

Classroom Materials as Spheres of Influence: Examining Institutional Influences on a Novice High School English Teacher

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General Poster Layout:

Background is a classroom. There is a large Title Box at the top, and to the left of it is the speaker icon to activate the presentation audio. Under the title box are three dark orange boxes in a row with arrows connecting them; they are referred to as the Top Row below. Beneath each of the dark orange boxes is a column of boxes, labeled Right Column, Center Column, and Left Column below. At the bottom of the poster is a very small References box that spans with width of the poster.

Title Box:

The title of the piece (Classroom Materials as Spheres of Influence: Examining Institutional Influences on a Novice High School English Teacher) is centered and bookended by two identical BGSU logos. Beneath the title is the researcher information: Brandie Bohney, Doctoral Candidate, Rhetoric and Writing Program, Bowling Green State University.

Top Row:

The left box has a title that reads, "A Bit of Background," and beneath it is the following text:

PREVIOUS RESEARCH LEADS TO A QUESTION: A great deal of research indicates that early-career high school English teachers are strongly influenced by their colleagues and school environment; often the influence of the school community is significantly greater than the influence of their preparation programs (Grossman, Valencia, Evans, Thompson, Martin, & Place, 2000; Johnson, Thompson, Smagorinsky, & Fry, 2003; Smagorinsky, Wright, Murphy Augustine, O'Donnell-Allen, & Konopak, 2007; Smagorinsky, Wilson, & Moore, 2011).

An arrow points to the center box which reads,

What these studies do not do, though, is respond to the following question: HOW DO INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS INFLUENCE EARLY-CAREER ENGLISH TEACHERS' WRITING INSTRUCTION PRACTICES? This research explores the ways in which the school environment influences an early-career high school English teacher and finds that texts used in instruction are a strong source of influence.

An arrow points from the center box to the right box, which has the title Research Site between images of a school building and a person teaching at the front of a classroom. The left column contains information about the teaching site:

- Midwestern public high school
- Roughly 900 students
- 19% minority population
- Top 20% in state for reading/language arts proficiency

The right column contains information about the case study participant:

- Case Study Pseudonym: Gordon

- Second-year English teacher
- Single, young, white male
- Teaching 9th and 10th grades
- Graduate teacher preparation program

Left Column (Findings):

The left column contains two boxes with findings detailed. The top box is titled “Findings: Institutional Ethnography.” It contains a bar chart and the following text:

CO-CREATED TEXTS: Of the 44 mentions of instructional strategies in 9th-grade professional learning community (PLC) meetings, 55 percent (n=24) related to creation and use of classroom materials.

From the shared strategies, fifteen categories of strategies emerged, and of these categories, 60 percent (n=9) were cross-coded with the institutional ethnographic category of influential texts. This data is represented in the chart at right.

The bar chart contains details of how many times the nine strategies cross-coded with influential texts were referenced in the field notes:

- Worksheet/Graphic Organizer = 6
- Genre Play = 4
- Shared Resources = 3
- Instructions = 3
- Models/Examples = 3
- Guiding Questions = 2
- Rubric = 1
- Notecards = 1
- Student-Teacher Collaboration = 1

The bottom box is titled “Findings: Case Study.” It contains a bar chart and the following text:

TEXTS IN PRACTICE: Classroom materials strongly impact Gordon’s practices in his classroom, and the process-tracing interview indicated that the community strongly influences creation and use of those texts. School-based influences (colleagues, standards/testing, students) comprised 95 percent (n=37) of the references coded for influence in the process-tracing interview.

This finding led to a similar cross-analysis of the coding of the classroom observations: of the nine PLC-specific strategies from the IE that coincided with texts, I observed five in Gordon’s practices. Of those five, four were among the six text-based strategies he most-often employed (two other text-based strategies also had seven references each).

The bar chart includes two rows of bars. The front row represents the data from the PLC meetings (also represented in the unordered list above), and the back row represents the data from the classroom observations of the case study participant. There are four overlapping strategies, represented in the table below:

	Shared Resource	Instructions	Worksheet/	Models/
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			Graphic Organizer	Examples
PLC References	3	3	6	3
Case Study References	20	17	16	7

Center Column (Implications and Conclusion):

The center column contains two boxes. The top box is titled “Implications.” It contains only text:

TEXTS CREATE INSTRUCTION

In the observations of Gordon’s classroom practices, it was obvious that texts of various types drive his instruction: slide decks display the agenda daily, necessary materials are shared digitally through Google Classroom and referenced in the slide decks, worksheets and graphic organizers guide student activity, and instructions and examples are often written as well as spoken throughout class. Although Gordon’s use of guiding questions, circulation, and conferencing (among several other strategies) do not experience the same cross-coding with texts, the classroom materials are at the core of nearly all of the instruction.

THE COMMUNITY CO-CREATES TEXTS

It is clear that the strong community-based institutional forces influencing Gordon’s classroom practices revolve around the creation and use of texts for use in class based on three related findings:

- Much of the discussions in PLC meetings regarding instructional strategies revolves around the creation and use of classroom materials
- Gordon’s classroom is deeply influenced by the texts he creates and uses
- The interview tracing the processes Gordon uses for creating those texts indicates that the most significant influence on his process is his school community

The bottom box is titled, “Conclusion.” It contains the following text (in a large, bold font):

The initial findings of this study indicate that the strong influence by the school community on Gordon’s instructional practices derives from community generation of texts for and discussion of their use in the classroom.

Right Column (Methods and Methodology):

The right column contains one large box with two complex diagrams. The box is labeled “Methods and Methodology.” Beneath the title is this text:

METHODOLOGY:

Institutional ethnography is a theory of feminist research practice that seeks not to make generalizations about the community being investigated, but instead “to investigate how the individuals within a location co-create the dynamics and processes under investigation” (LaFrance, 2019, p. 5).

METHODS:

This study begins with an institutional ethnography to determine generalized effects of the community on the practices within that community and then narrows to a case study of an early-career English teacher to determine the extent to which that influence affects his emerging classroom practices.

Beneath this text are two columns: on the left, a diagram and description of the institutional ethnography, and on the right, a diagram and description of the case study. The text for each column and an explanation of the diagrams are below:

Institutional Ethnography

Participant Observation:

- Meeting observations (12)
- Classroom observations (2)

Analysis:

- State standards
- Course descriptions
- Classroom materials

The diagram shows three boxes in a circular cycle pattern with double-ended arrows between them. The three boxes read "PLC Observations," "Classroom Observations," and "Artifact Analysis." Beneath them is a separate one-way arrow to a box that reads, "'Coding and Analysis.'"

Case Study:

Participant Observation:

- Classroom observations (4)

Artifact Analysis:

- State standards
- Classroom materials

Interview:

- Pedagogy history interview (1)
- Process-tracing interview (1)
- Discourse-based interviews (2)

The diagram shows a box labeled "Pedagogy History Interview" by itself at the top. Below it is a box labeled "Classroom Observations 1 and 2" connected to a box labeled "Discourse-Based Interview." Below that is a box labeled "Classroom Observations 3 and 4." It is connected to two boxes: one labeled "Discourse-Based Interview," and another labeled "Artifact Analysis," which is then further connected to another box labeled, "Process-Tracing Interview."

References:

The references box along the bottom of the poster contains the following text:

References: Grossman, P., Valencia, S., Evans, K., Thompson, C., Martin, S., & Place, N. (2000). Transitions into teaching: Learning to teach writing in teacher education and beyond. *Journal of Literacy Research*. 32(4), 631-662. Johnson, T. S., Thompson, L., Smagorinsky, P., & Fry, P.

(2003). Learning to teach the five- paragraph theme. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 38(2), 136-176. LaFrance, M. (2019). *Institutional Ethnography: A Theory of Practice for Writing Studies Researchers*. Logan, UT. Utah State University Press. Smagorinsky, P., Wright, L., Murphy Augustine, S., O'Donnell-Allen, C., and Konopak, B. (2007). Student engagement in the teaching and learning of grammar: A case study of an early-career secondary school English teacher. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 58(1), 76- 90. Smagorinsky, P., Wilson, A. A., and Moore, C. (2011). Teaching grammar and writing: A beginning teacher's dilemma. *English Education*, 43(3), 262-292.