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A NATIONAL STUDY OF RESPONSE TO STUDENT WRITING

When I am writing my papers I usually take into account which target audience will be reading my paper, especially if I am writing for a scholarship or a job. However in a school setting I am not too worried about my audience because the audience is one person, the teacher. Sometimes it's hard writing papers to a new teacher because in the beginning I do not know my teacher very well and it is hard to decide what kind of style of writing to use. However after the first paper I see the comments and then I can kind of get a feel to whom I am writing for.

Excerpt from a first-year writing
student's midterm reflection

The perspective on instructor response described in the student reflection above is an all too familiar one to teachers. Over the course of my college teaching career, I have certainly been guilty of designing response in the narrow, teacher-focused way this student describes. Too often as a writing teacher, I constructed response in my classes as a means to meet what must have felt to students as idiosyncratic criteria I handed down to them in a rubric that was designed in large part to justify a grade on a final draft. I always looked forward to reading my students' drafts, but I wondered if all of the response I was giving my students was worth the effort. Whether it was bringing home a pile of stapled student essays to pore over all weekend in my earliest days of teaching, or trying to find a quiet place to scroll through electronic files of student drafts to insert my supposedly helpful comments later in my career, I wondered if students were paying close attention to my feedback and applying it to future drafts, and if students were able to transfer my suggestions to the writing they were doing in their other courses. I promote language diversity in my assignments, but as a white cis male, I worried about the ways that implicit biases impacted my feedback, and I wondered how my response was received by the diverse student

populations of the institutions where I taught. Even though I tried to get students involved in giving feedback by asking them to respond to each other's drafts, it often felt to me that students viewed peer response as a waste of time, since I was the one who would ultimately be giving them a grade. Response also felt isolated and disembodied. Whether it was returning at the end of class a set of marked-up essays early in my career or emailing students an electronic file with comments later in my career, there was little dialogue, and students were mostly passive recipients of my comments.

I began to ask myself some fundamental questions about the way I was constructing response for my students; questions that I explore in the research reported on in this book. I began to question my own dominant role in response, and I wondered what the research had to say about the role of peer response and student self-assessment. I began to rethink what the focus of response should be, and I began to explore what the alternatives were to focusing on sentences and paragraphs of a rough or final draft. I became curious about what kind of response students were getting from teachers in their other classes. What did teachers across disciplines focus on when they responded, and what were students' perspectives on the feedback they received from their college teachers? When students engaged in peer response or self-assessment, how did their feedback and self-reflections differ from teacher feedback? Were there national trends in the ways teachers across disciplines respond that could help inform my teaching and the advice I gave to teachers in writing across the curriculum (WAC) faculty development workshops?

My interest in exploring response to college writing on a national scale began with a previous large-scale research project—a study of over two thousand college writing assignments from across disciplines that was reported in the book *Assignments across the Curriculum* (2014). In *Assignments across the Curriculum,* I analyzed teachers' evaluation criteria included in their writing assignments and rubrics, but I did not look at student writing and teacher response to student writing. I found that teachers who claimed to value content and critical thinking in their assignment prompts often focused on grammatical and citation style correctness in their assessment rubrics. I found an overall obsession with correctness of form, language, and format in assignment criteria and assessment rubrics. And I found that most teachers played the role of judge, asking for regurgitation of textbook or lecture information in exams. However, I also found that it was common for teachers across disciplines to respond to drafts and to make use of peer response, especially in courses that satisfy a writing-intensive requirement. What

I did not have evidence of in the data reported in *Assignments across the Curriculum* was the extent to which teachers' responses to student writing matched the examiner role they set for themselves in their assignment prompts, or what role students played in peer response. I also did not have evidence of how students responded to the assignments and the comments they received from teachers in the form of student drafts in progress and final drafts.

Reconstructing Response to Student Writing is part 2 of an ongoing research project that aims to provide a national view of college writing in the United States, offering evidence that *Assignments across the Curriculum* lacks and providing a bird's eye view of the other side of the coin of assigning writing—responding to it. In a review of response and assessment research in higher education, Carol Evans (2013) observes that most studies of response "are small scale, single subject, opportunistic, and invited" (77). Understandably, most studies of college teachers' response to student writing focus on a single course or a small number of courses, providing depth but not necessarily breadth. Perhaps this is one reason there have been few book-length studies focused on response. Evans calls for more large-scale response and assessment research, and Writing Studies scholars have begun to answer that call. Recent large-scale studies of response involve corpuses of thousands or even tens of thousands of teacher or peer comments (I. Anson and C. Anson 2017; Dixon and Moxley 2013; Lang 2018; Wärnsby et al. 2018). These researchers analyze big data to discover patterns about teacher and peer commenting on writing that provide a valuable complement to smaller scale studies. However, by focusing solely on written comments, these large-scale studies of response understandably lack context. Recently researchers have called for a greater focus on student perspectives in studies of response (Anson 2012; Edgington 2004; Formo and Stallings 2014; Lee 2014; Zigmond 2012), and large-scale studies lack the important context of the students' perspectives on the feedback they receive from peers and the teacher. Both small- and large-scale studies usually focus on one actor in the response construct (typically the teacher or peers) and one component of response (e.g., comment types, mode of delivery, the impact of feedback on revision). For pragmatic reasons, it is understandable that response researchers would narrow their focus in this way, but this narrowing often results in researchers not being able to capture the complex social contexts of response constructs.

To date no researcher has completed a national study of response to college writing that attempts to include and synthesize the many actors that make up scenes of response, the multiple components of response

constructs, and the perspective of the most important actor in response: students. In *Reconstructing Response to Student Writing*, I present the results of a corpus study that aims to provide a panoramic view of response to college writing in the United States while also providing richer contexts than prior large-scale studies of response and a consideration of the multiple factors and actors that make up response constructs. My corpus includes teacher and peer responses to over one thousand rough and final drafts of student writing as well as student reflection on response and self-assessment of their writing from first-year writing courses and courses across the college curriculum. In addition to reporting on my analysis of tens of thousands of teacher and peer comments, I consider the impact of these comments on students' drafts. Most importantly, throughout *Reconstructing Response to Student Writing* I provide students' perspectives on teacher and peer comments and students' own self-assessment of their writing. I also introduce a heuristic that takes into account the varied factors that should be considered when researching response and when designing response constructs. The heuristic is aligned with recent response research, which draws primarily on social-epistemic theories of literacy and learning.

CONSTRUCTIVIST RESPONSE RESEARCH

Constructivism emphasizes both the social context of learning and the learner's central role in the creation of knowledge. A constructivist approach to response takes into account the prominence of social-epistemic theories in recent response research (Anderson 1998; Askew and Lodge 2000; Crook 2022; Evans 2013; K. Hyland and F. Hyland 2019; Molloy and Boud 2014; Price and O'Donovan 2006; Siczek 2020; Villamil and de Guerrero 2020), the growing body of knowledge on student self-reflection and self-assessment (Boud 1995; Falchikov 2005; Yancey 1998b), and recent research on transfer and writing (Anson and Moore 2016; Moore and Bass 2017; Yancey et al. 2014). Constructivist response considers the entire social construct of responding: the student, teacher, class, assignment genre, discipline, and sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts. Constructivist response encourages social interaction and dialogue rather than response as a one-way transmission from teacher to student.

In a constructivist model of response, each factor of the response construct affects the others. For example, the common practice in English as a Second Language (ESL) courses of dynamic written corrective feedback improves students' ability to correct sentence-level errors, but

it may also reinforce students' perceptions that good writing is merely correct writing. Assignment genre choices will ultimately affect the teacher's approach in responding, depending, for example, on whether the genre assigned has strict or flexible writing conventions. Changing the mode of response and moving peer response from face-to-face in the classroom to an online forum will affect students' orientation to peer response, depending on students' comfort with the technology, their preferences regarding face-to-face versus digital feedback, the type of technology used, and so on.

Constructivist response emphasizes the learner's central role in constructing response, including student self-assessment and peer response. In this way, the research on self-reflection and transfer is relevant to constructivist response. The Writing Studies scholarship on transfer has emphasized writing and reading assignment design (Adler-Kassner et al. 2012; Anson and Moore 2016; Beaufort 2007; Carillo 2014; Downs and Robertson 2015; Moore and Bass 2017; Wardle 2009; Yancey et al. 2014; Yancey et al. 2018; Yancey at al. 2019), but perhaps because this research has focused mostly on designing curriculum, the transfer scholarship has not delved into the role of responding in writing transfer. The Teaching for Transfer literature has had little to say about responding for transfer. International literature on response does explore the concept of *feedforward*, but this concept has tended to focus on response that can be applied by the student to the next assignment within a course, rather than response aimed at more far-reaching transfer (Carless 2006; Duncan 2007; Martini and DiBattista 2014; Orsmond and Merry 2011; Pokorny and Pickford 2010; Vardi 2012).

Influential models of response, such as Brian Huot's (2002) Theory of Response in his seminal book *(Re)Articulating Writing Assessment for Teaching and Learning*, and Lynne Goldstein's (2005) response model in *Teacher Written Commentary in Second Language Writing Classrooms*, frame response as a dialogue between teacher and student but do not put student self-assessment at the center of the response construct. Goldstein argues that the key to response "is the effectiveness of the commentary provided and the quality of the communication between teachers and students about the students' revisions" (4). Huot encourages teachers to involve students in all stages of the evaluation of their work in a process he refers to as "instructive evaluation" (69). But Huot's chapter focused on building a theory of response emphasizes the central role of the teacher as responder, even as Huot argues that the teacher must remain in dialogue with the student. Thanks in large part to the scholarship of David Boud and Nancy Falchikov, self-assessment and self-reflection

Figure 1.1. A constructivist heuristic for response.

have been more integral to recent research on response and assessment in international scholarship. Self-assessment is integrated in John Hattie and Helen Timperley's (2007) Model of Feedback to Enhance Learning, and student self-assessment is central to Charles Juwah and coauthors' (2004) Model of Formative Assessment and Feedback.

As a tool for researchers to capture the social and cognitive contexts of response and for teachers across the curriculum to design more sophisticated response constructs that invite students to play a more central role in their own learning and assessment, I introduce a constructivist response heuristic (figure 1.1). The heuristic is built around fundamental questions that researchers can ask in studying response and that teachers can ask in constructing response for their classes. The heuristic distills, organizes, and synthesizes fifty years of empirical research on response in Writing Studies and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Additionally, the heuristic organizes my analysis of

the data in my corpus. Because the heuristic is informed by constructivist educational theory and research in response that points to the value of peer response and student self-assessment, the heuristic involves a conceptual reframing of response research and shifts the focus of researching response and of designing response constructs from teachers to students. In answering the questions who should respond, what should response focus on, and what contexts should be considered when responding, the heuristic emphasizes the student: student self-assessment, students' literacy histories, and students' ability to transfer knowledge to future writing contexts. The heuristic consists of six interrelated questions researchers can consider when studying response.

The heuristic is informed by the results of my national study of response to college writing and a comprehensive review of the literature on teacher and peer response and student self-assessment, including research from Writing Studies, English as a Second Language/ English as a Foreign Language (ESL/EFL), Writing across the Curriculum (WAC), and international scholarship published in English. I discuss my approach to both my primary and secondary research in more detail in the following section.

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Data Collection

When I set out to study response to college writing, I did not want to solicit responses directly from teachers, in the fear that they would share only what they considered to be their best comments. I also wanted richer data than just teacher comments, and I especially wanted to include student voices, which were missing from *Assignments across the Curriculum* and from much response research. At the time that I was considering a project on response, feedback to student writing was not accessible online in the same way I was easily able to collect a large corpus of writing assignments via Internet searches for my research in *Assignments across the Curriculum.* I postponed the project on response and spent the next few years collaborating with colleagues on a different project focused on a methodology for developing sustainable WAC programs. When that project was completed, I revisited my idea of a national study of response, and by this time—2018—I discovered that it was possible to collect a large corpus of response via the Internet. The key was to focus my search on ePortfolios.

Portfolio assessment is a pedagogical approach that involves students collecting their work for the class in a portfolio and the teacher

typically assessing the compiled portfolio rather than individual assignments. Contents included in a portfolio of student work vary, but most portfolios include rough and final drafts of student writing and a culminating self-reflection memo/letter/essay (Calfee and Perfumo 1996; Yancey 1996, 2009; Yancey and Weiser 1997). Portfolio reflection essays have been of special interest to researchers focused on student self-assessment of their writing (Bower 2003; Emmons 2003; Yancey 1998b). ePortfolios have become popular in first-year writing courses and are becoming more common in courses across disciplines and as a tool for students to collect and reflect on their work throughout their academic career, thanks in part to the availability of robust ePortfolio platforms such as Digication and Mahara. Through Internet key term searches such as "teacher comments," "peer feedback," and "reflection essay" combined with the term "portfolio," I was able to locate student ePortfolios that collect work from individual courses as well as institutional portfolios that gather work from students' entire undergraduate careers. Most of the ePortfolios I collected include multiple artifacts of both peer and teacher feedback as well as student self-assessment in the form of process memos and portfolio reflection essays. Common platforms students used to create the ePortfolios in my corpus include Digication, WordPress, and Weebly. Because there were few ePortfolios available published in courses outside of the United States, and because I considered this study to be the second part of the work I began with a study of writing assignment in US institutions of higher education, I focused only on courses at US institutions.

Carol Rutz (2004) argues that "piles of student papers may bear thousands of fascinating teacher comments, but at least half of the story remains untold as long as student writers are not part of the conversation" (122). I was especially interested in studying how students react to response from their teachers and peers, and what I found to be extremely useful qualitative data available in the ePortfolios were the many cases in which students reflect on teacher and peer responses and on their own writing processes in process memos, introductions to portfolios and to individual web pages, midterm reflections, and final portfolio reflection essays. Most of the portfolios in my corpus contain at least some student reflection on peer and teacher comments, and a little over half of the portfolios (128) include extended portfolio reflection essays that reference peer and/or teacher feedback. Throughout *Reconstructing Response to Student Writing*, student voices are predominant.

In 2018 and 2019, I searched online for as many ePortfolios that included response as I could locate. I was able to collect 240 portfolios

Table 1.1. Overview of corpus

Total number of portfolios	240
Total number of artifacts of student writing with teacher or peer response	1,054 635 teacher responses • 442 responses to drafts in progress • 193 responses to final drafts 419 peer responses
Distribution of teacher responses	70% from first-year composition 30% from courses in the disciplines
Total number of student self-reflection essays	128
Total number of institutions	70

and formative and summative responses to 1,054 pieces of student writing (635 teacher responses and 419 peer responses) as well as 128 student self-reflection essays. The portfolios represent first-year writing courses and courses from across disciplines at 70 institutions of higher education across the United States (see appendix for a list of the institutions). The portfolios are primarily from individual courses, but a handful are undergraduate career portfolios. Seventy percent of the teacher responses are from first-year writing courses, and 30 percent are from courses across disciplines. This reflects the greater availability of ePortfolios from first-year writing courses and not any intent on my part to have a larger representation from first-year writing courses. Approximately 25 percent of the teacher responses are final drafts of student writing (n=193), with the rest being drafts in progress. The corpus includes a broad range of genres: literacy narratives, research articles, business memos and reports, film reviews, white papers, literature reviews, and so on. Table 1.1 provides an overview of my corpus.

I submitted an IRB protocol to my institution and the project was given "not human subjects" status by an administrative review. In a discussion of issues of consent in corpus studies using Internet data, Tao and coauthors (2017) argue that accessibility of online research sites is an important determinant in whether informed consent is required (11). The data in my corpus meets the United States Department of Health and Human Services definition of public behavior archived on public web sites where authors do not have expectations of privacy (Office for Human Research Protections 2018). All of the artifacts I collected were existing data, publicly archived on the Internet without password protection. The students who published these portfolios knew their work was going to be publicly available on the Internet, and most of the portfolios include a welcome page in which the students introduce themselves to a

potential broader readership beyond the course and welcome readers to their website. An additional ethical issue in online research that Tao and coauthors (2017) discuss is the sensitivity of the topic being researched. I do not criticize the students or their writing in my research but rather provide examples primarily of the benefits of giving students a greater role in the response construct.

Though the data in my corpus is public and not focused on a sensitive topic, as Tao and coauthors (2017) point out, even Internet research focused on public data that is not classified by an institution's Institutional Review Board (IRB) as human subjects status is on a continuum between private and public (13). Although they are not private or password protected, the ePortfolios in my corpus were published to meet a course requirement. Students using Digication might have had the option of choosing password protection or publishing for solely an institutional audience, whereas students using Google Sites or Weebly or WordPress did not have a privacy option. In the interest of protecting the privacy of the students and teachers, I anonymized all of the data, and I do not identify students, teachers, or writing center tutors by name or institution. In some portfolios students display graded work, which is technically a violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and I did not include in my examples shared in this book rough or final drafts that are graded.

Data Analysis

As I was collecting responses from ePortfolios, I also began reviewing the literature on response. Given the scope of my data, my constructivist theoretical framework, and my desire to design a heuristic that fully engages the response construct, I made the decision to conduct a comprehensive review of the literature on teacher and peer response to college writing and college students' self-assessment of their writing that had been published since the early 1980s—the first wave of empirical scholarship on response in Writing Studies that was ushered in by the work of Nancy Sommers and the research team of Lil Brannon and C. H. Knoblauch. Another motivating factor in undertaking a comprehensive review of the literature was that I knew of no other review of response literature that attempted to (a) synthesize the findings of not just the literature on teacher response but also peer response and student self-assessment of college writing; (b) integrate research and theory from Writing Studies, WAC, and ESL/EFL scholarship; and (c) include a comprehensive overview of both US and international literature on

response to college writing published in English. Never far from my thoughts as I researched and wrote this book was the memory of one of my mentors when I was in graduate school, Richard Straub, who always encouraged me to be comprehensive in my thinking and my research-ing, and whose work on response has strongly influenced my perspective and the perspectives of Writing Studies teachers and scholars. Because my research corpus consists of college-level writing, I did limit the scope of my literature review to research on undergraduate college writing. I began by developing a heuristic based on predominant themes and areas of focus of the response literature. When I applied the heuristic to my corpus, I found that my analysis of my data caused me to revise my initial heuristic. Namely, the amount of student self-assessment and self-reflection on transfer of writing in my corpus, and the ways that my own pedagogy was shifting based on the evidence of the quality of self-assessment in my research, caused me to integrate metacognition and transfer more prominently into subsequent drafts of the heuristic.

My process of analyzing the data consisted of three cycles. In the first cycle, I read the portfolio artifacts quickly, noting in a spreadsheet the extent to which they connected to or differed from the components of my heuristic of themes from the literature. In the second cycle, I read the artifacts more closely, noting both representative and dis-crepant example comments and making brief analytic memos in the spreadsheet. In this second cycle, I revised the heuristic so that it had a greater focus on metacognition and transfer, based on the patterns I noted in the corpus. In order to peer check the reliability of my analysis and to check my own reliability over time, six months after complet-ing my analysis of the data I engaged in a third cycle of analysis and shared a random sample of twenty portfolios with two graduate students who were at the time pursuing a PhD in Education at the University of California, Davis, Amy Lombardi and DJ Quinn. I gave Lombardi and Quinn a stipend to participate in a three-hour reliability "sense-checking" (Creswell 2009, 192) activity in which I asked them to check the validity of my findings by reading a proportional stratified sample of ten portfolios each (seven first-year writing portfolios and three WAC course portfolios randomized within each stratum, for a total of 170 pieces of student writing responded to by peers or the teacher). During this activity, I reread all twenty portfolios. We then did a thirty-minute peer debriefing and discussed the extent to which Lombardi and Quinn perceived the themes from the literature and the questions in my heuris-tic matched the data. They felt my heuristic accounted for response con-structs in the corpus and they were in broad agreement with my analysis

of the data in relation to the themes from the literature, although they noted additional discrepant examples and also pointed out additional findings of interest.

Although I used my heuristic to categorize qualitative patterns in my corpus, I made a conscious choice not to create a taxonomy of types of response and code discrete comments. The evolution of research on response is a gradual movement away from focusing solely on analyzing teacher comments and toward incorporating ethnographic methods and considering student writing and student reflections after receiving response. Earlier research—and some current studies—are focused on creating taxonomies for coding and assessing teacher response. However, Ferris (2003) warns that "counting schemes . . . may not capture the complexities of revision" (36), and other prominent response scholars have emphasized that coding and interpreting teacher comments in isolation is reductive (Fife and O'Neill 2001; Knoblauch and Brannon 1981; Newkirk 1984; Phelps 2000). In light of my constructivist framework, and because I did not have the benefit of being able to member check coded responses with the teachers and students in my research, I elected to focus on broader qualitative patterns within my heuristic rather than use a taxonomy to code discrete comments or student revisions. In this qualitative and constructivist methodology, "labelling is done to manage data rather than to facilitate enumeration" (Spencer et al. 2014, 278). As Creswell (2013) notes, quantitative coding may not always work in a qualitative and constructivist research project, as "counting conveys a quantitative orientation of magnitude and frequency contrary to qualitative research" (185). However, I do attempt to provide enough qualitative evidence from the ePortfolios to establish the patterns in my corpus and their connection to the themes from the literature and the components of my heuristic. This evidence includes teacher and peer response, excerpts from drafts of student writing, and student self-assessment.

In my focus on student reflections on the responses they receive from teachers and peers, I hope to begin to address, on a large scale, the call for more response research that considers students' perspectives. This call for more student voices is ubiquitous in recent response research. Lee (2014) asserts that "research that explores students' role in evaluating their peers' writing and in self-monitoring of their own learning is much needed to add new knowledge to the current research base on feedback in writing" (1). Chris Anson (2012) calls for research that answers the question, "What do students *do* with teachers' responses to their writing? How do they read and interpret those responses, and

with what subsequent effects on their improvement as writers?" (192). Edgington (2004) expresses concern that "the focus on response has continued to be on teachers and the comments they write. Few scholars have focused their studies on how students react to responses" (287), a concern shared by Formo and Stallings (2014), who argue, "We have not studied the writer as solicitor of feedback" (48). Zigmond (2012) echoes these concerns about the lack of student voice in response research: "Most research in writing response theory examines the different types of comments that teachers write but falls short of understanding students' perceptions of those comments" (112). My research builds on the limited number of response studies that focus attention on student perspectives on response. Teacher comments are an important component of my study, but whenever possible I consider these comments in the context of student reflections on teacher comments.

Limitations of the Study

I believe the large scale of my data, the amount of student self-reflection on response that is included in most of the ePortfolios I collected, and the fact that my data is unsolicited are strengths of this study. The limitations of the research are in many respects similar to the limitations of the research I conducted in *Assignments across the Curriculum*. Despite the size of my corpus, I certainly cannot generalize from my data to all of college response to writing in the United States. This is especially true given that my corpus includes more than twice as many ePortfolios from first-year writing courses than courses in the disciplines. In *Assignments across the Curriculum* I noted strong patterns in the over two thousand writing assignments, and I argued that these patterns provided broader insight into college writing than smaller scale studies. I believe the same is true for *Reconstructing Response to Student Writing*. Although some of the responses in my corpus are from undergraduate career portfolios that students assembled themselves, the majority of the portfolios are from courses in which the teacher required ePortfolios and asked students to include rough drafts, peer response, and artifacts of self-reflection. The fact that most of the responses in my research are from teachers who have adopted portfolio pedagogy and writing as a social process further limits my corpus from being representative of college response as a whole.

A study of over a thousand responses, hundreds of student self-reflections, and tens of thousands of comments cannot include the level of context of smaller-scale, ethnographic research. As was true

of *Assignments across the Curriculum*, I do not have data from interviews with students or teachers or observations of classes. In this respect, my research is similar to other large-scale studies of response, including Connors and Lunsford's (1988, 1993) studies of comments in 3,000 essays solicited from writing teachers across the United States, Dixon and Moxley's (2013) analysis of 118,611 writing teachers' comments on 17,433 essays at one institution, Ian Anson and Chris Anson's (2017) lexically based index of 50,000 first-year writing students' peer response comments at one institution, Lang's (2018) analysis of five years of first-year writing TA comments on 17,534 pieces of student writing at one institution, and an analysis by Wärnsby and coauthors (2018) of 50,000 peer reviews at three institutions. As was true for these researchers, I did not have access to teachers to ask them what the intent behind their comments was, or what theory of response informed their feedback practices. It is certain that the teachers in my corpus responded to students in ways that I could not capture using my research methods: for example, in class discussions, office hours, conferences with students, and so on. It is also highly likely that there were teacher responses that students chose not to include in their ePortfolios, or that came after they had completed their ePortfolios. I did not observe any of the courses in my research, and I cannot connect peer and teacher responses to classroom conversations, except to the extent that classroom contexts were discussed in student reflections. Because of this, I try to avoid speculating on teachers' intentions as I analyze their comments, and I focus instead on student uptake of teacher and peer response, since unlike prior large-scale response studies, I do have students' testimonies in the form of portfolio reflection essays, process memos, metacommentary directly on responses, and introductory statements on web pages.

It is not my intention in *Assignments across the Curriculum* and *Reconstructing Response to Student Writing* to provide an in-depth look at the writing assignments and responses of individual teachers, courses, or institutions. Rather, my goal in these two books is to zoom out and provide a panoramic view of college writing and responding in the United States. I consider my work in these two books to be a compliment to ethnographic research into college writing, helping to sketch a large-scale picture of writing and response across the college curriculum at a variety of types of institutions across the country. If my work as a researcher is taken as a two-part investigation of college writing, over the last decade I have analyzed over 2,000 writing assignments and over 1,000 responses to student writing at 170 institutions of higher education. Throughout this book, I consider my findings regarding response in the context

of my prior research on college writing in order to present a comprehensive perspective on writing and responding in higher education in the United States. I end this book with a postscript in which I reflect on what I have learned studying college writing and responding on a national scale and offer advice for composition teachers, faculty in the disciplines, writing center tutors, writing program administrators, and upper-level administrators regarding teaching writing, responding to writing, and designing impactful writing programs.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

Chapter 2, "A Constructivist Heuristic for Response," explores the theory and research behind each question included in my constructivist heuristic for response. This review includes research from Writing Studies, ESL/EFL, WAC, and international scholarship published in English. The literature review I undertook for *Reconstructing Response to Student Writing* includes over 1,300 books and articles on the topics of teacher and peer response to college writing and student self-assessment of their writing. My constructivist heuristic is both a tool for researchers to take an expansive approach to studying response and a conceptual reframing of response research that encourages scholars to shift their attention from the role of teachers to the role of students in response constructs. This shift will encourage researchers to include peer response and student self-assessment in studies of classroom response, and it will benefit teachers and students by giving students a more central role in the response construct.

   In chapter 3, "Teacher Response to Writing," I discuss patterns in the 635 teacher responses to student writing in my research. My constructivist heuristic for response serves as an organizing device for the chapter. Because my data includes student reflections on teacher response, I discuss how students react to the responses provided by their teachers on rough and final drafts. The data reinforces prior research that shows that teachers construct their responses in limited ways and often focus on correctness, but my research also shows that teachers are quick to praise student writing. My research reveals that teachers connect their responses to the genres they are assigning, but there is a lack of teacher comments that can be applied to students' future writing contexts. In chapter 3 I highlight the extent to which the teacher as evaluator dominates students' thinking about writing and revision, with many students expressing their desire to achieve a good grade and please the teacher rather than seeing teacher response as an opportunity for growth and learning.

Chapter 4, "Peer Response to Writing," focuses on patterns in the 419 peer responses to student writing in my research. As with chapters 2 and 3, my constructivist heuristic for response serves as an organizing device. Because my data includes student reflections on peer response, I discuss how students react to their peers' comments on their drafts. The data supports prior research that shows that with scaffolding and guidance, students can respond effectively to their peers' writing. In chapter 4, I push this concept further than most prior researchers who have investigated peer response, and I argue that the peer response in my study is just as effective, and often more effective, than the teacher response.

In chapter 5, "Students' Self-Assessment of Their Writing," I present patterns regarding student self-assessment of their writing in the 128 portfolio reflection essays in my corpus, with the heuristic once again acting as an organizing device. Most of these essays are extensive and detailed, and they are supplemented by other forms of reflective writing in many of the ePortfolios, such as process memos and revision plans included with drafts. Chapter 5 presents evidence that not only are students capable of effectively assessing their own writing but they are often as insightful as teachers. I emphasize that students express a desire for response that they can apply to future writing contexts, and that they are thoughtful about reflecting on issues of growth and transfer when they assess themselves as writers.

In chapter 6, "Reconstructing Response," I review the major findings of the study, consider the implications of my findings, and suggest future areas for research in response. Chapter 6 reminds readers of the ways my research builds on, expands, and sometimes contradicts the prior research on response that I synthesize in chapter 2. In chapter 6, I suggest future directions in response research, with an emphasis on research that examines the full response construct and that considers aspects of response that were prominent in my study but have been less prominent in prior research, including response and transfer; the role of grades in student uptake of response; and the importance of socially constructed elements of response such as genre conventions, discourse community, and student and teacher sociocultural contexts. I make the argument that the future of response should mark a shift from an emphasis on teacher as primary responder and rough and final drafts as the focus of response to student self-assessment as the primary form of response and artifacts of self-assessment, such as portfolio reflection essays, as the primary focus of teacher response. Chapter 6 expands the purpose of my constructivist heuristic for response from a tool for response researchers

to a pedagogical tool to aid faculty across disciplines in designing more effective and more expansive response constructs.

In the postscript, "Reflections on Two Decades of Researching College Writing and Responding," I provide final reflections on college writing and responding based my research in *Assignments across the Curriculum* and *Reconstructing Response to Student Writing*, which taken together represent an analysis of over 2,000 writing assignments and over 1,000 responses to student writing at 170 institutions of higher education. I consider the implications of my research into college writing and responding for teachers, writing center tutors, writing program administrators, and upper-level administrators.