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A Theory of Text as Action: Why Delivery through Publication Improves Student Writers and Their Writing

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ABSTRACT

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Students in required writing courses often fail to see the purpose of these courses and invest themselves in their writing. Many composition pedagogues have noticed that one solution to this problem is to help students publish their writing, and have reported the positive outcomes of their publication-focused courses. However, this practice has not been grounded in theory. My project connects the practice of publishing student writing to theory. I draw on Kenneth Burke's and others' ideas of text as action and show how the ancient canon of delivery is a necessary means of experiencing and understanding text as action with consequence. I argue that publishing is one of the most effective methods of delivery that can help students understand the implications of enacted texts. I then couch this theory in practice by presenting a variety of sources that report on the impact of publishing student texts; I include my own data collected while teaching two publication-focused, first-year writing courses at Brigham Young University during Fall 2012 and Winter 2013 semesters. This data suggests that in most cases, publishing student writing positively impacts student identity, motivation, process, and product. I explain the results of my own observations and those of various composition pedagogues with the theory of text as action being powerfully experienced by students as they work toward delivering their texts to public audiences via publication.

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INTRODUCTION

A perennial problem in required writing courses, especially on the secondary school and

collegiate levels, is getting students to care about writing. Too many times students see their

required writing courses as hoops to jump through before they can graduate and move on to what

they really want to do, whatever that is for them. All too often, students fail to see the relevance

of their writing course to their "real" lives, their real goals; and in failing to make this

connection, students lack the motivation to invest themselves in understanding and developing

the invaluable skills of writing and communicating well. They "blow off" their required writing

courses.

Different composition instructors handle this situation in different ways, trying

everything from exciting students with an enthusiasm for writing that is (hopefully) infectious,

focusing on the writing process as a means of self-discovery, and occasionally experimenting

with making student work public via oral presentations, writing competitions, blogging, or other

forms of publishing.

Although the practice is not common, publishing student writing is not a new idea. Many

composition teachers have reported the effects publishing can have on student writers (the what),

and suggested ways to make students' texts public (the how); few of those involved in publishing

student writing, however, have been able to satisfactorily explain the why behind making student

writing public, why publishing impacts students the way that it does. Many have explained their

students' reactions to public writing by recognizing that their students are writing to "authentic

audiences" and that this motivates student writers to invest themselves more in their writing,

improving both their process and their product (not to mention their class experience) during

their writing courses. Educational psychologist Alicia Marie Magnifico suggests the implications of making student writing public saying, "If, indeed, authentic audiences [accessed via publication] do serve as motivational factors for students learning to write, this finding will provide important, far-reaching design implications for literacy teaching, and for schools more broadly" (181). Writing for authentic audiences via publishing can be the answer to reviving students' interest and investment in their writing courses.

But what is it about an "authentic" audience that motivates writers, often even more than a grade? Why is writing for a public so impactful, and why are our classrooms less so? These questions must be answered in order to truly understand the impacts and implications of making student work public.

I'm going to answer these questions and suggest a "why" for publishing student writing by providing grounding for the practice with a theory that will explain students' experiences with publishing and justify publishing as an important method of revitalizing student investment and involvement in their composition courses. This theory, which I will call textual action via public delivery, is that when students deliver their texts to authentic audiences via publication, they anticipate and experience their texts as actions with consequences in a more compelling setting than a classroom can provide. Seeing and experiencing their texts as actions on a public stage (as opposed to exercises on a classroom stage) is the main reason students are often more motivated to produce better writing. In this thesis I will first develop the idea of text as action by drawing on Kenneth Burke's and others' ideas of text as symbolic action that is best understood dramatistically. I will then emphasize the need for students to understand their texts as actions with consequences. I will show that delivery is how students experience text as action and explain why publishing can be one of the most effective methods of helping students see their

texts as actions. Next, I will look at the effects publishing has on student writers by turning to various researchers and practitioners who have noted how publishing affects their students and by presenting my own observations in publication-focused courses. Finally, I will make some suggestions for how to incorporate publishing into a writing classroom to most effectively help students experience their texts as actions via delivery. By making their texts public, thus helping students see their texts as acts with consequences, we can help students see greater purpose in their writing courses, invest themselves in becoming competent communicators, and revitalize the composition curriculum.

TEXT AS ACTION

Before I can discuss text as action, I need to define two terms, *action* and *text*, and show how they are related. Kenneth Burke defines action in part by contrasting it with his concept of motion. For Burke, there is a "difference between mental action and mechanical motion" (*Rhetoric of Religion* 40). He states, "The human body, in its nature as a sheerly physiological organism, would . . . be in the realm of matter, for which our term is 'motion'" ("Non-symbolic" 809). In essence, Burke sees motion as the physical forces occurring in the universe independent of human volition: to use his example of the human body, hair growing, the heart beating, cells replacing themselves, and so forth, would be "motion" because they occur whether we choose for them to or not. Action, on the other hand, is motive-driven choice: "*Action* involves *Character,* which involves *choice*. . . . [*A*]*ction* implies the ethical, the human personality" (*Rhetoric of Religion* 41). Language or text, then, because it always involves choice, is a form of action: "I define language as a species of action: 'symbolic action'" says Burke (*Rhetoric of Religion* 38). Although in this statement it would appear that Burke is seeing action and symbolic action as separate terms, in practice, action is always symbolic. Burke also notes that implicit in

this definition of language as symbolic action is the idea of drama—watching and being watched by an audience. For example, "If [a] film were being played in an empty house," says Burke, "there would be no drama, that is, no symbolic action" ("Non-symbolic" 833). In other words, for writing, speaking, or even other non-verbal symbols to function as acts, there must be an audience experiencing the text. Whether the audience is as large as the internet public or as intimate as the self, as long as someone is reading or listening, the symbolic texts we create—in this case, our own or our students' writing—are forms of action.

Text, symbolic action, then, is inherently dramatic: "the principle of drama is implicit in the idea of action" ("Language" 18). Seeing student writing in dramatic terms, specifically the terms of Burke's dramatistic pentad, becomes a useful way to understand how and why our students more clearly understand their texts as symbolic acts when they deliver them to a public rather than an in-class audience. I will later use Burke's pentad to help us explain why writing for a public audience, as opposed to a classroom audience, has the kind of effect that it does on students and their writing.

Text as action, along with implying drama, has a multiplicity of implications. If text is action, then text brings the kinds of consequences that actions bring. The consequences of enacted texts affect character, identity, morality, and ethics. As Burke states, "*Action* involves *character,* which involves *choice. . . .* Though the concept of sheer *motion* is non-ethical, *action* implies the ethical, the human personality" (*Rhetoric of Religion* 41). This sentence is packed with implication, for if action involves character, then action involves identity, how we perceive ourselves and how others perceive us. Burke sees the "'personality' or Self . . . as a social product, developed via the human experience with the resources of symbol systems" ("Non-symbolic" 837). He sees our identities as constructed via symbolic action—language or text. He

says that the human is the "kind of animal whose relation between its Self (as an individual) and its Culture (its society) is infused ('inspirited') with the genius (for better or worse) of its symbol systems, which it learns to manipulate and by which it gets correspondingly manipulated" ("Non-symbolic" 832). Building on this idea, we can see that as textual acts elicit reactions from audiences (personal or public), these reactions shape how we perceive ourselves, how we perceive others, and in turn, how we are perceived by others. This perception, in turn, shapes how we "manipulate" and "get manipulated," or, in kinder terms, how we treat ourselves and others.

Clearly, symbolic, textual actions can have profound impact on human relationships— and not only on relationships, but also on attitudes and actions. With such influence, text can become a change agent in society. Isocrates perhaps summarizes the implications of texts as acts best, saying that

> because there has been implanted in us the power to persuade each other . . . not only have we escaped the life of wild beasts, but we have come together and founded cities and made laws and invented arts; and, generally speaking, there is no institution devised by man which the power of speech has not helped us to establish. . . . For the power to speak well is taken as the surest index of a sound understanding and discourse which is true and lawful and just is the outward image of a good and faithful soul. (327)

From constructing a civilization to constructing an individual identity, texts experienced by audiences can have powerful personal potential for persuasion and change.

All this may seem a bit sweeping, but it is important to understand the potential power that a student in a composition classroom can have, during the course and after the course, by learning to create texts that are enacted, read by audiences that can be influenced by the students'

writing. Students' texts, as actions enacted for a responsive audience, can bring to bear all the implications—social, personal, and developmental—that have been mentioned. Clearly, helping students understand the implications of their texts as actions should be a major learning outcome of a composition course. But besides being an important concept, the idea of text as action can help students gain a sense of purpose and motivation in their writing courses as they begin to experience the greater implications of their communicative acts.

DELIVERY AS A WAY OF EXPERIENCING AND UNDERSTANDING TEXT AS ACTION

The question for writing instructors, then, is how do we get students to see the greater implications of their texts? How can we get them to see their texts as consequential acts? The ancient rhetorical curriculum provides some of the answers to this question.

In the ancient rhetorical curriculum, declamation was the culminating purpose of student compositions; all exercises and written texts were seen as preparation for oral presentations before public audiences. In order to make these presentations compelling and persuasive, students completed exercises from the *progymnasmata* and *gymnasmata* to develop a bank of persuasive strategies and to get feedback from their peers and teachers. Students would also compose and polish their speeches according to the five canons of rhetoric. The fifth canon of rhetoric, delivery, was concerned with performing or declaiming the orator's speech well and was taught and executed in terms of gestures, voice inflection, enunciation, and so forth. Nancy Christiansen notes that

> An important implication to emerge from this instructional program, one that enables its efficiency and effectiveness, is that there is a master genre—the declamation—framing all discourse, a genre that is by nature double—both drama and argument. . . . Each

preliminary model and theme was itself treated as both a dramatic performance and an

argument. (81)

Orally declaiming their compositions was expected of all students in this curriculum, and it

shaped every facet of the curriculum. As Christiansen explains, many of the exercises in the

Greco-Roman rhetorical curriculum focused on the performative aspects of the texts, with

exercises such as reading aloud and delivering original speeches to a class audience, which

would provide immediate feedback. With such an emphasis on declamation, "Students would

come to see that . . . all speeches are consciously designed 'acts' performed before audiences in

order to produce an effect upon and elicit a reaction from them" (Christiansen 83). Ancient

practitioners helped students see text as action and begin to take responsibility for the

implications of their actions through declamation—delivery.

Delivery may be the answer for pedagogical practice today, but current conceptions of

delivery necessarily differ from the ancient idea of delivery as public speaking, especially with

our current emphasis on written rather than oral texts. The website *Silva Rhetoricae* states that

while "delivery originally referred to oral rhetoric at use in a public context, [it] can be viewed

more broadly as that aspect of rhetoric that concerns the public presentation of discourse, oral or

written" ("Delivery"). In other words, delivery can be seen as more than just principles of

elocution to polish before presenting an oral speech: delivery can refer to any act that makes a

work public—from in-class presentations (if a classroom counts as a public) to publishing. With

this definition of delivery in mind, I will discuss how delivery can be an effective means of

helping students understand and experience their text as action.

HOW DELIVERY HELPS STUDENTS EXPERIENCE TEXT AS ACTION

Delivery helps students experience text as action for several reasons. First, delivery instantiates the students' texts in a performative frame. The performative frame is crucial because it is in the performance that we see the text functioning as "real" communication and begin to make the connection that "if *action* is to be our key term, then *drama;* for drama is the culminative form of action" (Burke "Language" 1347). In other words, the key to making text be seen as action is to experience the text in delivery (drama, performance)—a fact the ancient curriculum capitalized on. Christiansen notes this connection between text and action became clearer as a result of the ancient emphasis on declamation, where the practice of declamatory exercises connected "the word to the world, since text only fully exists in performance, behavior" (78). Without this performance, without an audience experiencing it, the text exists merely as an exercise and not as communication. But with an opportunity to deliver the text to an audience, the text becomes realized, instantiated.

A second reason delivery helps students see text as action is that once the text is enacted, there is opportunity for consequences in the form of audience response. Elbow emphasizes the importance of experiencing audience response when he states that "getting a sense of audience isn't just practice in feeling scared about how they might react. It also means learning how they do react" (*Writing* 83). Learning how they do react involves experiencing what Burke calls "'gradations' of response" to symbolic actions or texts ("Non-symbolic" 836). Understanding these "'gradations of response'" marks the difference between effective, audience-aware communicators and those who are merely speaking to an unresponsive void.

In addition to helping students get a sense for how an audience responds, helping students deliver their texts can provide an opportunity for them to experience how their judgments or opinions on a topic impact the judgments of their audiences; this is a third way that students can

experience their texts as actions via declamation. Christiansen notes that in the ancient curriculum, "With the declamation the fundamental genre and that genre inclusive of both judgments about action and calls for action, every text places the audience in the role of judge and the speaker in the role of an advocate who has already judged" (84). By delivering their texts and experiencing audience feedback, students can see how their judgments and opinions on a subject are then judged by an audience. Nicholas Mauriello and Gian S. Pagnucci provide an example of a student becoming more aware of himself and his audience in their article "Can't We Just Xerox This?: The Ethical Dilemma of Writing for the World Wide Web." They explain that "When students write for an on-line audience, they . . . become accountable for their words and the emotions those words may stir within the reader" (Isaacs 50). Mauriello and Pagnucci give an example of a student whose inaccurate essay on U.S. military tactics sparked multiple responses from veterans in his online audience, inspiring him to revise for accuracy (Isaacs 50). By delivering his writing (via publication in this case), this student received invaluable feedback from his audience, feedback that helped him both recognize the implications of his text as a communicative act and take responsibility for the accuracy of his statements. Through delivery, students can begin to see their writing as action within discourse communities, communities that will judge and respond to their actions.

Finally, a judging and responding audience also provides an opportunity for students to see their texts' connections to interpersonal relationships and even their own identities. Burke states, "My ego is an aspect of my Self, which is developed through modes of sociality (Culture) made possible by the resources of symbolism" ("Non-symbolic" 824). In other words, symbolic action, or text, makes social relationships possible, which in turn develops personal identity. Audience feedback from delivered texts shows students how others are interpreting and

accepting their ideas, which in turn shapes the students' sense of placement, role, and identity within their discourse communities. In the previous example from Mauriello and Pagnucci, the student received feedback that prompted him to change what he said, to make his writing more accurate. He revised not because he cared about accuracy per se, but because he cared about his relationship with his audience and how his audience would view him as a person. This idea of helping students develop identity by their experiencing their texts as actions with consequences will be addressed further in the next section.

PUBLISHING AS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE MODES OF DELIVERY

Thus far I have argued that delivery helps students understand and experience their text as action with consequence because they anticipate and receive audience response. There are, however, many methods of delivery, from publication to in-class presentations to reading the paper aloud to oneself. Which method of delivery most effectively helps students experience their texts as actions with consequence? I will argue that delivery for a public audience via publication is one of the most effective methods for accomplishing this goal. To explain why this is the case, I will use the five elements of Burke's pentad to compare delivery for an in-class audience with delivery for a public audience. In so doing, I hope to illustrate that in-class delivery, while it can still be very useful, is ultimately less impactful in helping students to see their texts as actions with consequence.

Purpose: Good Grade Versus Communication

When delivery is ultimately for only an in-class audience, the purposes of the writing are often something like, "impress the teacher or my classmates," "demonstrate writing ability," or "follow all parts of the writing prompt"—all with the ultimate purpose of "getting a good grade." In contrast, the purposes of delivering for a public audience are often more like "convince

readers of my opinion," "communicate my idea clearly," or "share what readers want to know."

Elbow notes this fundamental difference in purpose when he states,

> We all know that when students write to teachers they have to write "up" to an audience
> with greater knowledge and authority than the writer has about her own topic. . . . Thus
> the basic subtext in a piece of student writing is likely to be, 'Is this okay?' In contrast to
> students, the basic subtext in a [non-student] writer's text is likely to be "listen to me, I
> have something to tell you," for writers can usually write with more authority than their
> readers. ("Being" 81)

When students no longer feel that their purpose is to "write up," they can deliver texts that more

closely reflect what "writers" do—communicate as authorities. With a public outside the

classroom, the purpose is to write to an actual "rhetorical exigency, whereby students participate

in the 'real world' as part of their education" (Isaacs 88). In other words, students write with the

intent to present, to perform, to enact their ideas for an authentic audience. Their purpose is "real

world" communication with an audience responding outside the confines and politics of the

classroom. This purpose is often much more motivating to students than writing with the purpose

of demonstrating writing skill or fulfilling an assignment for a grade.

Scene: In-Class Versus Public

The next element of Burke's pentad is scene. An in-class scene includes the composition

teacher and the peers interacting with the texts produced in the class. While student texts are

certainly acting on some level for the audiences in this scene, Elbow points out that

> A regular teacher is usually too good a reader . . . he isn't really listening to you. He
> usually isn't in a position where he can be genuinely affected by your words. He doesn't
> expect your words actually to make a dent on him. He doesn't treat your words like real

reading. He has to read them as an exercise. He can't hold himself ready to be affected

unless he has an extremely rare, powerful openness. (*Writing* 127)

All this is not to say that a teacher audience is necessarily a poor audience; the teacher-audience

can be a crucial "pre-audience," comparable to an editor in a publishing company. The teacher

can give feedback to instruct students on how to improve their writing in specific and educated

ways. However, teachers become more like co-creators because of their roles as "coaches" in the

classroom scene, and thus they cannot provide the kind of response that helps students

experience their texts as social action on a larger scale.

By contrast, Elbow suggests that publics—peers—inside the class, or even better, outside

the class, "give better evidence of what is unclear in your writing. They're not just telling you the

places where they think your writing is awkward because it doesn't conform to their idea of what

good writing is. They are people telling you where you actually confused them" (*Writing* 128).

In-class peer feedback can indeed become the kind of audience response that helps students see

their texts as actions with consequence; peers, however, are a part of the "in-class" scene and are

therefore restricted by the politics of the classroom, just as the teacher is. They are often

"required" to read their peers' texts, whether they would like to or not, and so they function more

like "co-creators" than authentic audiences, who usually have little relationship with the author

beyond the text itself. Wells notes that a class-as-audience approach can be less effective in

helping students experience their texts as actions with consequences because "the texts that

students produce don't actually affect anything within the classroom" (qtd. in Herzberg 450). In

other words, the texts students create don't have the power to change the classroom scene in any

way because in the classroom student texts are not acting in a scene of "true exigency" (Herzberg

450).

All this is not to say that classroom feedback is not helpful—it definitely is. Students, especially beginning writers, need the safe feedback a classroom provides. As Kate Kessler says, the classroom is an essential "laboratory where students are given the opportunity for experimentation in composing for delivery" (Kessler 95). Yet it is important to recognize that classroom politics make it difficult for any member of the class to respond as an authentic audience would. The in-class scene, then, is a lower-stakes environment where a text's ability to truly be enacted is limited.

Act: Declamation in Class Versus in Public

Along these same lines, the act of delivery when performed in class, be it via oral presentations, peer workshops, or submitting the paper for a grade, is an act that has short-term, low-impact, confined consequences. Act is the third part of Burke's pentad. There certainly are consequences for the act of an in-class delivery of a text: delivering the text in-class can shape students' identity as students and influence the class audience as a class audience. However, as soon as the course is over, most of the power of this act ends. Students respond to this situation with the low-risk, low-impact finiteness of their in-class textual acts in mind. As Kessler states,

> Delivery is not independent of a written message; it is an integral part of the message. There is a difference between imagining an audience for a classroom exercise and imagining an audience for delivery. Nora Bacon is correct in her assertion that there is a contradiction in trying to teach "rhetorical awareness within the limited rhetorical environment of the classroom." (592)

If the goal is to teach students to communicate with audiences outside of their courses (as I believe it ultimately is), then we need to help students gain a "rhetorical awareness" in a less "limited rhetorical environment." A public audience, by its responses to enacted texts that have been publicly delivered, provides a higher-impact rhetorical environment. There is potential for

greater, more lasting consequences as the implications of their delivered texts reverberate through a public beyond the classroom.

Agent: Student Writer Versus "Real" Writer

The fourth element of Burke's pentad is agent—the doer of the act. The agent's, or in our case, the student's, role and identity in most writing courses is that of "student." However, when delivering to a public audience, a student's role shifts from that of "student" to that of "writer" as the student anticipates and experiences authentic responses. Burke explains how audience response can affect the role and identity of the student writer by saying, "If it is a form of self-expression to utter our emotions, it is just as truly a form of self-expression to provoke emotions in others. . . . [T]he self-expression of the artist, *qua* artist, is not distinguished by the uttering of emotion, but by the evocation of emotion." (*Counter Statement* 53). Burke continues, "[T]he artist . . . discovers himself not only with a message, but also with a desire to produce effects upon his audience" (*Counter Statement* 54). The goal of evoking a response from an audience can cause students to define themselves either as students writing for a class or as writers writing for a public. Their identity as "real" writers, then, in part depends on the opportunity to evoke a response from a "real" audience. According to Magnifico, "Communication with an audience is a central component of how expert writers learn to write. . . . The feedback that a writer gets from her audience is critical to her continued work and her identity as a writer" (178).

Agency: Class Genres Versus Public Genres

Burke's fifth element is agency or means for reaching an audience. We might redefine agency as genre, for an act of communication generally employs an established genre. Whether the text is enacted for a class audience or for a public audience may also determine the type of text—the genre—that students produce. Amy Devitt states, "One major strain of recent genre theory that connects genre to purposes, participants, and themes derives from the notion of genre

as the typified response to recurring rhetorical situation" (13). Obviously, the in-class writing assignment is a very different rhetorical situation and exigency than the rhetorical situation and exigency of a publicly enacted text. Student writers' texts, then, will take different forms according to their perceptions of their rhetorical situations. While in-class genres are still important and can help prepare for public genres, they are still a fundamentally different agency that functions for a different kind of act. Devitt emphasizes the differences in genres in term of action:

> [Genres] are also both social and rhetorical actions, operating as people interact with others in purposeful ways. To say that genres are typified actions is in part to say that genres are classifications but classifications made by people as they act symbolically rather than by analysts as they examine products. (14)

In-class genres can certainly be classified as people acting symbolically. However, in-class audience roles are more like that of "analysts as they examine products" than most public audiences because the in-class audience's primary purpose is to analyze the text and provide feedback. The agency or text in this situation with this audience is necessarily an exercise genre. In order to learn to responsibly create genres that will "act symbolically" in influencing an authentic audience beyond the classroom, students need to create an agency, a text, designed with this purpose in mind.

 As I have shown, Burke's pentad can be used to compare in-class and public delivery, demonstrate just how different these audiences and rhetorical situations can be, and suggest some ways these differences can influence student writers. But how much of this theory is evidenced in practice? In the following section I will examine some of the results that various composition teachers, including myself, have observed from publishing student writing. I will then suggest

that these results come when students begin to understand the "real" implications of their texts as actions with consequences.

RESULTS OF PUBLISHING STUDENT WRITING AND REASONS FOR THOSE RESULTS

In order to find out how and why students respond to making their text public the way they do, during fall 2012 and winter 2013 semesters I conducted research while teaching two sections of a first-year writing course emphasizing publication. In the first course I taught, the sixteen students in the class worked together to create a book for Amazon.com's Kindle Reader App. In the second course, I encouraged the ten students in the class to write toward submitting their work to a student journal or other local publication. I began these courses by telling the students that while publishing would not be required of them, publishing would be the focus of the course. I then kept a log of observations during these courses. At the end of each course, I interviewed as many students as were willing—a total of thirteen students—and asked them questions regarding their experience with publishing as a course focus. I recorded and transcribed these interviews, then searched the transcriptions for comments that lent grounding for the theory of text as action through public delivery. I share some of their comments here. (To protect student privacy, all student names associated with quotes have been changed.) Additionally, I interviewed two other writing instructors—one via email and one via telephone— who had done some form of publishing as part of the writing courses they taught. I also reviewed published accounts from teachers who have helped their students publish and reported on the results. Using my own empirical data and a variety of published sources from instructors who have emphasized publishing, I will show that the effects of publishing student writing can be explained by the theory of text as action as the why of publishing becomes clearer to these students when they deliver their texts in what they perceive as high-stakes public settings.

Effect of Publishing on Identity (Agent)

One of the major consequences of enacting a text is identity development, or

development of the agent. While students may not recognize the link between action and identity

on a theoretical level, they implicitly begin to understand it on the practical level when faced

with the opportunity to "enact" their texts via publication. Writing instructors report seeing

students make the connection between their published writing and their public identity. For

example, BYU English professor Patrick Madden taught a course in which students worked

together to build a web page and make their writing public on that page. In an email, Madden

recommended publishing as part of a writing course because "students are then forced to decide

whether they want to be proud of or embarrassed by their own work, which tends to make them

work harder on it. This feels real to me, unlike the isolation of 'practice' writing in most classes."

In making the decision about whether they will be proud of or embarrassed by their work,

students sense and respond to the fact that as actions in the public sphere, their texts will

influence the way they are perceived by that public. Perhaps one of my own students expressed it

best when he said "publication is like, 'this is *me* putting myself out there'" (David).

Publishing also affects personal identity development, or how students view themselves

as agents. When students have their work published, they begin to see themselves as "writers"

and "communicators" who have the power to influence the world through their words. Ellison

and Wu note that, in making their work public via blogging, students can gain "a window into

peers' perspectives, a doorway to a global audience, and a mirror through which to reflect on

their own thinking and writing" (119). Not only do students get a better perspective on

themselves as writers through audience feedback, but they also begin to believe in themselves

more as capable writers and communicators. One of my students mentioned that he experienced

a more "positive outlook" at the end of the writing course because of the publishing we did

during the course: "Good things came of this class. I'm a published writer; there's material here; I think that was good. I think that was successful" (Ben). Other writing teachers have noted that when students see their writing making a difference, they become empowered communicators and see themselves as people of influence. After taking a publication-focused course, a student of Kate Kessler's said, "I learned that if you have a voice about something you feel strongly about, it would be a shame not to let it be heard. The most important thing about the class is that it showed me that my writing is a tool that should be used to reach out to the world." Clearly, being published—experiencing their texts as actions via public delivery—helped these students develop a sense of identity as writers and communicators who can influence their world through their communicative acts.

Effect of Publishing on Motivation and Investment in the Writing Course (Scene and Purpose)

When students sense that their writing can reveal and shape their personal and public identities and influence public discourse communities, many of them begin to take their writing and their writing classes more seriously. When they write for a public scene rather than a classroom scene, students' purpose in writing shifts from focusing on getting a good grade to influencing a real, responsive audience. Magnifico notes that online publics "comment, collaborate, and grant authority. . . . As a result of this active audience collaboration and feedback . . . writing feels consequential, motivating, and interesting to many online writers" (180). Magnifico also says that "direct engagement with the performative aspects of writing for an audience seem to enable students . . . to imagine what an effective writing performance might be, to set goals for achieving that performance, and to motivate themselves to achieve to that level" (177–8). More interest in and motivation for writing were definitely some of the results my own students reported after participating in our publication-focused course. One student said:

[I]f I make something that I feel is well done, just to hide it away is kind of sad for me. I

would like others to see it. So, having the goal to publish it was kind of satisfactory,

knowing that it was actually going to do something more than just stay on my computer.

It made it a little more exciting. I felt like I had a little more drive to work on it instead of

just the night before like I have with other papers. I felt like I wanted to work on it and

polish it up a little more and actually make something out of it. (Tanner)

Another student appreciated the challenge of publishing, saying:

I've never published anything. . . . [I]t was a new experience and I knew it would be

pretty tough. I wanted to challenge myself and see if I could come up with something

professional and very revised and good enough to be published. (Sam)

While this new experience was intimidating for some, another student explained how the

intimidation turned to motivation during the course:

At the start I went into the class thinking I need to get an A . . . and I think at the start it

was really stressful because I was thinking, "Wow. Publishing." But then as [the class]

went along and especially . . . at the end of the class when we were actually working on

the [publication,] . . . I wanted to make time. I wanted to make it happen. I wanted to

come to class, and I wanted to get with my team, and I wanted to say, "Let's get our

papers edited, let's get the information out there, let's make this thing happen, let's make

this thing look good." (Ben)

Another student expressed similar sentiments, saying, "I felt like I was part of something bigger

than just our class and that gave me a bit more drive. I realized that I could create something

other people would see, not just for a grade, but something for people to appreciate. So I wanted

to do my best" (Tom).

That said, writing for an authentic public isn't always a motivating factor for every student in every class. The majority of those I interviewed felt that publishing was a significant motivating factor in their performance; however, out of the thirteen students I interviewed, three of them indicated that writing for a public audience was just another part of the class, and was no more important to them than writing for a teacher audience to get a grade. And if the class focuses on more of what Charles Moran calls "writing from the heart," publishing may become more daunting than motivating (Isaacs 35). In "Public and Private Writing in the Information Age," Moran explains that while publishing can motivate students to write with more passion and purpose, it may hinder some students from taking the risks some teachers encourage students to take in producing self-expressive writing (Isaacs 35–43). Therefore, the decision to require students to publish their writing depends in large part on the type of writing course they are enrolled in and the goals the teacher has for that course. Courses focused on highly personal writing or anything that may expose a student writer in inappropriate ways should not have a publication goal. However, the affordances of writing for a public audience are great enough that this constraint should not hinder instructors from considering publishing as an effective heuristic in other kinds of writing courses. Courses focused on persuasive, argument-based, expository-type writing, in which students write about topics other than themselves are appropriate for requiring publication.

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Effect of Publishing on Writing Process (Agency and Act)

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This question of making student writing (student-produced agencies) public versus allowing students to create private writing for a much more limited and safe audience is at the heart of the debate between process and product pedagogical theories. Do we teach our students to create great product, possibly at the expense of cramping self-expression, or do we teach our students to write for discovery and self-expression, possibly at the expense of "good" writing?

Do we focus on creating a superior agency (product), or do we focus on the creative act as a vehicle for learning and discovery (process)? And with either of these focuses, where does the act of declamation fit? Kessler argues that we can help students experience the best of both process and product pedagogies by helping them "compose for delivery" or write with declamation via publication as the end goal: "Composing for delivery can motivate students to link the writing process with the writing product," thereby harmonizing the goals of both process and product theories (89).

Just what does writing for a public audience do for students' writing processes? Sommers states that students need to be able to imagine an audience "whose existence and whose expectations influence their revision process" (385). Yet, in my observation, writing for a public audience impacted every stage of my students' writing processes, not just revision. I observed students picking topics that they felt more strongly about and believed their audiences would be interested in. One student stated that because he was writing for a public audience, "I was a little bit more conscious of what readers would think as I was creating the outline. How does this affect the reader? Would this appeal to them?" (Tom). Another student said: "I think my attitude toward writing changed a lot. For me the publishing made a pretty big difference . . . it gave me more ideas on how to make a good paper, strategies that I can use so that I can polish up my papers" (Sam). I also noticed my students taking more time and putting in more effort, often beyond the requirements of the publication. Some students even did some extra-curricular writing, working on the papers they were planning to submit to student journals after the course had ended. Another student noted:

> I think [publishing] has to do with the whole writing process because with other papers I never went through brainstorming and going through so much research and really

wanting it to be so good and getting it edited so many times and making so many drafts. I think publication made me really understand how much more time was involved. (David)

David Isaksen, a master's student at BYU, reported that having a focus on publishing via blogs in his Writing 150 course helped students "envision much more of an audience" in the writing process and "the ones who really caught on got almost addicted [with] weekly blog posts. . . . [T]here was much more extra-curricular writing going on" (Isaksen interview). Students focusing on publishing their work invested themselves in their writing, taking initiative to make their writing appealing to a public audience.

As part of the process of writing for publishing, many students became more serious about taking and giving peer feedback. Wendy Bishop says, "An idealized but obtainable writing classroom [is] one in which students join together in collaborative work and develop their writing abilities in a non-threatening environment" (343). In my publication-focused courses, I noticed that students were approaching our peer-review "workshops" with much more enthusiasm than was typical of my students in non-publishing courses; students came to class prepared, recognizing that the success of their peer's publication in part depended on the honest feedback they gave. In these courses I rarely had to bring a wandering peer-review group back to task; in fact, many of my students reported that the in-class workshops were some of their favorite parts of the course. One student (John) said, "In this class I felt like they [peer reviews] were more effective. I felt like we read the papers more thoroughly; I felt like everyone did." My students gave more detailed, honest feedback to each other because they were seeing themselves as collaborators, seeking to help their peers prepare to present their work to a public audience.

With this perspective, my students also began to really listen to teacher and peer feedback on their work. One student stated that:

[M]ost of the time when I get back reviews from a teacher I don't even look at them because I know it's not going to make any difference, but [publishing] helped me apply what the teacher had said . . . and improve. . . . [It] helped me learn the things that I had been doing wrong or little mistakes I had made so that I could apply [the feedback] again in the future. (Tanner)

This same student also added, "Especially after the first edit and we turned it in and you graded it and you gave it back to us, I really wanted to polish it up after that." He frankly admitted that in contrast to the papers he wrote for our publication, "[W]ith other papers once the grading is done, I never look at it again." In addition to taking teacher-feedback more seriously, many of the students shared their writing with each other and with people outside the class, seeking as much reader feedback as they could get. "I had more people read [my writing] and tell me what was wrong," said one student. "I was more willing to look at what my husband said and my mom said and everybody else" (Carly). Another student noted that a reason for this involvement in getting peer feedback was that "with the publication, what other people thought about the paper was a critical element in whether other people would want to read it. And whether there was a grade associated with that or not, it made me want to go and make those changes" (Ben). Students became involved in a course that very much met Ira Shor's description of a "participatory pedagogy," where "students experience lively participation, mutual authority, and meaningful work" (20).

Effect of Publishing on Writing Product (Agency and Act)

With greater investment in their writing process, student products also improved as students revised, edited, and polished their work before it became public. Because students were focusing on an act—declaiming before a public audience—that they believed could have lasting

influence, the students' agency (their writing) improved. Quintilian noticed the effect that the opportunity to publicly declaim had on student products when he said:

> Sometimes, however, pupils *should* be allowed to deliver what they have written themselves, so as to reap the reward of their labors in the coveted form of the praises of a large audience. But even this ought not to happen until they have produced a decently finished piece of work, so that they are given the privilege as a sort of prize for their efforts and can feel pleased that they have deserved the right to speak. (2.7.5, 317)

In Quintilian's classroom, students would have been rewarded for producing a "decently finished piece," or a good-quality product, by delivering their work, which in turn would have motivated and rewarded students to produce such work. In talking about using blogs in the classroom, Charles Lowe and Terra Williams claim that "by making their writing public in class, students begin to take responsibility for and ownership of what they have to say rather than handing it directly over to a teacher-reader-grader." This sense of ownership—this recognition that the declaimed text reflects author identity—often helps students produce higher-quality work, since they don't want to be seen as poor writers by their larger audience. Other experiential evidence also suggests writing for publication improves product quality. Gretchen Lee's article "Technology in the Language Arts Classroom: Is It Worth the Trouble?" published in *Voices from the Middle,* emphatically recommends publishing student writing, claiming that the "sense of audience" that internet publishing and desktop publishing provide "makes a huge difference in the quality of the work the students do" (25). Lee states that when her students learned they were writing to be published, "Suddenly the grammar rules that were 'dumb' mattered. Accuracy, mood, and tone were all important" (25). My own students reported that publishing "helped actually refine editing skills and get things good enough for [a public] audience instead of just

your teacher" (Jeremy). This student clearly believed that the public held higher expectations than even the teacher, and strove to produce a product that would meet those expectations. Another student stated that "[publishing] exposed me more to how good writing has to be in order to be published and how in-depth you have to go" (Sam). Another student similarly commented:

> Something that I learned from publication is [to ask]: what do people want to hear? What is going to create an emotional connection with this person? What can I say that's not just words on a page, but [will] jump out at them? Finding a true audience and writing to those people really brought out that language is important, that individual words in a phrase, in a sentence, can make a difference. (Ben)

In preparing to deliver their texts to a public audience, these students were becoming more aware of language, style, and correctness. They were striving to create a product that met the high expectations an authentic audience has for public text. One of my students actually brought his paper from a C level to a high B/low A level because he wanted to present a better product to his audience. Such motivation to go through the rigorous process of creating a better product makes sense when seen as a result of students beginning to sense the implications of their texts being enacted for a public audience.

That said, most student work is still student work. While many student writers were motivated to improve their writing, there are some possible drawbacks in publishing student products. Ellison and Wu point to the ethical issues involved with publishing, noting that requiring students to publish online "under his or her true name may violate [FERPA] policies depending on the content of the posts" (117). Students publishing online also establish a digital footprint, and "for blog sites that are public and archived by web crawlers, student words will be

linked to their digital persona for many, many years, creating an ethical conundrum. Should students be held accountable for their words 30 or 40 years later?" (117). Many student products, even after significant revision, are still less polished than most professional writing, so there are some risks involved in publishing such works. Ellison suggests that students use pseudonyms rather than real names to avoid some of these issues (117). Yet, as in Isaksen's class, some students were motivated by creating quality material for their "digital persona" that could build their resume. They wanted their writing to be associated with their identity. This is perhaps a choice to be made clear to students and then left to their discretion. However, instructors and students should be aware of the ethical concerns involved in requiring students to publish their work: students and teachers must work hard, often beyond normal course requirements, to produce quality products; students and teachers must recognize the possible consequences of their textual actions, evaluate their product, and decide whether or not publishing is appropriate.

CONCLUSION

Publishing student writing is an extremely powerful way for students to deliver their texts and experience "language as symbolic action" on a larger, more meaningful scale than a classroom can provide. While many composition instructors have recognized the power of publishing, not many have incorporated publishing into their curricula. In the past, this decision made sense since publishing meant printing and binding—a difficult and expensive project for a composition class. However, with the ease of internet publishing via websites, blogs, wikis, e-books, and many other venues, publishing is now more possible than ever. And many campuses have student-run publication venues, such as papers, magazines, and journals that welcome student submissions. With the current ease of publishing, it is time to more seriously consider making student work public because of its potential pedagogical affordances. Publishing may not

be appropriate for every situation encountered in a writing course, but it can be one of the most effective methods for helping students recognize how communicative acts shape their identities, affect relationships, and create change in communities. Both the positive and negative effects of publishing student writing can be explained by the theory of textual action via public delivery. If properly implemented, publishing in the classroom can be a powerful heuristic to help students experience the ultimate communicative implications of their writing, make their writing meaningful, and see their texts as actions with consequences. Reviving the ancient role of declamation in the curriculum via publication may be the answer to helping students see purpose in their writing, thereby revitalizing their interest, involvement, and investment in their writing courses.

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