanguage (Schleppegrell, 2013). By supporting students in recognizing patterns within and across texts, students can understand genre as a staged, goal-orientated purposeful activity (Cullip, 2009, p.194). In addition, an SFL approach to writing instruction provides students with a metalanguage for analyzing the written word.

Although SFL attends to grammar, it is not (unlike former GED skills-based instruction) a set of rules about what is correct or incorrect; rather, it is a theory about how language makes meaning (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004; Scheleppegrell, 2007), with a goal of raising students' consciousness about form-meaning relationships (Schleppegrell, 2013). Several studies have illustrated how focusing on metalanguage -- instead of on traditional grammar exercises -- helps students effectively develop academic writing skills (Fearn & Farnan, 2013; Schleppegrell, Achugar, & Oteiza, 2004; Schleppegrell, 2013).

Academic language. While a consensus of how to define academic language is difficult to find, I am using Scott, Nagy, and Flinspach's (2008) description of academic language as "a register of English that has distinctive lexical, morphological, syntactic, and stylistic features" (as cited in Baumann & Graves, 2010, p.5). A major component of academic language is academic vocabulary -- both general academic words such as *evidence, demonstrate,* and

represent, as well as more specialized words such as *diameter, condensation*, and *abolitionist* (Bailey, 2007, p.12).

Because knowing how to use words in academic writing does not happen by chance (Coxhead & Byrd, p.131), academic language research has begun to focus on using morphology to explicitly help students learn academic writing (Gamez & Lesaux, 2012; Keiffer & Lesaux, 2007; Keiffer & Lesaux, 2010). One promising approach may be through the teaching of morphological awareness – the ability to recognize, reflect on, and (most importantly) manipulate meaningful word parts such as roots and suffixes – in order to help students control linguistic forms to better capture their ideas in academic writing.

Although the majority of research on morphological awareness has focused on reading comprehension (Baumann, Edwards, & Boland, 2003; Carlisle, 1996; Nagy, 1988; Nagy & Anderson, 1984; Reed, 2008), some research is also beginning to show that morphological awareness may help students improve their academic writing skills (McCutchen et al, 2013; Rubin, Patterson, & Kantor, 1991; Scott & Nagy, 2003). This research shows that explicitly helping students learn how to manipulate words in morphologically complex ways can improve the quality of effective academic writing (Northey, McCutchen, & Sanders, 2015; Scott & Nagy, 2004, p. 214).

Academic literacies. Academic literacies -- which emerged during the mid-1990s in the UK in response to the greater cultural, social, and linguistic diversity of higher education students (Lillis, 2003) -- calls for a "broader perspective" in academic writing instruction. Heavily influenced by New Literacy Studies, an academic literacies approach to writing instruction "shifts attention from surface feature of 'literacy' to deeper features of epistemology and authority" (Lea & Street, p.1998, p.167).

Because of this focus on epistemology and authority, writing instruction within an academic literacies perspective encourages students to reflect on how they negotiate their identities as academic writers, and it emphasizes Critical Language Awareness (CLA). As Sanchez and Paulson (2013) explain, CLA is a literacy tool that helps students become aware of the ways that ideas become "naturalized or taken for granted as 'truths' about the natural and social world and how these 'truths' are tied up with language in use" (p.116). Through CLA, students are encouraged to uncover how the language of texts is socially constructed, as well as how language may both overtly and covertly position students in negative ways (Sanchez & Paulson, 2013).

Orchestrating powerful literacy through a focus on the word. In order to provide a focused way to teach GED academic writing that allows for elements of these perspectives to be present, I developed a design that focuses on how each perspective involves the word in teaching academic writing, emphasizing idea-generation, academic craft, identity, and discursive-positioning.

Word-doing in a writing to learn/expressionistic perspective. A focus on the word in a Writing to Learn expressivist writing perspective keeps a students' primary discourse present and productive, allowing students to experience writing as a not-yet-knowing through the use of their own "alive words" (Pumphrey, 1973). As Shaughnessy (1971) states, the real growth in writing begins when a student sees a connection between himself and the words he puts on paper. Instead of forcing students to use "million dollar words" (MacArthur & Lembo, 2009), students are able to first express what they want to say with "the words [they] want to say it with" (Elbow, p.152), incorporating Freire's (1970) mandate that adult literacy programs incorporate words "laden with the meaning of people's existential experiences" (p.88).

Word-doing in SFL and academic language perspectives. While an expressivist focus on the word encourages adult literacy students to populate the page with their own words, students must also learn to group these words into clauses, sentences, and paragraphs in order to compose an academic essay (Graves, 1972). A focus on word-doing through an SFL and academic language perspective explicitly equips students to do this, helping them to experience the craft of academic writing, as well as enabling them to gain access to power (Delpit, 1992; Siddle Walker, 1992).

Within an SFL framework, the language of the academy -- and the words that make it up -- are functionally studied, and students are explicitly shown how sentences, "particularly in terms of their primary members, words" (Myers, 2009, p.611), create different types of relationships between ideas, participants, and text structures. Specifically, SFL can help students deconstruct texts by showing how words connect to clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and essays.

To successfully practice this deconstruction, however, explicit instruction at the word level is needed; students need direct experience with academic words and their range of constructions. For example, Coxhead and Byrd (2007) state that teachers often incorrectly assume that students already know various forms of frequently used words, such as the verb 'require.' In their study of student texts, Coxhead and Byrd (2007) found that students overwhelmingly used the past participle 'required' when other forms, such as "requirement," may have been more effective syntactically (p.133). Academic vocabulary -- in the form of morphological awareness instruction -- can help by instructing students at the word level, showing students how to manipulate words morphologically to produce intended meanings in sentences, affecting paragraphs and the essay as a whole.

Word-doing in an academic literacies perspective. Yet, while a focus on words in a combined SFL and Academic Language context can help GED students understand and use academic form and language, such a focus also has the potential to neutralize academic writing. Although proponents of a systemic functional linguistic approach acknowledge that students bring a range of linguistic repertoires into the classroom (Gebhard, Chen, & Britton, 2014), there seems less of a focus on how these repertoires impact students' decisions to participate in literacy practices, especially academic writing. Likewise, proponents of academic vocabulary writing instruction, such as Coxhead (2012), unproblematically equate the use of academic vocabulary as an indication of membership within the academic community (p.138), ignoring the personal ramifications of this membership for individual learners. Studying words through an Academic Literacies' lens reminds both adult literacy instructors and students that using words is as much a social as a linguistic act; it opens up a space to acknowledge the divergence of linguistic codes, allowing for reflection on how codes implicate identity (Burgess & Ivanic, 2010; Gunter, 2012).

In addition to bringing attention to words' impact on identity, focusing on words through an academic literacies perspective creates a space to recognize that "writing is open for contestation and change" through the repositioning of words (Ivanic, 2004, p.225). While a combined SFL and Academic Language focus on the word encourages students to identify the power relations and represented messages of nominal elements (Schleppegrell, Achugar, and Oteiza, 2004), this focus seems to stop here. And although recognition and realization are the first steps in developing critical literacy skills, they do not necessarily lead to critique and transformation through the rewriting and repositioning of words. Instead, in academic settings, students are often apprenticed as academic writers to construct increasingly "generalized and

abstract interpretations" by developing "a specialized set of terms for referring to events and processes. . . in ways that are historically valued" (Coffin, 2006, p.418). By incorporating Academic Literacies, the discursive positioning and meaning-making power of such terms (and the words that make them up) can be studied critically, encouraging students (those-that-be) to see themselves as agents "who can enter in, own, and alter the discourse at hand, academic or otherwise" (Gunter, 2012, p.69).

A co-existence of word-doings. Theoretically, a GED academic writing pedagogical space that hosts multiple word-doings has the promise to subvert binary choice. It simultaneously emphasizes form and meaning, providing GED students with work-force preparation and transformative experiences through academic learning, while also challenging dominant beliefs about language and literacy. Such an approach stands in contrast to ProLiteracy's SkillsBoost, a Language Arts Extended Response preparation workbook targeted to GED students, which contains an activity instructing students to "use a variety of words that are precise, or that clearly communicate, what you mean" in order to strengthen the development of one's writing. The specific advice instructs students to: 1) avoid common, vague terms and 2) write formally; don't use slang or casual expressions (Proliteracy, 2014, p.26). This is followed by examples of weak vs. strong word choices. For example:

Weak word choice: Mario was a **good** friend of mine.

Strong word choice: Mario was a **loyal, trusted** friend of mine.

Weak word choice: The wedding reception was **off-the-chain**.

Strong word choice: The wedding reception was an **out-of-control, wild** party.

Within a theoretically mixed word-focused framework, such linguistic choices may be made more complicated. For example: Is a 'good friend' necessarily one who is 'loyal and

trusted,' or are there other meanings that can be ascribed to the adjectival form of 'good' when describing a friend? How might we use writing to discover and generate ideas about our own definitions of a 'good' friend? How might you make a friend's action into an adjective (as the verb 'trust' is used as an adjective (a 'trusted' friend))? What might be some identity issues with substituting 'off-the-chain" with "out-of-control" and "wild"? What ideological stance is behind the workbook's classification of words into 'weak' and 'strong' categories?

Complicating co-existence and powerful literacy. Practically, however, hosting multiple word-doings also foregrounds the depth of linguistic complexity: the everlasting link between language and humanness, complicating theoretical promise. Each perspective's way of looking at words has its own legitimacy within academic writing pedagogy. And, since each perspective leaves residues of meaning within words, each perspective's way of looking at words also reverberates within other perspectives. For example, in instructing a GED student to learn an academic word and its manipulation, enabling the student to craft an academic essay, the reverberation of that new word implicates the student's discourse and identity, the student's expression and idea generation, and the student's understanding of that word's discursive positioning capabilities. How does this affect the *humans-that-be* in GED classrooms? In order to help me begin to answer this question, I turned to Bakhtin.

Part II: Complicating Powerful Literacy through a Bakhtinian Lens: Becoming Other than the Other

Introducing Bakhtin. Educational practitioners and scholars -- particularly those struggling with the dynamics of language education within multicultural settings -- have turned to Bakhtin's work to assist in dealing with the tensions inherent in those dynamics (Ball & Freedman, 2004; Clark, 1990; Klancher, 1989; Halasek, 1992; Ward, 1994). And while

Bakhtinian scholars have criticized educators' use of Bakhtin as shallow, claiming that there are vast differences between Bakhtin's work and educational extensions of his ideas (Skinner, Valsinar, & Holland, 2001), engaging with his ideas can be productive for the education field, helping to challenge binary thinking and leading to better understandings of the dynamic forces that exist within educational settings, especially within adult literacy settings.

Unpacking Bakhtinian Theoretical Concepts. Although neat definitions or categorizations of Bakhtin's terms do not readily exist (Shield, 2007), I have found Bakhtinian scholars' concepts of heteroglossia, centripetal/centrifugal forces, dialogue, authoritative/internally persuasive discourse, and ideological becoming especially useful in helping to study a multi-theoretical powerful-literacy-influenced GED academic writing pedagogy.

Heteroglossia. Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia is premised on the idea that all language contains multiple, social, and cultural meanings; heteroglossia encompasses not just different languages or different ways of using language, but also different ways of understanding and engaging the world through language, resulting in various ways of understanding and engaging the world by different language-users (Costa & Jou, 2016, p.79).

Roseberry, Ogonowski, DiSchiod, and Warren (2010) illustrate how language can affect one's conception of the world, affecting learning. In their study of northeast elementary school students learning about scientific concepts, the authors explored heteroglossia's impact on the understanding of heat and heat transfer. In this context, the children needed to know the seemingly basic word 'cold;' yet, as the authors explain, the word 'cold' had very different resonances for different children: Children who had grown up in a cold climate understood the meaning of 'cold' differently than those who had recently immigrated from hot-climates, such as

Haiti; children who regularly went skiing in the winter understood the meaning of 'cold' differently than did students who lived in poorly heated environments during cold winter months.

As the authors point out, "the meanings and values associated with even simple words cannot be taken for granted; they taste of the complex ecologies of children's lives" (p.x). For Bakhtin, this heteroglossia is the normal condition of existence, and we must learn to fully live in a heteroglossic world (Shield, 2007). As Chapter 4 reveals, this is particularly true within adult literacy, which is a world filled with heteroglossia.

Centripetal and centrifugal forces. Bakhtin directly addressed the centrality of conflicting tensions with his concepts of centripetal and centrifugal forces in language use. According to Bakhtin, centripetal forces function to centralize and hierarchize, imposing order on a heterogeneous world; examples include national drives to maintain a standard language or GED textbooks that encourage the classification of words as 'weak' or 'strong' (Proliteracy, 2014, p.26). In contrast, centrifugal forces -- forces that encourage various classes, age groups, and historical times to use language differently -- function to disrupt this order, seeking to keep things unfinished and incomplete, allowing space for reflection and change (Behizadeh, 2014). When the literacy canon is contested (as within an Academic Literacies' stance, for example), centrifugal forces are at work.

As Clark and Holquist (1984) write, Bakhtin viewed this push/pull of competing forces as healthy, and he was continually interested in capturing the "great duel between centripetal and centrifugal forces" and the ways in which they affect the historical beings of individuals (p.xi). In particular, Bakhtin was interested in understanding how these competing forces affect language, generatively pulling it in different directions without resolve. For, as Fecho and Botzaki (2007) explain, if the push-pull of language gets resolved, language either becomes a

"reified dead-shell-like thing" or something "akin to the Tower of Babel -- much individuation with little communication" (p. 551).

Researchers have employed these conceptual forces to better understand writing instruction, especially for language minority students. Dyson (2008), for example, in her study of an urban first grader learning how to write, documented how the centripetal forces of the official school practice conflicted with the centrifugal forces of the student's home communicative practices, affecting writing outcomes. And Ives (2012) described how a student-written play showcasing the student's cultural and linguistic resources (centrifugal forces) were at odds with the official curriculum (a centripetal force), affecting the student's engagement in class and academic outcomes. As in research with elementary school students, it is also very important for adult literacy researchers to attune themselves to centripetal/centrifugal forces, allowing for a better understanding of the external factors influencing adult students' academic writing development.

Dialogue. For Bakhtin, dialogue is about sustaining the tension that happens when centripetal and centrifugal forces collide. While heteroglossia is the natural chaos of languages as they exist in the world, dialogue is the interaction of these languages. In Bakhtin's concept of dialogue, different discourses are inevitably interacting and competing with each other. Standardized language, for example, is in constant struggle with the myriad varieties of language (heteroglossia) that naturally exists (Halasek, 1999).

In order to understand Bakhtin's dialogue in the context of this study, it is important to articulate the difference between Bakhtinian and Freirian 'dialogue'. For Freire, dialogue is an external, social activity and cannot exist within the traditional teacher/student relationship. The instructor must relinquish all power in order to dialogue with students, which Freire describes as

“the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanized” (Freire, 1970, p.88 – 89 as cited by McAuley, 2013, p.3). Freire also maintains that dialogue “cannot exist in the absence of profound love for the world and for people” (as cited in Alanis, p.169, 2006).

In contrast, for Bakhtin, dialogue is always happening, intentional or not, and “is a condition of language rather than an attitude of the people” (McAuley, 2013, p.5); unlike Freirian dialogue, Bakhtinian dialogue does not hinge on the presence or absence of profound love. Additionally, Bakhtinian dialogue is not just talk, but rather openness to difference, resulting in the possibility of new understanding. “It is only through dialogue with others,” Bakhtin (1986) states, “that our words make sense and do we learn who we are” (p. x).

Scholars have drawn from Bakhtin’s concept of dialogue to better understand classroom discourse and learning, concluding that a Bakhtinian-influenced ‘dialogic pedagogy’ is more productive than traditional teacher-led classroom instruction, where teachers strive for monologism by pre-scripting questions and answers (Christoph & Nystrand, 2001; Nystrand, 1997). In their 2001 study, Christoph and Nystrand sought to better understand dialogic instruction by studying a ninth-grade English teacher in an inner-city classroom. They concluded that this instructor was able to orchestrate a dialogically-organized class by encouraging the productive interaction of diverse voices expressing different values, beliefs, and perspectives, promoting authentic questions rather than known-answer or yes/no questions, and “helping students to think, interpret, and generate new understandings” (p.270). Because of the potential benefits of a dialogic pedagogy, the lessons I implemented in this study sought to foster such teaching; however, as evident in Chapter 4, some lessons were much more effective than others in achieving this dialogic goal.

Authoritative and internally persuasive discourse. To better understand Bakhtin's concept of dialogue within a learning environment, it is helpful to unpack two related concepts: authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse. Authoritative discourse is the word of authority, such as a standard GED textbook advising students to "elevate one's language when writing" (Sharpe & Reddy, 2014); it demands that students passively accept the words of another without the chance to reflect on how it fits in with other things they know. In contrast, internally persuasive discourse leaves room for a student to decide whether he/she will accept the word of another, encouraging students to appropriate the word of another by populating it with his/her own intentions (Cornelius & Herrenkohl, 2004). As Bakhtin explains, "The word in internally persuasive discourse is half-ours and half-someone else's" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.345).

Hsu and Roth (2014) used the concepts of authoritative and internally persuasive discourse to better understand students' scientific learning. The authors argue that science has been traditionally taught within an authoritative discourse, which expects students to memorize science statements and inhibits meaning making with scientific concepts. In their study of high school science students apprenticing within a university biology laboratory, the authors observed how students were more meaningfully learning science as they adapted science terminology with their own accents and expressions. Within an adult literacy academic writing context, a Bakhtinian authoritative/internally persuasive lens is particularly insightful, helping to better understand the differences between teaching children and adult literacy learners, as revealed in Chapter 5.

Ideological becoming. Ideological becoming is what happens when people live dialogically, immersed in internally persuasive discourse. And while it provides for exciting opportunities and possibilities for expanding one's understanding of the world, it also requires

continual evolution and struggle. "The person who understands must not reject the possibility of changing or even abandoning his already prepared viewpoints and positions; it requires living as though there is always the possibility of being at least partially wrong" (Matusov, 2011, p.215).

In his study of a Russian adult learning English, Harvey (2016) explains how the student engaged in ideological becoming by finding the 'other' in himself through engagement with various English-language speakers, opening him up to being other in the world. Although the Russian student originally wanted to learn English for future opportunities (a desire influenced by an authoritative discourse), as he communicated with other English speakers, the authoritative discourse became internally persuasive, motivating him to learn English as part of his "being and becoming in the world" (p.34).

Skinner, Valsiner, and Holland (2001), in their article relating a theoretical and methodological examination of a Nepali adolescent's (Hari) narrative, also employ the concept of ideological becoming. In their interviews with Hari, they noted how he struggled with reconciling the authoritative word/world of the caste system with his growing understanding of a newer system, which was more internally persuasive to him. "In his utterance," they explain, "we see the struggle between different ideological points of view and the possibility of new configurations" (p.12). As adult literacy integrates academic learning, it has the potential to foster ideological becoming, which may cause adult literacy students to struggle -- as did Hari -- with reconciling different 'Truths,' challenging adult literacy instructors -- as I was challenged in this study -- with helping their students facilitate these reconciliations.

Reverberating Words and Becoming Other than the Other in Adult Literacy. Understood through a Bakhtinian lens, a word-focused powerful literacy-based GED academic writing framework foregrounds the heteroglot word, requiring students to grapple with the

push/pull of competing forces and enter into dialogue with authoritative and internally persuasive voices – potentially inducing struggle as they strive to make new meaning among conflicting ideological points of view and values.

Such a Bakhtinian understanding echoes seminal scholarship, and it also reframes the derived power of a powerful literacy-influenced adult literacy pedagogy. In her contested article "Conflict and Struggle: The Enemies or Preconditions of Basic Writing?," Lu (1993) critiques pioneers of the basic writing movement for not foregrounding the conflict and struggle inherent in learning new discourses. In their belief that learning new rules of a language will give students "the ultimate freedom of deciding how and when and where" to use different languages (p.905), Shaughnessy and other early Basic Writing scholars -- argues Lu -- were not understanding the impossibility of separating the freedom of linguistic choice from one's being (p.906). Instead of promising students the possibility of mastering academic discourse without having to reposition themselves, Lu advocates for an academic writing pedagogy that highlights the conflict and struggle experienced by students as they learn a new language; she argues for a pedagogy that teaches 'the process of repositioning" (p.910).

And it is this process of repositioning -- one's continual ideological becoming -- that is potentially powerful for adult literacy students, encouraging them to "[become] other than oneself that is other than the other" (Reza-Lopez, Huerta-Charles, & Reyes, 2014, p.116). By learning and using a new word, by understanding an already known word differently, one's consciousness is becoming other than what it had been, but it is not – necessarily – becoming like another's pre-existing consciousness; instead, one's consciousness is becoming "other than the other."

Framing learning in adult literacy as 'becoming other than the other' -- and understanding adult literacy students as having unique voices that are always evolving and never finalized -- starkly contrasts with previous framings of learning and students in adult literacy. In a work-force paradigm, adult literacy students -- as incomplete adults -- learn skills without penetrating consciousness; in a Freirian-based transformative paradigm, adult literacy students -- as fully finalized adults -- learn to raise a pre-determined consciousness. This stark contrast exemplifies the 'simple truths' (Heckman, 2012) that I argue the adult literacy field must resist. Yet, in order to fortify this resistance, the field needs a deeper understanding of conflict and 'becoming' as inevitable parts of the education process. In the following chapters, I describe the research design and methods that I employed to help the field begin to gain this understanding.

Chapter 3: Methodology: Designing to Understand

As the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the GED 2014 contribute to the de-marginalization of adult literacy, the field is primed to expand its own research agenda. Due to the relative absence of research with adult literacy students (especially in regards to academic writing), adult literacy curriculum is often dictated by research findings with other populations (Lesgold, A.M. & Welch-Ross, 2012). This needs to change: The inherent complexity of the field, especially as it incorporates academic writing, necessitates more than borrowing; it necessitates educational engineering (Dewey, 1922). Because of this, the study took the form of a design experiment (Brown, 1997) to both engineer and study word-focused powerful literacy-influenced GED academic writing lessons. The following sections explain the study's context and design, ending with a description of my own positioning as a researcher.

The Context

I began my preliminary research in the fall of 2013 at Pathways, an adult literacy GED program in Washington, DC, a few months before the rollout of the GED 2014. As a former adult literacy instructor, I had professional connections with this agency; the Executive Director was my former long-time supervisor at another DC-based adult literary organization, and I taught at Pathways during the summers while a graduate student. As part of my preliminary research, I observed and taught GED classes at Pathways in the fall of 2013 and winter of 2014. In addition to observing and teaching classes, I started to develop curriculum by studying the new GED 2014 commercial textbooks, and I also served as a trainer for DC's Adult Literacy Resource Institute, a center providing monthly workshops and professional trainings to GED instructors working in DC nonprofit adult literacy organizations.

Design Experiments

Because I had to first create a powerful literacy-based curriculum in order to learn from it, this study took the form of a design experiment (Brown, 1992; Collins, 1992). Ann Brown, an early pioneer in design experiments, explained that a tension in her work as a researcher was between contributing to a theory of learning and contributing to practice; she wanted to focus on outcomes while also paying as much attention to her learning as a researcher as she designed and studied interventions. Brown (1997) described her evolving approach to design experimentation as an "effort to bridge laboratory studies of learning with studies of complex instructional interventions based on such insights" (p.399). In design experiments, researchers both design and redesign elements in order to study the inner-workings of curricular elements, resulting in the "greater understanding of a learning ecology" (Cobb et al., 2003, p.9).

Study Design

In this design experiment, I used both qualitative as well as quantitative analysis to comprehensively study how my design elements (both planned, as well as emergent) functioned together, allowing me to address all parts of my research questions (Smith, 2006, p.457). The study design consisted of two parts: 1) analysis of data (recorded class lessons, student writings, and pre- and post-assessments) from GED lessons I taught in spring/summer 2014 at Pathways; and 2) analysis of interviews with one student who experienced the lessons, as well as analysis of her post-class writings. The two research questions these combined analyses sought to answer, and the data used to answer them, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Research Questions One and Two

Research Question 1 and 2	Data
1. What pedagogical tensions [*as studied through a Bakhtinian lens*] emerged from the curricular implementation?	• Class Transcripts • Lesson plans • Lesson materials • Student freewrites
2. How did these tensions affect the teaching and learning of academic writing?	• Class Transcripts • Sentence-Combining Pre- and Post-class assessments • Student freewrites • Student pre- and post- essays • Post-Class Student Interviews • Post-Class student writings

The third question this study sought to answer was: How can answers to questions one and two help inform future adult literacy academic writing pedagogy? The answer to this question is informed by my answers to the first two questions and presented in chapter six.

Methods

Part 1: GED Classes

Setting. Research for the first part of this study took place in an adult literacy organization in the Washington, D.C. area with which I had professional connections, providing me with a convenience sample. This program, Pathways (a pseudonym), was located in an urban area with a reported 42% high school dropout rate, an unemployment rate of close to 10%, and a poverty rate of 21%. The racial makeup of the area is 63% Black/non-Hispanic, 30% White/non-Hispanic, 3.2% Hispanic, and 2.5% Asian/PI. At the time of the study, Pathways was a grassroots, volunteer-based non-profit adult literacy program, providing ABE, ELL, and ASE GED classes for over 25 years; however, Pathways became an adult literacy charter school in the fall of 2014.

I piloted my curriculum design in the late spring and early summer of 2014; classes lasted for five-weeks, from May 12, 2014 to June 18, 2014, and lessons were scheduled for three days a week from 9:30 to 11:30 am.

Procedures. The Pathways Program Manager (PM) and staff helped me to recruit and consent students. During the spring of 2014, Pathway advisors identified students who were at or near the academic level (as determined by the standardized assessment Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS)) and who were interested in taking a writing course. These students were invited by their advisors to both enroll in the five-week course and to participate in the study (students were frequently informed that they did not need to consent to the research study in order to participate in the class). Once potential students informed their advisor of their interest, the PM approached each interested student individually to explain the details of the pilot class, the study, and to consent (or not) the students to the research study.

The PM ensured that students understood that they were in no way obligated to have their class participation, tests, or writings available for research purposes; they were also informed that their decision to participate in the research would in no way affect their standing in the program. After students had been encouraged to ask questions about the study, the PM asked them to consent or not.

Participants. A total of eight students participated in the pilot class, but only six consented to allow their work to be used for research purposes. Their names (all pseudonyms) and descriptions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Participants

Names (all pseudonyms)	Description	Educational Level
Phyllis	62 year-old African –American female	Finished 10th grade; taking GED preparation programs off and on for the past year
Zaria	35 year-old African female; recently immigrated to the DC-area	Finished high school and some university courses in Sierra Leone; fluent in English
Tameka	30 year-old African-American female	Completed 10th grade
Samantha	51 year-old African-American female	Completed 7th grade
Mesalit	31 year-old African female from Ethiopia	Completed high school in Ethiopia; not fluent in English
Michael	52 year-old African-American male	Completed 9th grade

Curriculum Elements. Since the impetus for this dissertation study emerged from my practitioner need to know the *how* of powerful literacy (how, specifically, does one develop lessons that help students learn to control academic language while also critiquing and transforming it?), I detail initially planned curricular elements. While the full design was left open to allow for new and/or redesigned elements (as typical of design experiments), the planned elements included free-writes, language/word-focused reading activities, morphology activities, sentence combining activities, and critical language awareness activities, which I describe below.

Freewrites. In order to foreground writing as discovery and keep a students' primary discourse present and productive, planned lessons integrated freewrites. A foundational aspect of the Writing to Learn/Expressivist perspective, freewrites (spontaneous writing) allow students to experience writing as the generation of ideas, allowing them to reflect on class themes and questions by experiencing writing as a not-yet-knowing through the use of their own "alive words" (Pumphrey, 1973).

Readings. In order to intentionally integrate Academic Literacies and SFL perspectives,

readings were selected and used to help foreground identity, as well as academic craft. Planned readings included critical literacy narratives and essays, including: Megan Foss's "Love Letters," Ernie Smith's "Ebonics: A Case Study," and bell hooks' Language: Teaching New Worlds/New Words; these readings were chosen to allow for reflections and discussions about how language -- and the words that make up language -- work in our lives, helping to form our identities. In addition, readings were selected to help focus students on language patterns and the grammatical features of words, word-forms, clauses, sentences and paragraphs -- with the aim of explicitly exposing students to the craft of academic writing.

Morphology activities. To help students *experience* the craft of academic writing, morphology activities were planned in order to provide direct experience with academic words and their range of constructions. Keiffer and Lessaux (2012) explain that while morphological manipulation should be explicitly taught, they also caution against having students memorize word parts. Therefore, instead of asking students to memorize roots, pre-fixes, and suffixes separately, the goal of these activities was to familiarize students with "word families" and to help them practice manipulating words morphologically to produce intended meanings in sentences.

Planned morphology activities consisted of a series of vocabulary mini-lessons designed to teach students to attend to the different forms of words often used in academic writing (interpret, interpreter, interpretation, misinterpret). Each lesson consisted of a word matrix, a chart delineating parts of speech of word forms, and exercises asking students to: 1) practice writing sentences with different word forms; 2) correct for appropriate word forms used in paragraphs (for example, in the sentence "*Conclude are often the most difficult part of an essay to write*," students were asked to identify the verb form "conclude" as an incorrect form and

replace it with the noun form "conclusions"); and 3) combine sentences (for example, students were asked to combine the two sentences: *" She had a strange feeling" and "She could not define the feeling"* into one combined possible sentence, such as *"She had a strange, indefinable feeling"*).

Sentence combining activities. Sentence combining activities were planned in order to merge SFL's metalanguage focus and Academic Language's morphological focus, further helping students practice the craft of academic writing. As Strong (1985) explains, sentence combining gives students "a heightened sense of how prose works on a page" (Strong, 1985, p.334). In contrast to strategy instruction, where adult students are required to complete sequential steps or use positive self-statements such as "I can do this" (Berry and Mason, 2012), sentence combining (which, like strategy instruction, has proven to be empirically effective (Saddler & Graham, 2005; Graham & Perin, 2007)) can apprentice students to invention (Kraemer, 2007), allowing them to practice complex sentence structures in order to better express their complex ideas.

Critical language awareness activities. Planned critical language awareness activities, which merged SFL's metalanguage focus, Academic Language's morphology focus, and Academic Literacies' critical literacy focus, were designed to help students develop as critical readers and writers. Werstch (1991), in his chapter "Narrative as a Cultural Tool," explains how he used "repositional referentiality" as a way to look at patterns of agency in narratives. By coding for noun phrases and dependent and independent clauses in a historical narrative about European settlers, he demonstrated how certain groups gained or lost agency in a narrative. For example, when European settlers were mentioned, "they almost were always given primary status in a clause, a tendency that was markedly less pronounced for Native Americans." (p.94).

The resulting picture, Werstch concludes, represents European settlers as the main force moving the narrative forward.

Influenced by Werstch, I created a critical language awareness activity using McCartney (2014) Washington Post article entitled "Changes in GED Test Make it Harder for Adults to Get High School Credential Needed for Jobs." McCartney writes:

> It's hard to find personal stories more heartening than those of unemployed and low-earning adults struggling in classes for hours each day, month after month, to get a substitute for the high school diploma they never got as teenagers. They wrestle with algebra, photosynthesis and the Bill of Rights for the sake of an entry-level job or a 75-cent raise in their $10 hourly wage.

Based on this excerpt, the activity asks students to list the adjectives (unemployed, low-earning) as well as the verbs (struggling, wrestle) used to describe adult literacy students; it then asks students to 1) reflect on how these words impact the agentic positioning of adult literacy students in this narrative, and 2) rewrite this excerpt using words and grammatical positioning that change the agentic positioning of adult literacy students.

Table 3 identifies specific details of the planned curriculum.

Table 3: Planned Curriculum Description

Activities	Description	Theoretical Perspective
Freewrites	Students spontaneously write at the beginning of each class, as well as after class discussion, to reflect on class themes and emerging questions.	Writing to Learn: *Expressionist*
Readings	Planned readings included critical literacy narratives and essays, including: Megan Foss's "Love Letters," Ernie Smith's "Ebonics: A Case Study," and bell hooks' Language: Teaching New Worlds/New Words and allowing for reflections and discussions about how	Academic Literacies: *Identity*

	language -- and the words that make up language -- work in our lives, helping to form our identities. In addition, readings were selected to focus students on words, word-forms, and clauses within sentences and paragraphs.	SFL: *Functional Grammar*
Morphology/ Sentence Combining Activities	Planned morphology activities consisted of a series of vocabulary mini-lessons designed to teach students to attend to the different forms of words often used in academic writing. Targeted words included *Academy*, *Economy*, *Conclude*, *Define*, and *Analyze*. Activities required students to practice writing different forms of words, to use these words to complete sentence combining activities, and to reflect on what the word forms were doing in each sentence.	Academic Language: *Morphology* SFL: *Functional Grammar*
Critical Language Activities	Planned activities designed to invite and encourage students to explicitly question the connotative meanings in an author's use of words.	Academic Literacies: *Critical Literacy*

Data Sources and Data Collection. I used the following data: class transcripts, pre- and post- sentence combining class assessments, and student writings.

Class transcripts. As I taught the GED spring 2014 writing class, I audio-recorded (with students' and managements' full permission) and transcribed thirteen two-hour classes, resulting in 26 hours of audio-recordings.

Pre- and post-sentence-combining assessments. At the start and end of the five-week course, I asked students to complete sentence-combining activity assessments (Appendix A). These pre- and post- activity assessments asked students to combine short choppy sentences into one longer, more interesting and readable sentence by morphologically manipulating words. For example, students were presented with the three sentences: *1) The campers slept under the sky. 2) The sky looked like ink. 3) Their sleep was deep*, and asked to combine them into one longer sentence by changing the forms of words. One correct combination of these three sentences would be: *The campers slept deeply under the inky sky.* In this sentence, the forms of both deep

and ink are changed to form an adverb (deeply) and an adjective (inky). This measure, based on sentence combining pedagogy that was popular in the 1980s (Farzaneh, 2002; Strong, 1983), was used in my previous work with community college writing students in order to invite students to demonstrate their knowledge of morphologically complex words (Lotas, Tarker, & Stull, 2012) and was used in the present study as a proximal measure of student take-up of morphological instruction.

Student writing assignments. Throughout the class, students wrote free-writes, reflection essays, and multiple drafts of academic essays. All of these were collected for data analysis, serving as more distal measure of the instructional intervention.

Data Analysis. In order to answer my research questions, data analysis consisted of both qualitative and quantitative analyses; qualitative analysis included analysis of class transcripts, while quantitative analysis included analysis of both sentence-combining pre- and post- tests as well as student writings.

Analysis of class transcripts. After transcribing 26 hours of class lessons, I used qualitative content analysis (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1994) to search for themes that connected to my first two research questions. Abbreviated examples of excerpts supporting my primary codes are presented in Table 4. (A longer version is included in Appendix B).

Table 4: Primary Code Examples (Abbreviated)

PRIMARY CODES	Examples
Dialogic	• Discussion of word forms and apostrophes; students discuss their confusion about where to put apostrophe for plural possession. • Discussion of emotions of words: Discussion of the use of ‘Nobody knows’ vs. ‘no one knows” • Discussion of African-American vs. Black • Discussion about starting sentence with ‘because’ • Discussion about nouns as abstract things – Tameka: “*I hope that love is not a noun.”* • Discussion of ‘growth’ as a noun, and ‘growing’ as an adjective

Monologic	• Morphology lessons on Define – ask several known-answers (*What is inapplicably modifying?*) • Reading text: What part of speech (political and demographic)? • Reading article - phrase: hotly contested - "*Now Tell me this, what part of speech is contested? Now what is 'hotly' doing?*/brushed off Mesalit's question: *But means hotly?*
Centrifugal	• Discussion of keeping 'ol ways of talking' – • Phyllis*: Standard English is not the only language - so it doesn't mean that you are not educated...* • Phyllis description of brother and code-switching • Samantha's statement about 'there are many parts of you' • Michael's acknowledgement of Dominant American English (Paris & Alim, 2014)
Centripetal	• Tameka: *"I was just thinking - there have been plenty of movies - and do they talk because of lack of education --"it had me saying "Uh?" It is kinda like - country..."* • Michael: "But that don't sound right" • Class support for strong vs. weak word exercise
Understanding Ideological Becoming	• Samantha: "*I like this class - now it's got me thinking about things I never be thinking about before...* • Samantha's bone connected essay • Phyllis changing her mind: *".. I don't see any reason but now that you all have been putting in your input..."* • Michael: "*I'm not getting it - not like I should be*" • Micheal: *"I find myself talking like a textbook..."* • Michael: *"I wish I could be the teacher..."* • Tameka states that she will *Never* change her mind • Tameka's summary start

To eventually arrive at my primary codes, I first open-coded by hand to make initial sense of the data. Initial coding generated categories relating to my curriculum design, such as *idea-generation, discovery, grammar understanding,* and *identity*. Subsequent first-cycle coding generated new categories, such as *emotions, wanting rules,* and *missed critical opportunities*. In secondary-cycle coding, I used the qualitative analysis software Dedoose to start organizing and categorizing codes at a more abstract level. At this stage, I began to draw on Bakhtinian concepts, using coding categories such as *heteroglossia* and *authoritative discourse* as umbrella codes. For example, I put the codes 'wanting rules' and 'improper' under the code 'authoritative discourse.'

I also incorporated elements from Nystrand and Gamoran's (1991) system for analyzing

classroom discourse. After identifying all classroom discussions in the transcripts, I analyzed these transcript sections using the following codes: *instructor authentic questions* (open-ended questions with no pre-specified answers), *instructor uptake* (the incorporation of a student response into a subsequent question), and *instructor high level evaluation* (the elaboration of a student's answer by building on it in subsequent interactions). In addition, I also used the code *IRE (Initiation, Response, and Evaluation)* to categorize segments where I, as the instructor, asked questions with right/wrong answers. Throughout subsequent secondary-cycle coding, I created analytic memos to reflect on the meaning of codes and the connections among them (Tracy, 2012), such as "Excerpts shows how student beginning to change mind by being open to new understandings. There is a link here to internally persuasive discourse and ideological becoming."

At the end of this stage, I began to organize these codes using a Bakhtinian lens. I used concepts such as *Centrifugal*, *Centripetal*, *Dialogic*, *Monologic*, and *Understanding Ideological Becoming* to arrange and organize the codes created in the first two coding cycles. (An example of a codebook is included in Appendix C). I then used these themes to help me identify and better understand the pedagogical tensions that emerged from the curricular implementation (research question one), as well as how these tensions affected the teaching and learning of academic writing (research question two).

Analysis of sentence combining. In order to analyze the sentence-combining assessments, created sentences were scored using a point scale based on how the kernel sentences were used. Each kernel sentence was given a point for *Meaning Maintained* (for example, does the new sentence still express that the campers were sleeping under the sky? That the sky looked like ink? That their sleep was deep?), a point for *Morphology* (Did the student correctly change a

word into a morphological relative (deeply for deep; inky for ink)?), and a point for correctly spelling the morphologically changed words (for example, did the student write “inky” instead of “inkey”?), and a point for the combined sentence’s overall grammatical correctness. Points for *Meaning Maintained*, *Morphology*, *Spelling*, and *Grammaticality* were added together to arrive at a total score for each sentence and the test as a whole (Appendix D). Because I was the scorer, issues of reliability were not satisfied; however – as part of the previous similar research study – I had years of scoring experience with this exact measure on which estimates of inter-rater reliability were very high, $r = .99$ (Lotas, Tarker, & Stull, 2012), suggesting that the scoring rubric may provide a clear set of criteria for judging the items. Analysis of sentence combining was used as a proximal measure to further help me understand how lessons affected students’ academic writing skills (research question two).

Analysis of student writing assignments. In addition, I analyzed student writings to helped me further answer my first two research questions.

Freewrites. I analyzed student freewrites as I did class transcripts. I first open-coded each freewrite by hand: Initial coding included categories such as *enjoyment of writing*, *writing mistakes,* and *Dominant American English* (Paris & Alim, 2014). I then transcribed these coded excerpts and (as I did with my transcribed classroom data) used the qualitative analysis software Dedoose to start organizing and categorizing these codes at a more abstract level through a Bakhtinian lens. For example, I subsumed the codes *Dominant American English* and *writing mistakes* under an *Authoritative Discourse* umbrella code.

Pre- and Post- Essays. In order to help inform my second research question, I studied students’ first and second drafts of more formalized essay-writing attempts by typing pre- and post- essays as written and then using a Revision Assessment Tool (Table 5) to look for: 1) word

count, 2) number of sentences, and 3) number of morphologically complex words. The main question guiding my analysis of pre- and post- essays was how -- if at all -- did the lessons improve (or not) the quality of students' academic writing? However, since students' more formalized essays varied substantially, it proved difficult to robustly answer this question using an in-depth writing quality metric. Because of this, I decided to create a more distal metric as a proxy for measuring improvements in academic writing quality, measuring writing productivity and syntactic complexity through word count, number of sentences, and morphologically complex words. Although writing productivity, as captured by number of words and sentences used, does not necessarily translate into improved writing, a certain amount of text is needed for idea development, and some research has found a strong correlation between writing productivity and writing quality (Kim, Otaiba, Wanzek, & Gatlin, 2015).

In addition, research has also shown a correlation between syntactic complexity and writing quality (Martinez, 2018). Since the use of morphologically complex words helps students better craft complex sentence patterns, helping them to develop and organize ideas, I compared the number of morphologically complex words used in students' pre- and post- essays as a proxy for measuring syntactic complexity. Specifically, I analyzed how students were using their developing knowledge of morphology to include nominal expressions, allowing for the expansion of information in a clause, as well as to make use of abstraction, allowing for establishment and maintenance of referential connections, building cohesion and linking ideas (Fang, Schleppegrell, & Cox, 2006; Martinez, 2018; Nicholas, 2014; Spycher, 2007).

Table 5: Revision Assessment Tool

Element	Description	Example	Rationale
Word Count	Number of words in an essay		• Increased text can influence idea development • Correlation between writing productivity and writing quality (Kim, Otaiba, Wanzek, & Gatlin, 2015)
Number of Sentences	Number of sentences in an essay		• Increased text can influence idea development • Correlation between writing productivity and writing quality (Kim, Otaiba, Wanzek, & Gatlin, 2015)
Morphologically complex words	Words with multiple layers of affixation, including derivational suffixes	Organizational, predisposition Active, activate, activation (Nagy & Townsend, 2012)	• Use of morphologically complex words can help students better craft complex sentences • Correlation between syntactic complexity and writing quality (Martinez, 2018).

Limitations. There are many limitations with the methodologies used in this first part of the study. Because study participants were recruited from one GED program and self-selected to participate, the study sample was not representative of GED students, limiting generalization. In addition, my role as both practitioner and researcher presented limitations. Since there is such difficulty with understanding events when one is a part of them (Huberman, 1996), the analytical capabilities of the practitioner-researcher must be questioned. Blurring the line between inquiry and practice also impairs validity and generalizability (Cochran-Smith, 2006). Yet, at the same time, my practitioner-researcher role allowed me an insider perspective that is not always

available, allowing for reflective depth and evaluation (Rowe, 2016).

Part II: Case Study

The second part of the study was designed to look more closely at data from a case study, providing a more nuanced understanding of my design experiment.

Procedures. In order to enlist students to participate in interviews after the five-week class, the Program Manager (PM) approached each student individually to explain the study and the researcher's interest in conducting follow-up interviews. The PM ensured that students understood that they were in no way obligated to participate in the interviews and that their decision will in no way affect their standing in the program. After students had been encouraged to ask questions about the study, the PM asked them to consent or not.

Participants. A total of four students consented to be interviewed, and I was able to interview three. Yet, two of the students' interviews were limited to phone interviews and were not in-depth. Only one student, Samantha, was able to meet consistently and for long periods. Because of the in-depth nature of the data I gathered from Samantha, I made the decision to focus my analysis on her as a case study, in order to supplement the group data.

Measures and Data Collection. Samantha and I met a total of seven times in coffee shops, libraries, and in her transitional home during August 2014 to February 2015. Meetings lasted between one to two hours and were audio recorded. Measures included semi-structured interviews and collection of post-class writings and exercises.

Post-class Semi-structured interviews. My interview questions were constructed to explore the impact of the lessons on Samantha as an adult literacy academic writing student. However, in order to encourage Samantha to open up and expand on responses "in a way that is distinctive

from conversation" (Brennar, 2006, p. 261), the structuring of questions was also open-ended. Examples of these open-ended questions included:

- Can you help me understand the type of writing instruction, if any, that you find most helpful?
- Can you help me understand the type of writing instruction, if any, that you find least helpful?
- Can you help me understand your experiences of learning new academic vocabulary words in the spring GED writing class? What did you find most challenging about the vocabulary exercises? The least?
- Can you help me better understand your decision to revise a specific writing assignment?

Post-class writings. In addition to these questions, I also collected the writings and exercises that Samantha had constructed after the end of the class. These included post-class freewrites and finalized versions of 12 of these freewrites.

Data Analysis. Data Analysis consisted of analyses of Samantha's post-class interview transcripts and analysis of her original and finalized post-class freewrites.

Analysis of post-class interviews. Because the strength of the case study is its ability to provide an in-depth, holistic examination of a particular case (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Yin, 2008), I analyzed Samantha's data to present this depth. I first coded the interview transcripts to account for Samantha's life and educational experiences. Emerging codes included work, school, early writing and reading, depression, housing, and spirituality. I then grouped these codes into larger categories to thematically narrate parts of Samantha's life experiences.

I then continued to use qualitative content analysis (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1994) to search for themes, further helping me answer my second research

question. First, similar to analysis of classes, I open-coded by hand. My initial coding stuck closely to the transcription, using many in vivo codes (Saldana, 2009) such as *Changing Me, Letting Words Out, and Words That Just Opened Up a Story.* In subsequent first-cycle coding, I used codes such as *Connection/Disconnection, Unearthing Something,* and *Lacking Critical Awareness*.

As with my analysis of lesson transcripts, I used the qualitative analysis software Dedoose in secondary-cycle coding, where I began to organize and categorize first-level codes at a more abstract level. At this level of analysis, I began to think about my codes through a Bakhtinian lens, using categories such as *"Making Words her Own"* (Warwick, 2006), *Heteroglossia*, and *Authoritative Discourse*. I then began to create umbrella codes based on statement types. For example, I used the codes: *connection statements* (statements where Samantha mentioned a form of the word 'connect"); *I-knew-before statements* (statements where Samantha mentioned that she had known something (such as a word/idea) before her class participation); *I-never-before statements* (statements where Samantha mentioned that she had never done something before class participation); and *it-just-came-to-me statements* (statements where Samantha mentioned something (a word/idea) suddenly appearing for her).

Similar to my coding of class transcripts, at the end of secondary coding cycles, I began to view my codes through a Bakhtinian lens. I used concepts such as *multivoicedness, internally persuasive, ideological becoming,* and *centripetal* to arrange and organize the codes created in the first two coding cycles. For example, under the Internally Persuasive Code, I grouped the umbrella codes described above (*connection* statements, *I-knew-before* statements, *I-never-before* statements, and *it-just-came-to-me* statements). Under the multivoicedness code, I grouped the subcodes: *words talking to her*, *talking to herself*, and *other voices talking to her*.

An example of a codebook is included in Appendix F. I then used these themes to help me better understand how word-focused powerful literacy-based lessons affected Samantha's learning of academic writing (research question two).

Analysis of post-class original and finalized freewrites. In order to analyze Samantha's original and finalized post-class freewrites, I compared the differences in wording, mechanical, and sentence-level changes. I then studied these analytical findings through the thematic categories used in the analysis of Samantha's post-class interviews.

Limitations. Because this part of the study focuses on one student's experiences, the findings are not generalizable to the whole population, or even to the whole group of students (Erikson, 1986; Merriam, 2009); in addition, the popularity and prevalence of interviewing has made some researchers suspect the credibility of interview-based research (Brennar, 2006). However, interviewing techniques can allow researchers to get a glimpse of people's past and present experiences, and the meaning they prescribe to them (Brennar, 2006, p.357).

My Positioning as a Researcher

As an adult literacy instructor for the past 20 years, I am an invested member of the adult literacy field. And (as I wrote in chapter one) I have struggled with balancing the educative task of preparing students -- "welfare" mothers and "disconnected" youth -- for a context-less accreditation measurement tool (the GED) with my commitment to context-based learning that may somehow lead to transformative experiences for both individual students, as well as for society. Because of these experiences, I am, in some ways, an insider (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006). Yet, as a privileged white woman teaching marginalized minority students, I am also very much an outsider, raising important questions. Am I reifying societal power structures

regarding race and class? Do I have the right to represent my students' experiences as different cultural language users (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006)?

Perhaps my greatest learning as an apprenticing scholar and researcher these past many years has been coming to better understand myself, as well as adult literacy programs, as historically situated (Gadamer, 1975). The reverberating past affects the present; all seemingly clean sheets of paper have already been written upon. And although this understanding is sometimes uncomfortably complex, plaguing me with my own conflicts and often "pulling me up short" (Kerdeman, 2003), it has also taught me to persevere in the face of daunting complexity. For in my graduate learning these past years, I have been reminded of how educative spaces may develop expansive learning (Guiterrez et al., 2009, p.224), enabling both past and present voices to timelessly connect to one's own through the written word, allowing for my own continual ideological becoming.

In the following two chapters, I present my research findings and my evolving understandings of my design experiment.

Chapter 4: Bakhtinian Reflections – Part I

Below, I present both qualitative and quantitative findings from a five-week GED academic writing class that respond to research questions one and two: *What pedagogical tensions emerged from the curricular implementation, and how did these tensions affect the teaching and learning of academic writing?* Analytic findings suggest that the two most salient (and related) tensions were between dialogic and monologic discourses and between centrifugal and centripetal forces. These tensions seemed to affect students by both promoting and constraining ideological becoming, as well as by inhibiting and improving academic writing skills.

Participant Reintroductions

In order to keep the participants present in the findings, I describe them in more detail below (all names are pseudonyms):

Phyllis. Phyllis was a 62 year-old African-American female. She finished the tenth grade and had been attending adult literacy programs off-and-on for several years. At the time of the study, she was caring for both her grandson and her ailing mother, requiring her to miss several classes.

Zaria. Zaria was a 35-year-old female from Sierra Leone who immigrated to the United States one year prior to the study. In Sierra Leone, she finished high school and took several university classes. Although English was the official language throughout her schooling, Zaria's 'mother tongue' was Krio, and she is also fluent in French. Zaria's goal was to enroll in an American university to study Business Administration.

Tameka. Tameka was a 30-year-old African-American female. She completed the tenth grade, but she left high school when she became pregnant with her first child. At the time of this study, she had been attending adult literacy programs for six months; her goal was to obtain her A.A. degree. During the study, Tameka was experiencing personal hardships, leading her to miss many classes.

Samantha. Samantha was a 51-year-old African-American female. She left school in the eighth grade. Although she had stopped and started GED classes throughout the years, she had been consistently attending GED classes for the past year. Her goal was to enroll in a four-year university to attain her bachelor degree.

Mesalit. Mesalit was a 31-year-old woman from Ethiopia who has been living in the United States for three years. She attended high school in her country, but did not graduate. Her native language was Amharic, and she was still learning English. Her goal was to enroll in nursing school.

Michael. Michael was a 52-year-old African-American male. Originally from St. Louis, Missouri, he completed the ninth grade at Father Flanigan's Boys Town Boarding School in Nebraska, and he trained and worked as a barber. His primary goal was to attain his GED.

Findings

For five weeks, the above participants and I engaged in a pedagogical experiment, exploring the design, implementation, and redesign of a powerful literacy-based academic writing curriculum. Below, I present the results -- as understood through a Bakhtinian lens -- from this experiment.

Inviting and Resisting Dialogue

While some lessons allowed for authentic dialogue, allowing heteroglossic multivoicedness to influence the growth of learning and understanding, there were also several instances where potential dialogic exchanges were thwarted, leading to missed learning opportunities.

Inviting dialogue. Dialogic exchanges both foregrounded the heterglot word, shaping the curriculum, as well as unearthed linguistic complexity, unearthing the nonbasicness of basic skills.

Foregrounding the heteroglot word, shaping curriculum. The curriculum's focus on words quickly highlighted heteroglossia, as well as the heteroglot word, ultimately directing the curriculum's trajectory. One example occurred early in the study, when Tameka raised a new issue: She did not like the term African-American. "I don't see myself as an African-American, but as a black American," she said. "As of my family history, I don't know. But I know that I am not African. I have been here all along. I want to be called black."

Samantha responded by explaining: "I don't think that 'black' sounds respectful, because it is like an adjective that is describing what you look like." She later added: "Black American is more on your color but African is that you do have a culture. . . but black is just a color; there is no culture, there is nothing behind it." A passionate conversation about race and words followed, which extended through multiple class sessions. The words "Negro," "Colored," and "the N-word" were discussed, eliciting Samantha's statement: "I just think that words -- how funny -- how words can empower, and how some words can give you a certain way of feeling a particular way. So it's very interesting ... words have a lot of emotions and power."

This exchange is interesting since it illustrates how, possibly, an academic language stance and an academic literacies stance were beginning to synergistically work together. Samantha's recognition of the word 'black' as an adjective, coupled with her realization that 'words have a lot of power' was possibly allowing for an emerging deeper understanding of language and its conceptualizing power: The world, as Bakhtin reminds us, is conceptualized in heteroglossic words (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981, p.292).

The class ended by my seeking to refocus the class on academic writing and its unique ability to increase dialogicality (Dysthe, 1996). "If you think there is something wrong with using African-American," I said, "and you want to change it, then let's figure that out. The goal of this class is to get you to use writing to help you figure things out." In response, Tameka announced: "I want to delve deeper into this."

And this she did, engaging other voices outside of the classroom to explore heteroglossia. The next week, Tameka came in early, excited to tell me that she had conducted her own research about people's preference on whether to be called African-American or black on Facebook. I asked her to share with the class. She first explained: "We were reading a passage, and African-Americans kept coming up, and while we were reading what was going through my head was how much I do not like being called an African American." She then shared her Facebook post.

> Okay. This is what I wrote to get their opinion: "Hey, Facebook: I am doing research on something. I want to know if you would rather be called an African-American or a black American. My teacher wants me to do some research on this because I brought it up. The fact that being called an African-American insults me, so please, I would like to know what you think.

Tameka then shared some of her findings with the class. “A lot of people would rather be called black American than African-American,” she said. “One girl did bring up the fact that her parents are from Nigeria, so she considers herself as an African-American, and she brought up a good point.” Tameka continued: “One other person stated that he would rather be called an American -- not an African-American or a Black American -- because it is very offensive both ways.”

Tameka’s sharing ignited a fierce exchange -- proving how challenging orchestrating true Bakhtinian dialogue can be, especially during instances where different backgrounds and opposing opinions and values clashed (Dysthe, 1996). For example, as Tameka shared her responses from Facebook, Zaria, who recently emigrated from Sierra Leone, was staring intently at Tameka, causing Tameka to ask her politely: How do you feel? This engendered a heated exchange between Zaria and Tameka as illustrated in Excerpt 1.

Excerpt 1: So Now You Are Questioning God?

1. **Zaria:** My color is very real in Africa. You need to think, “How did you get that
2. color?”
3. **Tameka:** [quietly] Okay...okay…but ...
4. **Zaria:** That is what you have to think about. I don't think you should be offended
5. by the word African. Because you have the color; you can't change it. God gave
6. you that color, and you can't change it, so now you are questioning God and
7. saying, "God, why did you make me this?" And we don't need to question it -- and
8. this is exactly what you are doing.

10 **Tameka:** Okay, okay.

In this excerpt, it is clear that words have been "shot through with the intentions and actions" of others (Bakhtin, 1986), challenging productive dialogue about them. For example, Tameka's initial attempt to dialogue with Zaria (line 3) was unsuccessful, perhaps preventing her from further engaging with Zaria (line 10).

As the class progressed, it became clearer that Tameka was particularly offended by being asked to label herself on applications; she didn't think that race should be asked on any applications. Michael added: "You know, they have the same thing about asking your religion -- so that could have the same effect. If you are a certain religion your place in society is sorta like ... if you are a Muslim they may look at you as a threat, especially now." Tameka, elaborating on Michael's statement, continued to develop her critical stance: "And that should be offensive too."

This exchange demonstrates how, within an academic writing GED class, classroom dialogue can be used more productively than in previous GED writing classes. For example, instead of having to stop this conversation to refocus on writing "a-happiest-day-of-a-life" GED essay, we were able to use this conversation to create a potential authentic academic focus question: "Should Applications Ask for Race or Religion? Why or why not?"

However, it took another session for the class to agree on whether this should be a focus. In the next class period, Tameka was absent, but we returned to the conversation about words and racial labels. Zaria began class by talking about Tameka; yet, as illustrated in Excerpt 2, this conversation resulted in a more productive dialogue than the initial exchange due to the filter of academic writing.

Excerpt 2: "You Know: Be Passionate But in a Detached Way Too"

1. **Zaria**: She's [referring to Tameka] angry because she doesn't like being

2. called African-American

3. **Michael**: We were born in America but we are still African. We may not

4. speak the language and all that -- all that culture.

5. **Sasha:** So Tameka feels very strongly about this...and I think that these are

6. important things to think about - the question though as an instructor – how

7. can we use this topic to – hmm -- how can we have these conversations and

8. write about topics that we care about without it blowing up?

9. **Zaria:** It is going to spill over into emotional areas, so maybe we should not

10. have the conversation.

11. **Samantha:** Well, maybe we should just agree to disagree, because it is an

12. argument, and if we look at it on paper -- because you know that is life – you

13. are going to have different points of views, but you are going to have to

14. learn as being human beings to control your emotions. You know -- be

15. passionate but detached in a way, too. This is my opinion, but other people

16. have the right to their opinion.

17. **Sasha**: Okay - so you don't need to agree. But you need to keep pushing

18. yourself about why do you believe that, why do you believe that? Not to

19. disprove someone else – but how - If you were to write an editorial, how

20. would you want how would you use - to get other people to agree with you?

21. In an academic essay, what kind of support are you going to use to help

22. convince someone else?

23. **Zaria:** Exactly

24. **Samantha:** But it will be interesting for me to know why - I never, you know

25. - it will be interesting for me to know why I believe it

26. **Zaria:** yeah, make you think outside the box

27. **Samantha:** Yeah

28. **Zaria:** It is about how you express yourself...I think this will be good

Excerpt 2 shows how an SFL perspective may have started to help the class dialogically engage with difficult topics by foregrounding the genre of academic writing and its requirement to *not* just express an opinion but to *also engage* with the difficulty of figuring out the underpinning "whys" of that opinion. As opposed to the previous class when Tameka seemed to shut down after her heated encounter with Zaria, Samantha was able to productively respond to Zaria. In response to Zaria's initial belief that the class should not have the conversation since it "was going to spill into emotional areas" (line 9), Samantha provided a perspective on the argument that combined an Academic Language and Academic Literacies stance by "looking at it on paper" (line 12) in order to allow the class to have this important conversation in a "passionate but detached way" (line 15). This conversation also solidified the class's decision to unanimously direct the curriculum's trajectory to use reading and writing to help us understand the underpinning 'whys' of our opinion to an authentic academic prompt: "Should applications ask for one's race or religion? Why or why not?"

Unearthing linguistic complexity, unearthing the nonbasicness of basic skills. In addition to generating dialogue about the class's driving topic, dialogic instruction was also evident when integrating SFL and Academic Language instruction, allowing students to dialogue about their linguistic understandings. For example, in discussing the purposes of different types of words, such as subordinating conjunctions (*because*, *although*, etc.), learning about the grammar of sentences became less about learning the *basic skill* of identifying complete and

incomplete sentences and more about the learning of the *non-basic skill* of arranging sentences to covertly and overtly convey meaning. For example, during an activity asking students to practice the placement of commas when positioning insubordinate and subordinate clauses, students' misconception about how they could and could not start sentences was revealed. Because students had previously been taught not to start sentences with *because* or *although*, they were hesitant to do so. I authentically responded by sharing my hypothesis that teachers probably taught them this to help them avoid sentence fragments. "But it's really difficult," I explained, "to write an academic essay without having the option of starting a sentence with a subordinating clause. It can help you with conveying different meanings about something."

In trying to explain, I gave the class some examples of how to experiment with starting sentences with different clauses; Phyllis then also began to experiment with clauses as illustrated in Excerpt 3.

Excerpt 3: "Just Trying to Throw a Little Twist"

1. **Sasha** [writing an example sentence on the board]: "Because she was talking too
2. much, the teacher lost her students' attention." But we can also write: "The teacher
3. lost her students' attention because she was talking too much." Now, what if we used
4. "Talking" as the subject? … Hmm … let's see … 'Talking too much'... hmm
5. **Phyllis**: "… made the teacher hoarse." (laughing)
6. **Sasha:** "Great. Let's write that. [Writing on the board:] "Talking too much made
7. the teacher hoarse."
8. **Phyllis**: Okay. What if we wanted to put in, "Also the students were asking
9. too many questions."
10. **Sasha:** Hmm. … Okay. … Let's see

11. **Phyllis:** What if we try: "Talking too much made the teacher hoarse because the

12. students asked a lot of questions." Hmm. … I don't think that makes sense. We

13. should probably change it around or something.

14. **Sasha:** Okay, great. This is exactly what academic writing is -- you have all these

15. ideas, and you want to put all this information into one sentence, but the perfect

16. sentence is not going to come out right away, so you need to play around with it.

17. Okay, let's think. Let's see if this expresses what we want to say: "Because the

18. students were asking a lot of questions, the teacher talked too much and became

19. hoarse"?

20. **Phyllis**: Yeah. I was just trying to throw a little twist. It's kinda throwing it on the

21. students.

22. **Sasha**: Yes, great. By rearranging the sentence like this, it seems to put the blame

23. on the students in getting the teacher to become hoarse.

24. **Phyllis:** Yeah, I'm getting it. I'm getting it.

This excerpt demonstrates how instructor uptake (the incorporation of a Phyllis's response into a subsequent question: "Does this express what we want to say?"), and instructor high level evaluation (the elaboration of a Phyllis's response by building on it in subsequent interactions) can create dialogic instruction in skill-based lessons, better helping students to understand the craft of academic writing. For example, Phyllis may have been starting to understand (line 24) – through an SFL perspective -- that learning how to academically use and punctuate subordinate clauses was more than learning the basic skill of how to avoid sentence fragments; it was also about learning the non-basic skill of how to use clauses and punctuation to convey a particular relational idea, allowing a writer to use clauses to "throw a little twist" (line

20) in a sentence, subtly changing the agentic positioning of actors and their actions within a sentence (lines 20 to 23).

Dialogic instruction of sentence-level skills also unearthed how heteroglossia affects students' grammatical understandings, especially in relation to abstract nouns. For example, when working on a morphology activity (Appendix G) with different forms of the word *academy* (noun: *academy*; adjective: *academic*; adverb: *academically*), students were asked to combine sentences by selecting the best form of the word, as illustrated in Excerpt 4.

Excerpt 4: I Hope That 'Love' is Not the Noun

1. **Sasha** [reading from the exercise]: *After attending the program, the students'*
2. *[blank] work improved*." What should be in the blank?
3. **Zaria:** *Academic*.
4. **Sasha**: Great. Why *academic*?
5. **Zaria**: Because it's … it's an adverb describing *work*.
6. **Sasha**: Okay, it is describing *work*, but *work* is what part of speech here?
7. **Zaria**: *Work* is a verb. No, wait, it's a noun?
8. **Sasha**: Excellent. It depends on how it is being used. A lot of times you know
9. what sounds right, but I'm asking you to go back and figure out why. What are
10. the rules that you are using? . . .
11. **Tameka**: So this is what I want to work on -- the difference between an
12. adjective and an adverb, because I figure it out just by how it sounds, like you
13. said, but I want to know why.
14. **Sasha**: Okay, good. Let's start with a noun; let's define what a noun is.
15. What would you say?

16. **Tameka**: Okay. A noun, that one is easy: it's a person, place, or thing.

17. **Sasha**: Okay, great. So it can be easy, but it can be complicated. Give me

18. an example of a noun.

19. **Tameka**: A man, a house, a person, a purse, a rock

20. **Sasha**: Now, use one in a real simple sentence for me.

21. **Tameka**: Okay. Hmm … "The house was big."

22. **Sasha**: Great. So *house* is the noun. Now what if I said: "The work was hard."

23. What part of speech is *work*?

24. **Tameka**: It's *not* a noun. . .

25. **Zaria**: No, it is a noun. . .

26. **Sasha**: It is a noun. Now, why did you think that it wasn't?

27. **Tameka**: It's not a person, place, or thing.

28. **Sasha**: But *work* is actually a thing. It's an abstract thing, the same thing as

29. "love" – "The love was strong."

30. **Tameka** [repeating the sentence]: "The love was strong." So what is the noun?

31. **Sasha** [repeating the question]: So what is the noun?

32. **Tameka**: I hope that *love* is not the noun! [class laughs]

33. **Sasha**: But it is! [also laughing] Why do you hope that it's not?

34. **Zaria:** It's the same as "The man was strong."

35. **Tameka**: It's just weird.

Although this excerpt began with a traditional initiation-response-evaluation (IRE) pedagogical approach, with the teacher asking a known-answer question within an inauthentic, fill-in-the-blank activity, it also demonstrates some authentic dialogue. For example, Tameka

was able to reflect on both her implicit understanding of how to grammatically label words: "I figure it out just by how it sounds" (line 12), as well as on her need for more explicit knowledge: "but I want to know why" (line 13). In addition, this excerpt also supports Bakhtin's claim that words are far more than neutral dictionary definitions with defined parts of speech. Conceptually understanding nouns – especially within an academic context - requires more than memorizing a noun's definition: a person, place, or thing. It also requires understanding nominalization, a crucial component in comprehending and writing academic texts (Fang, Schleppegrell, & Cox, 2006). The word *love*, for example, is more commonly used as a verb -- a doing. Yet, love can also act as a type of nominalization: a non-zero-derived de-verbal noun (Hartnett, 1998; To, Le, & Le, 2013), as in "The love was strong."

Most importantly, perhaps, this excerpt also emphasizes the Bakhtinian link between language and life, as well as the persistent challenge of this link in the teaching and learning of academic grammar: Understanding grammatical form can be as difficult as trying to understand humanness. Throughout classes, Tameka often talked about her three children and how much she *loved* them. "I even sit and think sometimes," she explained, "that they just don't know exactly how strong my feelings are for them. How do you put that into words for them to understand?" This question likely impacted Tameka's confusion about how 'love' could be a noun. Learning that the word 'love' -- the relative best word to convey her feelings for her children -- is the grammatical equivalent of the word "purse" -- a thing (line 19) shoved in the seat next to her -- may have been difficult for her to accept, as illustrated when Tameka expresses her "hope" that love is *not* a noun (line 32).

Resisting dialogue. However, despite evidence of genuine Bakhtinian dialogue during instruction, there were also several instances of more traditional monologic instruction --

especially when foregrounding ‘word-doings’ in an SFL/academic language perspective. This created lessons that focused on answers, de-emphasizing understanding and perpetuating banking pedagogy.

Focusing on answers, perpetuating banking pedagogy. In particular, parts of lessons were sometimes reduced to IRE exchanges, where I, as the instructor, repeatedly asked questions with yes/no answers, avoiding uptake or high-level evaluation, and shutting down dialogue and the chance for greater learning opportunities. For example, after completing several grammar and morphology exercises, students were asked to use their knowledge of the “doing” of clauses and words to help them comprehend complex texts. In response to the discussion about whether applications should ask for race or religion, I had compiled different readings to help the class think through the question. The three readings included: the op-ed piece “Racial Privacy Initiative: An Invitation to Racial Discrimination,” by Andy Barlow (2002); a New York Times article titled “Black, White, Asian? More Americans Choose All of the Above” by Susan Saulny (2011); and the scholarly article “Counting and Classifying by Race: The American Debate,” by Mary C. Waters (2008). This last article was particularly complex and dense, and I was focused on helping students use their developing knowledge of SFL/Academic Language word-doings to help understand the points that the author was making, as illustrated in Excerpt 5.

Excerpt 5: What Part of Speech is Blood?

1. **Tameka** (reading): “Long ago the nation saw itself in more hues” – “hues,” is that
2. right?
3. **Sasha**: Yup.
4. **Tameka**: “… in more hues than black and white. For people who had a

5. per [stumbling over word].

6. **Sasha**: “Perceptible.”

7. **Tameka**: “… a perceptible trace of African blood. . .”

8. **Sasha**: Okay. Now tell me what part of speech is “perceptible” in here.

9. **Michael**: Um, that’s got me stuck.

10. **Tameka** (softly): An adjective.

11. **Sasha:** I heard it here. (Walking over to Tameka and Phyllis.)

12. **Tameka**: An adjective?

13. **Sasha:** Great. Describing what?

14. **Tameka:** Um, “trace” … which is a noun?

15. **Sasha:** Now what is African in that sentence?

16. **Mesalit:** An adjective.

17. **Phyllis:** Wait, no, “African” -- it's a proper noun, isn't it?

18. **Sasha:** Okay, let's look at it again. [Reading the last part of the sentence:]

19. “…which was for people who had any perceptible trace” – “perceptible,”

20. adjective, and “trace” a noun – “of African blood.” So what part of speech is

21. blood?

22. **Phyllis:** A noun.

23. **Sasha:** So what kind of blood is it?

24. **Phyllis:** It's African. Describing the blood; the kind of blood. Ahh.

Since the main purpose of this lesson excerpt was to help students develop understanding of what words are doing in sentences, this was all I focused on. For example, in asking Tameka to identify that the word *trace* was being used as a noun instead of a verb (line 13), I was hoping

she would realize that the word *perceptible* (a more common academic than everyday word) was acting as an adjective (line 9). In addition, in encouraging Phyllis to identify *African* (line 22) as an adjective describing the noun *blood* (rather than a proper noun as she had originally thought), my goal was to help her and the class better comprehend the main theme of the passage: the historical legacy of classifying people by blood percentages.

And while Phyllis's response of "Ahh" (line 22) shows that she may have been beginning to understand, there was no level of uptake or high-level evaluation of her response to help deepen her understanding. I also ignored Michael's response of "that's got me stuck" (line 5), as well as failed to acknowledge Mesalit's answer (line 16).

In addition, my focus on having students *tell* me the answer during reading comprehension word-doing activities also limited dialogic learning opportunities, as evident in Excerpt 6.

Excerpt 6: It is also describing changes; the kinds of changes, right?

1. **Sasha**: Now - I want us to focus on this sentence: "*But demographic and political*
2. *changes have begun to highlight this issue, and whether and how we classify people*
3. *by race is increasingly being debated*." So this sentence is part of the thesis statement
4. and she [the author] packs a lot of information into this. So let's see – to try to
5. understand, let's break it down. What part of speech is "changes"?
6. **Michael:** Noun. It's a noun.
7. **Sasha:** Good. Then what about "political"?
8. **Tameka**: An adjective, because it is describing a noun.
9. **Sasha**: What about "demographic"?
10. **Michael:** It's also an adjective. It is also describing changes; the kind of

11. changes, right?

12. **Sasha**: Yes, yes. Great.

My goal in this teaching excerpt was to help students understand the first part of the author's thesis statement by focusing on the word *change,* which is not acting as a verb but rather as an abstract noun, a thing: *Something* has highlighted the issue of race classification. This something: *Changes* (a noun). What kinds of changes have highlighted the issue of race classification?: *political* (adjective) and *demographic* (adjective). Although lines 6 to 11 suggest that Michael and Tameka may have been beginning to understand how *what* words are doing in a sentence can help with understanding what the thesis statement is doing, my questioning and evaluation style (line 5-12) may have limited students' potential understanding of the sentence as a whole. Instead of treating student response as a thinking device, I treated student response as a transmission mechanism (Applebee et al., 2003), creating Freire's distained banking model of education.

Hosting Centrifugal but Maintaining Centripetal Forces

While lessons provided space for centrifugal forces to reside, the hierarchizing function of centripetal forces often usurped this space. Authoritative discourse, such as a standard GED textbook advising students to "elevate one's language when writing" (Sharpe & Reddy, 2014), seemed to perpetually whisper in the background, making it difficult to integrate a critical literacy perspective.

Hosting centrifugal forces. In order to incorporate an Academic Literacies stance, class readings and activities both started and ended with a focus on language and identity, eliciting support for 'Non-standard' English and the importance of code-switching.

Defending 'non-standard' English. The first week of class focused on readings by Foss, hooks, and Smith, using these readings as a lens to analyze some textbooks' covert language ideologies. For example, early in the session, we compared the GED description of Trait 3 (Trait 3 is about how well one uses Standard English -- or the English that educated people use in formal situations) with the following bell hooks' passage:

> For in the incorrect usage of words, in the incorrect placement of words, was a spirit of rebellion that claimed language as a site of resistance. Using English in a way that ruptured standard usage and meaning so that white folks could not understand black speech made English into more than the oppressor's language.

I then asked the class to analyze the description of Trait 3 through hook's statement, using the guiding question: *Would bell hooks agree that if you don't use Standard English, you are uneducated?* The class immediately defended the idea that different styles of English originated due to the need to connect to heritage, survival, and emancipation. Michael, for example, explained: "We keep our old ways -- us African people -- as a reminder that we were once captured or kidnapped into this country so we developed a different style." And Samantha explained that people needed to invent their own language, "and that is pretty smart to figure out: Okay, I am going to invent this so that you can't understand what I am saying."

Evidence from classes suggested – on the surface - that students did not submit to a hierarchical system of language. For example, students likened the difference between using Standard English and Non-Standard English to a simple stylistic difference. To illustrate this idea, Phyllis brought up her brother. She first explained that "He [her brother] got out, thank God, and went to school and he speaks very well and he makes a lot of money." She then used him as an example of someone who can easily adapt his way of speaking, explaining: "When he

comes to visit us, he goes 'Hey fat lady, what's up?' But when he talks on the phone, he says, 'Ahh, yes. I think we can do that' -- all proper-like. So you kinda have to adapt, and it's okay."

Samantha continued the theme that "it's okay" to adapt one's way of speaking in different environments by sharing:

Excerpt 7: We are not betraying ourselves

1. We are humans and we have so many different parts of ourselves -- there is not
2. just one part. So at home you may not have any clothes on but you know that you
3. can't go on the street without any clothes on, and you don't feel like you are
4. betraying yourself when you put your clothes on. … So it is funny that we put
5. labels on ourselves and we say, 'Why you talking like that.' No, that's just one
6. part of me. We are not betraying ourselves.

In some ways, these statements suggest that students seemed to acknowledge that code-switching was an everyday part of their lives, and there seemed to be a neutrality about it; changing words and language in different situations was the same as wearing different kinds of clothing (line 4).

Maintaining centripetal forces. However, within these statements, there were also judgments, maintaining a centripetal force. These judgements, reinforced by the authoritarian word of the GED textbook, as well as possibly by the framework's Academic Language perspective, seemed to reify 'standard' English, inhibiting critical literacy.

Reifying 'standard' English, inhibiting critical literacy. Discussions of adapting one's language often seemed to side with a more centripetal force. For example, in a continuation of our class discussion about whether there was a connection between how people use words and being educated or not, Samantha explained: "The way that you feel about some of the words that you hear in your mind … [you know that these are] not the words that you should be speaking --

you have to learn how to critique it or turn it off a little." This statement seems to complicate the idea that changing one's words is just like changing clothes; instead, it seems to suggest an internalized centripetal force that has the power "to critique some of the words in one's mind."

While on the surface, students seemed to accept and even celebrate non-Standard English ways of speaking and writing, there seemed to be a legitimizing of Standard English as the 'proper' way to speak. This is exemplified in the brief conversation between Michael and Tameka (Excerpt 8) during a subordinating-conjunction activity when Tameka wanted to use 'if' instead of 'when' to complete a sentence.

Excerpt 8: That's poor English

1. **Michael**: 'If.' That don't make no sense; that is poor English. ...
2. **Tameka**: But it makes sense to me.
3. **Michael:** I disagree. That's poor English.

The power of centripetal forces is also illustrated in the Excerpt 9.

Excerpt 9: Speak like you have some sense

1. **Samantha**: But you can't go into a job and talk like you are on the street with
2. your street friends
3. **Phyllis:** Thank you! … You need to look 'em in the eyes and you start talking
4. properly … and shake their hand and then speak like you have some sense. Then
5. maybe once you get the job then you can speak like you normally speak. You
6. speak like you regularly speak, they not going to hire you. ... I mean come on!
7. **Samantha**: Yes, yes. Exactly!

As both Samantha and Phyllis imply, 'street-talk,' even if it is how one 'regularly speaks,' (line 6) is improper (line 4).

Centripetal forces also lived in students' freewrites, residing most strongly in Mesalit's. For example, when asked to reflect on the concepts of 'standard' and 'nonstandard' English,' she wrote: "English language is the most important in the world because it is international for all the world;" when asked to reflect on the meaning of 'multidialectical,' she wrote: "I exemplify multidialectical by listening, reading, and writing. I speak and follow the grammar and correct word." These centripetal reflective responses help explain, perhaps, why Mesalit primarily made class contributions during grammar-focused lessons (as is evident in excerpt 5, line 16).

The lurking of centripetal, authoritative forces made it difficult to integrate critical language activities -- activities meant to encourage students to explicitly question the status quo in terms of social justice and equality (Macrine, 2009). For example, my attempt to have the class analyze the GED's 'Strong vs. Weak Words' exercise met with little success. As described at the end of Chapter 1, this exercise asked students to use precise words and avoid slang: instead of using "off-the-chain," use "out-of-control" and "wild.") This is illustrated in Excerpt 10:

Excerpt 10: It does show weak and strong words and this is very helpful to know.

1. **Sasha**: So, what do you think Smith or Foss would say about these directions and
2. examples?
3. **Samantha:** I think in the beginning it would have been a conflict -- and maybe
4. still for Foss - because it seems like Smith would have adapted and would have
5. roll … hm … went with it. I was beginning to say rolled with it [she and class
6 laugh]. It seems that Foss still has the perception of her old self and she is still a
7. little bit afraid of losing it.
8. **Sasha**: [After a long class silence] Well, what do you all think about this? Do
9. you think that this might be helpful to students?"

10. **Zaria**: "I think yes, because it does show weak and strong words and this is very

11. helpful to know. Yes, it is always helpful."

In bringing this activity to students' attention, I was attempting to unveil and complicate the covert language ideology within a GED commercial textbook. (As discussed in Chapter 1, the covert ideology that Standard English is an elevated language used by educated people.) Like many other past and present Freirian-inspired adult literacy educators, I was attempting to help my students become critically conscious of the social forces working on them, enabling them to reflect on these forces and transform them (Friere & Macedo, 1987); and, also like many of these educators, my efforts failed.

While the curriculum invited and hosted centrifugal forces, centripetal forces – forces dictating how someone spoke (either properly or with poor English), as well as which words were strong and which were weak – maintained its hold. This seems particularly clear in Samantha's correction of her own "ways with words" in Excerpt 10 (line 5-7); she began to express her point with the phrase "roll with it," only to laugh at herself, beginning her point again with "went with it." Without reflecting on how to productively counterbalance the perpetual presence of authoritative discourse, students, such as Zaria, will continue to express that GED commercialized lessons are "very helpful" (line 11), contributing to the proliferation of such texts and to the potential proliferation of adult literacy binaries.

Fostering and Constraining Ideological Becoming

Lessons both helped to foster as well as to constrain ideological becoming, with students both accommodating and resisting different voices and "otherness." For two students, Phyllis and Samantha, the curriculum's dialogic invitations seemed to help foster ideological becoming;

however, for two other students, Michael and Tameka, the curriculum's maintenance of centripetal forces seemed to possibly constrain ideological becomings.

Fostering ideological becoming. In order to help inform the discussion and writing of whether applications should ask for race or religion, I included different readings, such as Water's (2008) text "Counting and Classifying by Race: The American Debate," which argues that collecting racial and ethnic statistics can help to document and combat racial discrimination (uncovering gerrymandering, for instance). Once we had finished some of the readings, I brought the class back to our focal question (*Should applications ask for race or religion?*), asking students to return to their original free-write essays. All students had originally agreed that applications should not ask for race or religion. Phyllis, for example, initially said: "I don't see any reason. You know, I think it is discriminatory."

However, as we were dialogically reading and unpacking Waters' complex text, Phyllis said: "But you know, this is making me change my mind." That prompted the following conversation, as illustrated in Excerpt 11.

Excerpt 11: It's not racist anymore: demographics and dealing with different things

1. **Phyllis:** Things that we have been reading and what we have been discussing
2. have made me change my mind. I don't think it's really racial anymore. … I think
3. it has its own meaning. I started thinking this [that asking for race is
4. racial discrimination] at the beginning, but now that you all have put your input
5. and meaning in … it has … I'm starting to think that it's not racist anymore …
6. demographics and dealing with different things. It may not be racist, but that's
7. just my opinion now.

8. **Sasha:** And this is such a great example of academic writing and research. You

9. may change your mind once you start thinking and getting more information …

10. and that's one of the points of why we are doing this.

In this excerpt, we see that Phyllis is changing her mind about what she originally thought by combining many voices within (Matusov, 2011, p.115): "But now that you all have put your input and meaning in…I'm starting to think that it is not racist anymore." Likewise, Samantha was also integrating different voices with her own as evident in Excerpt 12, illustrating how tension between new voices can create new meaning.

Excerpt 12: Your Neck Bone Connected to Your Other Bone

1. **Samantha**: You are classified from the cradle to the grave -- this is so true. So
2. you really can't ever get away from it. I think it is important to have these
3. classifications. Reading -- I know a lot of people get fixed on why we shouldn't say
4. what race we are and why should it matter. But in life a lot of different things matter
5. for so many different reasons. Reasons that you probably never thought of. It is all
6. connected -- almost like when people say "Your neck bone connected to your other
7. bone -- that bone connected to some other bone." This is so true in life. It is all
8. connected. It is connected to research, because men and women are different;
9. different races are different. A lot of African-American women get Lupus. Men have
10. heart attacks differently than women do. So there are so many different things … so
11. I think we are going to have to -- but to make sure we are not crossing anyone's
12. rights. But sometimes we may have to a little bit because life is so interconnected
13. and so complicated. It is not black and white.

I include this long monologic excerpt because it illustrates how Samantha's understanding of the article prompted her to think aloud, changing not just her mind but also her writing, supporting Dysthe's (1996) argument that the interaction of classroom discourse and writing may increase dialogicality and multivoicedness. For example, Samantha was able to use her insights -- her insights that "it is all connected" (lines 8 and 9) and that this interconnectedness "is so complicated" (lines 12 and 13) -- to completely restructure her second written response to the question: *Should Race or Religion Be Asked on Applications? Why or Why Not?* Samantha's first response is captured in Excerpt 13.

Excerpt 13: Samantha's Original Essay

1. Should applications ask for one's race or religion? My main argument is that it
2. shouldn't be. The reason why I believe it shouldn't be is race we live in a multi-
3. culture [sic] world and everyone deserves to get a fair deal. Their [sic] is no
4. reason for race or religion on performance.

Samantha's original essay illustrates that she initially believed that there was no reason to ask for race or religion on applications because we live in a multicultural society and "everyone deserves to get a fair deal," (line 3) implying, perhaps, that asking for race or religion on applications prohibits a "fair deal" for some. However, the start of her second essay shows how she incorporated class readings and discussions -- as well as her own insights about the connectedness of things -- to change the content and stance of her text. She wrote:

Excerpt 14: Samantha's Revised Essay

1. In life, we are all connected in so many different ways. The human body has
2. different distinct parts, however they are all connected. For example, if you
3. have a toot[h]ache, your ear hurts. These many connections in life are

4. complicated and puzzling. One of our major questions of this century is
5. whether we should ask a person['s] race on documents and applications. I am
6. taking time to examine this question for myself. At first I said we shouldn't ask a
7. person['s] race, that is not necessary. After reading and some research on the
8. matter, I am changing my mind.

As Excerpt 14 illustrates, Samantha took her idea of bone connectedness (from Excerpt 11, lines 6-7) and expanded on it, making the point that even when things are 'distinct' and don't seem like they should be connected -- such as a toothache and an earache -- they actually are (line 2-3). She then takes this insight and applies it to her new awareness: that asking for race on an application might also be similarly connected to a distinct something else (lines 5-6), setting up her essay to allow her to possibly document how she is changing her mind (line 8). This is very different from her original essay, in which she immediately used writing to tell her answer (Excerpt 13, lines 1-2) instead of using writing to explore an answer.

Constraining ideological becoming. As Bakhtin (1981) acknowledges, appropriation is not the same for all, and "many words resist while others remain alien" (Bakhtin & Holquist, p.292). While both Phyllis and Samantha demonstrated an openness to the Bakhtinian other, thereby facilitating ideological becoming, both Michael and Tameka demonstrated a resistance to the Bakhtinian other. In reflecting on Michael's and Tameka's resistance, I wonder if both were possibly equating 'becoming other' with becoming the centripetal other, rather than with becoming other than the other.

Michael. Michael seemed to struggle with negotiating his past/present identity with an academic writing identity (Burgess & Ivanic, 2010). In studying Michael's reaction to lessons, he seemed to be experiencing extreme conflict about who he was and who he could become as an

academic writer. Several of his statements suggested he felt incapable. For example, during a class break he told me that he was "not getting it - not like I should be. I think I should be on prompt, but who am I? I'm not a writer." And during a class discussion, he shared a glimpse of a past identity that school had constructed for him:

Excerpt 15: No one ever told me that I was good at anything

1. What I'm trying to say - my memory - I'm not familiar with writing like this. . .
2. [in school], they just tested us and only feedback was my grades and
3. everything was a C; no one ever told me that I was good at anything.

But there was also evidence that he enjoyed experimenting with language and writing, and that he may have thought of himself as capable. For example, in a freewrite asking him to reflect on what he likes/dislikes about writing, Michael wrote: "What excites me is my friends would appreciate my writing. They would encourage me to use [it] to exemplify what goes on in my head."

Michael's possible enjoyment of and capacity for writing was also evident in class. For example, during a morphology activity on using different forms of the word *define* in sentences, Michael volunteered to share his sentence, which was unique: "The exclusive accounts of the nature of the crime defines the nature of the crook." After the class and I expressed our admiration for such an interesting sentence, Michael explained, "Yeah, I didn't want to be real simple." And when I asked him to say more about what he meant by "*exclusive crime*," a spirited class discussion occurred, engaging other students to think of examples of an exclusive crime that could define the nature of the crook. For instance, Samantha excitedly said: "Oh. I have an example – the crook took all his clothes off – for example, a robber who robs a house proudly naked," which further engaged the class in a lively discussion of a proudly naked robber.

Part of this conflict between not-being and being capable as an academic writer may have had to do with his idea that being capable would cause him to become the centripetal other. For example, as we were trying to unpack Waters' complex thesis statement ("*But demographic and political changes have begun to highlight this issue, and whether and how we classify people by race is increasingly being debated*"), Michael expressed how hard he thought the reading was, stating: "I mean, this isn't just on-the-corner talk." Although he, the class, and I all laughed at this 'joke,' Michael's comments about words and language became more serious. Halfway into the class, Michael suddenly stated: "This class is getting me to talk like a textbook. . . people are going to be thinking that I am talking from above." During the same lesson, he interrupted the class conversation and said the following:

Excerpt 16: Can I ask you a question?

1. Can I ask you a question? I mean, I was wondering how you think someone
2. could use all this … um… I wonder … um … we are not -- it is just giving me
3. ideas about not speaking right. I mean my only goal is to graduate. To get out of
4. here in one piece.

At the same time, however, Michael also made comments suggesting that he might want to do more than "get out of here in one piece" (line 3 – 4); he might also want to explore an otherness. For example, Michael often commented on how 'knowledgeable' he thought I was, and he made comments that he also wanted to be knowledgeable. "You know," he told me during one class, "you work so well -- and I'm learning, right, but sometimes I'm thinking - gosh, I wish I would have said that." He also shared: "I wish I could be the teacher -- if I learned well enough. 'Cause it must be fun --it must be fun -- it must be fun challenging other people, making other people challenge their abilities -- you know -- and trying to teach knowledge."

Michael's conflicting statements point to the difficulty of learning in an academic context when a student sees identity as static, rather than dynamic; this is especially true for students possibly more affected by the identity constraints of centripetal forces. In their study of African-American male high school students, Nasir, Snyder, & Shah (2013) found that -- due to pervasive racial storylines -- their study's participants had less freedom to experiment with identities, especially an academic one. This may have also been true for Michael as a young high school student in the 1970s (he completed only 9th grade), making him less likely to engage identities as an adult literacy student and more likely to struggle (painfully, at times) with ideological becoming.

Tameka. Unlike Michael, Tameka did not seem conflicted about who she was and who she could become; instead, she seemingly had a strong sense of her identity and she wanted to use learning to continue confirming her identity, constraining her learning and ideological becoming.

For example, after Tameka shared her dislike of the term African American, I asked her to use writing to help her explore the 'why' of her feelings, mentioning that her mind might change as she was writing. "*Never*," Tameka emphatically responded. In addition, as Tameka was sharing her Facebook findings with me (responses to her racial labeling-preference inquiry), she repeatedly pointed out all the responses that agreed with her. "See," she explained (referring to a post), "that was one of the points that I was making – my point – they are thinking like me." When I asked her to reflect more on this by stating: "So then the question is – especially in academic writing – is okay, what does that mean that they are thinking like me? You are always…," she excitedly interrupted by sharing a response from her sister (who was thinking like Tameka).

Tameka's preference for people 'thinking like her' seemed to limit her openness to other ways of thinking, limiting her chances to experience productive dialogue and ideological becoming in an academic setting. For example, after reading Andy Barlow's (2002) op-ed piece "The Racial Privacy Initiative: An Invitation to Racial Discrimination," which argued against California's 2002 Racial Privacy Initiative Ballot, I asked the class to write a summary. After we unpacked the author's claim that *not* asking for race would result in racial discrimination, Tameka became confused, asking: "So he is saying that they ask for your race in order to *stop* racial discrimination? How?"

After clarifying the author's claim -- a claim about the discriminatory dangers of pretending to live in a color-blind society by not asking for race on applications -- I wrote a summary template on the board. As students started writing, I noticed that Tameka was just staring at her paper; she wasn't writing. I went over to help her, and we had a whispered exchange (as illustrated in Excerpt 19).

Excerpt 17: While reading this, I was just thinking. . .

1. **Tameka**: (whispering) While reading this, I was just thinking ... about a month
2. ago, I went to an open interview at McDonald's . . . And I didn't get a call back
3. and neither did another Black girl. So this just made me think, were we not good
4. enough to work there?
5. **Sasha:** So do you think that there was some sort of racial discrimination going
6. on?
7. **Tameka**: I do believe that, yes, and just reading this makes me think that there is
8. racism going on and it's more about what I look like.

After discussing her experiences at the McDonald's interview, I tried to refocus her on the summary activity. At the end of class, Tameka gave me what she had started, but she asked if she could finish it at home. When I looked at the beginning of her essay, she seemed to have used the summary to continue advocating for her wish for racial invisibility, even though Barlow's article was in direct opposition to this wish.

For example, Tameka wrote: "The author. . . believes it [asking for race on applications] would discourage discrimination because he feels that it will not achieve what most Americans wish for which is to have the color of their skin not to mean anything." However, the article was not about how Americans wish for "the color of their skin not to mean anything;" rather, it was about the dangers of pretending to live in a color-blind society and the continued need to ask for race on applications in order to discourage racial discrimination. Because Barlow's article conflicted with Tameka's own strong opinion (that applications should not ask for race), Tameka's understanding of it may have been compromised; in addition, her continued engagement with Barlow's and other articles may also have been compromised, as this was the last piece of writing she gave me.

As an instructor, I struggled with Tameka's resistance to other ideas, and I was unsure of how to best help her become more dialogically open. Unlike Michael, who seemed conflicted about learning and using "textbook' words, Tameka seemed to be quite open to learning new words and grammatical forms; she often got excited when recognizing different parts of speech: "Yeah - I'm catching on, I'm catching on." And she continued to engage with the 'weirdness' of grammar. For example, after a more dialogic SFL/Academic Language activity, Phyllis shared: "You know, it all seems to boil down to what the word is doing…yeah..," to which Tameka

responded: “Yeah – that’s so weird – that’s so weird...my head is exploding!” She also repeatedly stated that the class was helping her – “…actually, like, this helps in everyday life.”

Yet, perhaps like Michael, Tameka (at this specific time in her life), may have been acutely aware of centripetal forces, causing her to create her own protective internal authoritative discourse. In doing this, she was possibly better able to contend with an external authoritative discourse, which was forcing her to uncomfortably identify herself, as well as possibly keeping her from a McDonald’s job.

Unfortunately, a powerful-literacy GED design cannot be powerful enough to contend with these forces; and -- upon deeper reflection -- my goal as Tameka’s instructor was not to get her to shed her own protective authoritarian cloak. Yet, was there a way to help her fashion a more porous cloak? In allowing for porousness in an academic setting, I might have better supported Tameka to *try on* the role of a Dostoevsky character -- a character (as described by Bakhtin (1984)) who is left unfinalized. Without this porousness, Tameka may only experience the role of a Bakhtinian monologic character -- a limited character who “cannot cease to be [herself]” (Bakhtin, 1984, p.52), disempowering her becoming other than the other in a GED academic writing learning space.

Inhibiting and Improving Academic Writing

Since one of the goals of this design experiment was to help adult literacy GED students develop academic writing craft, helping them to academically represent their thinking as well as pass gate-keeping points (Delpit, 1993), student writing was analyzed to gauge academic writing improvement. Unfortunately, for some students, the class’s maintenance of a centripetal force may have inhibited their academic writing. Other students, however, improved their academic

writing skills, as evidenced by analyses of sentence combining pre- and post-assessments and essay revisions.

Inhibiting academic writing. Tameka, Michael, and Phyllis had little writing to assess. Although Tameka wanted to work on her summary at home, she never turned anything in. Unlike her freewrites, as well as her Facebook posting -- in which Tameka quickly used writing to share her opinions and elicit opinions from others -- Tameka was slow to get started on writing more formalized essays, and her summary start was the last piece of writing that she handed to me. Similarly, Michael rarely turned in any of his more formal essays. When I asked Michael if I could collect his essay on "Should Applications Ask for Race or Religion," he told me that he was ashamed of what he had written and wanted to start again. "I feel ashamed of what I wrote, Sasha, I'm ashamed of it."

In addition, Phyllis had little academic writing to assess. Like Michael, this may have had to do with feeling 'ashamed' about her writing, as evidenced in her freewrites. For example, she wrote: "I am so afraid of writing and trying to put my words together so people can understand what I [am] writing. I really thought this was going to be a simple writing class. Then maybe I could get more practice in over the summer maybe better get better at what I'am doing." And on another, she wrote, "I am much more aware of the way in which I write, and the mistakes that I make. Really feel as though I need to start at the beginning. Commin to [Pathways] has opened a whole new way of thinking."

Yet, despite her fear of writing and making many mistakes, her writing – as evidenced by other freewrites – was engagingly crafted. "I had a very quiet weekend," she wrote. "I watched television with my mom. The grandchildren called me twice. I did a lot of soul searching. I read my bible, and washed windows. I was at peace in the world." When she read this aloud,

the class and I commented on how poetic it was: "I read my bible, and washed the windows. I was at peace in the world." Yet, perhaps due to her internalization of authoritative discourse, which the framework's focus on Academic Language may have reinforced for her, she did not seem willing to engage her poetic voice in crafting academic writing essays.

Improving academic writing: Sentence Combining. However, as measured by the sentence combining assessment (Appendix A), there is some evidence to suggest that Phyllis improved her academic writing craft, as did the other three students -- Mesalit, Zaria, and Samantha -- who took both the pre- and post-assessment.

As illustrated in Tables 6 to 8, Mesalit, Zaria, and Samantha all improved their scores from pretest to posttest on the sentence combining measure, with Mesalit improving by 23 points, Zaria by 10 points, and Samantha by 17 points. Phyllis (Table 9) showed a reduction of seven points between the pre- and post- tests; however, many of these lost points were due to her attempts at more complex phrasings at the expense of including all the original information in each sentence.

Mesalit. Although Mesalit's sentences remained syntactically incomplete or awkward, she was able to make syntactic improvements, suggesting that class discussions focused on word and word-doings had a positive impact on her acquisition of English – a relatively new language for her [Table 6]. For example, for item number 5 (which asked students to combine the following short sentences: *The students ate soup. Steam rose from the soup. The soup had flavor. The eating was quick*), Mesalit's pre-attempt was: "*The soup flavor had steam rose students ate quick;*" in contrast, her post-attempt was: "*The students ate quick the flavorful hot soup.*" By comparing these two attempts, we see that Mesalit changed the subject of the sentence from *soup* to *students*, and she added the suffix *ful* to *flavor*, turning the noun *flavor* into *flavorful* to

describe soup. While she did not transform the adjective *quick* to the needed adverb *quickly* to describe the verb *ate*, she did place the verb closer to the subject, making the sentence clearer.

Table 6: Mesalit's Sentence Combining Scores

Mesalit **Gained 22 points**	
Pre-Score: 8	Post-Score: 31
Examples of pre:	***Examples of post:***
The soup flavor had steam rose students ate quick.	The students ate quick the flavorful hot soup.
The snake move slow down the tree.	The snake glistened as it moved slowly down the moss coverd tree the coils
The whales swam silent migrated ocean.	The whales swam silently through the ice ocean they migrated.

Zaria. Although several initial items in Zaria's pre- and post-assessments did not change, Zaria seemed to apply the lessons' morphological focus to make later items syntactically clearer [Table 7]. For example, in item number 6 (which asked students to combine the following short sentences: *The motorcycle backfired. The backfire was loud. The motorcycle sputtered. The motorcycle had dents*.), Zaria's pre-attempt was: "*The motorcycle that backfired loudly sputtered and had dents;*" in contrast, her post-attempt was: "*The dented motorcycle backfired and sputtered aloud."* By comparing these two attempts, we see that Zaria was able to change the noun *dent* to the adjective *dented* to describe motorcycle, streamlining the sentence. Interestingly, in her original attempt, she changed the adjective *loud* to the adjective *loudly*; however, in her post attempt, she changed the adjective *loud* to the adverb *aloud*, a phrasing perhaps more typical of the written rather than spoken register.

Table 7: Zaria's Sentence Combining Scores

Zaria **Gained 10 points**	
Pre-Score: 52	Post-Score: 62
Examples of pre:	**Examples of post:**
The motorcycle that backfired loudly sputtered and had dents.	The dented motorcycle backfired and sputtered aloud.
The snake moved slowly down the moss tree and coils a glistering coiled.	The glistened snake moves slowly down the moss tree.
The silent whales migrated and swam away from the ocean that had ice.	The silent whales swam through the ocean and migrated from the icey ocean.

Samantha. While Samantha's post-assessment revealed that the lessons helped her better understand how to combine short sentences into one clearer sentence, she still had some difficulty with morphologically changing words [Table 8]. For example, in item number 1 (which asked students to combine the following short sentences: *The students felt confusion. The students wanted advice. The advice would help.*), Samantha's pre-attempt was: "*The students felt confused they wanted advice to help them;*" in contrast, her post-attempt was: "*The confusion students wanted helpful advice.*" By comparing these two attempts, we see that Samantha composed one run-on sentence in her pre-assessment, but was attempting to create one complete sentence that was close to being syntactically correct; however, she chose an incorrect morphological form of confuse: *confusion* instead of *confused*, to modify students.

Table 8: Samantha's Sentence Combining Scores

Samantha **Gained 17 points** **[Explanation: While it is clear that Samantha made progress in her sentences, she still had trouble with using the correct morphological word]**	
Pre-Score: 50	Post-Score: 67
Examples of pre:	**Examples of post:**
The students felt confused they wanted advice to help them.	The confusion students wanted helpful advice.
The motorcycle was loud when it backfired, it was left with dented when it sputtered.	The dented motorcycle loudly backfired as it sputtered.
The seal swam toward the penguins.	The spotted seal swam a direct path to the terrorize penguins.

***Phyllis*.** As previously explained, unlike the other three students discussed, Phyllis lost points from pre- to post- assessment. Yet, on closer inspection, it seems as though she lost many of these points due to her attempt to combine sentences into one sentence in the post-test (as opposed to just stringing the sentences together in the pre-test), which made it more difficult for her to include all the meanings [Table 9]. For example, for item number 6 (which asked students to combine the following short sentences: *The motorcycle backfired. The backfire was loud. The motorcycle sputtered. The motorcycle had dents*.), Phyllis's pre-attempt was: "*The motorcycle backfiring made a loud noise it sputtered it had dents;*" in contrast, her post-attempt was: "*The motorcycle with the dents had a loud backfire then it sputtered."* By comparing these two attempts, we see that Phyllis composed one long run-on sentence in her pre-assessment by simply stringing the short sentences together; however, in her second attempt, she successfully combined two of the three sentences before reverting to a run-on structure.

Table 9: Phyllis's Sentence Combining Scores

Phyllis Lost 8 points	
Pre-Score: 50	Post-Score: 43
Examples of pre:	Examples of post:
The students were confused they got advise the advice helped the students.	The students felt confused they thought some advise would help.
The motorcycle backfiring made a loud noise it sputtered it had dents	The motorcycle with the dents had a loud backfire then it sputtered.
The snake slowly moved his coils down the tree the [missing word] had moss the coils glistened.	The slow snake moved his coils down the moss, glistened tree.

Improving academic writing: Essay revisions. Mesalit, Zaria, and Samantha all completed and turned in a first and revised draft of their "Should Applications Ask for Race or Religion?" essays. As described in Chapter 4, essays were scored using a Revision Assessment Tool (Appendix E). Analysis revealed that the greatest changes in students' writings from the first draft to the revised draft had to do with increased numbers of morphologically complex

words, allowing for the inclusion of more nominal expressions and lexical cohesion -- crucial elements of academic texts (Fang, Schleppegrell, & Cox, 2006). All first and revised essays are included in Appendices H to J.

Mesalit. As illustrated by Table 10, from first draft to revised draft [Appendix H], Mesalit decreased her word count by six words, from 83 to 77 words; and the number of sentences she wrote slightly decreased from six to four. Yet, while Mesalit's original draft included only one morphologically complex words (*required*, used as a verb), her second draft included eight morphologically complex words: *requirement, required* (used as an adjective*), qualification, residential, properly, ability*, *one's*, and *job's*, allowing for greater cohesiveness among sentences. For instance, she ended her first sentence with *". . . one's ability to perform the job's requirement*," and she was able to maintain this meaning in her second sentence by turning 'requirement' into an adjective: "*For example, if someone can* [sic] *required qualification of the job, it should not matter race (the color)*."

Table 10: Mesalit's First and Second Draft

Mesalit				
	Pre-Essay		**Post-Essay**	
	Number	**Examples**	**Number**	**Examples**
Word Count	83		77	
Sentences	6		4	
Morphologically Complex Words	1	Required (*as a verb*)	8	Requirement, required (*as an adjective*) qualification, residential, properly, ability, one's, job's

Zaria. As seen in Table 11, Zaria's first and revised drafts [Appendix I] were drastically different. Her word count increased from 135 to 375, and her sentences from six to ten. While in her original essay, Zaria did include 11 morphologically complex words: *advertised, qualified, particular, employer, employers, perception, predetermined, biased, earlier, applicant, and pre-*

assumption, her revised draft included 32 morphologically complex words (listed in the table 11). Like Mesalit, Zaria's use of different word forms allowed for better cohesion among sentences. For example, in her first draft, she used only two forms of employer: *employer* and *employers*; throughout her revision, however, she used four forms: *employer, employers, employee*, and *employee's*. Her revision also shows a greater use of nominalization, an important resource for constructing academic texts (Fang, Schleppegrell, & Cox, 2006). For example, Zaria's revised sentences included the noun forms of words more commonly used as verbs (such as talk and sit): "*Talking and sitiing [sic] in their midst is widely unacceptable. . .*"

Table 11: Zaria's First and Second Draft

Zaria				
	Pre-Essay		**Post-Essay**	
	Number	**Examples**	**Number**	**Examples**
Word Count	157		353	
Sentences	5		12	
Morphologically Complex Words	11	Advertised, qualified, particular, employer, employers, perception, predetermined, biased, earlier, applicant, pre-assumption	32	Employers, employer, employees, employee's, deeper, applicant's, complicated, knowing, added, medical, behavior, questionable, encourages, discourages, unacceptable, diseases, catered, insurance, coverage, disrespectful, cultural, careful. practices (*as a noun*) stereotyping, different, widely, unacceptable, talking (*as a noun*), sitting (*as a noun*), running (*as a noun*), acceptable, organization, effectively

Samantha. As seen in Table 12, Samantha's first and revised drafts [Appendix J] were also different. She used 53 words and four sentences in her first draft, and 99 words and nine sentences in her revision. In addition, she originally included only two morphologically complex words: *performance* and *argument;* yet, in her revision, she included nine morphologically complex words: *connected, connections, complicated, puzzling, different, applications, reading, changing,* and *documents*. Similar to both Mesalit and Zaria, Samantha's inclusion of different word forms allowed for greater lexical cohesion, allowing for more complex repetition (Nicholas, 2014). For example, Samantha starts her essay with the sentence: "*In life, we are all connected in so many different ways;"* in her fourth sentence, she is able to repeat her *connected* meaning by using the noun form *connections*: "*These many connections in life are complicated and puzzling*."

Table 12: Samantha's First and Second Draft

Samantha				
	Pre-Essay		**Post-Essay**	
	Number	**Examples**	**Number**	**Examples**
Word Count	53		99	
Sentences	4		9	
Morphologically Complex Words	2	Performance argument	6	connected, connections, complicated, puzzling, different, applications, reading, changing, documents

Evolving Thoughts

Analyzing the design, implementation, and redesign of this curricular experiment offers several insights to inform the teaching of academic writing in adult literacy GED programs. First, findings suggest the importance of including dialogic instruction in all aspects of adult literacy

academic writing pedagogy, especially when focusing on form. Secondly, however, findings also reveal the intense challenges of orchestrating dialogic instruction in heteroglossic adult literacy classrooms, suggesting a need for professional training in dialogic pedagogy for adult literacy instructors.

And third, findings suggest that in striving for a balanced multifaceted view *of* and multi-theoretical approach *to* academic writing, a persistent disequilibrium between centripetal and centrifugal forces remains. Finding a balance will require much more pedagogical experimentation, requiring the adult literacy field to join other educational fields in continuing to wrestle with the meaning vs. form dilemma in academic writing pedagogy.

However, I want to end this chapter -- and preview the next -- by foregrounding the importance of pedagogic wrestling in adult literacy in order to allow the field to provide students with rich educational experiences. As discussed in Chapter 1, adult literacy GED programs have been and will continue to be so much more than second-chance programs; but, at the same time, their role in helping to address historical educational debts (Ladson-Billings, 2006) cannot be diminished.

Since Heckman (2012) argues that making educational investments in "disadvantaged, low-skilled young adults" is ineffective (p.3), my guess is he would likely argue against making an educational investment in someone like Michael, a 52-year old with only a 9th grade education. Nevertheless, Michael is still owed the chance to experience learning as the taking up "of new information, acquir[ing] and deepen[ing] conceptual understandings of subject matter, and com[ing] to understand the natural and social worlds in new ways" (Nasir, Snyder, & Shaw, 2013, p.286). He is owed the chance to experience an academic learning environment that can

foster his becoming other than the other, and the world is owed the chance to benefit from his becoming.

Chapter 5: Bakhtinian Reflections - Part II

Chapter 5 delves deeper into understanding the framework's curricular implementation by presenting findings from a case study of a student who experienced the lessons. Although a total of four students – Phyllis, Zaria, Tameka, and Samantha – had consented to interviews, only one -- Samantha -- was able to meet on an ongoing basis. Phyllis was caring for both her grandson and her dying mother; Zaria was distracted because her three-year-old daughter was still living in Sierra Leone at the time of the deadly Ebola outbreak; Tameka stopped coming to class during the last week, and when the staff and I tried to contact her, her phone had been disconnected and her mail returned.

Research in the real world is always difficult, but -- due to the real-life problems facing many adult literacy students -- adult literacy research is particularly difficult, causing the field to depend on research with other populations (as explained at the beginning of Chapter 3). The intensity of real-life problems may also contribute to sometimes well-intentioned simplification of GED programs. Tameka, for example, was in desperate need of a job, and perhaps she may have been better served if the writing class had simply focused on getting her to pass the test instead of reflecting on the complexity of racial classification or on how *love* could be an abstract noun.

On the other hand, Samantha illustrates the educative possibilities of reflecting on the complexity of how to teach academic writing in adult literacy GED programs. The following is structured to first present Samantha's background information, followed by analytical findings that address the study's second research question. Qualitative findings revealed that for this particular student the classes 1) encouraged multivoicedness, leading to productive revising, 2)

fostered internally persuasive discourse, fostering ideological becoming, and 3) reified authoritative discourse, complicating critical literacy.

Background Context

I first met Samantha when I was doing preparation for my study in fall 2013. She quietly sat in the front row of most of the classes I observed. Sometimes she wore a straight black wig, sometimes she tied a colorful scarf around her head, and sometimes she left her bare head uncovered. She had a lovely smile, and it took some time to realize that she actually had no teeth.

As evidenced in the class analysis, Samantha was a serious and enthusiastic learner. She attended most classes, completed all her assignments, and she asked for additional assignments. I met with her a total of seven times for about one to two hours each. We met in a library for the first three interviews during the end of summer 2014; a coffee shop and the visiting area of her residence during for the fourth and fifth interviews during fall 2014; and in the visiting area of her residence for the last two interviews in winter 2015.

Life and educational experiences. Even though Samantha loved school when she was younger, she left school in the eighth grade. When I asked why, she stated that she had been abused. "I used to love to learn," she said "but my childhood was really rough and I dropped out of school." She explained: "I was molested by my father. … I never knew what that was back in my day -- it wasn't on TV, and I didn't have a name for it … and I couldn't focus. It wasn't -- it left me with clinical depression." This depression caused her to cut herself off from other people, and she started staying in the house, experiencing agoraphobia, until she was in her mid-twenties. Yet, with the help of effective therapy and her study of metaphysical teachings, she

explained that she was able to overcome her depression and agoraphobia. "One day," she said, smiling, "I just put on my headphones with my new-age music and walked up the street, caught the bus, and never looked back."

She explained that for the next 25 years she was always focused on work, and she always had two jobs at a time. Most of her jobs were in sales (signing people up for credit cards, for example) and in nonprofits (collecting used items for veterans and their families). She explained that work always got in the way when she would try to go back to school. "Maybe in the '80s I took some night GED classes, but I never finished because -- you know -- something would have happened. And work and making a living was always number one."

In 2009, Samantha's job opportunities started drying up. She made it clear to me that she had never been fired from a job, but -- one by one -- the companies she worked for started closing. "First one ended, and I had trouble paying rent, and then all of a sudden another one ended, so I couldn't pay rent, so I had to move in with my family." These losses triggered another severe depression; "I just couldn't see the light," she said. Eventually, she was no longer able to stay with her family, and, having no other place to go, she moved into a long-term shelter for women.

However, this move turned out to be a turning point for her. When she first got to the shelter in the late summer of 2013, her caseworker asked her what she wanted to do. "Well, I always wanted to finish school, and I realized that I was free and could do this." She continued: "I told her [the caseworker] that I went to Pathways years ago, but I was busy working so I had to stop. I told my counselor there was something that felt good about it. So I called, got in, and have been going ever since."

A love of school, reading, and writing. Samantha explained how she always loved learning. When she was young and had to miss a day of school, she would cry. “That's how much I loved learning,” she said. “I was always open to learning and I've always been that way.” She said she did really well in school. “As a matter of fact,” she said, “one of my science teachers said, ‘She does really well; she just doesn't come.’” Samantha also stated that she read a lot when she was younger, and she loved mysteries. “I always loved to read. I read a lot of books. This is one of my passions.”

Samantha also explained that she had always wanted to be a writer. “When I was a little girl,” she said, “I used to send away for different travel catalogues because I wanted to write stories about different places.” She also explained that she was on the school newspaper. “So I always wanted to write,” and she added,

> but then after I started getting abused, I said “I don't have any stories left.” Before I got abused, I used to write stories; after I got abused, I said that I have no more stories left to write. I think I kinda put it away after I was abused. … I think I thought all my writing became sad -- I would read what I wrote and it was filled with sadness … heartbreaking.

Samantha shared that she had taken a mythology writing class at her metaphysical church about 25 years ago and began writing origin stories. “So I started to write stories again,” she explained, “and then [the teacher] said that I should write children's books... so I did that for a while, but then I put that on the backburner again and kept working and working.”

When I probed her more on why she stopped writing, she said that she somehow felt like she should not be writing. She said that “For some reason I kinda thought, ‘Well, I wasn't educated’ . . .I always did well in school but I felt like I was dumb … like all of a sudden I became dumb … something just shut down.” She further explained that because of this, she

gave up writing for a long time. "But when I started at Pathways again," she told me, "it [writing] just poured out of me again. I got it back."

Findings

Qualitative findings revealed that for this particular student the classes 1) encouraged multivoicedness, leading to productive revising, 2) fostered internally persuasive discourse, fostering ideological becoming, and (thought-provokingly) 3) reified authoritative discourse, complicating critical literacy.

Encouraged multivoicedness, leading to productive revising. During our interviews, Samantha explained that her favorite part of class was the dialogue. "I liked the way we could talk, and I could listen to other people's opinions," she explained, further adding that "Sometimes hearing them inspired me" in her own writing. She also shared that the "class [kept] coming back into mind" while she continued to complete freewrites, even after classes ended.

In addition to letting other voices influence her writing, Samantha also let the voices of words influence her writing. During our first meeting, Samantha told me that she had done a lot of freewriting in the month after class. "Remember, I told you that I was going to get a word from the dictionary each day? Well, I looked up a word and then I wrote the definition about it -- and then I just started writing stories about it!" In total, Samantha had written 12 stories based on words that she had looked up in the dictionary.

One of the first stories she shared with me was about geodes. "I used to have geodes. They look like little caves and they are filled with beautiful crystals," she said. She explained that she was watching a movie with geodes in it, so she looked up the word and started writing a story, as illustrated in Excerpt 18 below.

Excerpt 18: Samantha's post class freewrite #1

The Sparkling Geode Rooms

1. Geode – a hollow nodular stone often lined with crystals
2. I went to my friend Kay's house for lunch. Kay's house is decorated completely
3. in beautiful pastel colors. Her living [room] is a wonderful mintly [sic] green
4. filled with flower pattern tableware. I am impressed with her warm lavender
5. living room with large pillows. Spending time with Kay is like listening to [a]
6. melodic musical with only your eyes viewing the music notes as color. Now its
7. [sic] time for you to journey back from this large cave with bright lights of
8. crystal shining from its door, like a large geode.

This freewrite and excerpt are interesting for two reasons. First, they show how a word and its dictionary meaning (Line 1: "Geode – a hollow nodular stone often lined with crystals") created an image for Samantha that she was able to explore in her description of her friend's living room: "a large cave with bright lights of crystal shining from its door, like a large geode" (line 8). And secondly, it reveals how she was able to use her new knowledge of 'word-doings' to conceptually convey her experience of spending time with Kay (line 5), as explained below.

After reading Samantha's story, I asked her why she had used the word *melodic* (line 6), and she said that she had "wanted to play with words a little bit more." She explained that she knew the word *melody* -- "I love a song called 'Melody" she shared -- and she was trying to find ways to express her idea of "seeing the sounds but not listening to 'em" because being with Kay was like that for Samantha: "Like if you close your *ears* and *see* the different beautiful colors of the music." She explained how turning melody into an adjective – *melodic* -- allowed her to find

a phrase -- *melodic musical* – that conceptualized her experience of visiting with Kay in her geodic living space.

Throughout our interviews, Samantha continued to explain "how words just opened up a story for her." For example, in discussing another story she had written -- a story titled "A Text from Mr. Urbane" -- she said with a laugh that she "just flipped through the dictionary and wondered, 'What does this word mean?' And it meant suave and sophisticated," so she started writing a story: "Soulmate Connection and Mr. Urbane." She giggled as she started to read part of the story: "You can judge for yourself if I am the suave and sophisticated man you have been waiting for. I consider myself a very urbane man."

In addition to showing how Samantha was beginning to use words to influence expression and idea generation, the freewrites she shared with me also illustrated how she was learning to revise, changing and adding words to better express her meanings, as well as her ideas. She gave me both a copy of her revised freewrites, as well as her first drafts of some so that I "could see how [she] changed things around."

Samantha explained that her former idea of writing was that -- similar to GED students in former skill-based instruction (Chapter 1) -- her writing had to be perfect the first time. But, she told me, "When you said [during class]: 'Maybe it can go this way,' it was almost like a window opened." She explained that she particularly experienced this opening during class freewrites: "What I started off writing was never what I ended up putting down." This is further illustrated in Excerpt 19.

Excerpt 19: Letting Words Out, Examining Them, and Being Open to New Words

1. At first, it was letting the words out on a piece of paper . . . but with the class I let
2. the words out but then also starting examining the words and then I started not

3. only letting them out and examining them but then changing them and being open

4. to new words.

This comment suggests that Samantha, because she conceived of writing as being perfect the first time, may have previously believed that writing was just about "letting the words out on a piece of paper" (line 1): Once the words were let out, she believed, the writing stopped. In contrast, a synergistic Expressionistic and SFL/Academic Language focus on word-doings may have allowed her to begin to understand how to play with words, allowing her to also begin to conceive of writing as a process in which words change and evolve (Pumphrey, 1973). An example of an original and revised freewrite is in Excerpt 20.

Excerpt 20: Samantha's post class freewrite #2 – Original and Revised Drafts

Environmental Awareness (Original Draft)

1. Today as I walk this winding I am acute aware of the smells of fresh flower, grass
2. and summer soil. The temput is 76 dg yet I am feeling cool. My surrounding are
3. so beautiful that my body is at rest therefore lives me feeling cool. If we take to
4. "smell the roses" and let our mind drink in the deli sites of mother earth we can
5. have a calmess in us that helps us to relax. So on any given day step out and into
6. natural let it take yourself on a wonderful calming ride and see where you end.

Environmental Awareness (Revised Draft)

7. Today as I walk this winding road, I am acutely aware of the summer smells of
8. fresh flowers, grass and soil. The temp is 86 degrees yet, I am feeling cool. My
9. surrounding are so beautiful that my body is at rest. Therefore taking time to be
10. in nature is good for body, mind and spirit. We can let our mind drink in the
11. delicious sites of mother Earth. This will supply us with calmess and realx us

12. complety. So on any given day step out and into nature, and take yourself on a

13. wonderful calming adventure and see where you end.

In comparing the original and revised drafts, we see that Samantha made wording, mechanical, and sentence-level changes. First, she caught grammatical mistakes. In her first draft, Samantha wrote "I am acute aware" (line 1). In her second draft, she wrote: ". . .I am acutely aware. . ." (line 7), correctly revising the adjective *acute* to its needed adverbial form of *acutely* to modify the adjective *aware.* She also added words that were missing, such as 'road' (line 7), which was missing from her original version (line 1); fully spelled the word 'delicious' (line 11), which she had left incompletely spelled in the first draft (line 4); and changed words to their correct form, such as changing "into natural" (line 6) to "into nature" (line 12).

In addition, she experimented with commas in the second draft. In the first draft, she used only one comma (line 1); however, in the second draft, she used four commas (two on line 8, one on line 11, and one on line 12). Of these commas, she used three correctly: a comma to separate items (line 8 and line 10) and a comma after *and* (line 12) to separate two independent clauses. Her incorrect use of a comma (line 8) -- "The temp is 86 degrees yet, I am feeling cool" – reveals that she had an idea that a comma was needed to separate a compound sentence, yet her understanding of where to place the comma (before instead of after the connecting word) was still evolving.

What is most interesting, however, is how she expanded one of her original sentences into three. For example, she revised her one sentence: "*If we take to 'smell the roses' and let our mind drink in the deli sites of mother earth we can have a calmness in us that helps us to relax,"* (lines 3 – 4) into three sentences: 1)"*Therefore taking time to be in nature is good for body, mind and spirit"; 2) "We can let our mind drink in the delicious sites of mother Earth"; and 3) "This*

will supply us with calmess and realx us complety." (lines 9 -12). These changes suggest that Samantha was experiencing writing as an organic process; using the phrase "smell the roses" in her first draft (line 3) prompted her to explore the ideas in that phrase, helping her to realize and communicate what she may have ultimately wanted to communicate: "*Taking the time to be in nature is good for body, mind, and spirit*" (Line 9).

Fostered internally persuasive discourse, fostering ideological becoming. Many of my questions about Samantha's stories had to do with the new vocabulary words she was using in her second drafts. For example, in her story about a woman wanting to relocate to Paris, she used the word "elated" in her second draft (instead of excited) because she wanted to say excited without saying *excited*. "So I looked through the dictionary and I saw 'elated' and I said, 'Yeah, that's it – elated!'"

In addition to flipping through the dictionary to find new words, Samantha had also started to work with the words on "Om" cards ("Kinda like affirmation cards," she explained) to gain a better understanding of the messages. For example, one morning she had picked up a card with "Financial Flow" on it, and, she said, "I decided to look up the words, and then I tried to incorporate the meaning into a story."

In my discussion with Samantha about these versions, I also asked her about her inclusion of new academic vocabulary words in her revision. For example, in her second draft she wrote the sentence: *"Financial is tangible and flow is more elusive,"* so I asked her why she decided to incorporate the words *tangible* and *elusive* into her second draft. Samantha's explanation is captured in Excerpt 21.

Excerpt 21: Okay, Money You Can Touch

1. I was trying to say, "Okay, money you can touch - but flow of things kinda goes

2. … you can't touch it." … So I was going to use "untangible," and then I say no

3. … and then I thought of "elusive!" And I never used "elusive" in any of my

4. writings before, but it just came to me … and so then I said, "Well, let me just

5. look it up so I can make sure. … And then I said, "Yeah, elusive -- I am going

6. to use 'elusive'."

This excerpt illustrates how Samantha was using her knowledge of morphology to try to express how to describe something that one can't touch by experimenting with the word *untangible* (line 2), but then knowing that it wasn't quite right. Her comment and excitement about the word *elusive* was also interesting; although she knew the word, she had never used it in any of her writings, but it just suddenly came to her (lines 3 and 4).

During our interview sessions, I kept questioning Samantha to get a sense of why she had started to include different kinds of words in her writing. It was particularly interesting to me because she often said that she had "always known the words" that she was now using, but she never felt like she could use them. For example, she stated that she had been completing a freewrite the morning of our interview, and someone said something to inspire her, causing her to write the word *jovial* (a word she already knew) for the first time (as illustrated in Excerpt 22).

Excerpt 22: I Don't Think There Was a Connection with It

1. And I used the word *jovial* … and I always knew what the word was … and I was

2. writing it the way you spell it too. I looked it up and I said, "Oh, yeah, that's how

3. I thought it was spelled." … But I never would have used the word five years

4. ago ... even though I knew the word. I don't think there was a connection with it.

The theme of a connectedness to words (line 4) came up several times. For example, Samantha stated: "When you were asking me, did I know this word, I be saying, 'I've been

knowing these words for years,' but I never connected with them. The class helped me to connect with the words." This was particularly interesting to me because it reveals a difference between the teaching of language to children and adults. In their discussion of academic language and school-age children, scholars and researchers (Coxhead and Byrd, 2007; Keifer and Lesaux, 2007; Snow, 2010), point to the idea that some students struggle with academic reading and writing because they have limited academic vocabularies. In the case of Samantha, however, this did not seem to be the problem: She already knew many academic words; she just wasn't accessing or connecting to them.

This is evident in Excerpt 23, in which we discussed Samantha's use of the word "keen," which she had included in another one of her freewrites.

Excerpt 23: A Keen Sense of This, a Keen Sense of That

1. **Sasha**: Did you know the word "keen"?
2. **Samantha**: I've heard it before, but I never used it. Since being in your class - it is
3. funny how these -- I knew "keen" before -- a keen sense of this, a keen sense of that –
4. but I never thought about using it before.
5. **Sasha**: What about speaking? Do you use it in speaking?
6. **Samantha**: No. It is always in the back of my mind, but no. It is funny how things,
7. how I'm beginning to use them, and it -- some were never there, but words like "keen,"
8. that was there.

In this excerpt, we learn that even though Samantha was well aware of the word '*keen*' (most likely due to her viewing of British television and movies), she never used it before in writing or in speaking (line 2). When I went on to ask her about why she was starting to use these words (words that she had known 'for years'), she further explained: "You are doing more

critical thinking and more academic writing . . .it gives you a sense of moving forward. You moving more -- learning-wise -- you not just like you've been: stuck." She also explained that she had never felt "open" to some words, stating that she had once "got a vocabulary thing on cassette tape years ago but never used it." Yet, she explained that "being in class, it opens doors, not only opening doors of jobs but opening doors in your mind … in your mind … yes, in your mind."

All of Samantha's statements about connecting to words suggest that previously authoritarian words were now becoming more internally persuasive to her. By creatively incorporating words that she had known but hadn't thought were hers (perhaps because she felt 'uneducated'), she was now generatively claiming these words, making them her own, and using them for her own purposes. Samantha also seemed to be experiencing the creative power of the internally persuasive word and its ability – as described by Bakhtin (1981) – to awaken "new and independent words," organizing "massive words from within" (as cited by Halasek, 1999, p.124). For example, she explained: "I'm playing around with words more – words that I would never use are popping up – yeah – I'm growing – all these words."

In addition to claiming these words -- words existing on the borders of two speaking subjects (Halasek, 1999, p.124) -- Samantha was also entering into dialogue with other users of these words, presenting her own utterances, and leading to ideological becoming. During classes, Samantha made comments about how she was noticing both herself as well as her writing changing due to the readings and exercises. For example, after sharing her response to a reading exercise analyzing an author's argument against compulsory schooling laws, Samantha suddenly started to think aloud: "You know, I can tell how this class has helped me." I asked her to explain further, which is captured in Excerpt 24.

Excerpt 24: So All This is Changing Me

1. When I was writing this, different words came to my head -- I started thinking
2. "striving," "thriving," "surviving," -- yeah, it is changing for me. Yeah, it has
3. changed me. … I mean, "The existing system" that is new. … I don't think a
4. month or two ago I would have thought about this all. … I mean I wouldn't have
5. used "existing system" – so all this is changing me.

During one of our interviews, I asked Samantha about these changes (line 2) and if she was feeling any conflict or tension about them. I reminded Samantha of our question about whether applications should ask for race or religion, sharing with her my concern that the class may have made it difficult for some students to see things in a different way. Samantha said that it could be "because it is this new part of you -- you got to get used to this new you -- and also other people need to get used to it." She laughed and said that some people were telling her, "Oh, you brand new now." But she also explained that she was at a point now "of being truly opened -- my senses have been awakened, I am willing to challenge myself."

Reified authoritative discourse, complicating critical literacy. However, while the curriculum encouraged Samantha to tap into internally persuasive words, it did not seem to encourage her to challenge the power of a centripetal authoritative discourse. Instead, classes may have reified authoritative discourse for Samantha, complicating the teaching of critical literacy.

Samantha's attraction to a more authoritarian discourse was evident throughout our interviews. For example, she consulted the authoritative dictionary to look up words, even when she knew she was right about a word's meaning and spelling. She also craved grammar rules, and continually wanted me 'to mark-up' her writing: "Yeah, mark it up, just like you did before."

Perhaps the strongest evidence of Samantha's affinity for authoritarian discourse came when she pulled from her bag the 'Strong vs. Weak' word GED exercise – the exercise that helped to spark this dissertation study. In our third meeting, as Samantha was sharing her freewrites with me, she also shared her fully completed 'Strong vs. Weak' exercise, which I had presented to students *not* for them to complete, but rather for them to critically study. When she asked me to review how she had completed the exercise, I struggled with my response. "Okay," I said, "let me ask you . . .I guess I'm trying to figure out is why.. is why these bother me so much...there are different ways to write...it's a different voice." As I continued struggling to explain myself, Samantha interrupted me by stating: "I found it helpful." She went on to explain that she thought the exercises were helping her to write more professionally. "Take 'mess' [one of the words in the paragraph in need of editing]," she said. "I am a mess today…and...people kinda know what you mean, but then," she continued to explain, "if you are writing it professionally I can never say 'I'm a mess' because what does that mean? So, it would be better to use 'I'm stressed out today.'"

After finally recognizing Samantha's desire for feedback on her completed exercise, I studied it more closely. Table 13 captures the activity's original paragraph to be edited, and Excerpt 25 contains Samantha's first revision attempt.

Table 13: 'Strong vs. Weak' Activity's paragraph to be edited

Original Paragraph to Edit	**Speaking in front of a class is hard. It makes me freak out. Sometimes my heart starts beating fast even before I am called upon. This causes me to stress even more. My hands and legs start to move. I get sweaty. By the time my teacher calls on me, I am a mess.**

Excerpt 25: Samantha's Strong vs. Weak Revision Attempt #1

Samantha's 'Strong vs. Weak' Revision Attempt #1

1. Speaking in front of a class is difficult for me which makes me nervouse.
2. Sometimes before I begin to speak, my heart beats fast. This causes more stress
3. on me. My hands and legs starts moving which cause them to become sweaty.
4. By the time the teacher calls on me, I am so stressed out.

In her revision, Samantha changed many of the original words and phrasings: *hard* became *difficult* [line 1], *freak out* became *nervouse* [sic] [line 1], and *mess* became *so stressed out* [line 4]. As I was looking it over, Samantha asked if she should have put "so stressed out" to replace "mess." In my response, I channeled the authoritative GED 'book people,' as illustrated in Excerpt 26: line 2, line 7, and line 10.

Excerpt 26: Yeah…I wonder if that was what they were looking for

1. **Samantha**: Should I put so stressed out?
2. **Sasha**: Yeah, you could …okay ----but being them – *the book people* – what would
3. they want?
4. **Samantha**: I thought about "totally stressed out" but that doesn't sound academic
5. – it sounds more street-like – but you read 'so' stressed out – sounds more
6. professional (laughing)
7. **Sasha**: (laughing too; then sighing) Maybe they are looking for anxious?
8. **Samantha**: Oh! I never thought about that! And I kept thinking and thinking.
9. Anxious! Yeah – that would have been perfect
10. **Sasha**: I wonder if that is what they were thinking – yeah, okay, so [moving on to ask about her freewrites]

Due to her excitement about the word anxious [line 9] (a word that the GED book people were most likely looking for), Samantha made another revision attempt. During our next meeting, Samantha -- surprising me again -- eagerly reached into her bag, pulling out the now notorious 'Strong vs. Weak' word exercise. "Oh!" she said. "I did – let me show you – so I redid one and two" [referring to both questions on the Strong vs. Weak'' exercise]. This revision, however, was -- in some ways -- stronger than the other two, complicating my use of this activity to help develop critical literacy. Samantha's second revision is in Excerpt 27. (Table 14 includes the original paragraph, as well as Samantha's first and second revisions for comparison; these paragraphs are also included in Appendix K.)

Excerpt 27: Samantha's Strong vs. Weak Revision Attempt #2

Samantha's 'Strong vs. Weak' Revision Attempt #2

1. Speaking in front of a class can be difficult for me, I begin to feel anxious.
2. Just before speaking sometimes my anxiety causes my heartbeat to expedite,
3. which leaves me pre_____[left blank] and my legs and hands to twitch. Therefore
4. by the time the teacher calls me my anxiousness has taken over.

In this revision, Samantha replaced word phrases and words, such as *makes me nervouse*[sic] with *feel anxious,* and she (awkwardly) replaced *fast* with *expedite* -- an internally persuasive word that just popped into her head (but one that also needed to be authoritatively checked). When I inquired about her use of the word *expedite*, she explained: "Yeah, I knew it. I was thinking – um -when you said anxious instead of saying stressed, I thought how can I say speedy and then I said 'oh, expedite' so then I had to just go and look it up."

In addition, Samantha also experimented with sentence combining. In her first revision, Samantha wrote the following three sentences (Excerpt 25, lines 2-3): "*Sometimes before I begin*

to speak, my heart beats fast. This causes more stress on me. My hands and legs starts moving which cause them to become sweaty." In her second revision attempt, she combined the meaning of these three sentences into one (Excerpt 27, lines 2-3): *Just before speaking sometimes my anxiety causes my heartbeat to expedite, which leaves me pre_____[left blank] and my legs and hands to twitch.*"

By using *anxiety*, the noun form of *anxious*, Samantha was able to achieve greater lexical cohesion by incorporating the meaning in her first attempted sentence (*I begin to feel anxious),* into her second sentence *(Just before speaking, my anxiety causes. . .*). This nominalization also allowed her to make 'feeling anxious' into an abstract thing, allowing *anxiety* (caused by fear of the teacher calling on her) to be the subject of the sentence, and the thing more explicitly responsible for the changes in her body (faster heartbeat, sweatiness, twitching), which was not explicitly clear in either of the first two paragraphs, as shown in Table 14.

And finally, Samantha's use of anxiousness -- another noun form of *anxious* -- in her last sentence provides for more complex repetition of meaning throughout the paragraph, ultimately making it more reflective of academic writing.

Table 14: Strong vs. Weak Original Paragraph, Samantha's Revision Attempt #1, Samantha's Revision Attempt #2

Original Paragraph to Edit	**Speaking in front of a class is hard. It makes me freak out. Sometimes my heart starts beating fast even before I am called upon. This causes me to stress even more. My hands and legs start to move. I get sweaty. By the time my teacher calls on me, I am a mess.**
Samantha's Revision Attempt #1	Speaking in front of a class is difficult for me which makes me nervouse. Sometimes before I begin to speak, my heart beats fast. This causes more stress on me. My hands and legs starts moving which cause them to become sweaty. By the time the teacher calls on me, I am so stressed out.
Samantha's Revision Attempt #2	Speaking in front of a class can be difficult for me, I begin to feel anxious. Just before speaking sometimes my anxiety causes my heartbeat to expedite,

	which leaves me pre_____[left blank] and my legs and hands to twitch. Therefore by the time the teacher calls me my anxiousness has taken over.

These 'Strong vs. Weak Words' vignettes echo many of the tensions presented throughout this study. First, as in a transformative adult literacy paradigm, I -- as the instructor -- was seeking to help Samantha raise a pre-determined consciousness; because I had problems with this exercise, I also wanted Samantha to have problems with it. Secondly, like the well-meaning college instructors described by Delpit (1992), I was de-emphasizing my own cultural power, ultimately disempowering Samantha. I implicitly knew what the GED book people were looking for; Samantha did not. And by not taking the time to explain my implicit understanding (as evident in Excerpt 26, line 10, when I quickly shifted my attention to Samantha's freewrites), I was not explicitly telling her the rules, limiting her ability to acquire cultural power.

These excerpts also possibly reveal a reason for the limitations of my curricular design in helping students challenge dominant beliefs about language and literacy. Because I was so unwilling to dialogically engage with authoritarian GED exercises, I may have given extra authority to them. For in dialogically engaging with this 'Strong vs. Weak' exercise (as I was forced to do for this analysis), I *now* understand it as more than a promotion of centripetal language ideology; I *now* understand it as poor academic writing instruction, diminishing its authority.

Instructing students, as the GED exercise does, to use 'strong words' in academic writing is ineffective at improving academic writing craft. For example, Samantha's decision to replace *fast* with *expedite* (Excerpt 27, line 2) was awkward and did not strengthen the paragraph. However, while Samantha's use of different word forms (anxious, anxiety, anxiousness) was perhaps a bit too repetitive, it was helping her get closer to strengthening the paragraph: By

increasing her use of academic language, she was able to make use of abstraction and cohesion to better convey her intended meaning.

What if I had taken the time to explicitly explain the pedagogical problems with this exercise to students -- such as Zaria and Samantha -- who both found it 'helpful'? By pedagogically engaging with this exercise, I may have allowed for more explicit teaching about the elements of stronger academic writing, as well as helped to better inform students' own opinions of such exercises.

Evolving Thoughts

As I ended the previous chapter, I end this chapter by continuing to advocate for the promise of wrestling with the *how* of adult literacy academic writing pedagogy. After better getting to know Samantha as an adult literacy student, I want to return to McGraw's article -- and his questions -- about the unfairness of the GED 2014 (discussed in Chapter 1). McGraw asks: *"Do they [GED test-takers] really need to master algebra to work as a laborer in the construction trade or a shelf stocker at Walmart? Do they really need to demonstrate close reading skills to get an entry-level job to support themselves and their families?"* (p.3). The answer to these questions is no. Samantha neither needs to master algebra to stock shelves at Walmart nor does she need to demonstrate close reading skills to get an entry-level job. With only a seventh-grade education, she has had many of these jobs, two at a time, in fact, since one full-time minimum wage job did not allow her to make her rent payments.

But these questions do not relate to Samantha's desire to learn, expand, and use academic reading and writing to explore, discover, and express the complicated interconnectedness of things (as she did in her "bone connectedness" class essay about applications and race in Chapter

4). These questions do not acknowledge the power of academic learning to foster adult literacy students' becoming other than the other, nor do they acknowledge the influential potential of adult literacy students as they become other than the other.

Chapter 6: Adult Literacy: Continuing to Become Other than the Other

This dissertation study was fueled by my practitioner need to understand: How can adult literacy programs realize academic writing's unique educative potential to bring forth new understandings (Males, 1997) for their students? What are the *hows* of teaching for powerful literacy, what tensions may exist, and what can we learn by understanding these tensions? As an artist learns to draw by focusing on negative space: the space created by the outlines of objects, I wanted to learn how to pedagogically create by focusing on classroom negative space -- the space where different perspectives and concepts interact. In doing this, I was able to study the complexity of negotiating tensions, allowing me to better understand pedagogical hows and whats, informing the future of the adult literacy field.

Luria, as cited by Emig (1977), describes how the slowness of writing allows the past, present, and future of our experiences to connect, encouraging a shuttling among these tenses to make meaning. In reflecting on how to design a GED academic writing educative space, I have used the first part of this project to connect and reflect on past and present adult literacy and academic writing pedagogical discussions; I use this final chapter to summarize these reflections, as well as to connect them to future pedagogical discussions by answering my third research question: *How can answers to questions one and two help inform future adult literacy academic writing pedagogy?* This is followed by a description of the study's limitations and future directions for research.

Dissertation Summary

In my first chapter, I make my main argument that with WIOA and the new GED's inclusion of academic writing, more educational possibilities now exist for adult literacy

students. Instead of having to choose one binary educational goal over another (as past workforce and transformative paradigms did), adult literacy can join other K-12 and postsecondary educational systems in endeavoring to meet multiple educational goals (Biesta, 2012; Labaree, 1997). However, I also argue that taking advantage of these new possibilities is complicated by historical tension, both within adult literacy as well as within academic writing pedagogical fields. The chapter concludes by reflecting on how a powerful literacy-influenced (Gee, 1996) GED academic writing pedagogical framework studied through a Bakhtinian lens might allow the adult literacy field to better understand and learn from these tensions.

I used the second chapter to detail my design and theoretical framework. I first articulate the design of a powerful literacy-influenced GED academic writing curriculum framework, which 1) pulls from four broad theoretical views: *Writing to Learn, Systemic Functional-Linguistics, Academic Language Development, and Academic Literacies* and 2) is word-focused, allowing for multiple writing pedagogical perspectives to co-exist. In the second section, I introduce Bakhtin and unpack five Bakhtinian concepts: heteroglossia, centripetal/centrifugal forces, dialogue, authoritative/internally persuasive discourse, and ideological becoming, specifically focusing on how these concepts have been used to better understand classroom environments. The chapter ends by both reframing the derived power of a powerful literacy-influenced adult literacy pedagogy, as well as by acknowledging the need for a deeper understanding of conflict and 'becoming' in adult literacy.

Chapter 3 explains my design experiment and research methodology, detailing the study's evolution, as well as the research components. These included 1) qualitative and quantitative analysis of a five-week GED class (meeting three times a week for two hours a day) and 2) qualitative analysis of interviews with one student who experienced the classes. This

chapter also includes the limitations of these approaches and describes my positioning as a researcher.

In Chapter 4, I present both qualitative and quantitative findings from a five-week GED academic writing class, illustrating -- through a Bakhtinian lens – pedagogical tensions and their effects on student learning and academic writing. Findings revealed that a word-focused powerful literacy framework influenced GED academic writing lessons by 1) inviting and resisting dialogue, 2) hosting centrifugal but maintaining centripetal forces, 3) fostering and constraining ideological becoming, and 4) inhibiting and improving academic writing.

Chapter 5 delves deeper into understanding the framework's curricular implementation by presenting findings from a case study of a student who experienced the lessons. Qualitative findings revealed that for this particular student, the classes 1) encouraged multivoicedness, leading to productive revising, 2) fostered internally persuasive discourse, fostering ideological becoming, and 3) reified authoritative discourse, complicating critical literacy.

These combined findings have now allowed me to begin answering my third research question : *How can answers to questions one and two help inform future adult literacy academic writing pedagogy?*

Informing Future GED Academic Writing Pedagogy

As adult literacy programs continue to academically evolve, especially in regards to academic writing expectations, I urge the field to continue grappling with the *hows* of academic writing pedagogy in order to provide adult literacy students with transformative academic opportunities. To help inform this grappling, findings from Chapters 4 and 5 suggest the need to: 1) acknowledge the non-basicness of basic skill instruction, 2) confront the Bakhtinian

challenges of teaching for critical literacy, 3) experiment with culturally-sustaining pedagogical counter spaces, and 4) invest in dialogic professional development for teachers of adult literacy.

Acknowledge the non-basicness of basic skill instruction. Since basic writing instruction intensely highlights the heteroglot word, such teaching should be re-conceptualized as philosophically complex. Roseberry, Ogonowski, DiSchiod, and Warren (2010) explain (as cited in Chapter 2) that the meanings associated with even seemingly simple words -- like the word 'cold'-- cannot be taken for granted when teaching elementary-school children. Likewise, the neutrality of language within seemingly simple skill instruction (like identifying nouns) cannot be taken for granted when teaching adult literacy students -- adults with much word-lived experience.

Therefore, instead of relegating parts-of-speech instruction, for example, to a lower-order tier or equating it to "an act of oppression," such teaching can be reframed as touching upon what it means to be human; a noun is not simply a person, place, or thing, but also an abstract phenomenon (To, Le, & Le, 2013), allowing human beings to communicate felt experiences that cannot be seen or touched, such as love. Teaching in such an atmosphere would also allow teachers and students to philosophically contend with other 'basic' writing rules: A complete sentence needs to include a complete thought, but is there a way to truly distinguish a complete thought from an incomplete thought (Murray, 1985)?

By acknowledging the non-basicness of basic skill instruction in adult literacy, instructors can more deeply engage in its needed teaching, especially through dialogic instruction. Although there were some fruitful dialogic moments in my own skill-instruction, I was more likely to view these moments as distracting from -- rather than enhancing -- the lessons' intended learning outcomes. Yet, since learning outcomes in all writing lessons implicate Bakhtin's living

word, dialogic instruction is needed at all levels of instruction. This requires ‘basic’ skill instructors to both allow and intentionally plan for authentic teacher/student questioning and uptake, facilitating one of Freire’s adult literacy tenants: helping adult literacy participants understand the world through the word.

Confront the Bakhtinian challenges of critical literacy. However, while it is important to continue honoring Freire’s adult literacy vision of creating a socially just world, there is also a need to confront the inherent challenges in such a vision; this is particularly true in regards to teaching for critical literacy in present-day adult literacy. Freire’s focus on critical consciousness development emerged from working with students (peasants in extreme poverty) who maintained a magical consciousness: the belief that the circumstances of the oppressed are due to fate or ‘the will of God’ (Roberts, 2015). By helping the oppressed gain a critical consciousness, Freire sought to enable them to externalize a non-magical oppressor, recognize their man-made oppression, and begin to use their own words to name and rewrite their own world.

Many Freirian-inspired adult literacy instructors seek to continue helping adult learners gain a critical consciousness, urging learners to name and rewrite their world; yet, understood through a Bakhtinian lens, a critical-consciousness mandate poses many challenges for both the students-that-be and the teachers-that-be in adult literacy classrooms. First, the words students use to name and rewrite their worlds are not virginal; they both partly belong to them and partly belong to others. “After all,” Bakhtin wrote, ‘there are no words that belong to no one” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.121-122). Therefore, in renaming and rewriting their world, learners’ worlds are never completely theirs.

In addition, the world that learners name and rewrite is never static but always evolving. As adult literacy learners learn new words and meanings, they will continually change the words

they use to name and rewrite their worlds; as they confront the words that others use to name and rewrite their worlds, they may change (with some potential struggle and pain) their world-naming/rewriting words.

Lastly -- as clearly exemplified in my own teaching -- the words with which adult literacy students name and rewrite their worlds may be very different from the words a critical adult literacy instructor wants them to use, possibly compromising academic writing's potential promise. One of the potential affordances of the GED's inclusion of academic writing (as explained in Chapter 1) is that it balances shallow multiple choice-based teaching (for example: Ancient Greek civilization was democratic because it allowed males with land to vote) with deeper learning. However, in a critical adult literacy classroom, this depth may be limited by an instructor's implicit desire to orchestrate – rather than facilitate – a student's evolving consciousness.

Experiment with culturally sustaining pedagogical counter-spaces. In order to truly honor Freire's adult literacy vision of creating a more socially just world, the adult literacy field can raise the bar for what counts as literacy (Juzwik et al., 2006) by taking up heterogeneity (Roseberry, et al., 2010, p.353) within culturally-sustaining pedagogical counter-spaces. Historically, adult literacy programs, such as the Highlander school described in Chapter 1, have served as counter-spaces, allowing progressive educators to covertly experiment with alternatives to banking-system pedagogies, helping to redress the educational debt. As adult literacy programs incorporate academic writing, as well as inherent academic writing pedagogical dilemmas, these experimental counter-spaces may continue to be needed, especially to understand how to better balance centripetal and centrifugal forces.

One way to experiment with this balance is by incorporating Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2014) -- pedagogies that seek "to perpetuate and foster linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (p.85) – into adult literacy counter-spaces. While deeply honoring the previous work of scholars who helped to positively reposition non-dominant practices, Paris and Alim (2014) argue that asset- and culturally-relevant based pedagogies have often been enacted by teachers and researchers in ways that perpetuate a deficiency narrative, as well as in ways that fail to allow for dynamism in an increasingly globalized world. In contrast, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) centers on and engages with the rich complexities of students' evolving linguistic and cultural practices.

In a CSP counter-space, adult literacy programs can more fruitfully grapple with academic writing instructional tensions by supporting multilinguism in practice, as opposed to outside of practice (Michael-Luna & Canagarah, 2015). For example, what if discussions of code-meshing had replaced discussions of code-switching in my enactment of a powerful literacy-based academic writing pedagogy? What if we had explored how to textually build cohesion and link ideas by learning how to also manipulate the non-academic words of different linguistic and cultural practices? As discussed throughout this study, and as evident in my own findings, there is a perpetual tension between the power of academic language to strengthen an academic writers' intended meaning and evolving understandings, and the power of academic language to potentially foster the hierarchizing of languages, hierarchizing human-language users.

By reflecting on the need for adult literacy *students' right to their own language* (Smitherman, 1974), the adult literacy field is not starting 'ex nihilo' (Falmouth, 2008); instead, it is generatively connecting to reverberating voices of both past and present scholarship (Green,

2016; Horner & Lu, 2010; Michael-Luna & Canagarajah, 2015; Smitherman, 1974; Wood, Vaughan, & Machado, 2017). While the *how* of facilitating (as well as assessing for) culturally sustaining adult literacy academic writing pedagogy will be challenging, it will also allow for greater possibilities, allowing adult literacy students to bring their whole humanness to the powerful craft of academic writing.

Invest in dialogic professional development. In order for the adult literacy field to realize existing and potential possibilities, the field must invest in dialogic training for adult literacy instructors. Designing a multifaceted writing pedagogy that accounts for a comprehensive view of language and literacy (Ivanic, 2004) was difficult; teaching such a pedagogy sometimes felt impossible. Such teaching requires a multiplicity of skill expertise. For example, a high-level of grammatical knowledge is needed to dialogically teach basic skills. I often struggled with responding to students as they asked authentic questions about complex grammatical rules, inhibiting my uptake and evaluation abilities, inhibiting needed dialogic 'basic skill' instruction. Yet, in addition to a high-level of academic grammatical knowledge, an instructor also needs to skillfully use this knowledge to teach academic writing craft, while also skillfully understanding and communicating how this knowledge may perpetuate hegemonic beliefs.

Instructors must also develop productive dialogical instructional skills. Although dialogue, according to Bakhtin, is always happening (even in the absence of a Freirian-love between students and teachers), an instructor needs to facilitate this dialogue in order for it to be educationally productive. This requires study and guided practice, especially as instructors confront different beings and voices coming into classroom contact.

Equally as important, however, is the need to support practitioners as they confront the complexity of perspectival voices within a multifaceted writing pedagogy. In my own experience, this complexity sometimes had me close to becoming a strategy-based convert, and I needed a dialogic space (such as this dissertation) to resist. Likewise, adult literacy practitioners --- as they hear divergent scholarly voices -- will need a professional development space to reside as unfinished dialogic selves, allowing for their continual becoming as academic writing adult literacy educators.

Limitations

The main purpose of this research was not to find definitive answers, but rather to produce rich material to think with (Geertz, 1973), helping to inform next iterations of academic writing pedagogical experiments with adult literacy programs. Because of this, the study had many limitations, especially in regards to the generalizability and internal validity of the findings. Since study participants were recruited from one GED program and self-selected to participate, the sample was not representative of GED students, limiting generalization. And because the case-study focused on one student's experiences, these findings are not even generalizable to the classroom study participants, let alone to the whole group of adult literacy GED students (Erikson, 1986; Merriam, 2009).

In future iterations of this design experiment, it will be crucial to address issues of internal validity, ensuring that findings can more legitimately respond to the 2012 Committee of Learning Sciences call report for more empirical research on adult literacy learners (p.253). Next iterations should prioritize the inclusion of member checks, peer review, and qualitative coding inter-reliability, as well as scoring inter-reliability.

And finally, this study was limited by my role as both practitioner and researcher. While one of the advantages of my practitioner-researcher stance was an insider perspective, allowing for reflective depth and evaluation (Rowe, 2016) -- as well for Bakhtinian dialogue between my practitioner- and researcher-self (leading to my own, as well as this dissertation's, continual ideological becoming) -- it is also important to acknowledge the difficulty of understanding events when one is a part of them (Huberman, 1996; Cochran-Smith, 2006). In next iterations of this design experiment, an outsider perspective will be needed to truly spur educational engineering (Dewey,1922) within the adult literacy field, allowing the field to decrease its dependence on borrowed educational research as it grows into a legitimate third branch of the US educational system.

Suggestions for Future Research

However, as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the GED's academic focus contribute to the expansion of an adult literacy research agenda, this agenda needs to be more dialogic than it has been in the past. Currently, since adult literacy continues to be positioned within competing political and societal agendas, adult literacy research is used to support these different agendas, continuing to polarize adult literacy research and paralyze adult literacy pedagogy. For example, research investigating the academic reading and writing development of adult literacy students often describes students as "learners with reading and oral language deficits" (Tighe & Schatschneider, 2015, p.294); research that seeks to debunk these descriptions often excludes pedagogical insights about how to help adult literacy students develop academic reading and writing skills (Johnson & Rosario-Ramos, 2012).

Similar to Branch's (2007) and Shaughnessey's (1971) dilemmas (as discussed in Chapter 1 (p.22 and p.28)), adult literacy educators and researchers in 2018 are still caught-up in a dilemma: By relying on research to help adult literacy GED students develop academic skills, are we supporting deficit descriptions of our students? Or, by critically countering this research, are we neglecting the immediate academic learning needs of our students? Like magnets forced near enough to produce magnetic tension, adult literacy research agendas must be forced near enough to produce a Bakhtinian productive tension, resulting in the field's own ideological becoming. As Bakhtin (1986) states, "No human event unfolds or is decided by a single person or consciousness." (p.170). Through this dialogic research agenda, the adult literacy field can powerfully continue *becoming other than the other* within education.

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List of Appendices

Appendix A: Sentence Combining Activity Assessment

Directions: Below are groups of short, choppy sentences. These sentences can be combined to make just **one** longer and more interesting sentence. To do this, you need to change the forms of some words. For example, look at these two short sentences:
The school bus drove down a road.
The school bus had rust.
To combine these sentences into one longer sentence, you can change the form of rust to rusty, and write:
The rusty school bus drove down the road.
You can combine more than two sentences. For example, look at these four short sentences:
The school bus drove down a road.
The school bus had rust.
The drive was slow.
The road had bumps.
By changing word forms, these sentences can be combined to make the following longer sentence:
The rusty school bus slowly drove down a bumpy road.
Try combining the groups of sentences below into one longer sentence by changing word forms. Try not to use the word "and" to combine the sentences (For example, do not write: The school bus drove down a road and the school bus had dust.) The first one is done for you.

1. **The girl had lots of energy.**
The girl talked.
Her talk was constant.

The energetic girl talked constantly.

2. **The teacher stared at the paper.**
The teacher looked sad.
The paper was in shreds.

3. **The students felt confusion.**
The students wanted advice.
The advice would help.

4. **The campers slept under the sky.**
The sky looked like ink.
Their sleep was deep.

5. **The police investigated the crime.**
The investigation was careful.
The crime was a mystery.

---

6. **The students ate the soup.**
Steam rose from the soup.
The soup had flavor.
The eating was quick.

---

8. **The motorcycle backfired.**
The backfire was loud.
The motorcycle sputtered.
The motorcycle had dents.

---

9. **The snake was slow.**
The snake moved his coils down the tree.
The tree had moss.
The coils glistened.

---

10. **The seal swam toward the penguins.**
The penguins felt terror.
The seal's path was direct.
The seal had spots.

Appendix B: Primary Code Examples (Class Lessons)

PRIMARY CODES	Examples
Dialogic	• Discussion of word forms and apostrophes; students discuss their confusion about where to put apostrophe for plural possession. • Discussion of emotions of words: Discussion of the use of 'Nobody knows' vs. 'no one knows" • Discussion of African-American vs. Black • Discussion about starting sentence with 'because' • Discussion of Michael's sentence "*The exclusive accounts of the nature of the crime defines the nature of the crook"* • Discussion about nouns as abstract things – Tameka: "*I hope that love is not a noun."* • Discussion of 'growth' as a noun, and 'growing' as an adjective
Monologic	• Morphology lessons on Define – ask several known-answers (*What is inapplicably modifying?*) • Reading text: What part of speech (political and demographic)? • Reading article - phrase: hotly contested - "*Now Tell me this, what part of speech is contested? Now what is 'hotly' doing?*/brushed off Mesalit's question: *But means hotly?* • Tell me when 'answer' is a noun and when it is a verb: He answered the question/He questioned the answer • Yes/no questions: Sasha: *Okay – good. Tameka, does that seem right? It's a thing, right?* Tameka: *yeah*
Centrifugal	• Discussion of keeping 'ol ways of talking' – • Phyllis*: Standard English is not the only language - so it doesn't mean that you are not educated...* • Samantha: *"How language is kinda complicated and so many different forms. But Standard English [pause] also oppressed the other languages."* • Phyllis description of brother and code-switching • Samantha's statement about 'there are many parts of you' • Michael's acknowledgement of Dominant American English (Paris & Alim, 2014).
Centripetal	• Tameka: *"I was just thinking - there have been plenty of movies - and do they talk because of lack of education --"it had me saying "Uh?" It is kinda like - country..."* • Samantha: *"It's funny - even though we know Standard English when we hear it and we know when we don't hear it. Like, we know when we hear it, it is not right - but being in America, we kinda know: that don't sound right…you know, school, and learning the language"* • Samantha**:** "*But also it is very important to learn that language, so you have to really adapt."* • Samantha: "*The way that you feel about some of the words that you hear in your mind but it could be not the words that you are speaking - you have to learn how to critique it or turn it off a little."* • Michael: "But that don't sound right" • Class support for strong vs. weak word exercise
Understanding Ideological Becoming	• Samantha: "*I like this class - now it's got me thinking about things I never be thinking about before...now I'm asking myself: what is the purpose?* Explains her "Should/Should Not" template that she created for herself • Samantha's realization about how she previously approached applications: *"It's funny – I'm just used to circle, but I never thought about it. I can't think about why not? Why we should:*

Unless it's a balance...why...I never..I just never thought about it I just circled...I know that for demographics..."

- Samantha's bone connected essay
- Phyllis changing her mind: *"It shouldn't - I don't see any reason..you know, I think it is discriminatory../"but now that you all have been putting in your input…"*
- Michael: "*I'm not getting it - not like I should be*"
- Michael: "*What I'm trying to say - my memory...I'm not familiar with writing like this..."*
- Michael: "*Um…so ..this is giving me ideas that I don't speak the language – I don't speak English - right…"*
- Michael: *"I am being honest - my only goal is to graduate and to get out of here in one piece...cause you know..."*
- Micheal: *"I find myself talking like a textbook and some people think that I am coming from above"*
- Michael: *"I wish I could be the teacher – if I learned well enough. Cause it must be fun – it must be fun - it must be fun challenging other people, making other people challenge their abilities – you know – and trying to teach knowledge"*
- Michael: *"I'm learning, right, but sometimes I'm thinking - gosh, I wish I would have said that…"*
- Tameka states that she will *Never* change her mind
- Tameka states the Facebook responders were thinking like her
- Tameka: *"So he is saying that they ask for your race to basically stop the racial? How?"*
- Tameka's summary start

Appendix C: Example Codebook for Classroom Analysis

Secondary Codes (Examples)

HET	*Heteroglossia*: discussions related to word/word-form meanings
INSTRAUTH	*Instructor authentic questions*: open-ended questions with no pre-specified answers
INSTRUP	*Instructor uptake*: the incorporation of a student response into a subsequent question
INSTRHL	*Instructor high level evaluation*: the elaboration of a student's answer by building on it in subsequent interactions.
IRE	*Initiation, Response, and Evaluation*: Instructor asked questions with right/wrong answers.
AUTHD	*Authoritative Discourse:* instances where students wanted grammar rules, and/or used words such as 'improper' to describe ways of speaking
MISSCRITLIT	*Missed Critical Literacy Opportunities*: instances where students/class/instructor resisted engaging in critical literacy awareness activities
IDENTITY:	*Identity Statements*: 'I' statements made by students when describing themselves
INTERNPERS	*Internally persuasive*: student statements that included phrases such as 'changing my mind' or 'thinking differently'
NOTINTERNPERS	Not internally persuasive: student statements that included phrases such as "Never Changing,' 'Don't think like that,' 'Think like I do'

Primary Codes (Examples)

CENTRIF	*Centrifugal*: grouping of codes "code-switching,' 'awareness of DAE'
CENTRIP	*Centripetal*: grouping of codes AUTHD and MISSCRITLIT
DIAL	*Dialogic Instruction*: grouping of codes HET, INSTRAUTH, INSTRUP, INSTRHL
MONO	*Monologic Instruction*: Instances of IRE
UnderIDEOLBEC	Understanding Ideological Becoming: grouping of codes IDENTITY, INTERNPERS, NOINTERNPERS

Appendix D: Analysis of Sentence Combining Assessment

- **Meaning:** The first column, "meaning maintained," accumulates a point for each kernel of meaning that is maintained in the child's response (i.e., do they express all the relationships correctly). Synonyms do not count as maintaining meaning (e.g., *looked* instead of *stared*).
- **Morphology**: The second column, "morphological changes," accumulates a point for each target word that was changed into a *correct* morphological relative in the child's response. Producing a nonword or an improper derivation for the context are scored as 0. Some phrases are unlikely to elicit a morphological change (e.g., 7A), in which case, still score as 0.
- **Spelling:** The third column "spelling correct" concerns **only morphologically changed words**. Therefore, if credit was not given for a morph change, spelling is automatically scored as a zero—even if the words they did write were spelled correctly. If a word is changed and spelled properly, score as 1. If spelled incorrectly (e.g.: shreded), score as 0.
- **Grammaticality:** Determine whether the sentence provided was grammatical. Circle *Yes* if grammatical, *No* if ungrammatical (e.g., run-ons, fragments, improper word order, improper verb conjugations, etc.).

1.

		Meaning maintained	Morph change	Spelling correct	
The teacher stared at the paper	A.	______	_______	_______	
The teacher looked sad.	B._	______	______	_______	Grammatical? Yes No
The paper was in shreds.	C.	_________	_____	_______	(1) (0)

2.

		Meaning maintained	Morph change	Spelling correct	
The campers slept under the sky.	A.	_______	______	_______	
The sky looked like ink.	B.	_______	_______	_______	Grammatical? Yes No
Their sleep was deep.	C.	_____	_______	_______	(1) (0)

3.

		Meaning maintained	Morph change	Spelling correct	
The police investigated the crime.	A.	_______	_______	_______	
The investigation was careful.	B.	_______	_______	_______	Grammatical? Yes No
The crime was a mystery.	C.	_______	_______	________	(1) (0)

4.

		Meaning maintained	Morph change	Spelling correct	
The students ate the soup.	A.	________	_______	______	
Steam rose from the soup.	B.	________	_______________		Grammatical? Yes No
The soup had flavor.	C.	_______	________________		(1) (2)
The eating was quick.	D.	______	_______________		

5.

		Meaning maintained	Morph change	Spelling correct	
The snake was slow.	A.	_______	_______	_______	
The snake moved his coils down the tree.	B.	_______	_______	_______ _______	
The tree had moss.	C.	_______	_______	_____	Grammatical? Yes No
The coils glistened.	D.	_______ _______		______	(1) (0)

6.

		Meaning maintained	Morph change	Spelling correct	
The motorcycle backfired.	A.	_______ _______	______	______	
The backfire was loud.	B.	_______ _______	_______	______	
The motorcycle sputtered.	C.	_______ _______	______	______	Grammatical? Yes No
The motorcycle had dents.	D.	_______________	____________		(1) (0)

7.

		Meaning maintained	Morph change	Spelling correct	
The baker placed the cookies on the tray.	A.	_______ _______	_______	______	
The cookies had icing.	B.	_______ _______	_______	_____	
The tray shimmered.	C.	_______ _______	_______	_____	Grammatical? Yes No
The baker was in a hurry.	D.	_______ _______	_______		(1) (0)

8.

		Meaning maintained	Morph change	Spelling correct	
The seal swam toward the penguins.	A.	_______ _______	_______	______	
The penguins felt terror.	B.	_______ _______	_______	______	
The seal's path was direct.	C.	_______ _______	_______	______	Grammatical? Yes No
The seal had spots.	D.	_______ _______	_______	_______	(1) (0)

Appendix E: Revision Assessment Tool

	First Draft	Examples	Second Draft	Examples
Word Count:				
Number of Sentences				
Number of Morphologically complex words				

Appendix F: Example Codebook for Case Study Analysis

Secondary Codes (Examples)

WORDSTALK *Words Talking to Her*: Mentions of words influencing thinking/writing

SELFTALK *Talking to Herself*: Mentions of "I said to myself" or "I asked myself

OTHERV *Other Voices Talking to her:* Mentions of 'then I thought about what you/they said"

CONNECTION *Connection statements:* Mentions of the form of the word 'connect' in regards to words/language

I-KNEW *I-knew-before statements*: Statements that contained forms of phrase "I knew before" (ie: I been knowing those words for years)

I-NEVER *I-never-before statements:* Statements that contained forms of the phrase "I never before" (used a word/though like that/wrote like that, etc.)

CAME-TO-ME *It-just-came-to-me statements*: Statements that contained forms of the phrase "it just came to me" (as in a word/a thought just came to me)

Primary Codes (Examples)

MULTI V *Multivoicedness*: Grouping of codes WORDSTALK, SELFTALK, and OTHERV

INTERNPERS *Internally persuasive*: Grouping of codes CONNECTION, I-KNEW, I-NEVER, and CAME-TO-ME

Appendix G: Vocabulary Exercise

Word Forms of Academy

Noun	Verb	Adjective	Adverb
Academy	(no known verb form)	Academic	Academically

Use the best form of the word to fill in the blank below:

1. After attending the program, the students' ______________ work improved.

2. After attending the program, students improved __________________________.

Word Forms of Economy

Noun	Verb	Adjective	Adverb
economy	economize	economic	economically
economist			

Rewrite the following sentences using another form of the word 'economy.' The first one is done for you.

1. Many <u>people who study the economy</u> believe that education can contribute to <u>the growth of the economy</u>.

Answer: **Many economists believe that education can contribute to economic growth.**

2. <u>Communities that are disadvantaged in an economic way</u> may benefit from adult literacy programs. (Hint: Start the sentence with the adverb form of 'economy')

Answer:

Appendix H: Student Essays – Mesalit

Essay Topic: *Should applications ask for one's race or religion? Why or why not?*

Mesalit: First Draft

The job applicatios should not ask for race or religion. Because if any one has the full criterial (requare) about the job Why not ask race or religion. Every one can work by having any position. When the job applications ask race or religion It does not have enough experience the race or religion. To me I don't believe the race and religion ask for job. Every race can work and any religion follow person can work if required for the job application.

Mesalit: Second Draft

The job application Should not ask for race or religion because it has noting to do with one's ability to perform the job's requirements.

For example, if someone can required qualification of that job, it should not matter race (the color). I believe any one can Come from anywhere, any religion, If it has permanet residential or if it is legal can work. The only need who can work properly or who has the ability for this job.

Appendix I: Student Essays – Zaria

Essay Topic: Should applications ask for one's race or religion? Why or why not?

Zaria: First draft

I don't think applications should ask for ones race or eligion beacsue an advertised job is looking for a qualified candidate not the race or religion of tha person.

Some employers are biased against a particular race or religion. Therefore, when they come across an applicant with that particular race they shy away from that application even if that applicant is qualified to do the job.

So I think race or religion should not be part of the application also because, I feel that at most, an employer who is negative toward a particular race or religion will have no patience in reveiewing that application. They already have a pre-assumption of that race or religion so are alsways bias against you as they already judge you from their earlier perception of that race or religion.

Zaria: Second draft

After a deeper thought as to whether employers should ask about an applicant's race or religion, I think this is an essential and complicated part of the application process. Therefore, I think race or religion should be added in the application.

Knowing an applicant's race or religion will help the employer know the culture of certain races, the medical needs and the behavior of certain races.

With an individuals culture, the employer will learn why certain groups eat with hands in the same bowl which might be questionable in the American society. My culture encourages people to eat with hands in the same bowl and it also discourages one to look straight into the eyes of people which is an unacceptable culture in my Country.

Also, some culture have certain diseases that needs to be catered for For example, there is a high rate of hypertension in my country and this needs to be catered for , therefore, the employer needs to provide insurance coverage for his/her employees to match their needs.

Again, my society does not encourage a child to talk back at elders, which is considered as disrespectful, and an elder should not stand while a child is sitting down.

With regards, these diverse cultural practices, employers should be careful not to stereotyping certain cultures as individual peaopl are different so should not see a Sierra Leonena (my culture) and predict the persons behavior.

Finally, certain behavior as children not listening to grown-ups, talking or sitiing in their midst is widely unacceptable in my culture as it is termed as disrespectful but on the other hand, is widely acceptable in the American culture.

If an employer is aware of an employee's cultural background and race, he/she will be able to cater for different people from different backgrounds. This will ensure a smooth running of the organization and will understand why certain races behave the way they do and incooperate the good and acceptable behaviors in the culture of their organization.

Therefore, I think employers need to ask about ones race or religion to better understand why people behavior in a certain way and when they understand these behaviors from different cultures of races, they will be able to cater for all employees effectively

Appendix J: Student Essays – Samantha

Essay Topic: *Should applications ask for one's race or religion? Why or why not?*

Samantha: First Draft

Should applications ask for one's race or religion? My main argument is that it shouldn't be. The reason why I believe it shouldn't be is race we live in a multi-culture [sic] world and everyone deserves to get a fair deal. Their [sic] is no reason for race or religion on performance.

Samantha: Second Draft

In life, we are all connected in so many different ways. The human body has different distinct parts, however they are all connected. For example, if you have a toot[h]ache, your ear hurts. These many connections in life are complicated and puzzling. One of our major questions of this century is whether we should ask a person['s] race on documents and applications. I am taking time to examine this question for myself. At first I said we shouldn't ask a person['s] race, that is not necessary. After reading and some research on the matter, I am changing my mind.

Appendix K: Samantha's Strong vs. Weak Revisions Attempts

Directions: Rewrite the paragraph so that it uses varied and precise words. As you rewrite the paragraph, try to use the best possible word choice. Watch out for vague words, informal expressions, and slang. Replace them with more precise words and phrases tha clearly express your meaning (your paragraph might get a little longer).

Paragraph A:

Speaking in front of a class is hard. It makes me freak out. Sometimes my heart starts beating fast even before I am called upon. This causes me to stress even more. My hands and legs start to move. I get sweaty. By the time my teacher calls on me, I am a mess.

Samantha's Revision Attempt #1:

Speaking in front of a class is difficult for me which makes me nervouse. Sometimes before I begin to speak, my heart beats fast. This causes more stress on me. My hands and legs starts moving which cause them to become sweaty. By the time the teacher calls on me, I am so stressed out.

Samantha's Revision Attempt #2:

Speaking in front of a class can be difficult for me, I begin to feel anxious. Just before speaking sometimes my anxiety causes my heartbeat to expedite, which leaves me pre_____[left blank] and my legs and hands to twitch. Therefore by the time the teacher calls me my anxiousness has taken over.