UNLIMITED PLAYERS

*The Intersections of Writing Center
and Game Studies*

**EDITED BY
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Introduction

WHY GAMES?
Toward a Theory of Gameful Writing Center Pedagogy

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This project began, as many do, with a favor. In this case, Holly asked Stephanie to be the keynote speaker at the Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association Conference she was hosting at Pennsylvania State University, Berks in Reading, Pennsylvania. The theme of the conference, A Day at the Carnival: Writing Centers as Sites of Play, begged for a keynote speaker who could theorize games and ignite a conversation about how writing centers could intersect with game and play scholarship. Stephanie's thoughtful keynote, "*Pokémon Go* Is R.A.D.: How Game Studies and Writing Center Research Can Learn from Each Other," asked questions about what writing center practitioners could learn from the study of augmented reality games and what connections there might be between writing center work and game studies research. Dynamic conversations emerged during this conference and from subsequent roundtable presentations by Holly and Stephanie at the International Writing Centers Association Conference in 2017 and the Southwest Popular/American Culture Association Conference in 2018. Through these conversations, we unsurprisingly learned that there were other scholars who inhabited the space between game studies and writing center studies but that very little scholarship worked to bring these two disciplines together. We want to fill that gap.

Therefore, in this collection, we work to bring together the fields of writing center studies and game studies. In doing so, we address several important research questions. First and perhaps foremost, we articulate the reasons why this overlap is productive. We start to answer the question: What does bringing together two seemingly disparate fields of study offer scholars who dwell in those overlaps? Second, we drill down to some of the specifics of this productive overlap; by doing so, we offer theoretically informed practices that writing center directors,

consultants, staff, and others associated with writing centers can take away and apply in their own work. We work toward an answer to the question: What does a theory of writing center pedagogy look like when informed by game studies? We also hope to spur the thinking of game studies scholars and help build productive bridges between their work and that of writing centers. Writing studies as a field embraces game studies approaches, visible in the use of games in the classroom and game studies terminology and terministic screens in scholarship. We see many opportunities for those who work in writing centers to embrace game studies approaches, too. Thus, similarly and finally, we hope this collection will bring that enthusiasm for games and the study of games to writing centers, and vice versa: to help game studies scholars in writing studies and writing centers begin to question, What if?

What if we used games in the writing center and published about the impacts of doing so? What if we deepened already ongoing discussions about play and creativity in the writing center by incorporating language and theories from game studies? What if we made spaces for greater collaboration between game studies researchers and writing center practitioners? What if we used concepts and ideas from game studies to help writing centers grapple with the changing landscape of twenty-first-century writing and composing practices—practices that, as we explore momentarily, ask writing centers and their staff to engage with new media forms, digital compositions, multimodal writing, and the like? In short, what if games and gaming terminology became more familiar in the everyday practices and scholarship of writing centers? What would our work look like then? What would it mean to have an unlimited number of players coming together to collaborate on the best ways to educate tutors and work with writers? Instead of limiting the people in the game, what would happen if we open up writing center work to more diverse perspectives?

In this introduction, we first define our terms; specifically, we explain what we mean by games, play, multimodality, and new media. Then, we describe how attending to games in writing centers can offer new approaches to working with multimodality as well as new approaches to interdisciplinarity. We also explore how attending to games can productively deepen already existing conversations regarding the role of creativity, play, and engagement in writing center work. Following that discussion, we review the existing literature on the relationship between writing studies and game studies in an effort not only to model how these two fields inform one another but also to describe some of the theories and practices that unite writing and gaming. Finally, we

describe the structure of this book and preview the arguments presented in each chapter.

DEFINING OUR TERMS

What Is a Game?

While game and composition scholars have been defining and operationalizing the value of play in their own intellectual spaces, writing center practitioners have a limited engagement with games. There are few references to play in writing center scholarship. Neal Lerner (2009) cites Helen Parkhurst's 1922 text as evidence of early laboratory writing practices. She writes, "The important thing is not to make young children study the thing they don't like, for the moment school is not as interesting as play it is an injury" (cited in Lerner 2009, 17). For Parkhurst and her contemporaries such as Thomas Nash (1984), who likens the writing center to a playground, writing centers allow for unstructured exploration of texts that mimic the world of playful imagination children inhabit when they are not in school. However, not until sixty-five years after Parkhurst, when Daniel Lochman (1986) wrote "Play and Game: Implications for the Writing Center," did writing center scholarship receive a sustained discussion of play, games, and their relationship to one another. For Lochman, play is liberating and unstructured, and, if accessed appropriately, it can "generate significant associations, imaginative insight, bold expression and valuable ideas" (14). Conversely, for Lochman, games discipline unbridled play and are defined by their "pursuit and acquisition of a goal" (14). He defines the relationship when he writes, "Together, play and game offer potential for the acquisition and communication of knowledge, since the undisciplined materials generated during play may be presented to an audience through the conventional, normative modes of expression appropriate to the game" (14).

We agree with Lochman that play is an unstructured, free association space for generative learning, but, as rhetoricians and writing scholars, it is challenging for us to imagine a context that is not constrained by some rules of engagement, those that are generated by a teacher, world builder, creator, or genre and audience expectations. For us, there are always rules to play by, even if those rules are defined by language constructs. Therefore, in this collection, we are interested in games and how gaming contexts intersect with writing, writing centers, and tutoring. Several of the authors in this collection break down the barriers between play/playfulness and games in writing centers in productive ways. An understanding of play is necessary to understand games, and vice versa.

Lochman begins to provide a workable definition of games (play that is defined by the pursuit of a goal), but, for our purposes, game scholars Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman (2004) offer a richer way of defining games: "A game is a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome" (68). Their definitions (see table 0.1) can be expanded upon and applied to writing center examples. Although there are many ways of applying Salen and Zimmerman's definition, our example attempts to orient readers toward thinking of writing center work as a game, much in the way Lochman does in his article. Table 0.1 presents Salen and Zimmerman's definitions and our examples.

While Salen and Zimmerman provide a broad definition of games, which serves as an effective base for our conversations, the attributes of games can be varied. For example, some might also say that games are "ethical technologies, capable of embodying values and projecting them into the user experience" (Sicart 2012, 101) since they are designed, developed, and created by and for humans, with all the values associated with and embedded into the game as a result of that design process. In the subsequent chapters of this collection, the authors often add on to this basic definition to enrich our understanding of games and play. For example, Elliott Freeman's chapter draws on Caillois's work to deepen our understanding of play, and Brenta Blevins and Lindsay A. Sabatino's chapter uses the concepts *ludus* and *paidia* to establish the framework for how play and games can inform an emergent theory of tutoring.

What Is Multimodality? What Is Multimedia? What Is New Media?

Three other key terms drive our collection: multimodal, multimedia, and new media. Others have done the historical work of tracing these terms (see Lutkewitte 2014; Palmeri 2012), which we do not intend to repeat here. Instead, we will provide working definitions of these terms from recent composition and writing center scholarship that can provide a grounding for our use of these terms. For us, multimodal is best defined by Pamela Takayoshi and Cynthia L. Selfe (2007) when they write that multimodal texts are "texts that exceed the alphabetic and may include still and moving images, animations, color, words, music and sound" (1). These texts are necessarily multimedia texts since they merge different kinds of media. Throughout this collection, when authors refer to multimedia, they are frequently referring to digital multimedia texts. Indeed, much of the game studies scholarship today focuses on digital games: video games, mobile and app-based games, and computer games.

Table 0.1. Mapping Salen and Zimmerman's definitions of game terminology onto writing center examples

Term	*Salen and Zimmerman (2004) Definition*	*Writing Center Example*
System	"A set of parts that interrelate to form a complex whole" (68).	The tutoring session is a system made up of a set of parts (e.g., the draft, the table, the computer, the assignment, the writing tools, the agenda setting, the tutoring strategies, the dialogue, the client report).
Player	"A game is something that one or more participants actively play. Players interact with the system of a game in order to experience the play of the game" (93).	At least one tutor and a writer make up the players.
Artificial	"Games maintain a boundary from so-called 'real life' in both time and space. Although games obviously occur within the real world, artificiality is one of their defining features" (93).	Since the conflict is defined by the participants (for example, writing the introduction to a paper during the time allotted), then it is artificial: both the time constraint and the goal are agreed upon by the people in the session.
Conflict	"All games embody a contest of powers. The contest can take many forms, from cooperation to competition, from solo conflict within a game system to multiplayer social conflict. Conflict is central to games" (93).	The tutor and the writer work cooperatively to overcome a problem during a specific session time frame (e.g., writing the introduction of a paper, which would have been a goal set out at the agenda-setting stage of the session).
Quantifiable Outcome	"Games have a quantifiable goal or outcome. At the conclusion of a game, a player has either won or lost or received some kind of numerical score. A quantifiable outcome is what usually distinguishes a game from less formal play activities" (93).	The reward can be extrinsic (e.g., accomplishing a goal established at the beginning of a session) or intrinsic (e.g., increased sense of self).

However, we note, too, that multimodality and multimedia texts may be non-digital in form (see Shipka 2011 for a discussion of multimodality beyond the digital). Several of the chapters in this collection explore analog games, such as fantasy RPGs (role-playing games) that can be played with dice, boards, or character sheets. Similarly, writing center tutors may use a range of physical tools to help a writer invent, perhaps even using mixed media such as paint, markers, cut-out shapes, and so on to work through the composing process; consultants and authors may frequently rely on computers to digitally compose word-processed documents, presentation slides, podcasts, and other forms. In this collection, we may use the terms *multimodal* and *multimedia* interchangeably, as multimodal compositions are inherently multimedia.

Finally, the term *new media* has been used in writing center scholarship and needs our attention. Two recent collections employ the term similarly. First, in 2010, David Michael Sheridan and James A. Inman co-edited *Multiliteracy Centers: Writing Center Work, New Media, and Multimodal Rhetoric.* In the introduction, Sheridan writes that new media takes various forms such as "web pages, digital video, and digital animations" (2). Sohui Lee and Russell G. Carpenter's (2014) definition includes Sheridan's examples (and also includes texts like PowerPoint presentations, electronic portfolios, and digital ethnographies), but they go much further in their definition in *The Routledge Reader on Writing Centers and New Media.* They define new media as "the cultural objects that . . . use digital technologies for distribution of information, communication, and data. [New media] encompasses the digital data and communication—from video to applications (apps) on cell phones . . . It means that consumers are also producers who can create, collaborate, and share content" (xvii). While we are slightly put off by the term *new media* (what is considered new, and at what point does something new become old, after all?), Lee and Carpenter's definition is effective for much of the work in this collection. Digital games are new media, and therefore online RPGs, virtual and augmented reality games, and even online tutoring would fall within the category of new media, whereas analog games such as in-person RPGs and tabletop games would not be a fit. Therefore, in our collection, the writers tend not to use new media as a term for their work, tending to use multimodal or multimedia instead, and again, several chapters explore analog but multimodal games such as RPGs (see LeCluyse, Shay and Shay, and Henthorn for examples in this collection). These terms—multimodal, multimedia, and new media—are slippery, and for our purposes in this collection, this is how we have chosen to approach them.

NEW APPROACHES TO LITERACY AND MULTIMODALITY IN THE WRITING CENTER

As contributors outline throughout the collection, one reason the overlap between game studies and writing center scholarship is productive for writing center studies is that it provides writing center practitioners with new or improved approaches to thinking about multimodality. For quite some time, writing centers have been concerned with the ways technology—computers specifically—has impacted tutoring practices on a range of compositions (Carino 2001; Grutsch McKinney 2010; Harris and Pemberton 1995; Hewett 2010; Lee and Carpenter 2014;

Pemberton 2003; Sabatino and Fallon 2019; Sheridan and Inman 2010; Trimbur 2010). Given writing center scholars' interest in multimodal composing and tutoring, engaging with games feels like the next logical step in the quest to understand these composing and tutoring practices. As noted earlier, games, both digital and analog, are multimodal texts; as such, they are yet another curve in a multimodal turn, a turn Jason Palmeri (2012) has illustrated is long-standing in writing studies.

From a 1995 special issue of *Computers and Composition* featuring articles on "writing centers online" (Kinkead and Hult 1995) to a 2016 special issue over two decades later on "pedagogies of multimodality and the future of multiliteracy centers" (Carpenter and Lee 2016), from edited collections on multiliteracy centers (Sheridan and Inman 2010) to collections on new media and writing centers (Lee and Carpenter 2014), writing center studies has long been curious about the impact of technological developments relevant to composing on writing center work. Michael A. Pemberton (2003) asserted that computers have been part of writing center work for the better part of forty years. They have specifically been used as tools with which to write, teach, or otherwise communicate; yet, as he noted, that relationship has been "only a cordial one, with occasional fluctuations ranging from wild enthusiasm to brooding antagonism" (11). He further cited Lerner (1998), Peter Carino (1998), Muriel Harris and Pemberton (1995), Nancy Maloney Grimm (1995), and others as early explorers of the possibilities and potential problems related to the incorporation of digital technologies in writing center work.

As digital and multimodal technologies began to impact the writing classroom and, by extension, writing center work, writing center scholars explored new media, multimodality, and multiliteracies with a heightened fervor. Jackie Grutsch McKinney (2009) not only outlined approaches to tutoring new media texts but also argued that writing center work needed to evolve to keep up with changing literacy practices. Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede (2011) similarly stated that "the growing importance of visual, oral, and performative rhetorics, not to mention of the digital revolution, has challenged us to extend our borders and expand our mission whenever possible . . . [This is] a key moment in writing center history, as writing becomes multimodal, multimedia, multilingual, and multivocal and as writing centers move to adapt to students' shifting communicative needs" (21). As these changing literacy practices began to exert influence on writing classrooms and writing centers alike, conversations deepened to incorporate, among other topics, the importance of considering disability, accessibility, and social

justice in conjunction with multimodal texts (Hitt 2012; Naydan 2013) as well as the intersections of multimodality, multiliteracies, and identity politics (Ballingall 2013). Several of the authors in this collection grapple with identity studies, literacies, and multimodality through the lens of games, such as Elizabeth Caravella and Veronica Garrison-Joyner, who explore gameful design and its possibilities for more inclusive multiliteracy centers; Christopher LeCluyse, who examines the identity play that can occur in writing centers through the example of fantasy role-playing games; and Jessica Clements, who provides the example of a gaming ethnography as a means to encourage future writing center tutors to better empathize with tutees while also retaining an intersectional approach to identity.

Games studies has also wrestled with and attended to the challenges of changing literacy practices in writing. Scholars such as James Paul Gee (2008), John Alberti (2008), Jonathan Alexander (2009), Jennifer deWinter and Stephanie Vie (2008), and Gail E. Hawisher and Selfe (2007) each provide ways to understand the intersections of literacy and multimedia texts. Game studies language, terminology, terministic screens, and scholarship can be brought to bear on our work as writing center practitioners and scholars, and by doing so we may find promising avenues we can draw from as we work with the increasing presence of multimodal composing in our daily activities and our scholarship.

Similarly, games themselves are increasingly becoming the central object of focus in many classrooms worldwide, writing classrooms included. We describe later in this introduction how the increasing prevalence of digital games in everyday life has led to a concurrent increase in the use of games in writing classrooms. The scholars we cite have articulated how writing studies scholars have brought in games as pedagogical offerings, including to teach writing in many forms; as teachable moments regarding critical cultural concepts such as race, gender, sexuality, social status, disability, and so on; and as writing tools themselves, such as when faculty ask students to create their own games using technologies like Twine or Unity and others. As games become more common in everyday life, they have become more common in writing classrooms. And as a result, they are becoming more common in writing centers, too. Bringing a consideration of games into writing center studies is just one more way we attend to calls to adapt to students' changing needs as composers and writers.

We note here, too, that game studies scholarship is itself necessarily interdisciplinary; games and the study of games belong to no one field, and while game studies is now cemented as a field of study (with the

attendant conferences, peer-reviewed academic journals, MA and PhD programs, and other markers of an established scholarly field), most who place themselves within game studies as a scholarly home come from a wide variety of academic backgrounds and rely on varied scholarly methods. Frans Mäyrä (2009) notes that while "game studies [has developed] a conceptual, theoretical, and methodological corpus of its own," the interdisciplinary nature of game studies provides "the potential of game studies as a radical, transformative form of scholarly practice" (313). Paul Martin (2018) further states that "scholars interested in understanding games benefit from knowing not only the achievements of their disciplinary colleagues, but also the work done in other areas of the campus, and even outside the university's walls" (introduction). In articulating the benefits of bringing game studies into different disciplines, Martin says, "A particular disciplinary perspective runs the danger of focusing on one layer or process to the neglect of others. Multiple perspectives can help" (n.p.). Thus, in the next section, we describe the potential power of bringing an interdisciplinary approach to writing center activity and scholarship through the application of game studies work.

NEW APPROACHES TO INTERDISCIPLINARITY IN THE WRITING CENTER

Writing center professionals often discuss interdisciplinarity in three ways. First, interdisciplinarity refers to educating tutors to work with writers from across the disciplines (Devet 2014), sometimes focusing on educating tutors in transferable strategies that can work equally well for tutoring science lab reports or art critiques or teaching them genre conventions for a range of papers they may encounter during a session. Other times the focus is on educating tutors specifically in the genre-specific writing they may encounter. Beyond pedagogy, writing center scholarship theorizes and describes the value of collaborating with faculty across campus by creating or strengthening ties with Writing across the Curriculum/Writing in the Disciplines (WAC/WID) programs (Arzt, Barnett, and Scoppetta 2009; Barnett and Blumner 1999; Harris 1992; Mullin 2011; Pemberton 1995). Finally, writing center practitioners as a whole are interdisciplinary, coming from a range of areas, often in the humanities or social sciences but not necessarily from English or rhetoric and composition. As well, writing center scholarship is also necessarily interdisciplinary, drawing from a range of theories and practices beyond the narrow scope of writing studies to better articulate and understand writing center praxis.

For writing center practitioners, especially students, an interdisciplinary approach to the everyday practices within the writing center can offer new terminology and new guidance for the work they do. Writing center work has long been welcoming to faculty of all ranks, both on and off the tenure track, and particularly welcoming to graduate and undergraduate students, given the prevalence of both in writing center tutoring and consultant positions. As with many overlaps between different fields, incorporating concepts, ideas, metaphors, theoretical lenses, and so on from another discipline offers value to scholars and practitioners in each area.

For example, undergraduate and graduate students who work as writing center consultants are frequently already familiar with video and computer games in a variety of forms but possibly lack the terminology and the scholarly apparatus necessary to theorize games in the writing center. Lee and Carpenter (2014) explained in *The Routledge Reader on Writing Centers and New Media* that their collection "acknowledges the many years of excellent writing center scholarship but also foregrounds the need for connecting our research with other fields that have explored how new media shapes communication" (xv). Similarly, we see our collection as continuing such an exploration, honing in on game studies—and thus games, which are multimodal texts—to investigate the ways games and play prompt us to re-envision writing center practices and conversations.

Explorations of multimodality in writing studies have necessarily drawn on interdisciplinary approaches; our collection's approach that brings together game studies and writing center studies is also necessarily interdisciplinary. Raymond C. Miller (1982) described interdisciplinary approaches as "all activities which juxtapose, apply, combine, synthesize, integrate or transcend parts of two or more disciplines" (6). Further, he articulated, each discipline shares its own worldview, the "underlying premises of thought" or the "conceptual construction which is used by a group to interpret reality" (5). Within writing and rhetoric, we might approach this concept of worldview through Kenneth Burke's language of terministic screens, "conceptual vocabularies used to name and interpret the world, which includes the material phenomena and forces studied by science as well as the products or insights of human relations and thought. Terministic screens consist of the words we use to represent reality, and as selections from among many conceptual vocabularies, they can lead to different conclusions as to what reality actually is" (cited in Blakesley 2017, 1745).

Burke's concept of terministic screens showed that "language—inherently metaphorical—constructs rather than reflects knowledge"

(Jay 1988, 355). Thus we see in this collection an opportunity to provide new terministic screens, new language, for scholars in writing centers and in games with which to conduct their work.

DEEPENING DISCUSSIONS OF CREATIVITY, PLAY, AND NOISE IN THE WRITING CENTER

Later in this introduction, we provide a literature review of scholarship in rhetoric and composition (sometimes also referred to as writing studies) that draws on game studies theories and terministic screens. Such scholarship illustrates that rhetoric and composition has had a growing interest in both theorizing and applying games in writing and in the classroom. Where we see the gap this collection fills, however, is in the lack of scholarship within writing center studies—itself an area of focus within rhetoric and composition more broadly—that attends to games. With a small number of exceptions, few scholars have taken up research (broadly understood) on games in the writing center.

This dearth seems odd to us: writing centers have long been spaces for playfulness, for play, and for games. Writing center scholars have embraced the role of creativity (Dvorak and Bruce 2008), play (Lochman 1986; Welch 1999), and activity (Boquet 2002) in the work of writing centers, but as we noted earlier, little work has discussed games in the writing center. While Lochman (1986) argued for the combination of rules and regulations alongside play for writing centers—noting, for instance, that "play with language must be restrained by rules and conventions if it is to communicate" (16)—his extended discussion of the value of play for writing center work and its explicit connection to games through the idea of the "game of academic writing" is one of the first lengthy conversations focusing on this topic.

Later, Kevin Dvorak and Shanti Bruce (2008) assembled a compendium filled with authors who traversed the many opportunities for play in the writing center: incorporating play and toys (Verbais 2008), using role playing and interactive performance (McGlaun 2008), including playfulness in tutor training (Zimmerman 2008), and others. The editors ascribe their purpose in assembling this collection as pushing back against the institutionalization of the field, noting that when a field becomes more established, it runs the risk of becoming "stale, institutional," and stagnant (xii). Dvorak and Bruce focus on collecting ways contributors incorporated creativity into their writing centers in an attempt to "prove . . . that writing centers can include creativity and serious play alongside serious work—or better still—can put play to work, seriously" (xiii).

But that word *serious* continued to undergird discussions of play and creativity in the writing center, with later scholars (much as Lochman, Dvorak, and Bruce had earlier) echoing the need for a balanced approach between play and seriousness in the writing center. For example, Dvorak and Jaimie Crawford (2017), in ending their chapter on cross-institutional collaborations and writing center pedagogy, specifically call out the role of play in their takeaways for those intending to enact writing studies pedagogies on their campuses. "Remember to play and to encourage play in the work environment," Dvorak and Crawford state, "but . . . understand the benefits and potential drawbacks of a playful environment" (128). Frequently, when play and games are mentioned, they are discussed within a framework that assumes their incorporation will bring along with it negative possibilities, thus illustrating one of the tensions that impacts both writing center and writing studies practitioners alike to this day. Even in a recent tutor's column in *Writing Lab Newsletter*, Amelia Hall (2016) wrestles with this tension, here in regard to the use of puns in the writing center: "Puns are typically thought to be antithetical to serious scholarly writing, but their potential usefulness, in combination with the evolving genres of academic discourse, brought me to this question: Is there room for a writer's words to be playful within a discipline, while still maintaining scholarly dignity?" (23). Hall's words showcase the fact that the binary of seriousness and playfulness undergirds writing center work even beyond the use of games or play. Perhaps Scott Miller (2008) describes this state of being best when he asserts it as living "in a contrary state, and we are conflicted. We want to have play, with all of its wild possibilities; but we're afraid of precisely those possibilities, and also afraid that the play will just make us even less relevant than we already are" (26).

That is, our conversations about play and playfulness and about games always acknowledge the sometimes unspoken (but sometimes articulated loudly) question, If we bring play/games into the writing center/writing classroom, will anyone take us seriously? And will students *really* learn? Writing centers, too, have grappled with this legitimacy as a field, and adding games to our already marginalized position might be questioned. Yet, as we outlined above, we see great value in encouraging more scholarship on games in writing center studies and in bringing games (not just play or playfulness but games specifically) into writing centers themselves. If we buy into this narrative of play being equated with frivolity and work (e.g., writing, writing tutoring) as being equated with seriousness and appropriateness, then what do we miss out on? Albert Rouzie (2000)

argues that these "deeply entrenched divisions . . . ultimately impoverish our culture's approach to literacy" (628–29).

Too, game studies scholars have struggled with similar divisions between so-called serious games and games that are played simply for the purpose of leisure or entertainment; as several of the contributors to this collection explore, this division between games as serious objects and games as mere leisure—or the division between games with a "civilizing quality" (Caillois 1961, 27), what may be called *ludus*, and games with "diversion, turbulence, free improvisation, and carefree gaiety" (13), or *paidia*—has occupied the attention of many game scholars (see Freeman as well as Blevins and Sabatino in this collection for detailed explorations of *ludus* and *paidia*). We liken the back and forth of these divisions to the push and pull between "serious" writing center work and creative, playful, gameful writing center work. Rather than spend additional time occupying this binary, we propose to explode the division entirely by asking readers to accept that gaming can be, at different times, creative, playful, serious, educational, purposeful, frivolous, fun, and beneficial. Like Scott Miller (2008), we believe we can embody both ends of the binary pole at the same time (43). The simple act of incorporating games or play into a writing center or classroom space does not immediately mean that purposeful learning is occurring there; further, it does not mean that only levity and frivolity are now present.

Instead, we must consider what the goals are for incorporating games into an educational space such as a writing center and allow ourselves opportunities to embrace the full spectrum of possibility when games are included. Unlike other technologies, games have not yet been accepted to the point of becoming invisible technologies in educational contexts; as Selfe (1999) asserts, once technologies become invisible, we begin to assume their neutrality, allowing us to "focus on the theory and practice of language, the stuff [we believe is] of real intellectual and social concern" (413). In her foundational article, "Technology and Literacy: A Story about the Perils of Not Paying Attention" (1999), Selfe states that "in the case of computers—we have convinced ourselves that we and the students with whom we work are made of much finer stuff than the machine in our midst, and we are determined to maintain this state of affairs" (414). In the case of games, playfulness, and creativity, have many of us not similarly acquiesced that our work in writing centers and in education should be made of "much finer stuff," more serious stuff? Instead, we wish to resist that urge and instead bring the relationship between gaming and writing center work, following Elizabeth H. Boquet and Michele Eodice's (2008) call, "into the realm of conscious

awareness and consideration" (4), the kind of "paying attention" that Selfe (1999) urges would put scholarship and research in the writing center as praxis (432). This collection is our attempt to do just that. Certainly, there is space for further attention to the role of play, playfulness, and creativity in the writing center, and we believe specifically that the role of games in particular is a rich yet undertheorized aspect of writing center work.

In the next section, we review literature from writing studies scholarship that focuses on games and their study. Our literature review outlines work that has already occurred in rhetoric and composition broadly to illustrate that writing studies has taken up and legitimized the study of games vis-à-vis the teaching and theorizing of writing. In doing so, it opens up further space for writing center work—as a subset of writing studies broadly—to also attend to games. The scholarship in the next section therefore points to a space where writing center studies scholars and practitioners might take up ongoing conversations and questions and add to this literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW OF GAMES AND WRITING SCHOLARSHIP

Unlike writing center scholarship, rhetoric and composition (or writing studies) scholarship broadly has paid far greater attention to the study of games. Games in rhetoric and composition are both objects of theory and objects of practice. That is, rhetoric and composition scholars who study games have frequently approached the subject with an eye toward games' pedagogical use. This is unsurprising given the field's focus on the daily work of writing instruction, and much of this scholarship has investigated the potential pedagogical power of games: for example, addressing topics such as how to teach technical communication genres like walkthroughs or encouraging students to apply themselves throughout a course by gamifying the writing classroom (Finseth 2015; Grouling et al. 2014; Roach 2015). A number of authors describe the use of existing games (e.g., *World of Warcraft*) to help students better understand writing and rhetorical principles (Colby and Colby 2008), while others talk readers through the process of developing their own games in-house for classroom use (Balzotti et al. 2017; Sheridan and Hart-Davidson 2008). Others still conduct original research on the impact of games in the writing classroom by bringing into their pedagogy projects such as gaming literacy narratives (Arduini 2018).

However, such scholarship does not remain solely at the level of addressing pedagogy. Indeed, many rhetoric and composition scholars

who study games have moved beyond the classroom to instead consider the impact of games on the field itself and our approaches to critical constructs such as literacy, writing, and composition—all central to the identity of the field (or, to return to our earlier discussion of interdisciplinarity and terministic screens, all concepts that shape our worldviews as those who study writing). More broadly, some scholars in rhetoric and composition turn to the field itself when considering how writing studies and game studies might overlap. Rather than focus on individual games or gamified classrooms, or study one's own classroom using games, these scholars theorize the larger impact of games on the field of rhetoric and composition. While interest in new media and digital forms of multimodal composing had been of significant interest to the field prior to the entrance of game studies on the scene, it was not until the early 2000s that rhetoric and composition scholars began to significantly examine games and game studies. Some of this early work (circa 2000–2009) addresses the intersections of games and literacies, perhaps most famously in Gee's (2003) book *What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy*; while Gee, a linguistics scholar, addresses the K–12 teaching environment rather than the post-secondary classroom in his book, it has been widely cited in rhetoric and composition because it touches on topics of interest such as transfer of knowledge and learning as a social activity.

Closer to home, rhetoric and composition scholars who draw on Gee's work during this early stage of scholarship on games in our field frequently consider games' impact on literacies (Alberti 2008; Alexander 2009; deWinter and Vie 2008; Hawisher and Selfe 2007). Others often use principles drawn from Gee's book as support for their own analyses within writing studies. See, for example, Zach Waggoner's (2009) *My Avatar, My Self: Identity in Video Role-Playing Games*, which uses Gee's principles of real-world identity, virtual-world identity, and projective identity as starting points for Waggoner's own "terminological continuua" (i.e., "virtual/non-virtual" and "verisimulacratude/verisimilitude") that could be used by rhetoric scholars to better study the rhetoric of video games and identity construction (1).

Much of the work around this time period appears in special issues of journals (Colby and Colby 2008; Johnson and Lacasa 2008) or in edited collections (Hawisher and Selfe 2007) and monographs (McAllister 2004; Waggoner 2009). These publications laid early foundational ground for the next wave of scholarship to come in 2010 and beyond. For instance, Ken McAllister's 2004 monograph *Game Work* offers a substantive theoretical framework drawing on rhetorical theory for those in

rhetoric and composition to use when studying games. His "grammar of gamework" (44) gives scholars a five-part framework to study "how meaning may be made and managed specifically by those who design, market, and play computer games" and a means to "talk about the processes and techniques involved in this meaning-making process" (43).

Later, 2008 seems to have been a turning point in the field, a time when scholars began to take particular notice of games and investigate their possibilities in rhetoric and composition. While some earlier work on games and rhetoric and composition exists (see, for example, Derrick 1986), such work is sparse and far between. Instead, the scholarship did not truly pick up speed until the early 2000s. Ryan Moeller and Kim White (2008) describe that "the computers and composition community [is] rapidly accepting the idea that using computer games in the classroom can be a very effective way to teach writing. For example, the 2008 program for the Conference on College Composition and Communication included at least 23 presentations that either featured *games* as their primary topic or recognized that game theory has other applications in the composition classroom" ("Abstract").

At the same time, the conference game *C's the Day*—now familiar to many attendees of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC)—was emerging, first as a pre-conference workshop in 2009 that developed a preliminary game called *Confarganon* and later as the early iteration of what we now know as *C's the Day*, first seen at the 2011 CCCC (deWinter and Vie 2015, writing about "History of C's the Day"). These moments, which included a burgeoning number of publications on games in rhetoric and composition; conference presentations, special interest groups, and workshops related to games offered at major conferences in the field such as CCCC and Computers and Writing; and the development of *C's the Day* as an official conference game sponsored by CCCC and the National Council of Teachers of English, all seemed to announce that the study of games in the writing classroom and the field itself was surging. And such a surge seemed also to dovetail with increased calls, such as Kathleen Blake Yancey's (2004), in the field for greater attention to new forms of composing that would move the field beyond "print only" and "words on paper" (298).

Scholarship on games in rhetoric and composition continues to emerge, deepening the ongoing conversations established between 2000 and 2009. At the time we are writing this introduction, game-focused work in rhetoric and composition has expanded substantially to include studies of new games and transmedia storytelling,

wearable technologies (Euteneuer 2018), and augmented reality games. Additional edited collections (Colby, Johnson, and Colby 2013; Eyman and Davis 2016) and monographs collect further research that addresses gaming in rhetoric and composition. In these varied topics and approaches, we see both an expansion and a breadth of the media to which the field attends as well as an elaboration and maturation of ongoing conversations around literacy, technology, and the role of writing and composing.

Despite pointed attention to game studies within rhetoric and composition as outlined above, tensions remain today between acceptance of this part of our field's work and rejection by those who embrace a more traditional, gatekeeping view of literacy and writing studies. The latter see little space for gaming (or indeed for many other digital and multimodal forms of composition) in writing studies and pedagogy. Rebekah Shultz Colby's 2017 study of the field and its incorporation of games clearly addresses this issue. Her study examines, through a survey and follow-up interviews, the frequency with which writing faculty used games in their classrooms and in what ways. While she finds that few writing instructors responded that they used games in their teaching, she also explicates multiple reasons for this. Pointing to the tension between gatekeeping approaches to writing courses and faculty who incorporate digital and multimodal approaches to writing, Colby (2017) asserts that "the fact that writing teachers used video games the least in their assignments underscores curricular tensions within rhetoric and composition about what to value and privilege in writing instruction and how much multimodal composing should be taught compared to traditional academic written genres" (57). In this collection, we draw a similar parallel to understand the dearth of game-focused scholarship in the writing center, noting that writing centers, too, have historically faced stigmatization regarding their status in the university; by fighting against such stigmatization, some writing center staff, faculty, and tutors may have deliberately moved away from games—given their marked nature as stereotypical objects of low culture.

Within rhetoric and composition studies, some of this scholarship on games—as we have attempted to encourage throughout this volume as well—has drawn theories and terminology from game studies into writing studies broadly. See, for example, Richard Colby and Rebekah Shultz Colby's (2008) article describing the writing classroom as a space that is like Johan Huizinga's (1955) "magic circle," or as Colby and Colby put it, "a space bounded by terms and class periods and defined by its own set of classroom rules and learning objectives" (303). Joshua

Daniel-Wariya (2016), too, draws on the terminology of the magic circle to offer a rhetorical theory of play for writing studies, noting that "theorizing play's rhetorical potential is critical to the traditional and ongoing goals of computers and writing teaching and research in general" (45). He argues that instructors should deliberately seek out composing mediums that lend themselves well to playful interactions as well as reflect on how play might shape particular materials and then incorporate those materials into their classrooms.

Finally, still others move past a pedagogical focus to simply analyze and address the impact of games in society today, taking a broader cultural studies approach to understand, for example, the role of knowledge acquisition in playing massively multiplayer online games like *World of Warcraft* (Alexander 2017). Samantha Blackmon and Daniel J. Terrell (2007) examine race as a factor in understanding representation in video games; through their analysis of *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, the authors explore racial diversity in a popular video game franchise and its implications for establishing or reinforcing stereotypes of behavior attributed to particular races. And Lee Sherlock (2013) explores queer sexuality in role-playing games such as *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*), using the central example of "a transgender player [who] was forcefully confronted by the hegemonic values surrounding gender and sexuality held by much of the *WoW* playerbase" (162) to point to the need for further interrogation of identity, sexuality, and online game play. These examples showcase the fact that writing studies scholars have approached games beyond classroom use and instead have focused on cultural and psychological studies.

One reason why we aim to bring game studies (through the lens of rhetoric and composition) and writing center studies together in this volume is to respond to calls such as that from Lee and Carpenter (2014), who ask writing center scholars to connect "our research with other fields that have explored how new media shapes communication" (xiv). Indeed, rhetoric and composition continually examines how new technologies impact writing and the teaching of writing, a clear indicator that the field is waking up to the fact that writing (and composing) today occurs frequently in digital contexts and with the aid of digital technologies. The burgeoning interest in rhetoric and composition in a narrower discussion of a particular set of digital contexts and technologies—that is, video games—is yet further proof that writing scholars are attending (as they should) to digital technologies with which their students are familiar. In this volume, we ask the question of writing center scholars: Why not games? We hope this volume will collect important voices from

writing center studies who are interested in talking about games, play, and writing centers.

IN THIS BOOK

This collection is divided into three sections: Key Concepts, Terms, and Connections; Application of Games to the Writing Center; and Staff and Writing Center Education Games. The first two sections offer rich, theoretically informed substantial chapters that approach writing center work through the lens of games and play, and their contents cover a range of topics discussed in writing center scholarship: considerations of identity, empathy, and power; productive language play during tutoring sessions; writing center heuristics; and others. The final section includes games directors and tutors can play in the writing center. These games could be used for staff development but could also be played with writers to help them develop their skills and practices.

Part 1: Key Concepts, Terms, and Connections begins with Elliott Freeman's discussion of the writing center as a place for play. Drawing on concepts central to game studies work—*paidia* and *ludus*—Freeman skillfully applies these terms through Roger Caillois's (1961) four-part framework of play to expound on the powerful role play can offer to writing centers. Building on Beth Boquet's *Noise from the Writing Center* (2002), Freeman argues that "play is not just a way of creating noise or a by-product of it, but instead, play represents a powerful tool for channeling and modulating noise. If noise empowers and enlivens our work, then play provides us with a powerful mechanism for mindfully and knowingly directing that energy." In chapter 2, Neil Baird and Christopher L. Morrow tell the story of Libbie, a writing center tutor who overcame challenges in her consultant role through the careful application of game studies–based heuristics. Here, heuristics, a tool familiar to writing center practitioners, are updated through game studies concepts, and the authors believe the "dynamic nature of game studies heuristics—specifically the heuristic circle along with positional and directional heuristics—offers a new way of conceiving heuristics within the context of writing centers."

In chapter 3, Jason Custer offers a historical overview of process, another concept familiar to writing studies, to demonstrate that process in composition studies influenced procedurality in game studies; as he states, "seeing process across these fields presents an exigence for writing center practitioners and pedagogy to consider how focusing on concepts such as play and process may help students become better

writers." The final chapter in this section, from Elizabeth Caravella and Veronica Garrison-Joyner, explores the work multiliteracy centers can do in "interrogating and dramatically restructuring the parameters of typical or conventional forms of multicultural discourse in writing center practice"; through making connections between policy and power explicit, tutors and students may be better empowered to experiment and play productively with language and mode. Gaming concepts and language such as procedural rhetoric, possibility spaces, and gameful design are used to sustain more inclusive and supportive writing center and multiliteracy center practices.

Part 2: Applications of Games to the Writing Center offers a set of six chapters that explore writing center practices and games, and many provide detailed takeaways for readers that we hope can infuse their own writing centers and practices. The first chapter in this section, from Brenta Blevins and Lindsay A. Sabatino, turns to augmented reality games—perhaps most familiar in the example of *Pokémon Go*—to provide an emergent theory of tutoring that better allows consultants to respond to multimodal writing in their centers; they close by stating that "just as players level up in highly re-playable emergent games with no clear termination, a tutoring theory of emergence recognizes that a written product isn't the ultimate objective, but instead, ongoing encounters with writing will yield new challenges, new opportunities for exploration, creativity, and discovery in new media." Next, in chapter 6 of the collection, Christopher LeCluyse draws together threshold concepts of writing and fantasy role-playing games to discuss how these two elements together can better equip writing consultants to serve students in sessions, "making the moves of both systems explicit . . . and creat[ing] a playful space to explore alternative subjectivities." Kevin J. Rutherford and Elizabeth Saur explore how the game studies concept of magic circles can emphasize inclusivity and equity in the writing center. The authors reflect on their experiences with opening a new university writing center and tie those experiences to the concept of the magic circle in an effort to illustrate their efforts to create a "more equitable and just game."

In the second half of part 2, Thomas "Buddy" Shay and Heather Shay also turn to role-playing games through the lens of dramaturgy, here applying the concept to writing center tutors and the three layers of identity they take on while working. Drawing on Dennis Waskul and Matt Lust's (2004) examination of the layers of identity among participants in tabletop role-playing games, Shay and Shay explain how tutor training can be modified to give consultants heuristics that equip

them to navigate their multifaceted identities. The final two chapters in this section are explicitly pedagogical, offering readers assignments and activities that can be used in their writing centers. Chapter 9, from Jessica Clements, showcases a gaming ethnography assignment for tutor training that aims for greater intersectionality. And the final chapter, from Jamie Henthorn, reports on a pilot study that asked students in a tutor education course to participate in semester-long quests; by "turning her class into an RPG," Henthorn attends to how playfulness in consultant development offers greater ownership over their own professionalization.

Part 3: Staff and Writing Center Education Games offers ten practical games and playful activities that tutors, writing center professionals, and writers can play in the writing center and during staff development. The four staff education games are based on commercial games that may be familiar to our readers. For example, Nathalie Singh-Corcoran and Holly Ryan's game *Writing Center Snakes and Ladders*, which helps tutors discuss difficult tutoring scenarios, is based on the popular children's game *Chutes and Ladders*. Stacey Hoffer's *Active Listening Uno* and *Heads Up! Asking Questions and Building Vocabularies* are both based on card games. These two games provide tutors with a fun and interactive way to learn terms and concepts related to tutoring. Finally, Rachael Zeleny uses a familiar television show (*Shark Tank*) to frame her game "*And Now Presenting*: Marketing Writing Center Identities," in which writing center tutors create a marketing pitch for their writing center.

Other games in this section will be new to readers, such as the puzzle-based game by Christina Mastroeni, Malcolm Evans, and Richonda Fegins. In this game, tutors build group cohesion while also familiarizing themselves with tutoring resources. Two new games in the role-playing tradition are Alyssa Noch's *Level Up* and Mitchell Mulroy's "Writing and Role Playing," both of which encourage tutors to play with writer's identities, shifting the language of progress in a tutoring session to something more in line with role-playing discourse.

The final three games in the collection are intended to encourage discussion and open up conversations about issues related to tutoring. Elysse T. Meredith and Miriam E. Laufer describe a free-form non-synchronous play activity in which tutors write comments on a writing wall. Katie Levin's game "One Word Proverbs" similarly does not have a win-state but is a playful activity designed to encourage tutors to actively listen, collaborate, and find ways to write collaboratively. Brennan Thomas, Molly Fischer, and Jodi Kutzner take a play approach to citation styles with their game *Source Style Scramble*.

Each of the chapters in this collection answers the questions we posed at the beginning of our introduction: What would happen to writing center theory and practice if we brought together writing center scholarship and games scholarship? What would it mean to not limit our scholarship to familiar educational theories/theorists but to bring in other voices from scholars who typically are not part of writing center conversations? We would argue that opening the writing center scholarly play space to an unlimited number of players can bring about exciting and new ways of addressing the important practices, beliefs, and values of writing center pedagogy.

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