Viva La Revolución-ish: The Teacher-Scholar-Activist as Guerrilla
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Spiegel examines the complexities involved in taking up and sustaining one's work as a teacher-scholar-activist working within literacy education today. She argues that the guerrilla moniker may be a productive metaphor through which faculty can see and resee their positioning and approach to their work. Focusing upon guerrilla cause, band, and tactics, she provides guided heuristics to help faculty shape their response to local context as exigencies compete, resources drain, and terrain shifts.

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I aspire to be a teacher-scholar-activist. While teacher-scholar-activist is a relatively new term, it is a long-established tradition that carries with it bold ambitions. Patrick Sullivan, for example, outlines an eleven-item "To Do List" for teacher-scholar-activists. This list includes such worthy efforts as "chang[ing] the dominant narrative about two-year colleges," "help[ing] answer this question: is college for everyone," and "continu[ing] to innovate" (340-344). These items, along with the others on the list, constitute important work. To Sullivan's list many of us might wish to add items such as "advocate for the role of the humanities in democratic society," "resist austerity measures that threaten developmental education," and "challenge neoliberal visions of public education." This activist work is important.

Most days, I want to pick up the teacher-scholar-activist mantle and engage in this work. I have been teaching at Northern Virginia Community College, the second largest community college in the United States, for just over eleven years. In the time I have been there, I have taught courses across the spectrum of our program. I've taught five-credit developmental writing courses aimed at preparing students to enter first-year composition. I've taught within the accelerated learning model, pairing first-year writing courses with developmental support courses. I've also taught traditional first-year writing, advanced composition, and a host of professional writing courses. I've served in administrative positions charged with hiring,

professionalizing, and evaluating faculty who teach throughout our developmental and first-year writing program. And during those eleven years, I went back to school, completing a PhD in writing studies, in hopes that I would be able to refine and expand my ability to learn and theorize about how to best adapt our literacy education practices to ever-evolving classroom spaces and institutional climates.

While there are many institutional spaces wherein I could have taken up teacher-scholar-activist work, I chose to begin my career at the community college and have become more dedicated to what I see as the core mission of the community college. For me, this mission is necessarily activist. The two-year college has long provided opportunities to students whom four-year universities were either ill-equipped or unwilling to educate. In this way, I see two-year colleges as having progressive roots woven into their origin story.

However, the mission of two-year college has been contested throughout that history. Darin Jensen traces this tension in his 2017 dissertation noting that "The community college is at cross purposes, it is transitory, it serves multiple purposes" (39). Not all of these perceived missions align comfortably with my own sense of the goals and values of two-year colleges. For example, Robert Haight argues that "The two-year college is in the business of education" (74); thus, tension emerges when education is viewed as a commodity. Chris Gallagher describes this tension well; he argues that "while pedagogical progressives saw composition as an opportunity to practice child-centered pedagogy and to argue for inclusive, democratic educational, and social reform, administrative progressives saw composition as a chance to practices skills-and-drills instruction and to argue for a top-down, bureaucratic 'efficient' educational and social reform" (xviii). Gallagher goes on to note, nodding toward Raymond E. Callahan, that writing

instruction has long fallen prey to the "cult of efficiency" (xviii). The trouble is, of course, that writing is not an efficient process, nor is education.

In my view, education, particularly at this moment in American higher education, needs a revolution that aims, in part, to free it from the impacts of this efficiency cult. Nowhere is this need more apparent than within the context of the developmental education reforms that became pervasive in the last decade. The articulated outcome of these efforts has been, largely, to help students reach their goals in four-year institutions and to proceed through their curriculum smoothly. These aims, in isolation, are admirable. However, the side effects from these aims are problematic. The "TYCA White Paper on Developmental Education Reforms" outlines some of these effects. The authors' note that four-year institutions are removing developmental coursework from their offerings, placement is being standardized without careful concern for best practices, and curriculum design is being mandated "too often without attention to local context and without appropriate faculty training and input" (Hassel et al. 227). The assumption seems to be that the true barrier to student success is a lack of credential. Educational strategy so often aims to strip away any perceived gatekeeper, despite consequences which such essentialist behavior might generate.

Those working in developmental education need to contend with the ramifications of these reforms. Two-year colleges must respond to the changed curricula of four-year schools, stepping up to support students who can no longer receive developmental education at their baccalaureate institution. These colleges often face increased demand without additional resources. Developmental educators adapt to an evolving sense of "readiness" or "preparation" within their classes as placement practices shift the entry-level competencies of their courses. They shift into program designs created at institutional or state levels, despite concerns for how

those program designs reflect their lived experience, training, and scholarly expertise as educators. These faculty face the deeply challenging task of making their classroom an environment prepared for all learners. They must invite students to engage deeply and create environments that foster learning, not just environments that establish a conduit toward passing grades. Additionally, these educators work to convince the students, other faculty, and administrators that there is no such thing as "not college material" and advocate for access to quality education for all who come through their doors. As if these challenges are not enough, developmental educators need to contend with these factors while protecting themselves from the burnout and fatigue stemming from ever-expansive, ever-evolving, ever-undercompensated positions. Hunter Boylan reminds us in "No Silver Bullet" that these conditions are complex and will evade simplistic "solutions" which are too often championed by administrators and politicians.

This work is hard. Yet it is the work I have chosen for myself. The teacher-scholar-activist identity is the one I aspire to daily. It's the "me" I aim to present on social media and at professional meetings. It is who I most want to be within the world of academia. Yet if I'm real, if I'm honest: it's not the title I always feel entitled to claim. It is hard to take up this title when I am biting my lip before my third class of twenty-five writing students of the day, repeating one bit of instruction for the fourth time in two minutes. No. In my vision, the teacher-scholar-activist creates a classroom space of engagement, challenge, and warmth. It's one where students wrestle with powerful questions and come to life-changing conclusions about the power of literacy in their lives. It's not one wherein students reply "To torture us," when I ask "Why are we doing this activity?" Yet responses from students such as this show their own disillusionment with the notion of schooling. They point toward the ways in which students' own sense of the

value of education and their goal in enrolling are often positioned at cross purposes with faculty, administrators, parents, and politicians. Perhaps most importantly, moments such as these are a reminder that I am uniquely positioned to help students negotiate their sense of the mission of education and their role and place within the academy.

Likewise, "teacher-scholar-activist" is not the moniker I feel able to claim when, after diligent research, data-driven reports, and impassioned presentations, I learn that my college has opted to reduce course offerings to conform to limitations of a student information system software, rather than to support the curriculum vision of the faculty. In my vision of the teacher-scholar-activist, she uses language to overcome neoliberal agendas and does not relent until she sees progress. She does not throw her hands up in defeat insisting that faculty input has become mere theater rather than a path to shaping the institution's future.

Nor is teacher-scholar-activist the label I comfortably claim when I unsubscribe from discipline listservs which demonstrate how pervasive intolerant views really are for our field. Or when I hide social media posts that disparage the scholarship that doesn't conform to privileged ways of knowing. No, the teacher-scholar-activist of my mind's eye would challenge these voices head on, not just rant to her spouse over dinner. The fact is that "teacher-scholar-activist" is an aspirational title. It is an ambitious way of seeing the work of literacy studies and/or writing studies practitioners, particularly those situated within two-year contexts or basic writing programs in a wide variety of institutional situations. When we adopt this term, it helps us take a stance and define whom we aspire to be within the landscape of our local contexts. Yet if I allow myself to fixate too readily upon my vision for who the teacher-scholar-activist needs to be, on the great work she is called upon to do, then I can easily find myself in a position of burnout, anxiety, and ire. As one of my colleagues has put it, I have a tendency to shift into despair mode.

How can we ever make change in this climate of education? How can I ever reach 125 (or more) students a semester? How can we obtain better working conditions for *all* writing faculty? How can I make my voice heard to the administration?

Can we ever do enough? Fight hard enough? Say enough? Be enough? Teacher-scholar-activists can become affected by what Brigid Schulte calls "the overwhelm." This concept comes from her book *Overwhelmed: How to Work, Love, and Play When No One Has the Time.* Schulte describes "the overwhelm" as "that everything-all-at-once feeling that you're burning the candle from both ends and out of the middle" (22). She argues this feeling is "just more than an adjective could handle. It demanded its own noun" (22). I adopt it here to describe the urgency and competing demands that can be, all at once, placed upon teacher-scholar-activists. Too often I see in myself and in colleagues across the field a sense of paralysis, impending burnout, and overload, wrapped together with good intentions, creative ability, and track records for high achievement. These traits coexist within folks I know who take up the teacher-scholar-activist moniker.

This article is for my colleagues who want to take up this mantle but who might wrestle with their own despair mode. In the space I have here, I introduce pragmatic framing devices I use to help guide my own relationship to the teacher-scholar-activist to-do list. What follows is not a cure-all for the complexity of what makes it challenging to make teacher-scholar-activist work sustainable. However, what I aim to do is present a metaphor and related tactics that I find useful—often in new and unexpected ways—to my work within higher education, and my two-year college context, in particular. This framing helps me re-see my work as exigences compete, resources drain, and terrain shifts.

In the *Writing Life*, Annie Dillard emphasizes the importance of specific word choice. She argues, "Any careful word may suggest a route, may begin a strand of metaphor or event out of which much, or all, will develop" (15). This wording stirs to mind Kenneth Burke's concept of the terministic screen; he explains, "Whatever terms we use, they necessarily constitute a corresponding kind of screen; and any such screen necessarily directs the attention to one field rather than another" (50). Most of us in literacy education know that words have great power, but it is important to also recognize how the language we select also drives how we think and see the world around us. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson put it this way, "Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people" (4). Thus, as we consider our critical positioning within this moment in education, it's important that we carefully select productive concepts that will help us to see our positioning, our challenges, and our possibilities.

I use the word "productive" here in the spirit of Louise Wetherbee Phelps' concept of productive theory. Phelps developed a working definition of the term "productive theory" in 2011 with her graduate students at Old Dominion University. The definition they derived had three parts, which Phelps describes in her interview with Tanya K. Rodrigue:

> First, it's a theory or concept that explains or describes production or productive practice. Second, it's a theory or concept that is designed to afford production or productive practice, or a concept that wasn't designed to do this but can be appropriated for that purpose. The third, more inclusive, is any concept or theory that is generative, meaning that historically it has produced new problems, ideas, questions, other concepts, elaborations, etc. (Rodrigue).

We need productive metaphors that can help us to actively re-see our work in higher education and how we go about working toward the goals of the teacher-scholar-activist on a day-to-day basis. While Lakoff and Johnson demonstrate that our conceptual system is not something of which we are typically overtly aware, purposeful awareness is vital to generating a focused response within our local conditions. Linda Adler-Kassner refers to this as "working from a point of principle" in her book *The Activist WPA* (1). She notes that the arguments she makes are largely tied to a quote from Karl Llewellyn that she once found on a class chalkboard: "Strategies without ideals is a menace, but ideals without strategies is a mess [sic]" (qtd in Adler-Kassner 5). We in literacy education can often articulate our ideals. Many of us share common values and passions. But how do we translate those ideals into action appropriate for our positioning within our local contexts?

We first must recognize the tension between our ideals and the strategies of mainstream education in America. As Llewellyn argues, strategies without ideals *is* a menace. Many prevailing strategies in American education do not reflect educators' ideals and, as a result, *do* present as a menace upon our profession. Responding in kind with refined strategy of our own is not the solution I recommend, however. While it may be true that ideals without strategy create a mess, we would do well to recognize the potential that lies in disorder. Order helps feed strategy, but it does not necessarily generate opportunity.

To help appreciate this distinction, it's useful to return to Michel de Certeau's distinction between "strategy" and "tactics." de Certeau uses the term "strategy" to characterize the operations of the minority-majority who hold power within a localized social structure. He says strategy is "the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power [...] can be isolated from an 'environment'" (xix). Those who use strategy do so from

a *propre* place where they can drive relationships with those outside the power structure. These strategies can be a menace upon the environment wherein they are situated but are often presented as coming from a place of order, vision, and that which is proper. Education is driven by strategies put in place by institutions and policy.

On the other hand, de Certeau's notion of "tactic" contrasts with typical military notions, as he positions tactics in opposition to "strategy." Tactics, in his conception, operate outside of the space that is considered *propre* because "The place of a tactic belongs to the other" (xix). He indicates that tactic, unlike strategy, "has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances" (xix). Instead, tactics are time dependent—those who employ tactics are rooted in *kairos*; they wait for opportunities and act in those moments.

While strategies can be ruled successful or unsuccessful in observable terms (for example, did an institution meet the objectives of their strategic vision?), tactics have no definitive endpoint. Tactics are an on-going and resourceful way to respond to circumstances. de Certeau puts it this way: "Whatever [tactic] wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into 'opportunities'" (xix). Tactical responses do not drive institutional agendas or stem from organizations' mission statements. Instead, they are the ways of the everyday people within those circumstances. While many educators choose to move into full-time administrative positions and into public education policy to position themselves to drive the strategies of education, many teacher-scholar-activists remain "on the ground" or "in the trenches." These practitioners ought to choose an approach that is tactical, negotiating national pressures and responding to ever-evolving local contexts. I make this distinction not to pit faculty against their institutions, but to argue that there are ways to make change within the

educational landscape from outside its dominant power structure. Teacher-scholar-activists can have influence, but our approach must pivot away from the strategies most recognized as driving the future of education. We need our own tactics. We need our own metaphors.

Early in this essay I posited that education is in need of a revolution. To help make way for the metaphor and tactics I deem most generative, the concept of "revolution" is a useful place to begin. Louise Wetherbee Phelps' characterizes the nature of revolution in writing programs in "Institutional Invention: (How) is it Possible." She discusses how moving from a six-year writing program directorship into a faculty position allowed her to reflect upon institutional change and her own assumptions about how leadership influences change. She explains that

> [Her] attention shifted from what came to seem relatively easy—introducing new ideas and structures in a time of excitement and expansion—to the difficult, frustrating labor of consolidating and institutionalizing those changes. Later, realizing that inscribing a revolution ultimately recreates stasis, [she] changed focus again: from preserving the innovations per se to sustaining a climate of invention—an environment that would encourage and support creative work and learning by everyone in an ongoing way. (65)

I see two important observations in Phelps' writing here: first, revolutions recreate stasis, and second, change should be an ongoing characteristic, a part of faculty culture. In keeping with this understanding, I stopped trying to "win" the battle of education through revolutionary strategy. While I would like to see large, sweeping changes in education today, I recognize that the aftermath of those changes would only present new crises and challenges to surmount. Additionally, I am not prepared at this point in my career to shift outside of a faculty role and into the full-time higher administration work that would position me to inscribe the kinds of

revolutions I see as necessary. Doing so would take me away from my identity as a teacher-scholar-activist. For me, and many faculty like me, driving a revolution simply isn't the answer.

Instead, I propose that what we need is a revolution-ish approach. I adopted this term in 2013 after I visited The Fridge Gallery, an underground art gallery found down an alley off 8th Street in Southeast Washington, DC.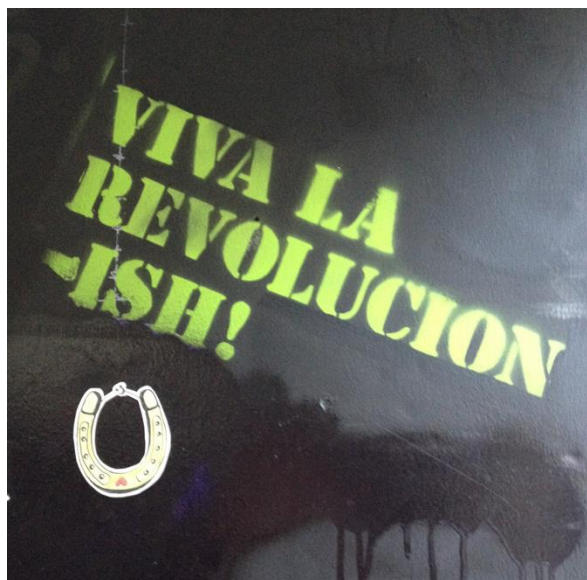 It is immediately recognizable because wheatpaste art and aerosol paint wrap the building's exterior. On the day I visited, the front door to the gallery welcomed me with a stenciled proclamation (Figure 1): "VIVA LA REVOLUCIÓN-ISH." At the time, this phrase struck me as light-hearted commentary on its own art form—street art, often called guerrilla art—which I was there to study.

Figure 1: Stenciling on the door of the Fridge Gallery. Photograph by Cheri Lemieux Spiegel

Now, this phrase speaks to me differently. It represents how I've seen my own work with revolutionary concepts evolve in recent years. I see my work as revolutionary-ish for several reasons. The "-ish" suffix affords flexibility. First, it indicates that my approach is characteristic of, but not limited to, a "revolutionary" frame of mind. This allows me to move beyond fixating upon waging a specific battle within the educational terrain but instead to aspire to a culture of innovation. It gives me permission to be gentle with myself on days, months, or long seasons wherein I feel I have no fight left in me. It allows me the flexibility to press pause on my tactics and await the next right moment. I need not always be on

the frontlines fighting for my ideals. Essentially, there is space within the "-ish" to customize and localize my approach and still claim ties to revolutionary practice.

Within the terrain of revolutionary practice, there are many different metaphors we might adopt to guide our specific, localized responses. Of all these possibilities, I find the most affordances within the concept of the "guerrilla." Each time I frame some new concept through this lens, I generate a set of enormously productive tactics. There are critical applications of the concept to my teaching (guerrilla pedagogy), my scholarship (guerrilla rhetoric, also the subject of my dissertation), and even service (guerrilla administration).

While the term "guerrilla" has its roots in warfare—initially meaning a "little war" and referring to "an irregular war carried on by small bodies of [humans] acting independently"—it has come (as of a 2015 update to the *Oxford English Dictionary*) to describe "activities conducted in an irregular, unorthodox, and spontaneous way, without regard to established conventions, rules, and formalities" ("Guerrilla"). Usage of this adjective has now spread into an astonishing number of contexts. The *Oxford English Dictionary* references a number of activities which have now been theorized about or approached using the guerrilla moniker, including advertising, cooking, gardening, knitting, and filmmaking. It references guerrilla economics, guerrilla television, guerrilla journalism, guerrilla science, guerrilla clinics, and guerrilla art.

By applying the guerrilla lens in alternative ways, the users of the term are able to reimagine conventional concepts. For example, Richard Reynolds, who wrote *On Guerrilla Gardening* explains,

Guerrilla gardening is not just about breaking convention but about breaking rules. Our enemy is not just normality but something much worse. Just like the original Spanish *guerrilleros*, guerrilla gardeners are reclaiming land from enemy forces, and although our

battle is seldom with imperial invaders, as theirs was, it sometimes feels as if we are up against a lot of little Napoleons. (19-20)

Reynolds' appropriation of the term recognizes the importance of an oppressive opposing force and an overarching cause that the gardener is working to support. These two elements (opposition and cause) permeate most guerrilla concepts I have explored. In Reynolds' text, guerrilla gardeners work to oppose two primary enemies: "scarcity and neglect" (61). In other words, they push against normality to battle a scarcity of land, which has resulted from vapid development which renders gardening space rarer. They battle policies and regulations restricting gardening in available spaces. In this way, Reynolds takes up principles of guerrilla practice and theorizes about how they can shape gardening practices in urban spaces.

Though situated in a very different domain, it is useful to note Reynolds pushes against three specific and familiar concepts: normality, scarcity, and neglect. These enemies are a central part of how he frames his guerrilla practice. Many of us who work in literacy education, and in especially developmental education, might say that these forces are of great concern for us today as well. As teacher-scholar-activists, we examine the "normal" strategies of higher education and conventional approaches to literacy education. We aim to be innovators as we examine our classrooms and always see possibilities for improvement. Meanwhile, austerity measures place pressure on our institutions are motivated by scarcity. As budgets tighten, this sense of scarcity, real or performed, creates tension and factions between units within the academic landscape. As periods of austerity become the new normal in higher education, we confront neglect. The physical spaces of our institutions show wear; important programs are overlooked; and perhaps most concerning, we often neglect ourselves, our boundaries, and our own limitations as we give everything we have to this mission of literacy education.

Normality, scarcity, and neglect challenge educators as much as they do gardeners. As we consider the nature of these shared enemies, it becomes useful to consider how guerrilla practice could serve as a productive resource for teacher-scholar-activists. To return to Phelps, part of the draw of productive theory is "the concept of affordance—the idea that productive theory affords or enables constructive action, building or creating anything" (qtd. in Rodrigue). As a teacher-scholar-activist, I see ways for the guerrilla to helps me identify new ways I might work toward the ideals I have as an educator.

While normality, scarcity, and neglect are useful concepts through which to see our work within academia, exploring these notions alone does not necessarily situate us firmly within the metaphor of teacher-scholar-activists as guerrilla. To take steps toward this aim, we ought to consider our work in light of three specific concepts: guerrilla cause, guerrilla band, and then guerrilla-specific tactics. The first of these concepts helps the teacher-scholar-activist to see or re-see her aims and positioning within her institutions. The tactics then allow her to generate a pattern of response within that localized context. For each of these concepts, I present a definition derived from traditional guerrilla text, discuss ways in which this portion of the metaphor has been personally productive, and provide guiding questions others might use to see their own work through this lens. In each case, I frame the guerrilla in light of Ernesto "Che" Guevara, perhaps one of the most notorious guerrillas in the modern day. Guevera is a controversial figure and one whose propensity for violence and atrocity I find deeply upsetting. His writing on guerrilla practices also privileges winning a specific battle over creating conditions for ongoing innovation. Even so, once we strip his arguments from the battlefield, his pragmatic approach to this complex subject makes his perspective on guerrilla practice useful.

Cause

Guevara argued that guerrilla warfare was "the basis of the struggle of a people to redeem themselves" (15). At its most basic, this is the definition of guerrilla exigence. He explicates this idea further,

> Each guerrilla fighter is ready to die not just to defend an idea but to make that idea a reality. That is the essence of the guerrilla struggle. The miracle is that a small nucleus, the armed vanguard of a great popular movement that supports them, can proceed to realize that idea, to establish a new society, to break the old patterns of the past, to achieve, ultimately, the social justice for which they fight. (20)

When I consider guerrilla purpose outside the discrete context of one battle, I come to see guerrilla exigency as motivated by a perceived objective that sympathizers are so passionate about that they are willing to sacrifice. The guerrilla cause is rooted in the ideals of the people on the ground. It is the guiding force that drives a movement. In guerrilla war, the vanguard might see the aim to be success on the battlefield (winning the war) but in everyday reality, the goal of the guerrilla is not simply to win, but to change society. Notice in Guevara's treatment an emphasis upon ideas, patterns, and social justice. Off the battlefield, we might conceive of the guerrilla as an influencer, not just a combatant.

This conception of the guerrilla is in keeping with Max Boot's characterization of modern guerrillas compared to their historic predecessors. Boot, who wrote *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present*, argues that "modern guerrillas tend to be intensely ideological and focused on winning the 'battle of narrative,' while their ancient forerunners were largely apolitical and tribal" (xxvi). The way that Boot frames the goals of the modern guerrilla leads me to conclude that such guerrilla practice isn't just about winning. It's about continuously shaping the narratives that relate to our ideals.

To apply this to a teacher-scholar-activist context, we must first determine the cause(s) we wish to recognize and then determine how we might influence the associated narratives. There is great value is managing the narrative of the cause. According to the United States Department of the Army's field manual, *Counterinsurgency*, "The central mechanism through which ideologies are expressed and absorbed is the narrative" (1-14). The manual further explains

> Narratives are central to representing identity, particularly the collective identity of religious sects, ethnic groupings, and tribal elements. Stories about a community's history provide models of how actions and consequences are linked. Stories are often the basis for strategies and actions, as well as for interpreting others' intentions. (1-14)

Within the landscape of education, each stakeholder has their own set of ideals, their own set of values, and their own set of goals. We might say, for example, that student success is a "cause" that all stakeholders are invested. However, the narrative related to student success is a contested space. Thus, teacher-scholar-activists need to be able to not only articulate what they value, but how their causes support, contrast, and subvert aims of others within their context. I would argue too that they should never lose sight of Guevara's original definition: the struggle of the *people* to redeem *themselves.* We must define for ourselves who we mean when we say "the people." Are we talking about students? Specific students? Faculty? Only contingent faculty? Once we know whose fight we're acting within, we must then ensure that those people are involved in our pursuits and narrative efforts.

Because I am so often drawn in many directions and struggle to define the scope of my work in manageable and sustainable ways, I find it useful to articulate my place within the teacher-scholar-activist landscape in relation to specific causes. I cannot show up or speak out

for every cause. Instead, I must limit my efforts. As I choose which initiatives to participate within or where to spend my time, I ask how well it speaks to the driving causes of my work. I revisit my core set of causes regularly.

The causes necessarily respond to evolving issues within my local context. For example, like many institutions, a majority (perhaps as much as 70%) of the writing courses at my institution are taught by part-time faculty. Tenure was abolished at my institution within the first decade the college existed. I work within the Commonwealth of Virginia, a "Right to Work" state. As such, the labor conditions of faculty are a core concern for me. I therefore borrow the language from the criteria of the CCCC Writing Program Certificate of Excellence when I say that one of my causes is to create a context wherein all faculty are treated "respectfully, humanely, and professionally." As I navigate this cause, I have to do more than simply say I am pro-faculty. I have to monitor the conversations about faculty and faculty labor. I need to be aware of who controls this narrative and how this narrative threatens my cause. When I work within this cause, my day-to-day goal is not to create more full-time faculty positions, although I support that effort. It is not to unionize within the commonwealth, although I chafe at the working conditions created by our at-will labor status in Virginia. Instead, I analyze faculty workload issues and present my findings to my dean. I comb through college strategies and institutional documentation for implicit bias against faculty, particularly part-time faculty. I question why discussions at the administrative level of my institution so often focus on student success without acknowledging the working conditions college faculty need to generate success.

I find myself asking a lot of questions and voicing concerns. Knowing that my questions are spurred from my desire to act for the cause and to influence the narrative related to that cause is valuable to me. While many reading this might embrace resistance and see conflict as a

necessary evil, my "fight or flight" meter sometimes leans hard toward "flight." In those moments when I know I must ask another set of hard questions or push back against some new college initiative, I find defining myself as a guerrilla teacher-scholar-activist useful. This sense of identity allows me to reframe negative feedback I sometimes receive as I negotiate spaces within the academy. In this light, I'm able to say, no, I'm not "getting all worked up," "shifting into despair mode," or "taking institutional change personally." Each of these responses to my movement is an effort to control the narrative, to shift attention away from the issues at hand. I can resist this reframing if I identify myself as one who must do what's necessary for causes I hold dear. When I allow myself to perceive my voice in this light—as showing up and leaning into the struggle—then I can reframe how I see my behavior and duties within my context.

If my aim is to engage the struggle, it is less appropriate for me to prioritize more accommodating or passive roles others might prefer. It's not my job to just teach my classes and go home, although that is often how faculty are positioned—either by themselves or by their administration. Brett Griffiths discusses two findings from her study of the professional autonomy of two-year college faculty that speak to the challenges of faculty positioning. First, she notes that her study (as well as the "TYCA Guidelines for Preparing Teachers of English in the Two-Year College") indicate that "faculty members are often poorly positioned by administrators at institutions to engage in such [institutional change-driving] advocacy" (49). In addition, she notes that "many instructors limited their own positioning within their institutions by restricting the articulation of their knowledge to the domain of the classroom" (49). When faculty agency is situated within the classroom context and limited to this domain, it hampers the potential for faculty to see themselves as institutional change agents. Thus, we must resist the

limitations placed upon us and push against our own tendency to limit our struggle to our classrooms alone.

We must be prepared to speak for our cause in campus hallways, on college committees, and during institutional town halls. Stepping into this version of the teacher-scholar-activist gives me permission to adopt an identity as a member of the vanguard. As I navigate these spaces, I must remind myself that it's not my place to bend to the charge of institutional task forces, just for the privilege of being invited to the table. I can resist tired, ineffective and largely gendered identities as "peacemaker" or "people pleaser." That is not to say that I should not be collegial, but compliance is not collegiality, it is conformity. This permission does not, of course, give me license to simply be contrary in all things. In keeping with the guerrilla metaphor, it gives me space to resist for the purposes of the cause, a guerrilla *exigence.* The guerrilla *exigence* stems from the guerrilla's perception of the people, as well as their needs. Defining the people's cause, and indeed, who the people are, is important mental work for the guerrilla teacher-scholar-activist.

It is quite useful for teacher-scholar-activists to conceive of their place within higher education in relationship to issues of cause and narrative. It is impossible to prescribe a set of causes that any one practitioner ought to adopt. The causes we each find in our work are both personal and hyper-local. Additionally, we cannot be the central figure in every point of conflict within the academy. Our capacity, like that of all guerrilla fighters, is limited. While there may be many causes to which we feel sympathies, we cannot fight in every war. Instead, we would do well to carefully identify our core causes and thoughtfully consider who we are fighting alongside as we take up those causes. Then, we can begin to control the narrative that we tell ourselves, that exists around the work we do, and that we use with others in discussing the ways

we engage or abstain from specific activities or conversations. Here are framing questions we can ask ourselves to help unpack our own sense of cause and narrative:

- What is the purpose or exigency that drew you to teaching, scholarship *and* activism? How can you articulate a personal vision that draws these three elements together?

- What people, groups, or institutions are served or benefited from this cause? Who is not served by this cause? Who resists this cause directly or indirectly? Why?

- How do each of these people, groups, and institutions see or talk about the cause? Who most controls the narrative related to the cause?

- What are the key struggles related to this cause within teaching? Scholarship? Activism?

Band

Once the guerrilla identifies the cause(s) and understands the narrative(s) surrounding it, she can begin to work to influence these issues. She cannot, however, go it alone. Herein lies a second core piece of the guerrilla metaphor: the band. The experiences of the guerrilla are necessarily rooted in the group experience. Guevara even defines the guerrilla fighter in terms of group participation: "the guerrilla fighter [is] one who shares the longing of the people for liberation and who, after peaceful means are exhausted, initiates the struggle and converts himself into an armed vanguard of the fighting people" (49). One of the key words in this definition is "shared"–the guerrilla is not one who operates alone; she shares in the cause and operates alongside others. As Guevara frames it, the nature of guerrilla band parallels quite well with the notion of communities of practice, a concept emerging from the scholarship of Etienne Wenger-Trayner and Beverly Wenger-Trayner. In their "Introduction to Communities of Practice," they explain that communities of practice "are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly"

(Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 1). While this definition is pretty straight forward, they propose a series of features that stand out as characteristic of such communities. Rather than simply being a group of friends or a club, a community of practice must share a common domain, community, and practice. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner indicate that the domain of the community of practice is important in distinguishing the group from others. They say, it is "not merely a club of friends or a network of connections between people. It has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest. Membership therefore implies a commitment to the domain, and therefore a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people" (2). Additionally, these kinds of communities have a level of dedication to the practice encouraging them to develop deep connections between members. The authors indicate, "in pursuing their interest in their domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other" and share information (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2). They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other. The information that is transmitted between members goes beyond mere passing interest in a topic. Instead, the use of the information is key to the community. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner indicate that "members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems—in short, a shared practice. This takes time and sustained interaction" (2).

I would argue that the domain, in the case of the guerrilla educator, might be seen as the cause. It's not simply education. Individuals engaged in guerrilla education practices are interested in going against some dominant ideology or upholding some core set of ideals. To work in this domain, we need to identify others in the academy who share our overarching cause. These individuals might include the faculty in our own department, in some cases, but in other

cases we might find we are the sole supporters of our cause within our context. We must look for others who share our domain of interest throughout our institutions and within the field overall. Identifying those who share our interests means stepping out of our classroom contexts and seeking connections. For me personally, it means joining campus and college-level committees whose charge seems sympathetic with my sense of cause. While not everyone on those committees necessarily shares my narrative of the cause, I am more likely to find like-minded practitioners in those spaces. Assembling my guerrilla band means staying engaged in the field at large by attending conferences, reading scholarship, and even connecting with disciplinary colleagues on social media.

It's not enough, however, to simply know others support your cause. Once potential members of the band are identified, the sense of community and practice must be developed together. It is important to purposely carve out opportunities for like-minded practitioners to engage with one another, share ideas, and develop strategy together. The band needs opportunity to learn from one another and to help each other.

For me, this engagement has involved creating a composition discussion group (which meets to discuss current disciplinary literature monthly) on my campus. It has also meant encouraging several faculty to teach with the same textbook, sharing ideas as they went; reading conference programs with an eye toward finding new like-minded voices with whom to collaborate; co-creating activities with the library and with the writing center; and pushing for collaborations between institutions in my community, and halfway across the country. Ultimately, I endeavor to understand my limitations as one teacher-scholar-activist and realizing the generative potential of working with a band of others.

I encourage other teacher-scholar-activists to find their guerrilla tribe but not to rush it. Remember that Wegner argues "this takes time and sustained interaction" (2). Too often I see newer members of the field (and I still consider myself one of them) pushing to be at the center of disciplinary conversation overnight. I watch folks struggle with their sense of place within the conversation if they do not see themselves within the core of their identified tribe. I mention this issue because I think at times it can contribute, possibly indirectly, to the feeling of being overwhelmed teacher-scholar-activists sometimes have. They think they must publish more, present more, serve on more committees, etc. to earn their place in the community of practice. This feeling that we are imposters within our own band seems to intensify feelings of overwhelm.

Like with guerrilla cause, there are guiding questions we might use to help us develop a sense of our community of practice or guerrilla band.

- Who do you know who already supports this cause?

- Who is already working toward change for this cause in your department? institution? field?

- Who has power to bring about the most important changes?

- Who has resources that can be used in support of the cause?

- What people, groups, or institutions oppose or somehow resist this cause?

  - What causes drive their resistance?

  - Who might be won over to the cause?

- What existing activities or discussions might you join in support of the cause?

- What activities or discussions might you skip to allow more time to focus upon the cause?

- What activities or discussions might you create or foster to bring together members of your band?

Tactics

Once we can articulate what we are fighting for and who we are fighting both alongside and against, we can begin the work toward our culture of innovation. Guevara's *Guerrilla Warfare* outlines the techniques that he has observed bring about success for the guerrilla fighter. Unlike what Guevara says, tactics should be variable and flexible; some might remain constant throughout a struggle while others must be adapted continually (25). In Guevara's treatment of tactics, we can find a third core element of the guerrilla metaphor: guerrilla-like tactics. Guevara outlines numerous tactics he believes are essential to guerrilla pursuits:

> perfect knowledge of the area; surveillance and foresight as to the lines of escape; vigilance over all the secondary roads that can bring in reinforcements to the point of attack; intimacy with people in the zone so as to ensure their help in regard to supplies, transport, and temporary or permanent hiding places if it becomes necessary to leave wounded companions behind; numerical superiority at a chosen point of action; total mobility; and the possibility of counting on reserves. (31)

At first glance, these tactics might not seem relevant or even desirable to the work we do in higher education. Surveillance, for example, is a concept that I think has been incredibly destructive to education. However, if we allow ourselves space to see them as a heuristic for exploring our approach to teaching, scholarship, and activism, might we find new opportunities or ways of thinking?

As an example, I'll take up Guevara's first tactic: perfect knowledge of the area, or "the ground" as some translations describe it. When I first framed my initial theory of guerrilla

pedagogy, I tried to identify the causes that were active within my classroom—those I supported

and those I resisted. You might say I wanted to have a strong understanding of the "ground." I

drafted an extraordinarily basic map of the terrain, as I saw it; this initial attempt consisted of a

four-way Venn Diagram wherein I overlapped my aims, my students' goals, my curriculum

objectives, and

public education's agendas (Figure 2). In constructing of my pedagogical situation in this

way, I constrained the narrative about whose causes shaped my classroom. I limited how specific
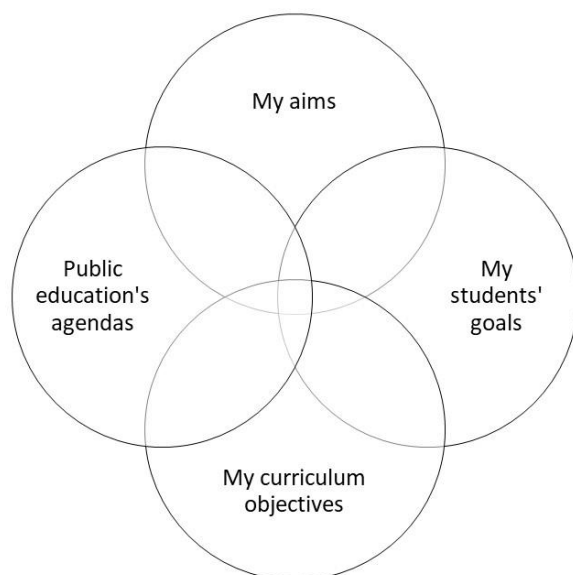
aims could interact with other issues in the classroom. I controlled the narrative, which allowed me space to see some of the tensions at work. However, the map I designed— and thus my perception of the

Figure 2: Four-Way Venn Diagram of Competing Aims.

causes—was limited. I realized that I had an inadequate mapping of the terrain. There was much

I chose to un-see by framing my work only in light of these four sets of aims.

Around this same time, I came across David McCandless' "Reasons for Being," which is

a diagram of the Japanese concept of *ikigai* (a concept regarding life's purpose that McCandless

maps as being the intersection between "what you are good at," "what earns you money," "what

you love," and "what the world needs." McCandless had reinvisioned Marc Winn and Dan

Buettner's original diagram, which was, like mine, a four-way Venn Diagram. Winn and

Buettner's diagram, however, named each of the four large spaces of overlap, such as that between "My aims" and "Public education's agendas" on my diagram. In doing so, they were able to deepen their understanding of the terrain covered by the four concepts they were mapping. McCandless, however, found their map inadequate. He argues, "Sadly, pedantically, the four-way Venn in the diagram is broken, from a technical POV. If you look closely, two sectors—love and paid for, good at and world needs—don't intersect uniquely […] So I fixed that and theorised what those missing sectors might contain, while making a few other tweaks." By re-mapping the terrain, McCandless was able to give himself space to theorize about common concepts in new ways. He used this same method to help himself articulate the principles of what makes for good data visualization.

Convinced that his model was effective for helping to better map the overlap between four complex concepts, I used the structure of McCandless' "Reasons for Being" and "What Makes a Good Data Visualization" diagram to create a new mapping of the competing causes within my context. Then I theorized about what the spaces between the overlaps meant (Figure 3).

Convinced that his model was effective for helping to better map the overlap between four complex concepts, I used the structure of McCandless' "Reasons for Being" and "What Makes a Good Data Visualization" diagram to create a new mapping of the competing within my context. Then, I theorized about what the spaces between the overlaps meant (Fig. 3).
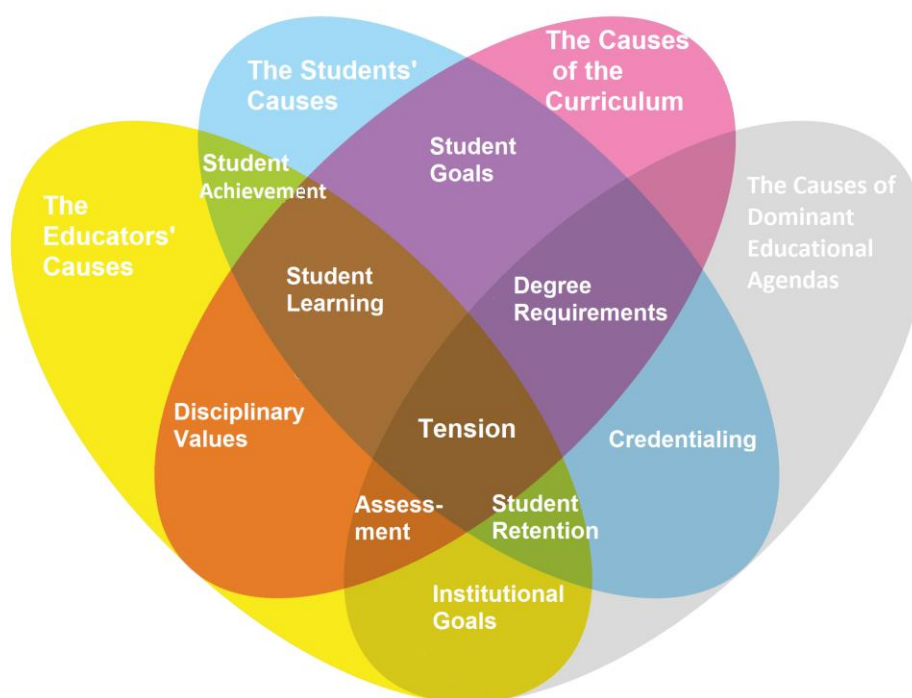
Figure 3: Visualization of Competing Causes Modeled after McCandless' "What Makes a Good Data Visualization"

While I would not consider this mapping *perfect* knowledge of the ground, and some folks might take issue with the ways in which I have theorized specific spaces, this mapping strikes me as more nuanced and complete.

In examining this model, it allows me to articulate myself in relationship to other efforts within education in new ways. For example, we might argue that each stakeholder represented here is interested in "student success." However, when I ask myself, "where is student success represented on this diagram," I am able to see how different stakeholders bring competing causes to their sense of student success. Is the goal of student success something that ties into the students' well-being and growth? Or is student success driven by retention efforts that are deeply

married to issues of budget and competition to retain faculty teaching positions? How are students' driven by their need to credential to obtain job prospects sometimes competing with opportunities for learning and growth? While this map does not present me with new knowledge necessarily, it allows me to think about my movements in the terrain in a new way, noting areas of rockiness and seeing the tensions that compete within the landscape.

I wonder what new ideas or new ways of seeing other teacher-scholar-activists might come by using the guerrilla tactics as a heuristic. For example, these practitioners might ask themselves:

- **Perfect Knowledge of the Ground**: What do you know about the nuances of the situation? What are the budget considerations, labor issues, external pressures, internal pressures, and/or historical precedents?

- **Surveillance and Foresight:** What are the arguments against the cause? What priorities and values are these arguments based upon? How can you demonstrate concern for those while moving forward with the cause?

- **Vigilance:** How long are you willing to work on this issue? For how long will it be problem? Can you sustain interest in it for yourself and for others?

- **Intimacy with People in the Zone:** Does your solution build on the needs and interests of others in the community? Does it reflect an understanding of local culture and tradition?

- **Numerical Superiority at a Chosen Point**: Who can be recruited to stand with you during opportune times? Look locally as well as regionally and nationally. How can you bolster the voices of those who have come before you as well as those who work with you now?

- **Total Mobility:** How can you introduce the cause in new locations/domains—to gain additional resources/support, new collaborators, or to rethink possible solutions?

- **The Possibility of Reserves:** What partnerships can you build upon? What initiatives might you lean on for assistance? How might old strategies be made new again?

For me, the guerrilla cause, band, and tactics are useful framing devices. They help me see and re-see the work that I am doing as a teacher-scholar-activist. They help me to decide where to pull back and where to push ahead. What I present here, however, is not a definitive guerrilla guide. I once thought I would write a guerrilla manual that paved a path toward guerrilla rhetoric, guerrilla pedagogy, and guerrilla administration in the way that Guevara outlined guerrilla warfare. Today I'm not sure such a manual would be possible. The wars we fight in academia are less defined than those Guevara faced on the battlefield. We may fight and win many battles; but normality, scarcity, and neglect will likely always threaten education. We need to become guerrillas for innovation, not for conquest. I believe this work might start with us examining the affordances of the metaphor of the guerrilla. With this lens we might begin to ask ourselves productive questions such as: How can we take up the mantle of revolutionary practice while avoiding stasis? How can we cultivate sustainable, revolutionary innovation? How can we carve out realistic goals for ourselves? How can we identify collaborators and ensure we need not go it alone? These questions are not easy to answer in three comfortable bullets. For me, the questions outlined here and throughout this article are a mere starting place. My hope is that other teacher-scholar-activists will take up this thought experiment and find it a generative metaphor to identify next steps in their everyday work. In presenting it here, I hope to give others a set of tools. Ultimately, I hope to expand my own guerrilla band. Viva La Revolución-ish!

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