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Emotions in Academic Writing/Care-Work in Academia: Notes Towards a Repositioning of Academic Labor in India (& Beyond)

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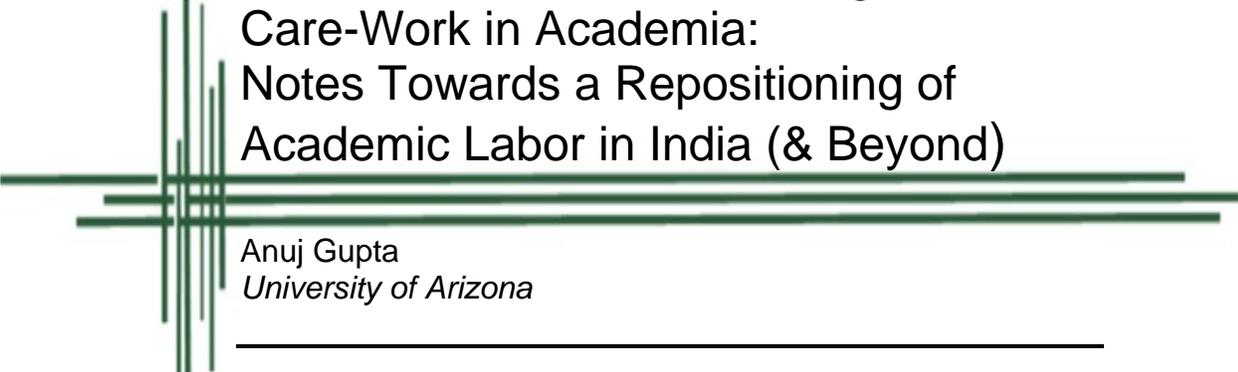
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Academic Labor: *Research & Artistry*

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Emotions in Academic Writing/ Care-Work in Academia: Notes Towards a Repositioning of Academic Labor in India (& Beyond)

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Abstract

In this article I seek to reflect on a rupture that happened in my college-level writing classroom in India when a student chose to write about her experience of rape and accompanying life-long trauma in a literacy narrative assignment. This rupture, and the ways in which I struggled to engage with it, were initially discomfoting but eventually led to strong convictions about the need to reposition academic writing and labor in Indian universities in a manner that sees the epistemic value of emotions in academic writing and the ethical value of care-work in academia as essential ingredients required to create a socially just world. Both ingredients have the potential to counter the debilitating effects that trauma has on students' abilities to learn and succeed in college, especially for those who are at a higher risk for mental distress due to their marginalized positionalities. Through a thick description of my experiences, I explore the rationale for the call to reposition academic labor; share some practically feasible suggestions which teachers and administrators motivated to work towards social justice can use to experiment in their classrooms; and end by reflecting on the limitations and challenges involved in such experimentation.

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In November 2018 I faced what is perhaps one the most challenging learning experiences that I have had as a teacher of critical writing—an experience that has been instrumental in transforming my pedagogic positionality about what is worth teaching in my Critical Writing class, and how it should be taught.

From 2016-2020 I have taught a graduate level Critical Writing course in an experimental and multidisciplinary one-year post-graduate diploma program at an emerging liberal arts university near New Delhi, India. College-level writing courses, in the American sense of the term, are fairly new to Indian higher education institutions, but over the last two decades more than a dozen such courses and writing centers have sprung up in various Indian universities, along with the importation of the American model of the private liberal arts university. Along with them have also come assignments that ‘invite’ students to write about their personal experiences in ways that may seem natural to many American students, but not yet to Indian students. My work with such assignments has transformed how I understand my position in the classroom, and what I try to achieve with my students.

While faculty in public universities in India sometimes face classes with hundreds of students, my classes over the last four years had about 30 students, generally aged between 21- 28. The program where I taught invites about 300 students who have completed an undergraduate degree and are seeking to experience a multidisciplinary education (something that most, if not all, Indian institutions currently lack) in order to make informed decisions about their future academic and/or professional lives. Within this one-year long program, the Critical Writing course runs for about 10 months and is spread out across the year. It seeks to build critical reading, writing, and thinking abilities. There are 10 sections of this course which consist of about 30 students each which are taught by 10 writing preceptors, or as they are now called, writing faculty. As part of this Critical Writing course, students learn how to write in a range of genres to improve their readiness for academic, social, and professional careers. This readiness usually involves the teaching of academic genres like summaries, reviews, and position papers. After reading some of the work on literacy by scholars in the U.S. discipline of writing studies (see Carter; Corkery; Gee; González et al.), however, I decided to experiment with the literacy narrative genre in order to move beyond the confines of the writing-for-academic-purposes paradigm that is common in India and other countries influenced by British models of education.

When I first introduced this assignment in the fall of 2018, I explained it to students by telling them that this is a kind of long reflective essay on key moments in their experience of acquiring some form of literacy they considered to be central to their lives (Appendix A). After assigning the essay, a female student, whom I will call Zoya, came up to talk to me after class and asked me if it would be okay to write about

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literacies gained through difficult personal life experiences. “Of course!” I told her enthusiastically. One week later, she sent me her first draft titled, “To Hell and Back Again – Broken Not Yet, My Journey through Rape and Patriarchy.” Such topics were not what I had expected at all. In it, she described her experience of being raped in graphic detail and the life-long “learnings” this experience had given her. Zoya recounted that what made it worse was her experience of living in a conservative, northwestern Indian family that blamed her for what she went through and subjected her to further violence.

When I read her account of being brutalized, not once but many times, I felt uncomfortable. I felt concerned. I felt numb. What should/could I have done? My initial impulse was to help her in some form, but I couldn’t work out exactly how or what I could do. My second response was to ask whether this kind of work was even part of my job as a teacher of writing. How could I ask her to revise her account of rape?! Should/could this even be a valid topic for a literacy narrative assignment in a writing class, or something that you write about inside any classroom for that matter? Doesn’t it feel wrong and insensitive to think of rape and the subsequent trauma attached to it as a form of literacy? How should I use this draft to provide lessons in style, thesis development, and academic writing?

When such questions come up in American classes, I think students and teachers are often well positioned to draw up counseling services, institutional policies, and established pedagogical protocols. While I did have access to the campus’ counseling services (which also is a rarity in India), I did not have any policies or prior protocols to follow, and this interaction ruptured my sense of what I was teaching and who I was in relation to my students.

In this essay, I will attempt a thick description of the rupture this moment created in the fabric of my classroom—a rupture that, I will argue, has enabled a repositioning of my conventional ideas about what should constitute academic writing and academic labor and helped me recognize how deeply rooted they are in cultural norms, institutional practices, and prevailing hierarchies. It has also opened up possibilities for social justice by helping me realize that many life experiences cause trauma in students’ lives—something that drastically impacts their abilities to excel in academic work (Cole et. al vi). Instead of being an exception, trauma is, in fact, widely prevalent (Davidson 5), and students from marginal positionalities are especially vulnerable to it. By creating the space for students to become more attuned to their emotions through reading, writing, and thinking tasks, and by re-imagining care-work to be valuable academic labor that students, teachers and staff are trained to do, a more resilient, caring, and just world can come into being.

To make this argument, in the first part of this essay, I will narrate my experiences of working with Zoya on her literacy narrative to offer a guide to other teachers who might be faced with similar situations. Here,

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I will draw mainly on primary sources, which include my interviews with Zoya as well as a few other students in her class; my reflections on her drafts; my recollections of my conversations with colleagues and friends who I had reached out for help at the time; as well as my reading of Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery*, which had given me a good suggestive framework to initiate myself into thinking about trauma and its relationships to writing at that time. In the second part then, I will contextualize my particular experience using a range of secondary sources from feminist pedagogic movements, trauma studies, education studies, colonial history, and writing pedagogy. While doing this, I will explore the rationale for my call for the repositioning of academic labor; share some practical suggestions which teachers and administrators motivated to work towards social justice can use to experiment in their classrooms and institutions; and reflect on the limitations and challenges involved in such experimentation.

While my positionality as a teacher and writing program administrator in India who is about to begin his graduate studies in rhetoric and composition in the U.S. necessitates that my essay will involve a mixture of Indian and American contexts and resources, I am hoping that my audience will not be limited to only these two contexts, but will also include teachers and administrators from across the world who are interested in exploring ways to make their institutions and classrooms more caring, resilient, and just, while keeping in mind their specific academic, pedagogical, institutional, and cultural contexts.

Part One: A Male Teacher's Account of Working with a Female Student Recounting her Experience of Rape in an Assignment

Trigger Warning: The remaining part of the paper includes unedited excerpts from Zoya's drafts about her experience of sexual violence which she has given me permission to use for this essay. Including these excerpts in their original form is important for charting out the pedagogic challenges that my paper entails. I want to request that readers who might be triggered by this decide whether they would like to read this paper further or not, and I respect their decisions either way.

I remember feeling a sense of paralysis on first reading Zoya's draft which started with a graphic description of her being raped by her art teacher when she was thirteen years old:

...He held my head from my forehead and banged it to the corner of the indoor pot, hard. I could feel warmth of the blood trickling. And as I started losing vision, I saw blood on that white pot corner. I was jolted back to consciousness after a while, [...] the metallic smell of blood was strong, but what struck me more was the nasty smell of rotten eggs and the difficulty in breathing. He had shoved his sock in my throat. It was disgusting. I was trying to push it out

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with my tongue, it tasted dusty and salty. And I could feel the searing pain from my groin region, with a splashing sound of sorts. He hadn't realized that I had woken up perhaps. I pulled the sock out and started clawing at his eyes and face as vigorously as I could. He just caught my wrist, brought it too my chest and pressed, hard, slowly.. I could see red again and the pain was searing, and I once again lost consciousness. When I regain consciousness again, breathing was extremely painful. Everything was painful. He was still there; I could feel him biting my nipples, biting...., and warmth of blood, the metallic and rotten egg smell. With a great effort, I just moved my legs and managed to kick him near the groin, I think, he withdrew. I could just hear his breathing. I was not completely naked, I had torn clothes on. I pulled the sock out and started to get up. But I wasn't able to escape. And this ordeal ended when he was done. After my parents arrived, the doctor came and was asked to stay shut about the matter. I had 54 bite marks, a dislocated hip and broken ulnar, with 6 broken ribs, broken right zygomatic, subdural hematoma and depressed open linear cranial fracture in the HBL area and Seizure disorder for a decade to come. ("To Hell and Back Again" 2-3)

I was numb after first reading this. A cold sweat ran down my neck as I realized that I don't just have to read this, but I must also give feedback to help Zoya revise. Worse, I must ultimately grade it. My initial discomfort emerged from various layers of complications: as a young, 26-year-old upper-caste¹, upper-class male who has been privileged enough to not face any sexual violence in his life in India, how do I give feedback to a female student² who is almost the same age³ as me about her narrative of rape? If I ask her to improve her sentence structures, logical coherence,

¹ Caste is a dehumanizing system of social segregation and oppression that is legally banned but still practised in many overt and subtle shapes and forms across South Asia. In some ways, it is similar to how race operates in contemporary U.S. but not exactly the same. Non-South Asian readers interested in familiarizing themselves with this phenomenon are recommended to read Dr. B. R Ambedkar's *The Annihilation of Caste*.

² In order to protect her anonymity, I am unable to reveal any more of Zoya's specific positionality markers even though that would help deepen this analysis. However, it is important for readers to know that apart from her gender, there are certain other positions of marginality, as well as some positions of financial and academic privilege, that inform her subjectivity.

³ Since many teachers at the unique diploma program where I teach start teaching at a young age right after their Master's degrees, and since the students at this program come having done their Bachelor's degrees and in some cases even their Master's, it is not uncommon in many classes for teachers and students to be in the same age bracket. In fact, in some cases, I have also had students who were a couple of years older to me.

characterization, etc., wouldn't that . . . I still can't find the right word for it . . . be wrong? Sadistic? Voyeuristic? Further complicating the situation was the fact that rape wasn't a one-time occurrence in Zoya's life; she had been a victim of various kinds of mental and physical abuse throughout her life. Should I give her feedback on her writing style or instead reach out to the police, lawyers, and psychologists to help her?

After the initial shock subsided, I realized that I needed to be proactive and could not continue to just stew inside my own head. Zoya had taken so much energy and trust to open up and be vulnerable during this exercise. To leave her in a vacuum of silence would be inhumane. I should respond, but how? While I did have a gut feeling about the need to respond in a meaningful, sensible, empathetic, and constructive manner, none of these adjectives were fitting the initial mumbblings that were forming inside my head in terms of feedback on her writing. This is when I reached out to some of my colleagues and friends for help. In hindsight, I feel reaching out helped make up for the limitation of my privileged positionality as a young, upper-caste, male teacher who did not have any experience of being in such situations before.

First, I spoke to my colleagues, Ratna Menon and Satyendra Singh, who teach writing in the same program. While I ensured that I did not reveal any particular details about either Zoya or her experiences, I shared with them the broad dilemmas that I was struggling with. They offered some key insights that were crucial in helping me avoid what could've been insensitive blunders. First and foremost, they advised me to not report her trauma to any legal authorities⁴. "This is her journey not yours," they told me. "You should provide her with the necessary knowledge about legal and psychological resources—we will send those to you—but it should be her choice whether she wishes to pursue those, not yours. Also, please make sure that you do not ask her again and again if she has reached out to any of the contacts you share with her. It is important to give her the agency and not make her feel judged any further than she has already felt in her life," Ratna added. "Regarding the written feedback, it is absolutely okay to not give her line-by-line comments," Satyendra suggested. "Instead, perhaps what you could do is recommend accounts of other survivors that she could read for inspiration on how to work on her own narrative—Roxane Gay's *Hunger* and Junot Diaz's *The Legacy of Childhood Trauma*—will be good starting points," Ratna recommended. Satyendra finally ended by saying, "At any point, if you

⁴ This is a tricky issue that I believe varies from country to country. While I know that in the U.S. there is a law called "Title IX" that mandates teachers to report to the authorities if any students tell them about any events of sexual violence; in India there aren't any such laws. Ethically, too, we all felt that the agency for reporting should lie with a survivor and not be forced upon them by others who they confide in.

want to, please come speak to us about what you are going through. We are happy to help and support you” (“Personal Conversation” 1).

Next, I reached out to my partner, Suha Gangopadhyay, an online education specialist who has interacted with many victims of sexual trauma due to her experience working as a teaching assistant for a graduate course on gender and sexuality. I also wanted her advice as a woman, who, like countless other women in the world, has had her fair share of experiences pertaining to sexual and gendered violence or trauma. She gave me what turned out to be really important advice at the time:

Instead of overthinking how to respond, it would be best to just be honest with Zoya and tell her about your lack of preparedness as this is the first time that you are engaging with this kind of writing in any assignment. You could also tell her that you don’t want to make it worse for her in any way, which is why, while you will hear her out and support her in the process of writing this, you would like to reserve any judgement or opinion on the writing itself. (“Personal Conversation 2”)

This advice gave me confidence and also made me realize that I needed a framework to approach the issue at hand. I started looking actively for literature that could help me. I was fortunate to come across Judith Herman’s *Trauma and Recovery*. Herman, a well-known scholar and practitioner in the area of trauma studies, describes in a very lucid and powerful manner a three-step process that therapists follow when working with patients of sexual trauma. I didn’t want to determinately rationalise or delimit Zoya’s experience within Herman’s psycho-therapeutic framing, but rather thought of using it as a suggestive to initiate myself into thinking about trauma. It is through Herman that I understood that trauma is a complex psychological response to either a single catastrophic event or multiple, repeated instances of abuse, which creates a sense of disempowerment and disconnection in individuals and leads to a damage of psychological faculties like “trust, autonomy, initiative, competence, identity, and intimacy” (133). The key insight I gleaned from Herman is that trauma has an important discursive dimension; that is, it leads to the rupturing of the meta-narratives that tie together an individual’s sense of self, relationships with others, and their world view. Her approach is to help survivors re-story or reconstruct their trauma in a manner that first establishes safety, then proceeds to help them write and rewrite their trauma story, and gradually reconnect with a community—all of which helps “reconstruct a system of belief that makes sense of [the survivor’s] undeserved suffering” (178).

All of this advice grounded me and gave me important perspectives that my identity and my life experiences hadn’t positioned me to understand. What follows now is a description of the processes through which Zoya and I worked on her literacy narrative using a mixture

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of insights that I received from my peers and Herman's work, along with Zoya and my own instincts. For the sake of coherence, I have ordered this part using the structure of the three-step process that Herman mentions in her work, but in reality things happened in a much more crisscrossing and recursive rather than linear manner. Also, it must be kept in mind that these steps shouldn't be thought of as universal or schematic. They are rather a suggestive, guiding template which I presume might manifest in dramatically different ways across different contexts based on the positionalities of the people involved.

Step 1: Establishing Safety

According to Herman, "[T]rauma robs the victim of a sense of power and control," and they "feel unsafe in their bodies . . . as well as in relation to others" (Herman 159-160). This is why in her method, "the guiding principle of recovery is to restore power and control to the victim" which "begins by focusing on control of the body and gradually moves outward toward control of the environment" (Herman 159-160). Therefore, she recommends that it is important to transfer decision making powers to the survivor at this stage; that is, make them understand that anything that happens to their narratives is within their control and not someone else's. We must resist any culturally conditioned desires on our part to be knights in shining armour. While my patriarchal positioning as a privileged, upper-caste male instructor had created an initial impulse like this in me, thankfully, I was able to avoid what could have been a disastrous mistake due to the timely counsel of my peers.

During the first office hour conversation I scheduled with Zoya to discuss her draft, I mustered up courage and spoke about how moving her narrative was, and how I was overwhelmed on reading it. I was honest with her about my own discomfort and inability to give her concrete feedback at the moment, but I also told her, "This is important writing that needs to be put out there. It really has the potential to help many other survivors of sexual violence." I then added, "I am here to listen whenever you wish to talk. I promise that whatever you disclose or write about will not be shared with anyone without your permission. I will share legal and psychological resources if you wish to consult anyone."

I then hesitantly summarized what I could about psychological traditions that use narrative writing in the healing of traumas. She broke down while hearing all of this and requested to go to the washroom. When she came back, she apologized for crying. I tried my best to comfort her, by telling her, "There is no need to apologize for anything to anyone!" I couldn't even imagine how she must have gone through what is perhaps the most traumatic experience anyone could have had, and I was moved by the fact that she was deciding to write about this. I wanted to establish some sense of safety and trust by clarifying my position and concern, and this may have encouraged her to embark on this enterprise—something that she spoke about later in an interview as well: "The fact that you

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showed you were not just a teacher but you were learning with us really helped me. I needed someone to show me that they were learning along with me instead of just sitting me down and teaching me” (Interview 1 26.45-26.59).

Step 2: Re-Storying

One important thing I learned about trauma stories through Herman’s book is that the healing process sometimes involves a telling and gradual transformation or re-signification of the trauma story. Such a re-signification can potentially transform an unexamined and anxiogenic messy bundle of thoughts, feelings, and images into a detailed and coherent account of events contextualized within a new belief system where the narrative brings dignity, strength, and control instead of shame, judgement, and powerlessness (Herman 176-187). This is something that I was conscious of while working with Zoya.

The broad template that I had given all students to work with for the literacy narrative genre asked them to first identify a learning experience or literacy that has been central to shaping their lives; then pinpoint the key moments of this experience, especially ones that involved struggles and conflict; write out these moments by elaborating on their emotional, behavioral, social, political or spiritual/existential dimensions in both descriptive and analytical detail; and finally weave all of them together in a manner that would bring out a sort of coherence and meaning for them and their audiences (see Appendix A). In hindsight, I think this structure was conducive for enabling what Herman recommends happen at this stage of the healing process in which the survivor retells the story in a manner that “includes four elements: context, fact, emotion, and meaning” (Herman 182). If we closely read the descriptions of events that Zoya had written out in her narrative, we see the close intertwining of context, fact, her initial emotional responses full of anxiety, embarrassment, and a sense of being judged to a gradual shift in her meaning-making of the event towards feeling righteous indignation.

She begins her narrative by sharing her father’s initial response to the incident: “I remember my dad *saying apni parvarsi hma kya khami rahi gayi hashe? Shu bhool thai gayi apni? Shu kam aavi nalayak diki jani apne? Aana karta to mari shukam na gayi? — Where did we go wrong in her upbringing? What did we do wrong? Why do we bear the shame of such an undeserving daughter? Why did she not die, instead of putting us through this?*” (“To Hell and Back Again” 1). After this follows the graphic description of her rape I have already mentioned above. While the first draft she sent to me had stopped here almost in a sense of dismay, her final draft developed these initial incidents to create a narrative arc that begins with helplessness, moves through several attempts at fighting back and gaining agency, and ultimately ends with gaining some form of meaning and literacy. The extracts quoted from her narrative so far cover the first part of this arc of helplessness.

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In the second part of her narrative, she connects her initial experience of helplessness with descriptions of her life-long attempts to fight against the conservative patriarchal contexts oppressing her. Her narrative is powered by descriptions of a life jostling between highly unsupportive and judgmental positionalities, to strong and independent attempts on her part at regaining power through whatever means available. As an example, while on the one hand she writes that, “I got married to my husband because he was the first person acceptably decent in view who agreed to marry ‘damaged goods’ as I was. The circumstances of my marriage and the patriarchal disadvantages of being a girl child became crystal clear when my mother told me before my marriage —*Pachi janaaza ma avje, nahitar na aavti*, i.e. *come back in a coffin or not at all*” (“To Hell and Back Again” 8); but on the other hand, she also writes that, “I pushed myself deep into work [and entrance examinations for further study, managed to get an] all India rank of 17. This infused me with confidence and helped me find my strength in myself and heal [...] I was exposed to alcohol, weed and cigarettes which helped me forget for a bit, and I really needed to forget, everything, and reinvent myself, my entire personality [...] I did enter a few relationships, but I was never able to hold on to them. I got bored easily of boys and girls and relationships that never lasted. It was through these broken relations, meaningless sex and nascent friendships that I slowly healed [...] my books were my escape from my nightmares and they became my friends. [...] I was a complete mess, but I was a high achieving mess. [...] As I explored new countries, interests, defied every convention I had lived with all these years and as I slowly internalized my locus of power, I healed” (“To Hell and Back Again” 5-7).

What we see in this dialectic of pushing and pulling is the unique ways in which Zoya’s positionality and agency, comprising elements of both marginalization as well as privilege, manifested in her struggles for survival. It is important to remember here that there is no universal writing template rape survivors can or should follow. To think so would be to assume “a category of women unified by a common psychic orientation to social gendering where there is no such category” (Mardorossian 755). Hence, one must be an active listener to the unique ways in which survivors position themselves within their narratives instead of nudging them to fit into any predetermined templates.

In the final parts of her narrative, Zoya expresses her transformed positionality in two very prominent ways. First, she manages to make explicit that what happened to her was wrong not because of anything she did, but because of the patriarchal society that she was a part of, thereby displacing her life-long guilt from her own self to a social fabric that was responsible for her suffering: “Reeling from, reacting to and healing from this incident is a process that has overshadowed my entire life. Time and again my father has blamed me for what happened. For a while I too believed it was my fault. [...] My society did not accept me after this

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incident and that hurt more than my scars or their memories” (“To hell and Back Again” 4-5). Second, she also speaks very confidently and directly to her audience and imbues her writing with tones of redemption, new meaning, and power as she writes:

I have never publicly spoken about this literacy and doing so now is cathartic. Healing, Living, Loving is far from something I know of well, I realize that now. I am glad that you are unaware of this. I hope and feverously pray to a god I don't even believe in, that you never come to know how this feels. But unfortunately, every woman has faced these *effects* and *biases* in some capacity or another. I have struggled and am struggling but I am not broken and unmade, Not Yet. And though my story is bittersweet, I hope it helps you speak and heal. (“To Hell and Back Again” 9; emphasis added)

Her choice of words here reveals the changed nature of her narrativization about her trauma. Her choice of "effects" implies that someone else (assaulter, family, and society in general) has caused her trauma and it is their "biases" that have led to her suffering. In her final draft, her emotions are not individualized anymore. The blame for the crime has shifted from her own self onto the social agents and historical-material environment of patriarchy which creates a culture of sexual violence. Through this externalization and reorientation of guilt, a new positionality emerges where she envisions a new solidarity with other women, foregrounding her own resolve to fight patriarchy and presenting this as a new meaning which now imbues her life-story. After triangulating her literacy narrative, her end of year reflection essay, as well as my interviews with her, and upon rereading Herman, I've come to realize that this transformation, from feeling challenged by this kind of writing to ultimately achieving a sense of catharsis through it, happened because she was able to put her raw impressions on paper, distance herself from them, and restructure and signify them in the form of a 'testimonial'—all in the presence of a supportive, empathetic, non-judgmental, and validating community. The latter aspects of this process are what I'll explore next.

Step 3: Re-Connecting into a Community

Herman advises that through the re-storying process, it is important to set up a community where the new narrative can be gradually exercised in a non-judgmental and supportive environment, which helps in the establishment of new relationships, a new self, and gradually a new worldview where the trauma story is no more a source of anxiety and judgement, but rather a source of strength and meaning: “Sharing the traumatic experience with others is a precondition for the restitution of a sense of a meaningful world. [In this,] two responses—recognition and

restitution—are necessary to rebuild the survivor’s sense of order and justice” (Herman 70).

Unlike traumas of war which often get both public recognition as well as restitution: “the most common trauma of women remains confined to the sphere of private life, without formal recognition or restitution from the community. There is no public monument for rape survivors” (Herman 73). It is through narrative forms of writing perhaps that survivors can create their own living monuments and get recognition by connecting with others who understand, accept, and validate their narratives. It is here that I want to mention the most important aspect of this whole process that happened in my class; something that Zoya has also repeatedly mentioned in her interview as important to her writing. As part of this assignment, I had allocated motivation partners to all the students whose task was to support and motivate each other through the writing process. In the past, I had realized that my own attempts at reminding students to complete their assignments through either gentle or disciplinary means were not always fruitful. Instead, assigning motivation partner pairs worked much better in helping students work on their narratives together. Apart from checking up on each other, partners also helped in the process of revision by listening through drafts, offering suggestions, and by providing validation.

“Rameena just came and gave me a hug for 10 mins,” Zoya said when I asked her about the role that her motivation partners Rameena, Reena, and Anushka (names changed) played (“Interview 1” 14.04 - 14.07). I was able to interview two of them—Anushka and Reena—who both started by honestly speaking about their initial discomfort in listening to Zoya’s story, which in many ways mirrored some of my own discomforts about potential discrepancies between the nature of my role in the institution and the work that this exigency was requiring of me. Instead of making their emotions manifest in front of her, however, they took the bold decision to simply listen with care and be there for her through her many revisions, drafts, and narrations. “Motivation comes from acceptance and validation . . . to have someone listen to your work and not judge you makes you realize that maybe I’m not that wrong, maybe I can do this!” spoke Reena, while Anushka stressed that, “I was always listening to her . . . I did not respond to her . . . she just needed someone to listen to her . . . it’s always good to listen to someone who has gone through such experiences. She was older to me and it was also an attempt by me to learn something” (“Interview 2”; “Interview 3”). Together, the four of them brainstormed ideas and shared vulnerabilities. Even if the ones that Rameena, Anushka, or Reena shared weren’t as intense as Zoya’s; nonetheless, the experience of being inside such a community collectively helped all of them develop an empathetic consciousness-raising process that wouldn’t have been possible with just a teacher.

This had a huge impact on Zoya’s experience of writing: “I felt very comfortable after writing about this . . . and the community maybe is

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what inspired me to write about it more than anything else . . . because it is very easy to be yourself when you are comfortable and then maybe you can venture out eventually in a space where you are not comfortable” (“Interview 1” 16.00 - 16.24). This experience with the motivation partners was also reflected in the community support that Zoya received during her time at the university, something that she strongly felt was very different from all her social experiences outside of it: “[This university] was a very comfortable space, a cocoon where you can come out . . . the kind of ideas and empathy you feel here is not something you ever feel in the world . . . I realized that this might be the only space where it would be okay to begin with . . . criticism of the event at least would not be part of how I would have to think about it. . . because what happens is that when you are out there you understand how brutal society can be especially on issues like this . . . this [university on the other hand] becomes a very comfortable space where you can start putting ideas together” (“Interview 1” 06.48 - 07.25, 14.15 -15.25).

In some ways, this whole process also mirrored a widely recognized form of therapy developed by two Chilean psychologists which imitates a legal testimony framing and submission method. In this the therapist engages in a formal recording, scripting, revision, narration, and delivery ritual in which “the document is signed by the patient as plaintiff and by the therapist as witness” (Herman 182). This imitation of a legal environment facilitates the patient’s reformation of a belief system and faith in a meaningful world order under which the trauma-narrative can be scaffolded. Unintentionally, perhaps, the act of writing an assignment for a writing course, working through drafts, discussing it during office hours and with peers, and finally submitting it for grading might have mirrored some aspects of that psychotherapeutic convention.

What added to this process was the environs of a caring community which valued and attempted to support Zoya’s transformation, even though it might have initially felt as an aberration in their general definitions of work within the university. The many cross-currents of these processes had a positive, cumulative impact on Zoya, who in her final reflective essay on the year gone by wrote that, “I went through [...] reliving my rape and a complete change in the way I saw myself, and one of the reasons I survived and thrived was because of this class, the people and the learnings. Today all that is behind me, I have finally triumphed over the demons that plagued me back then” (WAW 3).

Part Two: Bringing Emotions and Care-Work in Academia: The Why, the How, and the Things to Watch Out for

This entire process has shaped me in two important ways which I believe will also be relevant for many readers of this journal. First, working with Zoya on her literacy narrative has given me some introductory experiential knowledge about how to care for someone who has experienced sexual trauma. Second, it has enabled me to question certain conventional

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patriarchal positions in academia. I've come to realize that there is epistemic value of emotions in academic writing and ethical value in care-work in academic life, both of which I now see as vital ingredients to improve student performance in college as well as to make a socially just world. In this final section now, I will first think through the reasons for why I, along with many other scholars and educators am increasingly believing this to be the case. Then I will chart out some strategies and methods by which teachers, researchers, and administrators can experiment with these ideas in their institutional settings. Finally, I will also reflect on some of the challenges and risks that might come with such experimentation.

The Why

Social injustice often exists in a vicious cyclical form whereby different forms of oppression, exclusion, and marginalization in society lead to trauma and mental distress, which then negatively impacts people's cognitive and social skills and severely obstructs their ability to succeed or flourish in college. By creating the space for students to become more attuned to their emotions through reading, writing, and thinking tasks, and by re-imagining care-work to be valuable academic labor that students, teachers and staff are trained to perform for each other, this status quo can be challenged and potentially even changed. But what exactly is trauma? How is it connected to social injustice, and how does it impact learning?

Trauma is defined broadly as an experience in which "a person's internal resources are not adequate to cope with external stressors" (Davidson 4). This includes but is not limited to physical or sexual abuse, abandonment, chronic poverty, domestic violence, bullying, police violence, historical trauma, etc., and it may be a single or ongoing event that causes varying degrees of emotional distress over time (Davidson 4). Students from marginalized positions disproportionately experience trauma due to various ongoing or past stressful events in their lives (Read et al.). Female students are in fact at greater risk for trauma and alienation (Breslau and Kresser), and so are ethnic minorities (Norris and Sloan), students from lower income groups (Breslau et al.), religious minorities (Erum), marginalized caste groups (Pawde), and regional as well as linguistic minorities (Jaaware).

Exposure to trauma can drastically impact students' learning abilities. It can affect their academic performance (decrease in basic linguistic and cognitive abilities, emotional regulation, executive functions, attentiveness, perspective taking, etc.); their classroom behavior (increased aggression, defiance, withdrawal, or desire for excessive perfectionism, etc.); as well their ability to form constructive relationships with school personnel and peers (Cole et al. vi). Inhibiting students to succeed in college ultimately reproduces the inequality and social injustice which had caused the trauma in the first place as opportunities for social mobility are denied.

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How can emotions in writing and care-work in institutions help to change this? The former has the capacity to make trauma visible, and if it is made visible in an environment of care, there would be a possibility to accept, acknowledge, and perhaps even transform trauma in a manner that might aid the larger project of social justice in India, a country where most students really have no space to bring their personal, affective selves into academic spaces through writing or otherwise. In fact, students in India are often told that cutting out the personal from the academic is a sign of academic prowess. Anannya Dasgupta, a friend and fellow comrade who teaches writing in India, illustrates this poignantly in her essay “The Writing Self and Enacting Care in Critical Writing Pedagogy,” when she writes about her time in college as a student of literature in one of India’s most prestigious public universities. When a road accident left her bedridden with a cracked rib, she struggled but ultimately managed to complete a class assignment. While submitting it to her teacher, she apologized for the decrease in quality due to her personal circumstances, expecting some sympathy and encouragement. However, what she received was a dismissive and cold retort, “Let’s bracket out the personal.” She triangulates this experience with complaints of her own students about their teachers forcing them to mechanically regurgitate quotations from scholarly sources without any genuine personal engagement with them, as symptomatic of the larger Indian education system that, “is not adequately allowing a space for the experiential selves of students to emerge and learn to derive the joy of owning academic work” (Dasgupta). The denial of selfhood that social oppression and trauma create is thus replicated in models of depersonalized and distant academic writing in college, something that urgently needs to be changed.

Madhura Lohokare, another friend and fellow comrade teaching writing in India, builds upon this sentiment in her essay “Enacting Care in Writing Pedagogy,” to argue that a care-based pedagogy can help facilitate change: “care entails centering the students’ and teachers’ positionality and the students’ voice in the teaching-learning. A care-based ethic of teaching can animate critical writing pedagogy in important ways, given the fact that the latter seeks to enable the student-writer to find and nurture her voice.”

Why has this issue not been addressed more proactively in mainstream Indian academia until now? Why do students’ and teachers’ personal, affective lives continue to be bracketed off in the Indian education system? The answer lies in a mixture of factors, some of which are unique to India, and possibly to other erstwhile colonized nations as well, while others are prevalent across the world, even in many parts of the Western academia. Krishna Kumar, an eminent Indian educationist, provides a good illustration of the factors unique to India through his concept of the colonial “textbook culture” in his book *What is Worth Teaching?* He argues that the depersonalization students and teachers in India face is an inheritance of the long period that India spent under British

colonial rule. In the British colonial imagination, education in India was supposed to primarily provide a cultural base to support the exploitative economic policies Britain used to drain India's natural resources. Thus emerged a "textbook culture" whereby what was considered to be "knowledge" was determined by colonial masters and codified in textbooks which the Indian students and teachers merely had to accept and rote-learn, while never questioning or challenging based on their personal lives and positionalities. This attitude about students' and teachers' positionalities not being seen as worthy sources of knowledge creation has unfortunately carried on even after the British left (Kumar 23-41).

This phenomenon is further compounded by patriarchal, capitalist, and neo-liberal norms that are prevalent across many countries in the Western academic world and which marginalize emotions and care-work from the mainstream academic imagination. Sara Ahmed, a cultural historian of emotions feels that Western academia has traditionally viewed emotion as, "beneath the faculties of thought and reason. To be emotional is to have one's judgement affected" (3). There are clear gendered implications to these norms, as emotions are associated with women, and academia is seen as the "paradigmatic site of pure rationality devoted to the dispassionate and objective search for truth—an emotion-free zone," and this is why "it is not coincidental that women's entry to the academy was resisted on precisely these grounds" (Leathwood and Hey 439). According to Lynch et al., patriarchy, along with neo-liberal capitalism, presents the individualistic, rational, and economic-minded masculine actor as the ideal prototype based on which modern education systems have been designed—something they call the "care-less view of the citizen" (1). This has made the complex, affective relationships of interdependencies and care—that are essential for the survival of all human beings—invisible, thereby devaluing the care-based labor (performed mostly by women) that goes into sustaining these 'ideal' citizens (7).

Colonialism, patriarchy, and neo-liberal capitalism thus intersect inside Indian classrooms in complex ways to prevent students like Zoya from getting a viable chance to reverse the debilitating social experiences and conditions which limit their lives. Creating spaces for bringing their emotions into academic writing in a caring environment has the potential to challenge this status quo.

The How

At the curricular level, literacy narrative genre assignments have immense potential to help bridge students' personal, affective lives and academic discourse. There is a wealth of literature in the American discipline of rhetoric and composition that can be beneficial to writing teachers in India like myself who are interested in exploring the possibilities of this kind of work (see Carter, Corkery, Gee, and González et al.). The particular slant

that I gave to the general literacy narrative assignment can be viewed in the assignment sheet I have attached in Appendix A.

While it may seem counterintuitive at first, there is in fact a growing consensus on the immense value that such assignments can bring, not just in English or writing classrooms, but even in classrooms for STEM! (see Emerson). Another thing that can really help is for teachers to foreground their intentions towards student well-being during the syllabus preparation stage. Jaime Mejia Mayorga, a very inspiring graduate student at the University of Arizona, presents an insightful framework that teachers can use to question how well their courses help improve student well-being. He also recommends including language from this in the actual syllabus for students to see. I have included both documents at the end of this assignment, with his permission (see Appendix B and C). Inspired by his work, I created a self-reflective questionnaire for my students (see Appendix D), which they filled out midway through the course. Based on the trends we saw in the responses, my students and I collectively tweaked the course syllabus and policies through discussions to see how we could modify the remainder of the course to be more meaningful and nourishing not just for our cognitive, but also for our affective selves. I also used a version of this questionnaire in a workshop for the teachers who taught writing at my institution. Ekman's *Atlas of Emotions* is another great tool to help students develop vocabulary that enables them to talk and write about their emotional lives (see Design). The larger goal behind these curricular experiments in many of the classrooms where my peers and I are experimenting with care-based pedagogy has been to, "make space to let denied selves emerge" by providing pastoral care in the form of pedagogic support and by "producing the environment which enables the sharing of vulnerable early drafts, the exchange of critique and the ability to take feedback without feeling humiliation" (Dasgupta).

For readers who are interested in delving deeper into such practices, I also recommend familiarizing yourself with some of the wide range of interdisciplinary research emerging across the world that explores the relationship between trauma, learning, and social justice. Here are just some of the sub-themes and corresponding authors that one can begin to explore: critical emotional praxis (Zembylas; Ahmed); trauma and composition studies (Fox; Anderson and MacCurdy; Borrowman; Richmond); writing and affect (Bazerman; Mcleod); writing and psychotherapy (Herman; Pennebaker); trauma-informed pedagogy (Cole et al.; Davidson); trauma and applied linguistics (Busch and McNara); emotional intelligence (Goleman).

In addition, it is really helpful to engage with existing communities of teachers and administrators interested in having conversations about the need to bring emotions and care-work into the ambit of academic work. A recently successful experiment in this regard was the Conference on Writing and Well-Being, organized by the

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University of Arizona in January 2020. At this conference, teachers from a wide range of institutional (community colleges, K-12 schools, R-1 institutions, etc.) and national contexts (U.S. and India) came together to discuss their motivations, hesitations, and challenges, as well as successful experiments using these pedagogies. A version of this paper was in fact first presented at this conference as part of a panel titled “Practices of Care in the Postcolonial Classroom: Writing Pedagogy in India.” Here, the conference chair, Stacey Cochran, articulated an ambitious and much-needed plan to develop a body called the International Association for Well-Being in Education that would help incubate such conversations in an effort to “shift the culture of education to prioritize well-being and quality of life over test-taking, rankings, and social comparison” (Cochran 2). I recommend that interested readers follow the proceedings of this conference and try to stay in touch with future events. It is also important to note that while such initiatives are emerging in the U.S., in India, to the best of my knowledge, there is very little happening along these lines. Even if it is happening, it is not happening very visibly or on a large scale—something that needs to be changed soon.

Things to Watch Out for

It is important to take all the recommendations mentioned above in a considerate and informed fashion and not experiment with them in too fast or rash a manner. If this work is pushed down the throats of already precarious teachers by administrators without any support or incentive, or if it is taken up by well-meaning teachers without proper deliberation and training, then it will end up doing more harm than good. More often than not, “policy and research discourse positions teachers as agents of social change, as implementers of programme directives, without consideration of the ways in which teachers are differently positioned in their work and lives, positions that are sometimes at odds with reform ideals” (Sriprakash 7). Anyone interested in experimenting with these pedagogies should realize that “educating the carer [*sic*] citizens is not only about learning the know-how or skills for enhancing personal care relations, it is also about learning to produce the necessary social and economic conditions that enable love, care and solidarity relationships to be sustained economically, politically and socially” (Lynch et al. 14). This is why institutions where enough teachers and other stakeholders see the value in such work should be gradually transformed to create the enabling conditions that would allow for such work to happen. But what would these enabling conditions look like?

Based on my experience, I strongly believe that care should be thought of as a network of interlocking relationships between a range of individuals at different social and economic positions, rather than as isolated, unidirectional relationships between any two stakeholders. This is why teachers cannot perform care-work for students, or truly encourage them to see this as a desirable value worth imbibing, unless the institutions

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in which they work care for them. The care that institutions perform for teachers should prioritize the creation of manageable teaching loads to allow them to care for students, like I was able to for Zoya. Second, it should involve some degree of employment stability, including space to learn through discovery and failure, that would help teachers feel secure enough to experiment. Third, it should involve a community within the University which acknowledges, values, incentivizes, and provides them with the necessary training to do this work. All of this is what I received at my institution, which enabled me to do the work mentioned in this essay. Apart from the peer support and comfortable teaching loads, I was also grateful to work with an administrator who valued and supported this kind of work.

When I discussed my experiences with the dean of my program, Aniha Brar, she was both sensitive to and concerned about the situation and, at the same time, enthusiastic about finding ways in which we could navigate such situations, not just as individuals or teachers, but as an entire program. Together we designed an orientation workshop where we divided the participating teachers and administrative staff into teams, and each team was given a case study about a difficult moment that had come up in the program in the last few years, and they had to develop a process and an approach to tackle it. One of the case studies was inspired by my experiences with Zoya's writing. At other points in the year we organized sessions with the university's psychological counselling staff to learn more about how to better handle such situations, while also learning how to simultaneously draw boundaries and engage in self-care activities when needed. Combined, these sessions worked to create a pathway through which we could mutually train each other, but perhaps more importantly, it normalized the value of this kind of care-work as part of the collective labor we perform in our program.

An important limitation, as my friend and colleague Sayan Chaudhuri who also teaches at this program very kindly pointed out, is that the way we learn to care and who we care for is also linked to larger distributions of power. The kinds of caring communities we try to form at any institution will be limited by the kinds of identities already represented in them. While we learn to care for whoever is already inside the universities where we work, we shouldn't forget the many who have not been able to get in. Our caring should also try to extend to them, in whatever shapes or forms, while we also work towards figuring out how to create more bridges for them to come inside elite academic institutions.

Conclusion

While the classroom experiences I have chalked out in this paper were affirmative in many ways for Zoya, as well as for me in terms of the thinking and reflection they enabled me to do, it is important that I not lapse into a self-congratulatory register. As a straight upper-caste male, many aspects of my life have been and continue to be very much a part of

the problems that patriarchy and rape-culture create in the world. What is vital for me, as well as for other teachers like me, is to practice deep listening and continuously reflect on our gender and caste privilege—something that makes us part of the problem but also places us in a position of power that has the potential to be repositioned to become part of the solution. If you are a heterosexual, upper-caste male teacher, and your student has written an assignment narrating their experiences of trauma, instead of limiting your thinking and your response into the framework of how *you can help them* (which is how I had begun thinking about Zoya's assignment), it is vital that you also think deeply about your social position and act to remedy the many aspects of your own life—beliefs, behaviours, as well as those of your friends and family members—that create the cultural conditions which enable the suffering your student has written about. This is something that I am trying to do now.

I must also acknowledge that whatever potential energy has emerged through this entire experience should be premised on the environment of care I received at my institution, which is far from the norm. More often than not, teachers engage in care-work inside institutions that are anything but caring towards them. How should those institutions be transformed to value emotions in writing and care-work in labor? That is a big question that unfortunately my current positionality does not enable me to answer. However, I am hopeful that as this paper goes out into the world, I will come in touch with many other teachers and administrators experimenting with care-work in vastly different conditions, and I will be able to learn from and with them. My hope is to work towards connecting these various emergent sparks of caring energy that can inspire not just our classrooms or educational institutions, but also our communities and our countries to create a more caring and just world.

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Appendix A: Anuj Gupta's Literacy Narrative Assignment Sheet

I) What is a literacy narrative?

A literacy narrative is a sort of reflective narrative essay that archives a writer's experience of coming in contact with new languages/ dialects/ discourses, communities, and material environments, and it foregrounds the challenges, conflicts, hopes, frustrations, insights, aspirations, and possibilities created through such transitions. The focus, as in all narratives, is on a representation of events, preferably focused through one or more conflicts and their attempted resolutions. Unlike most narratives, however, a literacy narrative does not only represent events, but it also reflects on or ruminates over them.

II) Examples of literacy narratives

- *Importance of the Act of Reading* by Paulo Friere (highly recommended)
- *Learning to Read and Write* by Frederic Douglas
- *On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer* by John Keats
- *Literacy Behind Bars* by Malcom X
- *Hip-Hop Literacy Narrative* by Jamaal Matters
- *Om Prakash Valmiki's Joothan, Story of My Sanskrit* by Kumud Pawde
- Extracts from Kamala Das's *My Story*
- *Growing Up as a Human Mage: A World of Warcraft Literacy Narrative* (Anonymous)

III) Writing our own literacy narratives

- **Draft 1: Free-Writing:** Thanks to the reading by Prof. James Paul Gee that we did earlier, you have understood what "literacy" means and how it connects to the concept of "discourses." Sit with a partner and discuss the following questions with them:
 - What are some discourses that you are literate in?
 - What are some discourses that you are currently trying to acquire literacy in?
 - What are some discourses that you want to become literate in?
 - Of these, which particular literacy matters the most to you?
 - Why is this particular literacy important to you?
 - What are the objects, people, institutions, texts, ideas, beliefs, norms, and values that animate this form of discourse?

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- What are some key experiences that have been instrumental in shaping your experiences of trying to gain this literacy? Write them out in as much detail as possible. These moments will serve as coordinates around which your literacy narrative will be woven. Here you could think about:
 - some conflicts/problems that you faced in gaining this literacy
 - some important learning experiences that gave you some insights; any particular readings that were instrumental in this journey
 - some experiences that told you about the importance of this kind of literacy
 - the people and their relationships (both within this discourse community and with others outside it) that have mediated your access to this literacy
 - has this literacy had any impact on your identity? If so, how?
- How does this form of literacy-discourse interact with other kinds of literacies and discourses in the world? What is its role in the world?
- What would you say about this literacy to someone who is not familiar with this at all?
- **Draft 2:** In this we will flesh out your anecdotes using the ‘Showing and Telling’ technique as well as using secondary sources.
- **Draft 3:** In this we will connect and structure all your fleshed-out anecdotes together, so that they inter-illuminate each other to reveal the larger ideas about your literacy that you want your readers to grasp.

Submission Guidelines

- After the discussion, do some free-writing that answers these questions. This will serve as the first draft of your literacy narratives.
- Word Limit: 500 - 1000 words
- Submission deadline: 11:59 pm, Sunday, 4 Nov
- Based on this first draft then, we will work closely through in-class workshops and office hours to explore narrative possibilities that help flesh out your literacy

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narrative in an insightful and well-structured manner. We will work through 3 drafts in this process and your final submission will be due on December 1.

Appendix B: Syllabus Creation Guidelines by Jaime Mejiya Mayorga Using Oxford 2016's EMPHATHICS Framework

- 1) **E: Emotion and Empathy:** To what extent will my course provide spaces for emotions to be felt and dealt with? Am I ready to deal with unexpected emotions in the classroom? What assignments might instigate emotions? And what emotions and/or emotional reactions could these assignments have? To what extent am I considering being empathetic to my students? In what situations? Do I promote empathy in the classroom? If so, how do I do it?
- 2) **M: Meaning and Motivation:** Is my class a meaningful learning experience? Is my course full of meaningful content and activities? In what ways could my class contribute to students' meaning of life? Do I motivate students? In what other ways can I contribute to their motivation?
- 3) **P: Perseverance:** Do I provide opportunities for students to persevere? Do I use language/discourse that promotes hope, resilience, and optimism?
- 4) **A: Agency and Autonomy:** To what extent do I treat my students as the adults they are? Do I interact with them in ways that showcase their agency (for example, when students have to submit an assignment on a specific due date)? Do I allow students to be autonomous learners? Do I provide opportunities for them to figure things out?
- 5) **T: Time:** Am I realistic that one or two semesters might have little to no effect on students' writing performance? Am I aware that students are taking other courses, are working, and have other responsibilities in their daily lives? Are my assignments/am I respectful of students' time? Do I share with my students the importance of time for completing assignments and completing other activities?
- 6) **H: Habits:** What habits of mind am I promoting in my course? Besides habits of mind, what other habits am I promoting in the classroom?
- 7) **I: Intelligences:** Do I plan class activities thinking in the 'intelligences' students possess (musical, kinesthetic, intrapersonal, etc.)?

- 8) **C: Characteristics:** Do I provide opportunities for students to use their character strengths individually and collectively?
- 9) **S: Self-Image:** What class activities could help students take a look at themselves? How can I contribute to students' sense of self?

Appendix C: Foregrounding Intentions for Well-Being in Syllabi through Instructor Statements

“I am a strong advocate and believer of having positive relationships and emotions in the classroom. I try to incorporate principles of positive psychology in my teaching, so students and myself can feel encouraged, appreciated, loved, understood, and motivated to thrive and flourish as individuals and as members of a learning community. Therefore, you will experience a relaxed, welcoming, and fun class every time you enter our classroom. I really hope that you enjoy our time together and that you become aware of your emotional self as well as the emotional selves of others. Learning, besides being a cognitive endeavor, is also an emotional one.”

—extracted, with permission, from the syllabus of Jaime Mejia Mayorga, a graduate student and writing instructor at the University of Arizona.

Appendix D: A Collaborative Syllabus Planning Exercise for Teachers and Students by Anuj Gupta

Foregrounding Well-Being in Our Course

Please answer the following questions to the best of your abilities. Based on your answers then, we will try to reflect on what changes we can make in our syllabus and our course policies to make it more supportive for our collective well-being (these questions are inspired from the PERMA framework created by Dr. Martin Seligman at the University of Pennsylvania).

1. How is your physical health, safety, and financial stability right now? How have these been in the last semester, and how would you like them to be in the next semester? What can we as a community do to help you achieve this?
2. What kind of emotions are you experiencing right now? What has your emotional stream been like in the last semester, and what would you like it to be like in the next semester? What can we do to help you experience more positive emotions in this course together? You could check out this [Atlas of Emotions](#) for help with vocabulary.
3. Have you ever experienced a [flow state](#) in this course? If yes, please describe what you were doing while experiencing it and how it made you feel. What can we do together in this course that might help you experience flow states?
4. Have you ever felt a sense of belonging in this class? Is there someone you feel connected to and supported by? Is there something that you did last semester to help someone feel supported and better connected in the class, especially someone beyond your usual circle of friends? If yes, please describe it and write a note and give it to them today. How can we increase our collective sense of belonging and support each other better next semester?
5. Have you ever felt that you've done something meaningful in this course? Have you ever felt that you belong to and serve something higher than yourself? If yes, please describe it. How can we make this course more meaningful for you and for everyone else?
6. Do you feel that you've accomplished something in the last semester? If yes, please describe it. What are three things that, if achieved, will help you feel a sense of accomplishment next semester?

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