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Differentiating Between Potential Goals of Peer Review: An Interview Study of Instructor and Student Perceptions

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Despite extensive attention to peer review in composition studies literature, the activity remains challenging to design, in part because there are multiple potential goals for peer review. This article draws on existing literature to describe a variety of peer review goals and then presents interview data to illustrate the perceptions of first-year composition instructors (n=3) and students (n=8) about the goals of peer review. The three instructor interviewees each described a specific and distinct goal for peer review: constructing quality feedback, identifying effective writing, and developing peer trust. However, when asked about the purpose of peer review, all eight of the students focused on one goal: improving draft quality. This article recommends increased attention to naming and differentiating among specific goals of peer review, as well as more discussion of ways to deliberately articulate those goals to students.

Keywords: peer review, peer feedback, peer trust, first-year composition, instructional design

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Peer review is a cornerstone of writing pedagogy and, as such, has received considerable attention in the literature. Robust theories of peer review exist (Gere, 1987), as do explorations of peer review in relation to first-year composition (FYC; Wirtz, 2012), writing across the curriculum and writing in the disciplines (LaFrance, 2014; Morris & Kidd, 2016), writing centers (Davis, 2014; Harris, 1992), graduate student writing (Mangelsdorf & Ruecker, 2018), L2 learning (Chang, 2016), and technology-mediated learning (Chang, 2012; Dean, 2009; Pritchard & Morrow, 2017). Despite the extensive scholarship, peer review workshops remain challenging to design.

One factor contributing to this challenge is the disconnect between student experiences and instructor intentions. As the PIT Core Publishing Collective (2014) noted, "peer review for most FYC students is less about producing knowledge and more about completing a task assigned by an instructor" (p. 112). Harris (2014) similarly described students who "dutifully gather in assigned groups, they fill out the questionnaires, and they complete the group work" (p. 282), but they do not necessarily experience the types of learning their instructors intend. Harris speculated that one reason for this disconnect is that students enter the composition classroom with only a "vague notion that collaboration means 'working together'" (p. 280). They do not automatically see peer review as an opportunity for social knowledge construction that enacts the reader-writer relationship, nor do they necessarily assume that there is valuable potential for learning in the *process* of peer review. Consequently, composition scholars emphasize that for peer review to be successful the "goals and objectives (purposes) must be clear to students" (Corbett, LaFrance, & Decker, 2014, p. 6).

This article responds to and builds upon that work by investigating what instructors expect students to gain, as well as what students believe they gain, from peer review in FYC. After first reviewing composition scholarship that addressed the goals of peer review, I will report on an interview study of the perceptions of FYC instructors (*n*=3) and students (*n*=8) about peer review. My intention is to name and differentiate among specific goals that composition scholars, instructors, and students articulate and then examine the extent to which instructor goals are in line

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with composition scholarship, as well as whether students' perceptions align with their instructors' intentions. In so doing, I hope to offer additional guidance for composition instructors who are following the advice of Corbett et al. (2014) to clearly articulate the goals and purposes of peer review to their students.

Composition Scholarship on the Goals of Peer Review

Chang (2016) offered a thorough discussion of the goals of peer review in her literature review of L2 peer review research. She first differentiated between peer review/feedback/response and peer editing/assessment/evaluation/critique/rating and explained that her literature review focuses on peer *review*, not peer *grading*. She found three categories of scholarship on L2 peer review, characterized by research that focused on "the beliefs and attitudes of peer review," the "learning process or implementation procedures of peer review," or the "learning outcomes of peer review" (p. 81). The research on outcomes focused primarily on the extent to which authors make revisions in response to peer feedback and whether or not peer review enhances writing skills, thus supporting the argument that "the presumed fundamental goal of peer review is to improve writers' draft quality" (p. 104). However, Chang argued that improving a draft's quality is not the only outcome of peer review. She cited research that identifies audience awareness, understanding global writing issues, and developing self-assessment skills as alternative or additional outcomes.

Following Chang's lead, I looked for scholarship that identified specific goals of peer review and that recommended articulating those goals to students. Like Chang, I found that improving draft quality was a frequently assumed goal of peer review, but several other goals were expressed as well. Furthermore, I found few instances of scholars explicitly positioning their discussion of peer review around a particular goal or describing strategies for how instructors might articulate a particular goal to students. Instead, the goals of peer review were often implicit and overlapping. In an effort to make the multiple potential goals of peer review more explicit, this literature review distills the scholarship into a list of eight goals: improving draft quality, constructing quality comments, prompting revision, gaining audience awareness, identifying effective writing, gaining self-assessment skills, developing peer trust, and recognizing writing as a social act. This

list is not comprehensive—a broader review of the scholarship by a different researcher may result in a different list—but it does illustrate multiple potential goals of peer review. By naming and differentiating among goals, I hope to help composition instructors intentionally identify particular goals that make sense for their contexts.

Improving Draft Quality, Constructing Quality Comments, and Prompting Revision

The goal of improving draft quality is pervasive throughout composition scholarship on peer review, and it has roots in the theory of social constructivism championed by Lev Vygotsky (1978). His theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) states that interactions with more capable peers can close the distance between actual development and potential development. Bruffee (1999) drew on this theory to argue that each class of students has a "collective 'zone of proximal development'" (p. 37) and that the individual students in that class have overlapping ZPDs, which is why activities such as peer review have the potential to help all students improve. Other composition scholars have also pointed to ZPD as a framework for peer tutoring (Hewett & Ehmann, 2004; Jaxon, 2002) and peer review (Villamil & de Guerrero, 2006). In these applications of ZPD to peer review, the goal is to improve draft quality: As students interact with one another, they provide insights and support that increase their own and others' writing skills, which are measured by the extent to which revised drafts are an improvement on earlier drafts.

While not always grounded in the theory of ZPD, a substantial body of research has involved empirical investigations into the extent to which students' drafts are actually improved as a result of peer review. The most popular research method is to categorize the kinds of comments where peers' draft quality was improved (e.g., Baker, 2016; Leijen, 2017; Rysdam & Johnson-Shull, 2014). Another method is to analyze peer reviewers' interaction patterns as they shift among the roles of writer, editor, and commenter; in such a study, Yang and Wu (2011) found that students who read and commented on others' work were more likely to make revisions to their own work. In these studies, we see three distinct, though overlapping, goals of peer review: (a) improving draft quality, (b)

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constructing quality comments, and (c) prompting revision. The studies ultimately question the extent to which drafts are improved, but they do so by analyzing the quality of peer comments as well as the frequency with which those comments prompt revision.

Similar overlaps exist in the scholarship that recommends best practices. For example, Harris (1992) drew on her experiences as a writing center director to describe the "'try this/try that' comments" that help the writer "find revising solutions for a draft in progress at the same time that the writer is developing the ability to weigh possibilities" (p. 374). To enact such an approach, instructors need to first teach students to compose "try this/try that" comments (construct quality comments), then teach the student writers to "weigh possibilities" in response to those comments (prompt revision), and finally teach writers to engage in "revising solutions" that improve the draft (improve draft quality). I suspect that more explicit discussion of these three tasks as distinct goals would assist students in understanding the purposes of peer review.

The many empirical investigations into the extent to which draft quality improves as a result of peer review have not culminated in a single "best" approach to peer review. Instead, Chang's (2016) comprehensive literature review found that, despite the many studies on "the effects of peer review on student writers' revision," the results are "inconclusive" (p. 104). Morris and Kidd (2016) also reached this conclusion in their study, which employed a common peer review rubric in six disciplinary contexts to question the extent to which students revised and ultimately improved their writing as a result of peer review. They found that the results "varied considerably between the classes, suggesting the importance of the instructor, assignment, and peer review process" (abstract). Like Morris and Kidd's work, Covill's (2010) study comparing peer review, self-review, and no review concluded that "simply using a peer review system . . . does not guarantee the production of better final drafts. . . How peer review is carried out matters" (p. 221). The scholarship has suggested that there is not one "best" or "right" way to conduct a peer review workshop that results in feedback that prompts revision and improves draft quality, because the approach depends on the goals of the particular course and the specific assignment, as well as the population of students and the

instructor's identity and pedagogical orientation. Consequently, instead of categorizing comments and tracking feedback adoption rates, I advocate for increased attention to the distinct and multiple potential goals of peer review, including the ways goals can overlap and the ways instructors can introduce those overlapping goals to students.

Identifying Effective Writing

While the goals of constructing quality comments and prompting revision are closely related to improving draft quality, there are other goals of peer review that are not related to a particular draft's quality. Ashley, Fugelo, Pappalardo, and Stout (2014), for example, emphasized the ways that peer review helps students learn about writing: By going through the process of peer review, students gain skills that they can apply to many different writing tasks. From this vantage, the improvement of a specific draft or the production of feedback is secondary to the larger goal of learning to identify and subsequently create effective writing. Evans and Bunting (2012) made a similar argument, emphasizing the value of reading and responding to others' work, which improves the reviewer's writing abilities. Or, as Wirtz (2012) put it, "peer review sets students up to read like writers, to deploy craft criticism in which they identify the specific techniques that their peers are using effectively or ineffectively"; as they create these comments, the students "figure out how a piece of writing is constructed, how it is working or not working" (p. 6). Through this lens, the goal of peer review is to help students practice reading and evaluating writing so that they understand what constitutes effective writing. This goal may overlap with the goals of constructing quality comments, prompting revision, and improving draft quality, but it is a distinct goal, and I believe peer review workshops would benefit from emphasizing particular design strategies that facilitate different goals at different points in the process.

Gaining Self-Assessment Skills

Another related but slightly different goal of peer review is the development of self-assessment skills. Davis (2014), for example, trains his students to review one another's work by leading them in a full-group discussion of one another's writing. As a class, they identify strengths and

weaknesses. Then, at the end of the semester, the students grade their own work:

> In a lengthy self-reflection, they analyze both the strengths and weaknesses of their own work. The class discussions are a central component to this part of the process. First, the discussions have told the writers what succeeds and, by omission, what doesn't. Second, the discussions have given the students the vocabulary to discuss their own work, both the strengths and the shortcomings. Third, . . . each student is aware of the range of work being accomplished in the class, and is better able to see her own writing within the range of texts. (p. 214)

In this approach, Davis demonstrates that the goal of peer review is for students to develop the skills to assess their own work. Reid (2014) similarly argued, "The ultimate goal is to have student writers be able to provide *themselves* [emphasis in original] with feedback that they can use to continue to improve" (p. 226). Another practice for facilitating these self-assessment skills is to involve students in the process of creating grading rubrics (Kurtyka & Haley-Brown, 2014). Creating grading criteria prompts students to think through what elements contribute to or detract from successful writing and then use that criteria to assess their own work.

These examples of self-assessment as a goal of peer review are clearly related to the goal of identifying effective writing, as students must first learn what constitutes effective writing before using that information to assess their own work. The value in differentiating between the two goals lies in helping the instructor design, facilitate, and assess separate activities at different points in the semester that help students first achieve the goal of identifying effective writing and then achieve the goal of gaining self-assessment skills.

Gaining Audience Awareness

The goals of peer review described so far involve the student interacting with a writing product: They improve a draft, construct quality comments, engage in revision, identify effective writing, or self-assess their work. My review of the literature also identified a few goals that are more related to the process of peer review, such as how the experience of

interacting with peers helps students gain audience awareness. Of course, audience awareness could facilitate other peer review goals, such as constructing quality comments or interpreting feedback as coming from an authentic audience. Nilson (2003) advocated for such an approach in her recommendation to emphasize reader-response-style comments over prescriptive or judgment-driven feedback. But gaining audience awareness can also stand alone as a peer review goal, such that students are exposed to multiple perspectives and understand that writing is written for a specific audience to read. Gere and Abbott's (1985) study of kindergarten through Grade 12 peer review groups demonstrated this concept in the conclusion that the students developed audience awareness in response to the multiple perspectives that were shared during peer review. More recently, Bedore and O'Sullivan's (2011) study of graduate student writing instructors' perceptions of peer review found that engaging with real or imagined audiences was the most common positive characterization of peer review. Gaining audience awareness could be paired with other goals, such as constructing quality comments and improving draft quality, but it does not have to be: Gaining a sense of audience and engaging with audiences are in themselves valuable goals of peer review.

Developing Peer Trust

Similarly, developing peer trust can create the foundation upon which other peer review goals can be built, or it can stand alone as the end-goal of peer review. Many advocates for peer trust argue that decentering the classroom and encouraging a sense of solidarity among classmates is critical because students are often wary of the value of peer feedback (Wirtz, 2012). This wariness is typically rooted in negative prior experiences with peer review (Morris & Kidd, 2016) and in the belief that the instructor-as-grader is the only reader who matters (Harris, 2014). An important precursor to peer review, then, is trust. As Roskelley (2003) put it in her ethnographic study of group work in English classrooms, "unless students know and trust one another . . . they won't see this task as any more real than filling in the blanks" (p. 140). Other scholars suggest that peer trust is not only a *precursor* to peer review but can also be a *goal* of peer review, such that peer review provides a foundation for community-based

learning that establishes the tone and structure of the entire writing class (Wirtz, 2012). In this way, one distinct goal of peer review is to facilitate sufficient trust to establish a functioning community of learners.

Recognizing Writing as a Social Act

Just as gaining audience awareness and establishing peer trust are goals of peer review that relate to the process of interacting with peers rather than the production of a draft, some scholars argue that participating in peer review teaches students about the social nature of writing. Bruffee (1984) made this argument in his application of Vygotsky's theory of internalization, which maintains that reflective and critical thinking mirrors social conversation (thinking is a dialogue with oneself). Bruffee extends this to writing, arguing that "writing is internalized conversation reexternalized" (p. 641) and concluding that writing students should be in dialogue with peers as often as possible because "the way they talk with each other determines the way they will think and the way they will write" (p. 642). With this frame, the goal of peer review is to enact and come to understand the social nature of writing. Gere (1987) made a similar argument in her eloquent description of the reader-writer relationship: Peer review "blurs the distinction between writer and audience. Writing group participants become both writer and audience, incorporating the 'otherness' of the audience into their own writing" (p. 84). This act of "incorporating the 'otherness' of the audience" reinforces the idea that writing occurs within a community of readers and writers. One potential goal of peer review, then, is to put students in situations that push them to recognize reading and writing as social actions.

This literature review identifies eight distinct goals of peer review: improving draft quality, constructing quality comments, prompting revision, identifying effective writing, gaining self-assessment skills, gaining audience awareness, developing peer trust, and recognizing writing as a social act. These goals interact and overlap—constructing quality comments can be a precursor to revising in response to comments, just as audience awareness can inform and be informed by recognizing writing as a social act—but the goals can also be defined discretely. My intention is not to generate a conclusive list of all possible peer review goals, but

instead to point out that there are many different potential goals, which complicates the directive to clearly articulate the goals and purposes of peer review to students. I suspect that paying attention to the differences among potential goals can help instructors select and combine goals that are appropriate for their instructional contexts and more clearly articulate those goals to students.

To learn more about the practice of defining and articulating the goals of peer review, I analyzed a series of semistructured interviews that asked students (*n*=8) and their instructors (*n*=3) about the purpose of peer review. My analysis of the data was guided by two research questions:

1. What are the instructors' goals for peer review, and how do these goals align with composition scholarship?
2. How do students define the purpose of peer review, and are students' perceptions in line with their instructors' goals?

By focusing on instructors' goals for peer review and whether instructors articulate goals that I also found in the literature, the first question offers insight into the extent to which peer review scholarship is translating into practice, at least for the three instructors in this study. The second research question focuses on student perceptions, which allows me to question the implication of a disconnect between instructor intentions and student experiences (Corbett et al., 2014; Harris, 2014; PIT Core Publishing Collective, 2014). Gaining a better understanding of instructors' and students' perceptions of the goals of peer review allows us to articulate particular goals in the context of specific workshops, which can in turn help instructors make informed decisions about what goals to emphasize in their own courses.

Methods

This article reports data collected for an institutional review board–approved qualitative study conducted in fall 2014 at a large West Coast institution in the United States. That study included semistructured interviews with instructors (*n*=3) and students (*n*=8) about their experiences with peer review workshops in an FYC class.

Participants

Courses were randomly selected from a list of courses offered that semester, and students were invited to participate in interviews via a questionnaire. The three instructors I describe, "Jasmine," "Marie," and "Michael," identified themselves as Caucasian Americans who were pursuing PhDs in English (Marie and Jasmine) or Rhetoric and Composition (Michael). Michael had prior experience as a teaching assistant and a tutor at another institution, but this was his first semester as an instructor of record. Marie and Jasmine both had prior experience as instructors at previous institutions and had been teaching at this institution for two years.

Table 1 describes the students featured in this article, as self-reported in interviews.

Table 1
Student Participants

Name	Instructor	Year in school	Major	Ethnic identity
"Hannah"	Jasmine	Junior	Animal science	American
"Jacob"	Jasmine	Sophomore	Computer science	Chinese
"Jessica"	Jasmine	Junior	Anthropology	Mexican American
"Bahar"	Marie	Freshman	Business	Iranian American
"Megan"	Marie	Freshman	Psychology	Taiwanese American
"Rosa"	Marie	Freshman	Sociology	Mexican American
"Celia"	Michael	Sophomore	Political science	Peruvian American
"Emily"	Michael	Junior	Art	Mexican American

Data Collection and Analysis

The study involved three 60- to 90-minute semistructured interviews with each instructor and one 45- to 60-minute semistructured interview with each student. The instructor interviews took place in the week before the semester started, in the week after the peer review workshop, and in the week after the semester concluded. This article draws primarily on data from the first two instructor interviews, which included the following questions: "What is the goal of peer review?" "What do you think your students gained from the workshop?" "Did [the students] achieve what you expected them to achieve?" The student interviews took place after

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the peer review workshop and included the question "What was the purpose of the peer review workshop?"

I audio-recorded and transcribed the interviews and then imported the transcripts into Dedoose, a qualitative data analysis software. I coded the transcripts for the goals of peer review that emerged from the literature, questioning the extent to which participants gravitated toward one or more specific goal of peer review and paying particular attention to the participants' responses to interview questions about the goals of peer review.

Workshop Designs

The three instructors were all graduate students who had participated in the same training—a semester-long course on composition pedagogy and a two-unit workshop that took place during their first semester of teaching. Additionally, the study participants were all teaching from the same common syllabus. The first major assignment was a literacy narrative, which included a two-part peer review workshop as part of the assignment sequence. The instructors each put students into groups of three that included both strong and weak writers.

Despite the many similarities in workshop designs, there were some key differences. Most notable is that Marie was teaching a hybrid course, so her students met once per week and completed online activities in lieu of a second meeting. Michael and Jasmine's students each met twice per week, though Michael's students were in a computer lab and Jasmine's were not.

There were also some differences in the ways the instructors asked their students to provide feedback. Both Michael and Jasmine facilitated two in-class workshops, one focused on content in response to students' first drafts and one focused on editing in response to students' second drafts. In Michael's class, students created written feedback during both workshops and then had an opportunity to verbally discuss the comments; they responded to two peers during the first workshop and to one peer during the second workshop. In Jasmine's class, the first workshop included only verbal comments; students read and had a group discussion about the drafts one at a time. The second workshop included only written

comments; students silently read and filled out a rubric in response to two peers' drafts. Marie's students first engaged in an asynchronous online workshop, where they created written feedback in response to peers' first drafts. Next, they engaged in a face-to-face workshop, where they discussed their comments on the first draft and also read and commented on the second draft. Like those in Jasmine's and Michael's classes, Marie's first workshop was officially more focused on content and the second workshop was more focused on editing; however, Marie emphasized recommending revisions for the second draft rather than editing the draft for grammar, and she asked her students to discuss the revisions they had made in response to the first workshop. Consequently, her students treated the second workshop more like an additional content workshop than like an editing workshop.

Another difference related to the instructors' assessment of student work. Marie evaluated her students' peer review performance via a criterion on the literacy narrative rubric, whereas Michael and Jasmine did not collect or evaluate the comments their students produced. Instead, peer review in Michael's and Jasmine's courses received a participation grade, which was awarded if students attended both workshops.

Findings

During semistructured interviews, I asked three instructors and eight students to describe the goals and purposes of peer review. I found that the instructors each articulated a specific and distinct goal: constructing quality comments (Marie), identifying effective writing (Jasmine), and facilitating peer trust (Michael). However, the students all focused on one peer review goal: improving draft quality.

Instructors' Goals for Peer Review

Despite their similarities in training and institutional context, the three instructors I interviewed had distinct responses when asked about the goals of peer review. Their definitions of peer review goals were in line with goals that emerged from the literature. Marie emphasized constructing quality comments, Jasmine focused on identifying effective writing, and Michael prioritized facilitating peer trust.

Marie explained that she was particularly interested in teaching students to construct quality comments:

> I want them to really see how it's productive to give compliments. Not just for the sake of being like, "You're a good writer," but just to actually look for the strengths that a writer has and be able to articulate that to someone else also so they know . . . what to take into their next assignment.

Marie reiterated this emphasis on student comments when I asked how she was assessing the students' performance in the workshops. She noted that the rubric for the literacy narrative included a peer review criterion. When grading the literacy narratives, Marie would "look back and see, okay, did they really—do they deserve a check plus in terms of the comments they are giving?" In so doing, Marie noticed that "a couple people . . . aren't participating as robustly. . . . I'm hoping that will turn around since they've now gotten feedback on that." Similarly, when I asked what the students gained from the workshop, Marie noted, "I thought the comments were pretty good." Throughout our interviews, Marie consistently emphasized the construction of quality comments as the primary goal of peer review. The workshop also carried a second and more implicit goal: improving draft quality as a result of receiving those comments from peers.

By contrast, Jasmine focused on helping students identify effective writing. When asked what her students gained from the workshop, she said it "forces them to look more carefully at both their own drafts and, like, other people's drafts. And they think about nuances that they wouldn't otherwise." To facilitate this attention to "nuances," Jasmine conducted a writing tutorial that included "examples of creative language," and she also emphasized "sentence variety" and "cohesion." Her goal was to draw students' attention to particular writing features that they would assess in their peers' drafts during peer review, thus prompting students to "be more mindful of language usage while they are reading." Jasmine further explained that the writing features in her tutorials varied based on the assignment: She designed "writing tutorials that I think will fit well with the unit and then make that the focus of peer review." For Jasmine, the main goal of peer review was "to articulate what you think the strengths

and weaknesses of a paper are" and in so doing gain a better understanding of what constitutes effective writing.

The third instructor I interviewed, Michael, articulated yet another approach to peer review. Instead of producing quality comments or identifying effective writing, he highlighted peer trust as the primary goal of peer review. As he put it, "I almost didn't care as much what comments are being left, in that I wanted them to feel like they were safe talking to one another." When I asked Michael what he expected his students to achieve, he said it was "for them to see that they are not the only ones struggling with their writing. That their peers are just as concerned, if not more, about their writing." When students develop this sense of solidarity, Michael explained,

> [it] allows them to kind of start to pull on each other for support, versus pulling on me for support. So I want them to be able to talk with each other and share with each other, and create a safe space that we can then continue on for the next 10 weeks, versus feeling like we are 21 different people working on our own writing, isolated. That's one of the big things that we're trying to teach in this. Writing is a social act, and writing is a social kind of conversation.

Michael saw the goal of peer review as creating a "safe space" where students trust each other enough to "pull on each other for support." He further asserted that this emphasis on peer trust would teach students that "writing is a kind of social conversation," which implies a secondary goal of recognizing writing as a social act.

My interviews with Marie, Jasmine, and Michael indicate that, even though they facilitated similar workshops that followed the same common syllabus, they approached peer review with different goals in mind. Marie identified the primary goal of peer review as constructing quality comments, with the more implicit goal of improving draft quality in response to receiving peer feedback. Jasmine was also interested in draft quality, but for her the primary goal of peer review was to identify effective writing so that students could incorporate that effectiveness into their own writing. Michael was less interested in the types of comments students produced or the quality of their drafts; instead, he saw peer review as a means of developing sufficient peer trust to sustain the classroom

community, with a secondary goal of helping students recognize writing as a social act.

Of course, just because the instructors focused on one goal for peer review in the interviews does not mean that they never mentioned other goals. Marie described the value of "forming community" and noted that peer review can show students that "somebody else sees this in a totally different way," which may shape student approaches to the writing process. Jasmine recognized that peer review allows the "author of the paper [to] ask questions, and sort of address concerns that they might have about it," and also stressed the importance of creating a positive classroom community: "Everyone just, I think, wants to feel positive about writing, right? Like, not frustrated with themselves or anything." Michael noted that workshops can help students "develop a way of . . . critiquing others' writing in relation to . . . their own" and also mentioned that peer review can give "the author a little more insight from an outside perspective." These comments came up throughout the three-part interview series I conducted, as the instructors thought through and talked about their strategies for designing and facilitating the peer review workshops. However, when I asked directly about the goals of peer review, or about what they wanted their students to achieve, they each gravitated to one primary goal. This finding affirms the value of naming and differentiating among specific goals of peer review—these instructors had similar training and were teaching in similar contexts, and yet they approached peer review with different goals in mind.

With that being said, the instructors also expressed some frustration about the difficulty of assessing the extent to which peer review actually "worked." Jasmine articulated this perspective most strongly: "Sometimes it's hard for me to judge. . . . I think that they are getting stuff out of working with each other, but I can't always tell what that is." She further explained, "It's always a split. Some, like, don't find [peer review] useful and they say it's one of the least useful things. Whereas others say it's one of the best parts about the class." Jasmine's comments point to the complexity of assessing the extent to which instructor intentions translate into student experiences. All three instructors additionally noted that this complexity is exacerbated by the many moving parts of peer

review—answering questions and checking in on groups who all have different dynamics, plus dealing with logistical and technical difficulties, is a lot to contend with. Even if instructors have a clear goal in mind, it can be difficult to know whether that goal is actually achieved or perceived by the majority of students. Consequently, student perspectives are an important element in research on the goals of peer review.

Students' Perceptions of the Purpose of Peer Review

To learn more about the students' experiences in these peer review workshops, I interviewed three of Marie's students, three of Jasmine's students, and two of Michael's students. In each interview, I asked, "What is the purpose of peer review?" The overwhelming response was that the purpose of peer review is to improve draft quality. In their discussion of draft quality, students mentioned comment construction, but they focused on *receiving* comments, not generating them. A couple of students also noted that peer review exposed them to examples of effective writing, and a few students mentioned the importance of peer trust. However, none of the students felt that the purpose of peer review was to identify effective writing or develop trust. It was also not the case that students from a particular section shared a distinct perspective on peer review. This finding was surprising given how differently the instructors conceived of the goal of peer review, and it implies that instructor intentions were not articulated strongly enough to impact student perceptions. I report on these findings in three subsections, first describing students' understanding of the primary goal of peer review as improving draft quality, which includes their perspectives on constructing quality comments, and then reporting on students' perspectives on identifying effective writing and developing peer trust.

Improving draft quality. When asked about the purpose of peer review, all the students referred to receiving comments that facilitate revision. The students in this study particularly highlighted the value of gaining a reader's perspective and the ultimate goal of improving their drafts prior to instructor review.

Three of the students I interviewed were particularly focused on reader perspectives. Jacob, one of Jasmine's students, stated that the purpose was to have "another student read your article. And so it's in a different view. . . . They could help me think about my article." His classmate Hannah similarly described it as "another pair of eyes to look at your work, to see things that you missed because you are biased when you are writing your own stuff." Bahar, one of Marie's students, made the same argument: "You have, like, a fresh set of eyes. . . . I feel like a lot of times because I know what I'm talking about, everyone else does as well. But when you have someone else read it, they are, like, I have no clue what you are talking about here." Peer review helped these students rethink and resee their writing from a reader's perspective. We might argue that this purpose is similar to the goal of audience awareness, but none of the students talked about audience in broad terms. They focused on their peers as readers who could help them improve their draft quality. Also implicit in their comments was an understanding of peer review as something that benefits the ones who receive the comments, to help them revise and improve their drafts, which suggests that they did not see constructing quality comments as the primary goal of peer review.

The other students I interviewed were even more explicit about draft improvement being the primary goal of peer review. Megan, one of Marie's students, explained, "Being able to receive multiple opinions . . . and put them together . . . can really make a better essay. And so, yeah, it can improve your essay a lot." Megan's classmate Rosa similarly explained that without peer feedback, "I don't know that I would have had, like, ideas as to . . . what to change and what to add." For Megan and Rosa, the value of reader perspectives was more implicit, whereas the end-goal of using those perspectives to improve draft quality was more explicit.

Celia, one of Michael's students, shared this perspective, answering that the point of peer review is "to help us in our writing. And, like, to make us improve." This improvement, for Celia, occurred during revision in response to feedback. As she explained at the end of the interview,

> I feel like we actually learned something because, like, we had to go back and fix it. . . . I can kind of see the point why Michael did it. If he gave us his feedback first, we

> would have been, okay, well, he's a professor so I'll just change that and it's fine. But I feel like when they were, like, peer reviewing it, it's like, okay, well, I can go back and, like, see—try to understand where they got confused on. . . . So when Michael got it, like, [it] actually improved my writing. Because he mentioned, like, good explanation. You had a good argument here. And exactly in the places where I was missing all the things that they told me to fix.

For Celia, peer review provided feedback that she had to critically engage with, making decisions about how to resolve problems that peers pointed out. The instructor also played an important role in this process for Celia when he assessed the work and determined whether or not her revisions actually improved the draft.

Celia's classmate Emily also focused on the role of the instructor in peer review, such that she prioritized instructor over peer feedback: "I feel like if anyone should look at my papers, [it's] the teacher because he actually knows what he's doing." In this regard, Emily saw peer review as reality of instructor workload:

> The teacher doesn't always have time to grade, like, the nitty—the little tiny things that are wrong with your paper. . . . He shouldn't be grading, like, your crappy first drafts and then your weird second drafts. And we, like, we gave him our third drafts and I think that's just, like, easier on him.

With that said, Emily also stated that participating in peer review pushed her to fully engage in a multidraft writing process: "I'm like, oh crap, if my peers are going to be reading this. . . . When no one else is reading it until the teacher reads it, I don't always, like, try." Like Celia, Rosa, and Megan, Emily understood peer review as an activity that leads to draft improvement, but she seemed more focused on the ways peers can catch the "little tiny things that are wrong with your paper" than on the ways that peers can offer outside perspectives that would require her to rethink her draft.

Jessica, one of Jasmine's students, expressed a similar idea: "The purpose of peer review is mainly for grammar mistakes. And seeing if your essay flows well. If it makes sense." Jessica also described the value of positive comments, which made her feel like, "oh, okay, well I'm doing

something right." For Jessica, as for Emily, peer review primarily helped her prepare the draft for instructor review. The goal was still to improve the draft in response to comments, but Jessica and Emily were more focused on editing and grammar correction than on content revision.

All of the students spoke about peer review in relation to receiving comments that prompt revision. Their observations varied from the ways in which reader perspectives prompt problem solving to the ways in which peer comments can identify errors, and they were all quite clear that the ultimate goal of peer review is to improve draft quality. Importantly, while the students talked about comments and implied that constructing quality comments is an aspect of peer review, they talked much more about receiving comments than about generating them. Thus, I would not conclude that any of the students perceived constructing quality comments to be the primary goal of peer review.

Identifying effective writing. Similarly, the students did not point to identifying effective writing as a primary goal of peer review, but three students did mention it, and one of them was in Jasmine's class. Hannah explained that, in addition to gaining outside perspectives that improve draft quality, one purpose of peer review is "to put people of different writing levels together so that, you know, good writers can read bad writers, and bad writers can read good writers. And, you know, learn from that how to be a better writer." I asked for more details, and she said, "I'll see things in someone's essay, you know, like, a mistake that they made, and I'll be like, oh yeah, you're not supposed to do that. I'll remember it for my own thing. Be like, 'oh, did I do that?'" Hannah further explained that the process of reading others' work makes her aware of "the way that people sound when they write," which in turn makes her "start to think about how I sound, probably, to them." Hannah did not identify a specific writing feature that she learned about or practiced as a result of peer review, but she did show that she sees a purpose for peer review beyond receiving feedback that improves draft quality. She was benefiting from the process of reading and evaluating others' work.

The other students who mentioned identifying effective writing did so in relation to the peer review worksheet, and both of these students were

in Marie's class. Megan stated that "the peer review worksheet . . . kind of made me pay attention to different things. . . . [It] was more of what the assignment itself was looking for, . . . like, what the audience was . . . and overall flow of the essay and stuff like that." Her classmate Rosa similarly stated that she liked the "questions that asked about structure" on the worksheet and the question that asked if the author "tie[d] everything together" in the conclusion. She particularly appreciated the question about the conclusion because, as she said, "my conclusions are usually sucky all the time. So that was helpful that it told me I needed more information." The worksheets asked students to provide feedback about specific issues, which required them to identify effective and ineffective aspects of their peers' writing. However, it is unclear whether this attention improved their own ability to employ those writing features or whether the attention simply meant that they received focused feedback that prompted revision to improve draft quality.

Developing peer trust. None of the students I interviewed described peer trust as the purpose of peer review, but a few of them referenced the importance of trust in other parts of the interview. For example, Bahar, from Marie's class, noted, "When I got my thing back, I realized that the other girls were doing, like, their part, too. So they weren't, like, leaving, like, stupid comments." She went on to explain, "I feel like we were really, like, all nice about it and we were all trying to, like, help the other person. . . . No one to my essay was like, 'Hey, this is a stupid idea.'" Bahar was pleased to find that her classmates were taking the workshop seriously and offering constructive feedback. Consequently, Bahar decided that she could trust these partners, and this experience encouraged her to work toward offering them useful feedback. Her decision was rewarded when she read their revised drafts: "While reading their essays again after peer review, I noticed that they took the ideas I gave them. So . . . this peer review worked out, like, really good." Bahar's classmate Rosa similarly noted, "It's helpful for them, I guess. Because . . . when I went back and read it, they changed it. They did what I said. I was like, 'Yay, I helped!'" These students not only felt that their classmates were honestly trying to help, but they also felt valued as reviewers when they saw that their peers

made revisions based on their recommendations. This positive group dynamic encouraged the students to trust one another and motivated them to participate in the workshops. However, it was not the case that the students described peer trust as the *goal* of peer review.

The other students who talked about peer trust framed it in negative terms. For example, Jacob (from Jasmine's class) noted, "They are all students and they—maybe their comments are . . . not suitable for the paper." Both of the students from Michael's class expressed a similar sentiment. Emily commented, "Honestly, I just want good writers to look at my writing. And I'm not saying that they're bad writers, but we are students." Her classmate Celia stated, "I don't want to say that they're probably terrible writers or anything, . . . [but] I feel like having them grade my papers is like, well, I'm not sure if you actually know what you're talking about." Jacob, Emily, and Celia were all concerned that their peers might provide inaccurate or incorrect feedback, and they struggled to know which suggestions to trust. Furthermore, Celia went on to explain that, when she received feedback about her word choice, "I felt like I was being judged in my writing. And, like, I don't like to feel judged because it makes me feel like, well, I'm in this class but you guys seem to . . . know way more than I do when we're supposedly supposed to be at the same level."

Importantly, the students' comments about a lack of peer trust were exclusively focused on corrective or prescriptive feedback, such as grammar errors, where to add paragraph breaks, and whether to introduce a quotation with one's own words. It was common for the participants to describe helpful open-ended questions or reader-response comments from the same peer who provided prescriptive feedback that they did not trust. However, even their positive comments did not evolve into articulations of peer trust as a goal of peer review. Instead, the students in this study seemed to understand that peer trust is important for successful peer review that improves draft quality, and they were wary of prescriptive feedback.

Discussion

Corbett et al. (2014) argued that, for peer review to be successful, the "goals and objectives (purposes) must be clear to students" (p. 6). In this article, I have attempted to more specifically describe what those goals and objectives are by naming and differentiating among goals articulated in composition studies literature and in interviews with FYC instructors (*n*=3) and students (*n*=8). My review of the literature identified eight potential goals of peer review: improving draft quality, constructing quality comments, prompting revision, gaining audience awareness, identifying effective writing, gaining self-assessment skills, developing peer trust, and recognizing writing as a social act. The instructors I interviewed each pointed to one of those goals when asked about the primary goal of peer review: constructing quality comments (Marie), identifying effective writing (Jasmine), and developing peer trust (Michael). The finding that the three instructors in this study defined distinct goals for peer review, even though they received the same training and taught in similar contexts using the same common syllabus, suggests that instructors are aware of multiple possible goals of peer review and are intentionally selecting particular goals that are appropriate for their course and instructional contexts.

However, the findings also indicate a disconnect between instructor intentions and student experiences, corroborating the views of Corbett et al. (2014), Harris (2014), and the PIT Core Publishing Collective (2014). All of the eight students I interviewed indicated the same goal when asked about the purpose of peer review: improving draft quality. Some of the students also maintained an understanding of peer review as a way to catch errors before instructor review, which was not what their instructors intended. One instructor, Marie, did emphasize constructing quality comments, with an implied secondary goal of improving draft quality, which is similar to her students' perceptions of the purpose of peer review. However, her students were more focused on receiving quality comments than producing them. Furthermore, it was not the case that Jasmine's students saw identifying effective writing as the purpose of peer review, nor did Michael's students point to peer trust as the purpose. The variations in the instructors' intended goals for the workshops did not result in the students having distinct understandings of the goals of peer review.

Consequently, I recommend continued conversations about the specific goals for peer review, including discussions of how we might design, facilitate, and assess peer review workshops differently based on the primary goal and how we can effectively communicate that goal to students.

Students' understanding of peer review as a way to improve their essays is consistent with the tendency in peer review research to focus on feedback adoption that improves draft quality (Chang, 2016). It is reasonable to assume that this research focus reflects an emphasis on improving draft quality in our conversations about peer review across the curriculum and within composition studies. It also seems likely that students will have encountered this type of peer review most often throughout high school and college, which may predispose them to assume that improving draft quality is the primary goal of peer review. The importance of explicitly articulating the goals of peer review is even greater when those goals differ from students' assumptions and prior experiences.

Another reason for the students' focus on improving draft quality may have been the two-part workshop design in the common syllabus, in which students read and responded to two drafts and then submitted the third draft for instructor review. This design inherently prioritizes constructing feedback that prompts revision toward the end-goal of instructor review. This design may have made the instructor's primary goals for the workshops less evident to the students, especially in the cases of Jasmine and Michael. Alternative design options may more thoroughly establish identifying effective writing or developing peer trust as the primary goal of peer review.

For example, the findings from this study indicate that worksheets successfully drew students' attention to particular writing features, so instructors might foreground these tools in an identifying-effective-writing workshop. Instructors might also couple the goal of identifying effective writing with the goal of gaining self-assessment skills by asking students to collaboratively create grading rubrics (Kurtyka & Haley-Brown, 2014) or complete reflective self-assessments (Davis, 2014). Another option that I have observed anecdotally is to ask students to submit their peer reviews to the instructor but not to the author, thus emphasizing the reviewer's evaluation skills rather than the author's reception of the comments.

Stewart, M. K. (2019). Differentiating between potential goals of peer review: An interview study of instructor and student perceptions. *Journal of Response to Writing*, *5*(2), 72–102.

Similarly, there are ways for instructors to foreground peer trust. The findings of this study indicate that students understand the value of peer trust—they echoed composition scholars' arguments that developing peer trust is an important precursor to peer review (Roskelley, 2003; Wirtz, 2012). Scholars have also conceived of peer trust as the goal of peer review (Wirtz, 2012), a goal that was also articulated by one of the instructors in this study (Michael), but peer trust as a goal was not something that the students articulated. One way to foreground peer trust may be to couple this goal with the goal of increasing audience awareness, stressing the ways students are qualified to ask questions and offer their perspectives as readers (Nilson, 2003). A peer-trust-focused workshop might also emphasize conversations about the process of writing instead of the product being produced, or it might invite students to articulate the value of peer solidarity and a sense of community in the writing classroom. Avoiding prescriptive feedback and grammar checks may also be advisable in a workshop that aims to facilitate trust.

Finally, the participants' emphasis on improving draft quality suggests that students understand the goal of peer review as producing a final product, not benefiting from the process of interacting with peers. This tendency was evident in students' negative comments about peer trust and in their focus on receiving comments from peers rather than generating them. One implication may be that there is a disconnect not only between student experiences and instructor intentions but also between student perceptions and composition theory. The social constructivist theory that grounds much of composition studies advocates for writers co-constructing meaning alongside readers (Bruffee, 1999; Gere, 1987), and yet the students in this study did not view peer review as an activity in knowledge co-construction. A few students described receiving comments that helped them understand outside perspectives, but it was always toward the end goal of "fixing" the draft or preparing it for instructor review. The students did not seem to value the process of knowledge construction in a way that might lead them to see things such as peer trust or recognizing writing as a social act as goals of peer review.

Stewart, M. K. (2019). Differentiating between potential goals of peer review: An interview study of instructor and student perceptions. *Journal of Response to Writing*, *5*(2), 72–102.

Conclusion

The multiple potential outcomes of peer review contribute to the complexity of designing and facilitating a successful workshop, such that it can be tempting to assume that something positive will result from peer review as long as students have the opportunity to interact. However, the literature argues that explicit design and deliberate articulation of goals are important, and the findings from the instructor interviews in this study illustrate that similar workshops can be geared toward multiple different goals. The findings from this study additionally indicate that students may be unaware of the variety of potential peer review goals and instead focus only on the goal of improving draft quality. Differentiating among specific goals of peer review and discussing the ways design strategies may need to vary based on the intended goal(s) is a useful step toward bridging instructor intentions with student experiences.

Importantly, this article is not advocating for one particular goal as ideal, nor do I suggest that the eight goals I identified are conclusive. Instead, this article argues that there are many potential goals and combinations of goals that peer review workshops can facilitate, which complicates the task of clearly articulating the goals and purposes of peer review to students. I believe that this complexity can be alleviated by more explicit conversations about what specific goals are possible and how we can design different workshops that facilitate those goals. It might be that workshops earlier in the semester explicitly facilitate peer trust, so that later workshops can facilitate quality comment construction and prompt revision. It might also be that improving draft quality or identifying effective writing is a secondary outcome of a workshop that has audience awareness as its primary goal. I could also imagine a workshop where the instructor articulated multiple goals to students, perhaps first talking about the role of trust in peer review and then asking students to not only identify effective writing features but also use that evaluation to inform comment construction. The point is that the design for a workshop should reflect and change in accordance with the primary goal(s) that the workshop intends to achieve.

Future research might more systematically investigate the differences between specific goals of peer review and consider the potential of designing different types of workshops in a single course. It may also be useful to investigate the efficacy of aligning particular peer review goals with particular types of courses (e.g., FYC versus professional writing or writing in the disciplines) or with particular theoretical frameworks (e.g., social constructivist versus rhetorical genre theory). Other projects might explore the ways these goals overlap and identify strategies for distinguishing between multiple goals in a single workshop. Future research would also benefit from empirical investigations into workshops where the primary goal is not improving draft quality. Ultimately, this article aims to encourage more conversations about the value of articulating specific goals of peer review and then using those goals to inform the design, introduction, facilitation, and assessment of peer review.

Stewart, M. K. (2019). Differentiating between potential goals of peer review: An interview study of instructor and student perceptions. *Journal of Response to Writing*, 5(2), 72–102.

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Stewart, M. K. (2019). Differentiating between potential goals of peer review: An interview study of instructor and student perceptions. *Journal of Response to Writing*, 5(2), 72–102.