

More Than a Sum of its Parts: Five Fundamentals for Formative Peer Observation of Classroom
Teaching in Higher Education

Jonathan David McCloud

Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
In
Curriculum and Instruction
(Educational Psychology)

Dr. Peter Doolittle, Chair
Dr. Kate Drezek McConnell
Dr. Kelly A. Parkes
Dr. David Hicks

September 2015
Blacksburg, Virginia Tech

Key Words: Peer Observation, Peer Review, Classroom Observation, Observation of Teaching,
Faculty Development.

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Abstract

This dissertation comprises two manuscripts formatted for publication, preceded by a brief introduction to the dissertation project. The first manuscript addresses the recent history and development of peer observation in the United States and synthesizes the body available peer observation scholarship. Five fundamental elements of peer observation (design, community, control, training, reflection) are put forth as a nexus at which meaningful and formative peer observation can be undertaken. A selection of empirically based methods for conducting peer observation is also presented. The second manuscript is a mixed-methods descriptive study of the five fundamentals of peer observation. Three academic departments at a large land-grant university were identified, via questionnaire, as having programs of peer observation that aligned with attributes of the five fundamentals. These academic departments participated in individual case studies designed to bring-about a description of the five fundamentals as they were and were not manifest in authentic university/college contexts.

Keywords: peer observation, peer review, classroom observation, observation of teaching, faculty development

Acknowledgements

I cannot remember when I first heard the proverb “It takes a village....” As in, “It takes a village to raise a child,” “It takes a village to model a family,” or “It takes a village to coach a team.” It is a phrase that has been bandied about and attributed to (or claimed by) multiple cultural groups and individuals. The phrase seems simple enough. Add any particular item of import to the end of “It takes a village...” and one can express the significance of each individual member of a community in attaining a goal. For me, “It takes a village to get a PhD.” While performance in course work and completing a dissertation project are primarily the results of individual work, it would be silly to ever presume or state that this pursuit was an entirely individual endeavor. It is near impossible for me to name each individual and each relationship that made my education and degree possible. However, I will attempt to list those people that without whom my life would be significantly different (and certainly less fulfilling). I am thankful for those folks that gave the last push from the nest, shared the encouraging word, planted a seed of hope or an idea, or simply provided friendship along the way.

With endless love and affection, my partner in life Dr. Jennifer Sink McCloud. From her all hope and dreams come.

To my parents David K. McCloud and Judy (Blevins) McCloud: With ultimate care and scaffolding, they set my course in life and barred all storms from rising.

To my parents-in-law Ronald E. Sink and Janice (Woodson) Sink: When too few people in the world have one loving family or one set of kindly parents, I have been given two.

To my doctoral advisor and friend Dr. Peter Doolittle: I cannot imagine a wiser shepherd for the academic wilderness.

The members of dissertation committee Dr. Kate Drezek McConnell, Dr. Kelly A. Parkes, and Dr. David Hicks: I have truly benefited from your patient and enduring guidance.

And to all other members of my village throughout the years. Listed here are but a few:

Patrick and Pamela McCloud
Mike and Debbie Humphrey
David (“Buck”) and Pam Sink
Frank and Mary St. John
Rod and Amy Quinn
Cameron McCloud
Adam, Katie, and Ethan Humphrey
Ashley Pratt and Kristin Sink
Sam, Maggie, and Betsy St. John
Caleb, Shannon, and Hannah Quinn
Alexander D. and Karin MacPhail
Ralph C. and Alice MacPhail
Mark and Jenny Wagstaff
N. Wayne Tripp
Glen Earthman
David J. Parks

Terry Wildman
Kim Beisecker
Robert and Anne Tayman and Family
Sandra Guerard
Sonia Vlahcevic
Patrick Carlin
John Patykula
Philip C. Stone, Sr.
Thomas R. Thornley (“Doc”)
Jesse Hopkins
K. Gary Adams
Richard (“Toothbrush”) Adams
Terry Barkley
Carole C. Grove
Shelly Boardman
Jim Pennington

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Introduction to the Dissertation

Several years prior to this dissertation, while serving as a graduate assistant, I was tasked with developing an informative paper for the Center for Instructional Development and Educational Research [CIDER] on peer observation of classroom teaching in higher education. The paper was intended to provide a university taskforce on teaching assessment with information covering the scope of empirical peer observation scholarship and practitioner based literature for faculty development. That project highlighted that a substantial collection of available peer observation resources were firmly based on professional expertise, yet loosely based on previous empirical research. A small toolkit was available for practitioners and any university/college based academic program that required peer observation resources. The toolkit included templates for conducting peer observation, observation protocols, and various assessment and evaluation schemes (Blackwell & McLean, 1996; Braskamp & Ory, 1994; Brinko, 1993; Chism, 2007; Cosh, 1998 & 1999; Cohen & McKeachie, 1980; Keig & Waggoner, 1995; Mento & Giampetro-Meyer, 2000; Millis, 1992 & 2006; Weimer, Kerns, & Parrett, 1988).

Little empirical peer observation scholarship had been conducted to this date, the majority of which focused on institutions of higher education outside of the United States (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell, 2001; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Bennett & Barp, 2008; Blackmore, 2005; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Pressick-Kilborn & Riele, 2008). Of three peer-reviewed publications that had focused, in some way, on peer observation at United States institutions of higher education (Bell & McClam, 1992; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Yon, Burnap & Kohut, 2002), only Thomas Bell and Tricia McClam (1992) investigated how peer observation was conducted at a U.S. institution. It was clear that a

critical gap existed in the available peer observation literature concerning a scholarly-based formative approach to conducting peer observation and the dynamics of U.S higher education. This dissertation project comprises two article-styled manuscripts that are intended to begin addressing this gap.

The first manuscript, *Understanding Peer Observation: A Review and Synthesis of Peer Observation Literature in Higher Education* is a review of the available peer observation literature, which includes both empirical-based literature and practitioner-based literature. The manuscript/review presents three informative threads (a) an introduction to the recent history and development of peer observation, (b) a synthesis of the available peer observation literature arriving at five fundamentals for developing and assessing a program of peer observation, and (c) a review of previously examined models and methods for conducting peer observation. The five fundamentals are an original model or framework that I created as a way to synthesize and conceptualize the peer observation literature. The five fundamentals include: design, community, control, training, and reflection.

The five fundamentals serve as the line of inquiry into the second manuscript, *Five Fundamentals of Peer Observation: A Description of Peer Observation of Classroom Teaching at a Large Land-Grant University*. The second manuscript is independent of the first manuscript, yet it builds on the five fundamentals framework. A review of the peer observation literature and the creation of the five fundamentals led me to question how the fundamentals looked in practice. I designed an empirical mixed-methods study to examine and describe the five fundamentals, as they exist in authentic university contexts. The advantages and disadvantages of peer observation are presented in the manuscript, along with the five fundamentals of peer observation. The mixed-methods study is a two-phase study. The first phase identified three

academic departments, via a web-based questionnaire, with peer observation programs that clearly contained elements of the five fundamentals. The second phase, a case study phase, describes the five fundamentals, as they are and are not evident in the peer observation practices and procedures of three academic departments. The three departments that serve as the case studies are English, Agricultural Technology, and Theatre and Cinema. Conclusions demonstrate that while these three cases had elements of the five fundamentals in written policies or procedures, they implemented them at varying degrees with varying degrees of success. The study demonstrates that when the five fundamentals are implemented, they help eliminate faculty participant anxiety and facilitate confidence in the observation process.

This dissertation is meant to serve as a general reference for peer observation. I also hope that the five fundamentals will provide meaningful guidance for any university/college based academic program developing a program of peer observation. The five fundamentals can also be used to examine and/or assess a program of peer observation. The five fundamentals are intended to lead faculty and academic units toward a formative and pedagogically developmental peer observation experience.

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Understanding Peer Observation:

A review and synthesis of peer observation literature in higher education

Jonathan David McCloud
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Abstract

This paper presents a review of currently available literature on peer observation of classroom teaching in higher education. Both empirical research and practitioner-based bodies of literature were consulted. Recent history and function of peer observation in the United States is discussed, along with a description of strengths and weaknesses of using peer observation as a teaching assessment. Three commonly referenced models of peer observation are presented, as is a problem concerning the theoretically charged term “peer”. A synthesis of the empirical peer observation literature arrives at five fundamentals – design, reflection, control, training, and community – necessary for the implementation of a pedagogically formative program of peer observation. In addition, seven empirically based methods for conducting peer observation are discussed. Ultimately, this paper provides the initial framework for the establishment of and assessment of a program of peer observation.

The review of college/university teaching by either students or faculty-peers has been commonplace in US Higher Education since the early 1960's (D'Andrea, 2002). Specifically, Peer Observation of teaching has become an established component of faculty assessment and evaluation. The peer observation of teaching is a helpful tool in decision-making related to promotion, tenure, and reappointment, yet it is often discussed as peripheral component of faculty assessment and evaluation (Bell & McClam, 1992; Kemp & Gosling, 2009; Yon, Burnap & Kohut, 2002). Recently however, evidence suggests that between the years 2000 and 2010, peer observation has become far less marginalized as an element of faculty evaluation (Miller, & Seldin, 2014).

This paper lays-out the strengths and weaknesses of peer observation, describes precedent models of peer observation, establishes five empirically based fundamentals of peer observation, and discusses the use and function of seven methods of peer observation. The paper concludes that the peer observation of teaching can enrich the quality of teaching at a university/college.

Emergence of Peer Observation of Teaching

It is important to note a brief history of the peer observation of teaching and how peer observation relates to the current Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) movement. Over the last two decades peer observation has emerged as one ingredient in the peer review of teaching (D'Andrea, 2002). The peer review of teaching consists of a variety of methods in which faculty peers can formatively assess a colleague's teaching. Methods of peer review consist of, but are not limited to, the open discussion of teacher self-assessment and reflection, student evaluations, and the scholarly inquiry of teaching practices (D'Andrea, 2002). The peer review of teaching became a scholarly topic of interest following a 1994 project by the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), the *Peer Review of Teaching Project* (D'Andrea,

2002; Hutchings, 1996). The AAHE project was implemented to envision, fund, and document the peer review of teaching across several colleges and universities. The project successfully developed innovative methods for the scholarly examination of teaching. As a result, it produced significant changes in the *culture around teaching* in U.S. higher education. By the end of the decade the AAHE project had cleared a path for the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL), another program designed to promote and develop university and college teaching. These two programs inspired various research and publication initiatives; both are largely responsible for igniting the *scholarship of teaching movement* in the United States (SoTL).

Scholars in the United Kingdom have made equally significant contributions to SoTL. Principally due to a government push for *quality assurance*, considerable attention has been placed on the development of university and college classroom/laboratory teaching (Allen, 2002; Gosling & D'Andrea, 2001; Kemp & Gosling, 2009; Shortland, 2004). One product of the quality assurance movement has been an extensive and ongoing line of inquiry into the practice of peer observation (Gosling & D'Andrea, 2001; Kemp & Gosling, 2009; Shortland, 2004).

Why Peer Observation?

Peer observation is one of the few methods in which a teacher can receive feedback concerning his/her teaching (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005). Unlike self-assessment or student assessment/evaluations, peer observation offers a unique perspective from an individual outside of the classroom environment. "At its best the peer observation of teaching is a process that encourages reflection on teaching practice, identifies developmental need, and fosters debate and dissemination around best practice" (Hammersley-Fletcher, & Orsmond, 2005, p. 213). Significant international research demonstrates that peer observation is primarily a *formative* tool

that helps fosters faculty development in regards to pedagogy, course content/design (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell, 2002; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Bennett & Barp, 2008; Blackmore, 2005; Donnelly, 2007; & Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004 & 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Pressick-Kilborn, & Riele, 2008). In the United States, however, peer observation is chiefly employed as a *summative* measure of faculty performance (Kemp & Gosling, 2009; Yon, Burnap, & Kohut, 2002;).

It is important to note, that the available empirical literature cited in this paper demonstrates peer observation as leading towards pedagogical development (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Ackerman, Gross, & Vigneron, 2009; Bell, 2001; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Bennett & Barp, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004, 2005; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Peel, 2005; Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008; Swinglehurst, Russel & Greenhalgh, 2008; Yon, Burnap & Kohut, 2002). However, this research is based on participant claims of pedagogical improvement. The pedagogical ability and/or improvement of participants is not assessed, justified, or compared to an established standard or characteristics of high quality teaching.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Peer Observation

Participation in peer observation offers faculty a well illuminated path and a “fresh perspective” through the instructional environment (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009, p. 32). Peer observation breaks faculty out of teaching routines and pedagogical monotony and offers an institutionally endorsed opportunity to engage one another on the elements of teaching (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009; Bell, 2002; Donnelly, 2007). Peer observation helps faculty to analytically unpack teaching; to lay-out the teaching practice into its multiple parts, including students, teacher, context, engagement, strategies, and environment and activities. Peer

observation urges the teacher re-envision course learning objectives and the learning arc of the program/degree curricula (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Bennett & Barp, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; & Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004 & 2005).

In essence, peer observation can invigorate a teacher's desire for continued learning in all aspects of the teaching environment (Donnelly, 2007). Faculty that participate in peer observation, both as *observer* and *observee*, recurrently claim improvement in regard to basic teaching practices, knowledge of pedagogy/theory, and self-assessment (Bell, 2002; Blackmore, 2005; Donnelly, 2007; Martin & Double, 1998; Pressick-Kilborn, & Riele, 2008).

While the positive benefits of peer observation have been heralded throughout the literature, significant weaknesses have also been identified. Peer observation can be easily misinterpreted as administrative intrusion into individual and departmental autonomy (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Martin & Double, 1998). Feelings of unease develop when faculty anticipate their teaching practices to be challenged by colleagues. Anxiety and the fear of critique inhibit their willingness to participate and their willingness to discuss the practice of teaching (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell, 2001; Blackmore, 2005; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005). According to Adshead, White, and Stephenson (2006) it is the "fundamental fear of scrutiny and criticism [that] may be the main hurdle to overcome in getting teachers to take on peer observation" (p. 72).

Ackerman, Gross, and Vigneron (2009) carefully categorized three areas of faculty concern related to peer observation: unintentional bias, intentional bias, and atypical performance. Unintentional bias highlights or questions the proficiency of the faculty member in the observer role. It is likely that the observer could unknowingly analyze the observee through the lens of a different pedagogical preference, and/or the observer could set his/her own teaching

practice as the standard of quality for which to be compared. Either scenario could easily result in an erroneous evaluation of the observee's teaching prowess. Ackerman et al. also document that peer observation could be utilized in a spiteful or unprincipled manner. The frame of *intentional bias* concedes that peer observation can be a deliberate "tool for retaliation" or a means for producing unmerited laudatory reviews (p. 33). The concept of intentional bias reinforces earlier practitioner/theoretical arguments that peer observation can "[encourage] complacent back-slapping rather than stimulating reflection about practice" (Blackwell & McLean, 1996, p. 163). Lastly, *atypical performance* spotlights the everyday classroom environment. The classroom regularly consists of two parties, the teacher and the students. When another faculty member is present, as an observer, the usual power structure and social dynamic of the classroom is altered. The observer's presence may generate feelings of performance and/or anxiousness resulting in atypical classroom behaviors.

Faculty that participate in peer observation also express concerns that are more difficult to categorize as bias or performance. Some faculty believe that peer observation might bring about a heavier workload that would hinder their research activities (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell, 2001; Blackmore, 2005; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Swinglehurst, Russel & Greenhalgh, 2008). A program of peer observation must be designed to acknowledge and alleviate the abovementioned concerns; if unacknowledged these concerns can bring about faculty resistance and the eventual failure of the program (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009; Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell, 2001; Bell & McClam, 1992; Blackmore, 2005; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Peel, 2005).

Existing Models of Peer Observation

The Gosling Models

Gosling (2002) presents the conceptual design of three peer observation models – the Evaluation Model, the Developmental Model, and the Peer Review model. These three models have been influential in forming the ongoing discussion in the peer observation literature (Bennett & Barp, 2008; Blackmore, 2005; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004 & 2005; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Peel, 2005; Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008; Shortland, 2004; Swinglehurst, Russel & Greenhalgh, 2008; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005). The basis for the three models is relatively straight forward. Specifically, the format involves one teacher observing a fellow teacher while conducting a class; the observer collecting a variety of data related to the teacher's instructional practices, and the making of evaluative/summative judgments, formative/developmental assessments, or reflective conversations on teaching based on the collected data.

There are two key areas, however, where these three models differ. First, the authority/seniority of the individual in the observer role, and second, how the data collected from the observation are to be used. In the *Evaluation Model* the observer is a senior colleague with considerable authority. The data collected are used to make a summative judgment related to promotion, tenure, or job status. The Evaluation Model holds the highest amount of risk for the observee. The *Developmental Model* maintains less risk for the observee, as its primary function is formative. However, the model maintains a summative element. In this model the observer is a pedagogical expert and reports on how the teacher can improve his/her instructional practices. Data is collected over multiple observations and is compared to benchmarks or performance measures set by the pedagogical expert. The third model is the *Peer Review Model*, an explicitly

formative model. The Peer Review Model contains no risk for the observee. The observer and the observee are colleagues, ideally peers of comparable authority/seniority. The data collected in this model are used to prompt conversation and professional dialogue and reflection about teaching.

The Cosh Model

Jill Cosh has presented a reflective model or “approach” to peer observation (Cosh, 1998; Cosh, 1999). Her model focuses on the teacher’s self-development by placing the teacher in the observer role. Cosh’s models involve a teacher observing a fellow teacher, collecting data from the observation, and constructing a narrative in response to the observation. The narrative is then submitted to department or university administration. Cosh asserts that there is value in prompting the teacher’s reflection or data collection during the observation, through observation checklists or reflective questions. However, Cosh does not comment on how the narrative itself should or should not be constructed. No summative judgment is placed on the narrative or the developmental progress of the participant. Participation, not outcome, is required and valued.

The Bell Model

Some programs of peer observation have successfully incorporated reflection into a departmental or institutional program of peer observation. In Australia, as conveyed by Bell (2002) peer observation can be a component of graduate study and/or a certificate program. It is also commonly linked to a provisional, developmental period of time for recently appointed junior faculty. Beyond this, peer observation is almost exclusively used for faculty pedagogical development and generally coordinated with a teaching development program. The typical model of peer observation, regardless of objective, is a four part observation cycle. The observation

cycle is comprised of a pre-observation meeting/discussion, the observation, a post-observation feedback session, and a reflective discussion about the observation session (Bell, 2002).

The Question about Peers

The abovementioned models have generated some discussion about the use of the word *peer*. Scholars have questioned whether or not peer review/observation sufficiently accounts for the power distance between observer and observee (Arreola, 2007; Bell, 2001; McMahon, Barrett, & O’Neil, 2007; Weller, 2009). McMahon, Barrett and O’Neil (2002) argue that a power distance between observer and observee is inherent in Gosling’s Evaluation Model and Developmental Model. McMahon et al. premise is that each model contains summative components that are impediments to development. The Peer Review model is “the only model in which the reflection [on instruction] does not take an inevitable second place to concerns about managerial/inspectorial judgments” (p. 503).

The phrase *peer observation*, certainly suffers a similar identity crisis in U.S. Higher Education. In the United States, peer observation is commonly linked to issues of decision-making and accountability (Kemp & Gosling, 2009). These decisions are made either by individuals or committees composed of senior faculty or administrators. In this context there is little equality packed into the term *peer*. McMahon et al. (2002) argue for the use of the phrase “3rd Party Observation” rather than peer observation. The phrase carefully represents the intrinsic power dynamic in classroom observation. It also acknowledges the observer as an addition to the classroom environment, a “3rd party” to the students and teacher. While issues related to power are vitally important in any academic discourse, this paper will use the term *peer* to designate another individual in the academic community, regardless of power differential; a community that is dependent on its own sanctioned members to administer and regulate itself. The issue of

power between observer and observee is troubled when the empirical literature is consulted. This is because pedagogical development has been associated with peer observation when power distances have been great and small; peer observation is effective when peers of similar or dissimilar rank conduct observations (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Blackmore, 2005; Donnelly, 2007; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Mladencovic 2008). A peer of similar rank in the observer role promotes the equal exchange of ideas because of the diminished power distance (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Donnelly, 2007). Yet, the literature also demonstrates that faculty of higher rank (senior faculty) and educational experts are also beneficial to the peer observation process (Blackmore, 2005; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Mladencovic 2008).

Regardless of issues of power, the Gosling, Cosh, and Bell models have been widely cited in both empirical and practitioner literature. A variety of peer observation methods and programs have either been influenced by or have incorporated aspects of these models, which have been empirically scrutinized (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell, 2001; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Bennett & Barp, 2008; Blackmore, 2005; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Pressick-Kilborn & Riele, 2008). This set of empirical literature forms the backbone for the rest of this paper.

Fundamentals of Peer Observation

To ensure the success of a peer observation program, it must be constructed around five fundamental building blocks. These *fundamentals* are a nexus within the empirical literature that demonstrates a relationship between participation in a peer observation program and pedagogical development (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Ackerman, Gross, & Vigneron, 2009; Bell,

2001; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Bennett & Barp, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; Galbraith & Merrill, 2012; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004, 2005; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Kohut, Burnap, & Yon, 2007; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Peel, 2005; Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008; Swinglehurst, Russel & Greenhalgh, 2008; Yon, Burnap & Kohut, 2002). It is important to note that the abovementioned empirical literature affirms concepts that have been expressed in much of the practitioner literature such as, the importance of observee control, the incorporation of reflective opportunities for both observer and observee, training and preparation for the observation process, and issues of trust among participants (Blackwell & McLean, 1996; Braskamp & Ory, 1994; Brinko, 1993; Cosh, 1998 & 1999; Cohen & McKeachie, 1980; Keig & Waggoner, 1995; Mento & Giampetro-Meyer, 2000; Millis, 1992 & 2006; Weimer, Kerns, & Parrett, 1988).

The fundamentals of peer observation are not discrete and do not function independently of one another, but rather, overlap and intersect. The fundamentals include:

- *Design:* A program of peer observation must have a well-articulated purpose, an unambiguous process that clearly leads towards completion, and oversight.
- *Reflection:* There must be opportunities for participants to critically reflect on their peer observation experience.
- *Control:* It is essential that participants be able to control and/or contribute to the observation process and the data generated from the observation process.
- *Training:* A thorough training program for all peer observation participants, those being observed and those observing; is essential for alleviating the above-mentioned weaknesses of peer observation and strengthening perceptions of its reliability.

- *Community*: Administration, departments, and individuals must take great effort to develop a community that allows for openness and honesty throughout the observation process.

Design

The design of a peer observation program requires more than a simple checklist of what to look for in an observation. A program of peer observation must be able to answer three basic questions:

1. Why should I, voluntarily or mandatorily, participate?
2. What will be expected of me, and how will I know when I have fulfilled that expectation?
3. How can I be assured that peer observation will benefit my department/institution and me?

Most faculty members have rarely participated in an organized program of peer observation. In addition, faculty members that have experienced peer observation are likely to have experienced a summative model (Kemp & Gosling, 2009). With regard to the first question – why should I participate? – peer observation is either convincingly promoted as a formative tool, or participation is required for professional evaluation. Some practitioner literature suggests the implementation of rewards and incentives to “demonstrate to faculty that participation in formative peer evaluation of teaching truly is valued” (Keig & Waggoner, 1995, p. 5; Skinner & Welch, 1996). Nevertheless, faculty often presume that peer observation is strictly an evaluative and summative tool, and question their ability to accurately and justly critique a colleague’s pedagogical proficiency (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004). While initial participation may be problematic, research clearly illustrates that faculty are more open to participation when

goals and objectives (purpose) are clearly articulated (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Swinglehurst, Russel & Greenhalgh, 2008). A well designed and detailed program of peer observation provides faculty with a clear understanding of how the program will fit into their busy professional schedules while not detracting from other obligations or augmenting administrative oversight (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005).

The second question – What will be expected of me and how will I know when I have fulfilled that expectation? – A program of peer observation must have a mechanism that clearly maps-out the peer observation process so that a participant is knowledgeable of his/her accomplishments/forward-progress at any given moment (Bell, 2001; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004). When recognition of advancement is coupled with regular feedback on pedagogical development – through the peer observation process or originating from the department – a participant gains confidence in the validity of peer observation and is also able to monitor his/her own development (Bell, 2001; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004). Additionally, Bell (2001) found that a “coordinator” could easily provide oversight to the program and also ensure participants that they were meeting expectations. The coordinator was able to monitor the progress of each participant, collect necessary documentation, and supply written and/or personal feedback.

Lastly, question three – How can I be assured that peer observation will benefit me and my department/institution? – Participants should feel that they are contributing to the development of a community (Bell, 2001; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004). A program of peer observation not only provides well articulated goals for individuals, but it also articulates

departmental goals and objectives. Faculty participants demonstrate greater confidence in a program of peer observation and feel that their participation contributes to the overall departmental pedagogical development (Bell, 2001; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004).

Reflection

Reflection is the key that transforms peer observation from a summative practice to a formative, developmental experience (Bell, 2001; Bennett & Barp, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Peel, 2005; Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008). Reflection however, involves more than the simple recall of events and experience. Peer observation requires a critical reflection, an intentional effort on the part of an individual to recall an experience, and to then analyze actions/behaviors, emotions, and/or compare personal narrative with a larger public narrative (Spalding & Wilson, 2002). Therefore, reflection in regard to peer observation is the practice of examining ones teaching experience with the intent to change and/or improve future teaching.

Reflection on pedagogy is the ultimate goal of any formative peer observation program. The most basic program of peer observation affords participants a chance to debrief about their observation experience in a post-observation discussion. However, faculty members claim that a post-observation discussion often leads to trivial changes in teaching practice rather than meaningful change in pedagogy (Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005). For meaningful change to occur there must be an opportunity for participants to discuss their teaching practice and philosophy in ways that stretch beyond the post-observation discussion. An organized process and/or method of reflection is a critical aid for faculty to examine their pedagogy and epistemology. It is the practice of reflection in peer observation that fosters development, not merely the act of participation in peer observation (Bell, 2001; Bennett &

Barp, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersly-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Peel, 2005; Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008).

Control

While reflection in peer observation plays an integral role in pedagogical development, it is the level of control given to participants that influences the consequent success or failure of a peer observation program (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Ackerman, Gross, & Vigneron; 2009; Bell, 2001; Yon, Burnap & Kohut; 2002). Pedagogical development is greatest when participants are able to determine their own path through the peer observation experience – the ability to decide who observes, when the observation takes place, the type of data generated by the observer, the format of the feedback, what happens with the data/feedback generated after the observation – greatly influence’s personal investment (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Ackerman, Gross, & Vigneron; 2009; Bell, 2001; Yon, Burnap & Kohut; 2002). If a goal of peer observation is to foster pedagogical development, then there must be minimal administrative or castigatory intrusion (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Ackerman, Gross, & Vigneron; 2009; Bell, 2001; Yon, Burnap & Kohut; 2002). The notion of control, however, should extend beyond the individual faculty member. Great efforts should be made to manufacture a peer observation program from the grass-roots, and not from top level administration. Ideally, the academic department should have total control over how a peer observation program is constructed (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009).

Training

Any procedure resulting in the evaluation of a peer should be subject to some level of scrutiny or assurance of quality. Faculty are experts in a given field or discipline, yet unlikely that a faculty member is also knowledgeable or expert in pedagogy. The number of years a

colleague has taught accounts for experience and ease in the teacher role; however this does not connote an ability or expertise in the observation and assessment of teaching. Herein lies the greatest criticism faculty members have of peer observation; the possibility of a colleague's poor observation and assessment skills or a participant's own inability to act as a qualified observer can adversely affect the process and outcome of peer observation (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009; Blackwell & McLean, 1996).

The assurance of quality can be achieved by the organization of a continuous training program for all participating faculty. A training program must guide faculty in the practice of observation (Courneya, Pratt, & Collins, 2007; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Martin & Double, 1998). It must also address the weaknesses of peer observation and provide guidance on legal and ethical standards when observation/evaluation is connected to employment. A comprehensive training program establishes participant confidence as both an observer and an observee. It ensures the reliability and validity of peer observation and most importantly deepens faculty's commitment to participation (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009, Kohut, Burnap, & Yon, 2007; Martin & Double, 1998; Yon, Burnap & Kohut; 2002).

Training should also include the introduction of critical reflection (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004). As previously mentioned, the quality of pedagogical development is directly related to the reflective opportunities within the peer observation process. Reflection requires a processual organization that focuses on self-assessment and critique. Therefore it necessitates training in the practice of reflection, its benefits, and its meaningfulness (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005).

Community

Training provides an assurance that the procedural aspects of peer observation will be correctly and effectively realized. However, peer observation has at its core a group of faculty that possess a wide range of deeply human qualities. Faculty bring personal and professional apprehension to peer observation. A community of participants is needed to permit the free expression of inquiry and debate about the practice of teaching (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron 2009; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005). A community that is structured around peer observation, and pedagogy in general, helps to balance the problematic power distances between participants (observer & observee) and enhances the overall willingness of faculty to participate (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron 2009; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008). When the relationship between observer and observee is viewed as a component of a larger pedagogical community, faculty become more open to critique and the reception of feedback, and their general desire for pedagogic improvement strengthens (Ackerman, Gross, & Vigneron, 2009; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Hatzipanogos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Martin & Double, 1998; Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008).

Methods of Peer Observation

Based on an examination and synthesis of the available literature on peer observation, the following methods of peer observation are recognized as formative and beneficial for participants in a program of peer observation. These methods can be used to develop the pedagogical strength of individual faculty members, assess the value and currency of course content, or to re-adjust overarching curriculum content. They are presented in this paper to guide and/or inform an academic department in the development of a custom, scholarly program of peer observation.

A careful selection of methods can accommodate various department cultures, level of commitment to participation, available resources, and goals for peer observation. A department may naturally choose whether or not to use these methods as formative or summative assessment and evaluation. However, it is this paper's contention that all the following methods are formative and best used towards the development of university/college classroom teaching. The summative use of these methods and the data collected via these methods is not discussed in this paper.

The following methods of peer observation are best presented as two groups. *Group A* is comprised of two methods – pre/obs/post, and narrative – that form an essential basis for any program of peer observation. *Group B* is comprised of five additional methods that can be added to the pre/obs/post and narrative so that a program of peer observation may serve different functions. The methods of *Group B* can also be combined or layered in various ways to raise participant activity and engagement.

The work/effort required of departments and faculty to administer or participate increases as additional methods are incorporated. The added commitment, however, is minimal and with forethought can be easily absorbed into the academic calendar. Each additional method requires only the addition of another faculty participant or an additional observation cycle. The time-commitment and/or paperwork associated with this layering effect should be the purview of the participating department. A crucial note, however, concerns the selection of observation partners/pairs or trios. As frequently noted, faculty participants require unstinted autonomy in order to harvest the benefits of peer observation (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Ackerman, Gross, & Vigneron; 2009; Bell, 2001; Yon, Burnap & Kohut; 2002). These methods are based on the proposition that all observation groups, pairs and/or trios, are self-selecting. It is

important that faculty participants are comfortable with their peer observation colleagues, and feel respect toward their colleagues' professional experience within higher education. The following sections of this paper will describe the various methods of peer observation and address particular characteristics of each method.

Group A

Pre/obs/post. The pre-observation/observation/post-observation (pre/obs/post) template is the most basic method or format used in peer observation. One observation cycle is fully completed when the observer and observee have moved through each of the three stages in the pre/obs/post format. The format is straightforward and amenable for both participants; however each part of the pre/obs/post format is equally important and must not be truncated. Within the available, empirical peer observation literature, the pre/obs/post format is credited to David Gosling's (2000) Guidelines for Peer Observation of learning and Teaching (Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Pressick-Kilborn & Riele, 2008). This literature has established the pre/obs/post format as the primary element of any peer observation program, and the nexus from which most empirical studies have been developed.

The first stage in the pre/obs/post format is the pre-observation meeting. The pre-observation meeting helps to alleviate some initial apprehension felt by the participants. The meeting is between the observer and the observee and is intended to establish basic shared knowledge about the pre/obs/post process, participant expectations, and the class to be observed. The participants should reach an agreed upon time and location for the observation and establish a time and location for the post-observation meeting. Items that should be discussed include the

lesson plan, topic of the day, the classroom culture, and how observer feedback will be delivered. The meeting serves as a space for the observee to voice any concerns about the class or subject matter of the class. The pre-observation meeting should also be used to establish the observer's role in the class. The peer observation literature is thin and indeterminate in reference to the observer's role during the observation. The variety of teaching perspectives and personalities indicates that this decision is best left to the judgment of the participants (Chism, 1990; Seldin, 2006;).

When an observation is conducted without the teacher's input on any of the following items – time and location for the observation, what is to be observed and how data is to be collected, opportunity to rebut or clarify issues related to feedback – the teacher is effectively removed from the observation cycle. The teacher is reduced to a recipient of an irrelevant collection of data. The pre/obs/post format places the teacher in an active role throughout the entire observation cycle.

After the ground work for the observation has been laid out by the participants, the second stage is the actual observation. During the observation the observer records either specific occurrences or his/her general impressions of the classroom environment and the teaching/instruction. The method used for the collection of data is to be negotiated by the participants. The empirical literature remains focused on the broader, formative benefits of peer observation (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell, 2002; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Bennett & Barp, 2008; Blackmore, 2005; Donnelly, 2007; & Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004 & 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Pressick-Kilborn, & Riele, 2008) and discussion about the method for data collection is a sub-topic or brief mention at best. There has been, however, a significant contribution made in practitioner literature that suggests how to collect data during

the observation. Suggestions made by a few authors include: checklists relating to teacher and student behaviors, time-line documentation of teacher activities, and observer impressions (Braskamp & Ory; 1994; Chism, 1990; Lewis, 2001; Seldin, 2006; Weimer, 1990).

The kind and amount of data collected by the observer changes depending on the number of or variety of methods a department has incorporated into its peer observation program. A department that has only incorporated the pre/obs/post and narrative should use a flexible, open practice of data collection. A non-specific process for data collection places greater emphasis on the pre-observation meeting between the observer and observee. The observee should articulate what his/her teaching strengths and weaknesses are and if there are specific teaching practices where feedback would be helpful. The negotiation ensures that the data collected is more in line with the needs of the observee and that the observee retains greater autonomy/control. An open and negotiable process of data collection maintains the formative benefits for the observee while a subsequent narrative produced by the observer can still be used as a summative evaluation. A department that has incorporated multiple methods of peer observation effectively broadens its scope of inquiry into teaching practice and effectiveness. Data collection is then more methodical, varied, and ultimately plentiful because data is collected multiple times and through different methods each time.

Lastly, the third stage of the pre/obs/post format is the post-observation meeting. The post-observation meeting is designed to facilitate a conversation between the observer and observee about the class session just observed. The post-observation meeting should be scheduled either immediately or shortly after the observation. During the meeting the observer provides feedback on the pre-determined aspects of the observation, and the observee should be able to ask questions about or clarify items and themes of the feedback. It is critical that the post-

observation meeting is collegial and not punitive. The meeting is meant to promote the flow of ideas and questions from one participant to the other. Feedback has the potential to be emotionally charged and it is important that this stage, receive sufficient time during the peer observation training session.

Feedback is generated from the observer's analysis of data collected from the observation. How the data are collected influences the effectiveness of feedback. According to Brinko (1993) feedback is best given and received when the recipient has voluntarily requested feedback, the generating data is self-collected or initiated, and when the recipient controls how it is to be received.

It is this active and engaged role of a reflective participant that leads towards pedagogical development. It is the pre/obs/post format itself, which facilitates reflection/self-assessment and thereby leading toward development. (Bennett & Barp, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersly-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Peel, 2005; Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008). The pre/obs/post format moves a teacher from an unengaged recipient of feedback to a participant in a collaborative practice of pedagogical exploration. A collaborative and negotiated observation experience compels the observer and the observee to examine their teaching practices and beliefs (Martin & Double, 1998; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005). The format increases the amount of contact between participants, eases discussion and critique, and ultimately produces a more fruitful observation experience for both participants (Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007).

The narrative. The narrative can be used to structure the observer's feedback, supply a record of performance, prompt critical reflection, and provide formative assessment and/or summative evaluation. The narrative is a simple document that is typically written by the

observer. The narrative is meant to synthesize the data collected by the observer and the key themes from the post-observation meeting/conversation. Among faculty participants the narrative has not been found to be a preferred method for receiving feedback, but it has been shown to be the most prevalent form of both summative and formative feedback (Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Yon, Burnap & Kohut, 2002).

Although the narrative can function as a summative letter of reference or appraisal; the narrative is underused regarding its formative merit. The narrative provides an additional reflective component for the overall peer observation program. The narrative can recreate the classroom scene and allow the observee to witness the class from a new perspective. It is a record of feedback that can be revisited and reflected-on through different lenses of educational philosophy and theory. The narrative can highlight nuances of the classroom experience such as student/teacher actions and/or unusual occurrences which in turn can be considered over time (Donnelly, 2007; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007).

The collection of empirical literature does not answer how the narrative should be constructed or what information should be included in the narrative. Resources from the practitioner literature that provide guidance for narrative construction are also slim (Chism, 2007; Grol & Lawrence, 1995). That said, the narrative should not be constructed in haste. The document may serve the dual purpose of formative assessment and summative judgment yet in this context it is meant to coach and critique. The narrative, however, should be constructed/written within two weeks of the post-observation meeting and “should describe verbal and non-verbal behavior, emphasizing what the reviewer sees rather than the reviewer’s judgment” (Chism, 2007, p. 106; Grohl & Lawrence, 1995). The construction of a narrative should include but not be limited to

- a summary of the pre/obs/post experience including dates, class taught, number of students;
- what the observer believes to be positive aspects of the observe's teaching;
- areas of teaching the observer believes improvement is warranted;
- assessment of presentation ability and public speaking; and
- assessment of rapport/relationship with students.

Group B

Observe and be observed. The *Observe and Be Observed* method of peer observation modifies the roles of the participants. In the previous methods each participant occupied one role, either the observer or the observee. This method requires participants to serve as both the observer and the observee. The participants (a pair) undergo the observation experience (pre/obs/post and narrative) and then switch roles. The pair then undergoes a second observation experience occupying the opposite roles. The method requires a greater commitment of time and resources given that two observations are to be performed. However, literature shows that there is significant formative benefit for participants in the observer role (Bennett & Barp, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Pressick-Kilborn & Riele, 2008; Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008), thus there is ample reason to engage in these two observations. Bell and Mladencovic stated that being placed in the observer role “seemed to be more highly regarded than feedback received from peers” (2008, p. 747). A number of empirical studies specifically highlight observer benefits rather than observee benefits (Bell & Mladencovic, 2008; Bennett & Barp, 2008; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Peel, 2005; Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008). In 2003, David Gosling produced a report that surveyed participants and administrators that constructed peer observation programs around

Gosling's original Guidelines for Peer Observation of Learning and Teaching (2000). The report concluded that:

The most important point to emerge is that the value of the process of peer observation is not simply about staff receiving feedback on their teaching from their colleagues. At least as important as receiving feedback...is having the opportunity to observe others teach. (Gosling, 2003, p. 8)

The observer benefit is likely due to the observer being placed directly in a reflective situation. In the pre/obs/post format the observer is required to document the classroom experience and then assess the value and efficacy of a colleague's teaching practice (Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Pressick-Kilborn & Riele, 2008). The observer naturally compares what has been or is being observed with his/her own stock pile of pedagogical knowledge. When placed in the observer role, it becomes easier for the observing participant to envision new realities in the classroom. The observer is confronted with how a colleague may teach differently when placed in a similar situation. The act of observing heightens a participant's confidence to modify his/her teaching practice (Donnelly, 2007).

An additional note supporting the *Observe and Be Observed* method regards a probable difference in teaching experience between the observer and observee. A peer observation used for promotion and tenure or a general summative evaluation consists of a pair of participants in which one participant is generally senior to the other. The summative aspect of this peer observation experience will likely be unidirectional, senior faculty evaluating junior faculty. However, incorporating the *Observe & Be Observed* method of Peer Observation wherein the

junior faculty also observes the more experienced teacher (Bennett & Barp, 2008) a junior faculty member can gather valuable insight into discipline specific teaching strategies or basic classroom management techniques (Bennett & Barp, 2008). The *Observe & Be Observed* method should receive healthy consideration amongst departments interested in pedagogical development.

Multiple observations. Peer observation literature demonstrates that pedagogical development is not limited to the observee (Bennett & Barp, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Pressick-Kilborn & Riele, 2008; Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008). Pedagogical development is indeed a benefit for both participants. The next method was created to combine and enhance the benefit gained by participating in each role of the observation experience. The fourth method is *Multiple Observations*. When incorporated in to a peer observation program a pair of participants commit to at least four observation experiences, two as an observer and two as an observee.

Multiple observations is a very effective tool for pedagogical development as it allows participants to modify their instructional practice and have those modifications observed a second time (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Peel, 2005). Participants can either modify their instruction as a reaction to feedback (a corrective measure) or participants can choose to receive feedback on new instructional practices. Multiple observations also means opportunities to reflect on practice and how practice can change, improve, or relate to larger pedagogical theories. Multiple observations can be used as a formative process with a summative evaluation, wherein the multiple narratives that are produced can document instructional improvement and pedagogical development (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Peel, 2005).

Multiple observations can also be a productive method for allaying apprehension associated with peer observation. A participant's first observation experience can be consumed by their awareness of their own actions and comments in the classroom. Participants may feel they are presenting a staged performance of teaching. During the initial observation a participant can feel a loss of freedom or feel burdened by the presence of the observer. However, as other observations occur, the participant becomes more familiar with the other's presence and apprehension subsides (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008).

Data collection for the Multiple observations level indexes a wide range of classroom information. The type of data collected as well as the method of collecting data can be different with each observation cycle. Each observation experience will have its own data to generate feedback and discussion/reflection in the post-observation meeting and the corresponding narrative. Yet, the data collected also contributes to a wholistic picture of the classroom environment. This aligns with Brinko's (1993) assessment that feedback is valuable when it is the result of multiple perspectives and multiple occurrences.

The range of data collected during multiple observations warrants the guidance of a prescribed set of items and procedures. A compilation of this kind lends itself for use in summative evaluations (Arreola, 2007). Yet, the following note should be considered. At the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Kohut, Burnap & Yon (2007) surveyed the University's tenured and untenured faculty. Their survey revealed that a majority of faculty believed that the forms/documents used to guide the collection of data were valid, in that the forms prompted the collection of appropriate and useful data related to teaching evaluation. However, a greater number of faculty believed the forms were not reliable. This discrepancy

highlights the question of quality and skill of the observer and emphasizes the importance of training in peer observation.

Observation trios. *Observation Trios* is a natural extension of *Multiple observations*. The *Observation Trio* is composed of three participants and each participant serves as observer and observee for each other member of the group. This trio may be composed of three faculty from the same department or a mixture of faculty from diverse departments or pedagogical experts. The trio then produces a variety of reflective opportunities; the participant from a different discipline may focus on instructional mechanics while the third participant from the same discipline/department can focus on how the course being observed relates to pre or post requisite classes. Bell and Mladencovic (2008) found that participants of a peer observation program cited multiple participants in observation groups/trios as a desired method for enhancing a peer observation program.

Trios add an important layer of reflection or analysis to the peer observation process (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008; Stillwell, 2008). Schuck, Aubusson and Buchanan (2008) explain that a trio of observers (who are also observees) creates a more difficult environment for achieving congruence or agreement on teaching practice.

Peter and Sandy questioned why certain aspects of John's classes had challenged one of us but not the other. For example, why had the way that John implemented questioning techniques not been something that Sandy was satisfied with her questioning techniques or was it because this was not something she had thought deeply about? (Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008, p. 223)

This incongruence presses faculty to analyze and understand their different opinions and judgments related to instruction. Trios help to highlight what may be “taken-for-granted” among pairs of observer/observees.

Outside discipline participant. The sixth method, *Outside Discipline Participant*, and the following methods of peer observation require the integration of participants from outside the academic department. A participant from a different academic discipline can bring value to the observation experience (Donnelly, 2007). When the peer observer and observee are from the same academic discipline, both participants share a common knowledge of the class/course content and also understand how the class/course fits into the overall curriculum. The shared knowledge-base enables the participants to reflect on how and when particular content should be presented to students. Also, junior faculty can benefit from senior faculty’s experience and understanding departmental objectives and departmental teaching/learning culture. While these are obvious positive outcomes, an observer from the same discipline can get lost in the discipline/content and not focus on basic dynamics of teaching and classroom mechanics (Donnelly, 2007). The nuts and bolts of university/college teaching such as syllabus design, lesson plans, reading and homework assignments, term papers, and instructional strategies, all become secondary to the content (Blackmore, 2005). Participants from different disciplines have the unique advantage of being able to focus primarily on instruction and minimally on content. Participating in peer observation with colleagues from other disciplines helps to move “[teachers] beyond the point of being subject specialists who reflect on subject content and into consideration of learning and teaching philosophies and cultures” (Donnelly, 2007, p. 127). The Outside Discipline Observer does not add additional observation experiences. The trio can be

comprised of three participants from the same academic department, all different departments, or a 1:2 ratio.

Educational expert as observer. The benefits derived from participation in a peer observation program can be enhanced or altered by manipulating the observation experience. Different emphasis can be placed on how and when the observations occur, how the narrative is constructed, or who participates in the observation. The variety of peer observation designs can promote development in specific areas of need. If a departmental objective is to understand how each faculty member contributes to the overall curriculum, then observations among departmental colleagues may be best. Or, if a departmental objective is to raise its overall teaching evaluations, then perhaps a peer observation program designed around multiple observations and outside discipline observers is most advantageous.

A particular addition to peer observation that can raise the instructional quality of participants is the use of an educational expert. The *Educational Expert as Observer* is a method in which a fellow scholar or expert in university/college teaching takes on the role of observer. Bell and Mladencovic (2008) established that while participants found peers to be valuable observers; participants also felt that feedback from an educational expert would be of higher quality and “balance” how an observee interprets feedback. The educational expert may not share discipline or departmental knowledge with other participants, yet feedback from an educational expert helps to affirm the progress made by participants. Participants feel that their development related to peer observation is validated and contributes to the overall goals of the department and university/college (Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006).

The educational expert replaces either the outside discipline observer or the second participant from the same discipline. It is likely that an educational expert is not a fellow

member of the teaching faculty at a college/university, but a member of an office dedicated to the advancement of college/university teaching and thereby not currently teaching. If so, the process for incorporating an educational expert adds an additional observation experience for the participants.

Conclusion

A synthesis of the available literature on peer observation highlights two essential frameworks for the implementation of a program of peer observation. The first being that five fundamentals – design, reflection, control, training, and trusting community – are necessary for the formative benefits of peer observation to be realized (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Peel, 2005; Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008; Swinglehurst, Russel & Greenhalgh, 2008). These fundamentals generate a willingness to participate in peer observation, alleviate faculty skepticism and anxiety related to participation, and ultimately allow for the open and free discussion of pedagogical practice (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Peel, 2005; Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008; Swinglehurst, Russel & Greenhalgh, 2008).

The second framework is the collection of methods for peer observation. These methods have at their foundation the most basic and two easiest methods of peer observation to put into practice, the pre/obs/post and the narrative (Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Pressick-Kilborn & Riele, 2008). An academic department or program can then tailor the peer observation

experience to produce a variety of beneficial outcomes by incorporating one or more additional methods of peer observation. By the careful organization of peer observation methods a department can enhance its faculty's classroom management skills and instructional techniques, educational philosophy/theory, and critique its curricular plans. When a program of peer observation is mindfully constructed by the consultation of peer observation literature, it opens the practice of teaching for public scholarly discussion and facilitates reflection on teaching and learning. It is clear that the peer observation of teaching can enrich and develop the practice of teaching, inside the higher education classroom.

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Five Fundamentals of Peer Observation: A description of peer observation of classroom teaching at a large land-grant university

Jonathan David McCloud
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Abstract

This paper presents a mixed-methods descriptive study of peer observation of classroom teaching at a large U.S. university. A synthesis of available empirical peer observation literature provides the basis for a discussion on advantages and disadvantages of the peer observation, as well as a source to advance five fundamental attributes. The five fundamentals are design, community, control, training, and reflection. When included in a peer observation program, they contribute to the pedagogical development of peer observation participants. The purpose of this study was to describe how the five fundamentals are manifest in authentic, university contexts. 76 academic departments chairs were provided with a web-based questionnaire to identify departments in which the five fundamentals were clearly present. Out of 35 departments that responded to the questionnaire, three were selected to participate as case studies. Key personnel from each of the three departments participated in semi-structured interviews and one focus group. The peer observation practices and procedures are described for each of the three departments, followed by in-case and cross-case descriptions of each of the five fundamentals. The paper concludes that when present, the five fundamentals diminish the negative features of peer observation. Positive and negative faculty views on peer observation align with the presence and absence of the five fundamentals. The presence and absence of the five fundamentals can positively and negatively contribute to individual and departmental pedagogical needs and goals.

In the United States, the professional performance appraisal of Higher Education faculty is a practice largely conducted by faculty peers. This practice is commonly and professionally referred to as *peer review* and is well established within the professional culture and structure of US higher education (D'Andrea, 2002). Currently, and for much of the last century, the peer observation of classroom teaching has been an ever-present component of institutionally based peer review, faculty assessment (D'Andrea, 2002). In the mid 1990s, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) movement highlighted the peer observation of classroom teaching as a creditable method for the development and renewal of pedagogical abilities (D'Andrea, 2002; Hutchings, 1996). U.S. institutions have since placed greater value on peer observation, which has become an influential factor in decisions of promotion and tenure (Kemp & Gosling, 2009; Seldin, 2006; Braskamp & Ory, 1994). Indeed, Miller, & Seldin (2014) report that, from 2000 to 2010, peer observation of classroom teaching has increased in significance by nearly double that of all other forms of faculty evaluation.

Despite the obvious volume of tenure and promotion decisions that are linked to, or at the very least influenced by, peer observation, there is little known about the policies and practices of peer observation at U.S. institutions. The general body of peer observation literature is mostly comprised of practitioner based literature that focuses on various ways of doing peer observation; yet due to a quality assurance movement in the United Kingdom a relatively recent line of empirical inquiry has begun to develop (Gosling & D'Andrea, 2001; Kemp & Gosling, 2009; Shortland, 2004). Thomas Bell and Tricia McClam (1992) produced a scholarly evaluation of peer observation at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. Bell and McClam's evaluation carefully outlined issues related to procedure, strengths and weaknesses, and administrative leadership. Following Bell and McClam's work, little scholarly investigation has addressed (a)

how peer observation is conducted at large U.S. institutions; and (b) to what extent that institution's peer observation policies and procedures are related to or informed by empirical peer observation literature. This study will provide a synthesis of available peer observation literature, through which, meaningful peer observation can be identified. This article will then address the aforementioned questions by providing a description of peer observation programs at three academic departments, situated in a large U.S. land-grant institution.

Understanding Peer Observation

Peer observation is a unique pedagogical assessment in which members of the faculty observe the classroom teaching of colleagues (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Blackmore, 2005; Donnelly, 2007; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Mladencovic 2008). Notwithstanding this seemingly simplistic definition, there is hesitancy amongst scholars to agree on a more concise definition of peer observation. The unwillingness to agree is linked to the theoretically charged word *peer*. The word *peer* and the accompanying phrase *peer observation* imply a relationship and activity between equals (Arreola, 2007; Bell, 2001; McMahon, Barrett, & O'Neil, 2007). Regrettably, the word/phrase does not adequately account for the varying distance of power that often exists between the observer and observee, for example, a junior faculty member being observed by a tenured member of the faculty, a department or program chair, or a governing member of the school's administration (Arreola, 2007; Bell, 2001; McMahon, Barrett, & O'Neil, 2007).

In the available peer observation literature, scholars have discussed the role of observer and observee and the professional qualities/experience of those individuals; yet, these studies rarely present a definition of peer or peer observation that is outside the boundaries of the particular program of peer observation under investigation (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009;

Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Blackmore, 2005; Donnelly, 2007; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Mladencovic 2008). While theoretical concerns and questions of power are indeed vital to future peer observation research, such issues lay outside the current considerations of this paper, which is to earnestly examine how peer observation is conducted in relation to available empirical literature, not to assess the conceptual positions of faculty on the terms “peer” and “peer observation”.

Advantages of Peer Observation

Peer observation highlights the complexity of the classroom environment, fosters dialogue and reflection on pedagogy and curriculum, and encourages the development of pedagogical abilities (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Bennett & Barp, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004 & 2005). What sets peer observation apart from other pedagogical assessments, is that it provides a teacher with an assessment of his/her teaching by an individual that is not a regular member of the classroom environment. Daily or weekly classroom instruction can foster roles and behaviors that become commonplace for the instructor and students, such as, classroom discussion and participation, the submission of assignments and test-taking procedures. These commonalities can be easily overlooked by other pedagogical assessments. Objective pedagogical perspective is difficult to achieve with student evaluations and teaching portfolios, these are produced by regular members of the classroom environment (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005). The presence of an outside observer compels the teacher to reflect on his/her pedagogical practices/abilities through an outsider’s perspective. Peer observation helps to widen a teacher’s pedagogical scope to include students, the student-teacher relationship, instructional strategies, physical space, and countless other classroom elements (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell & Mladenovic,

2008; Bennett & Barp, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004 & 2005). Peer observation engages a teacher in the self-analysis and improvement of their own knowledge of instructional strategies and learning theory (Bell, 2002; Blackmore, 2005; Donnelly, 2007; Martin & Double, 1998; Pressick-Kilborn, & Riele, 2008). In short, participation in peer observation inspires faculty to expand their pedagogical knowledge (Donnelly, 2007).

The benefits of peer observation are not limited to faculty participating as observer and observee. At its most basic, peer observation includes no less than two faculty members and it requires these participants be in communication about pedagogy (Gosling, 2000; Donnelly, 2007; Martin & Double, 1998). That dialogical nature of peer observation thrusts pedagogical mindfulness into a public realm for conversation (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009; Bell, 2002; Donnelly, 2007). It provides an open and acceptable medium for faculty to discuss issues related to pedagogy and curriculum, which in-turn fosters innovation and improvement in faculty teaching (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Bennett & Barp, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004 & 2005).

Disadvantages of Peer Observation

Despite the sometimes-glowing reviews of peer observation, it also suffers from several common ailments. Peer observation is often met with faculty scrutiny and skepticism. It is frequently labeled as administration encroachment, an unnecessary faculty burden, or simply an obstruction to faculty research agendas. And simply, faculty express trepidation to being observed and/or observing a colleague (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell, 2001; Blackmore, 2005; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005). Such trepidation is founded on concerns that peers will be unable to remain impartial to differences in pedagogical conviction and instructional strategies (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009). Faculty question the neutrality

and loyalty of peers in regard to institutional politics and unsavory faculty relationships, and how peers might assess unplanned occurrences in the class being observed (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009; Blackwell & McLean, 1996). Yet, what is most at the center of faculty opposition to peer observation is the human element of anxiety and fear of criticism (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell, 2001; Blackmore, 2005; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005). Anxiety related to the criticism of and from colleagues is considered the chief impediment to a successful and meaningful peer observation experience (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006).

Meaningful Peer Observation: Five Fundamentals

A synthesis of the available empirical peer observation literature reveals five fundamental attributes that a program of peer observation must exhibit/engage in order to diminish faculty unease and scrutiny. *Design, community, control, training, and reflection* provide a nexus at which peer observation is a pedagogically meaningful and developmental experience. The fundamentals are conceived of as coessential, intended to function together as a framework to guide the development of and/or the assessment of a program of peer observation. They are broadly defined and can be widely interpreted concerning their implementation by an academic unit (e.g. school, department, program). The fundamentals will be fully developed and analyzed in the case studies section. What follows is a brief description of and introduction to each fundamental.

Design refers to the overarching peer observation scheme. Effective design includes a clear articulation of purpose, procedures, group and individual responsibilities, group and individual goals, and documentation of the peer observation program (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher &

Orsmond, 2004; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Swinglehurst, Russel & Greenhalgh, 2008). *Community* entails regularly occurring and intentional meetings/conversations regarding both peer observation and pedagogy (Ackerman, Gross, & Vigneron, 2009; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Hatzipanogos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Martin & Double, 1998; Kohut, Burnap, & Yon, 2007; Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008; Yon, Burnap & Kohut, 2002). Community is not to be confused with social collegiality, such as department gatherings for potluck dinners, holiday parties, or beer on Fridays. Instead, community refers to the ways in which colleagues explicitly set-aside time to discuss peer observation and pedagogy with one another.

Control is the ability of faculty to satisfy requirements of the peer observation program and the institution within a framework of self-governance and individual autonomy. Control is multilayered. It relates to interactions between observees and observers within a peer observation program, as well as to departmental autonomy within university governance. At the interpersonal observee/observer level, control is evident when an observee and observer make joint decisions and negotiations about the observation. For example, an observee may select the class to be observed and then engage in conversation with the observer about aspects of instruction to focus on during the observation (e.g., wait time). At the departmental autonomy level, control is evident when departments are able to take disciplinary/curricular expectations and contexts into account when designing observation procedures (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Ackerman, Gross, & Vigneron, 2009; Bell, 2001; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Yon, Burnap & Kohut, 2002).

Training involves an organized effort by the institution, or the peer observation program, to address questions and concerns regarding the quality of peer observation as a pedagogical

assessment, the required elements for conducting peer observation, and the intended outcome of peer observation as related to human resources and employment (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009; Blackwell & McLean, 1996; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Martin & Double, 1998). Finally, *Reflection* is both an intrapersonal and interpersonal practice. At the intrapersonal level, observees and observers reflect on his or her individual role in and experience of peer observation. Observees and observers then engage in interpersonal dialogue about pedagogy and the peer observation process (Bell, 2001; Bennett & Barp, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Peel, 2005; Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008).

University governance, institutional make-up, and an assortment of environmental factors influence the structure of academic units, as well as professional and discipline specific standards. A restrictive notion of the five fundamentals would not be useful for either the development or the assessment of a program of peer observation. For example, departmental/program policy and procedures may exist in hard-copy documentation or merely as practices that are communicated via personal communication. Also, ideas and components such as training and community may be expressed differently within departmental practices and personal/professional relationships. It is entirely more useful to explore the ways in which the five fundamentals currently exist in multiple, authentic, university contexts, and not useful to rigidify them into a brittle framework. Therefore, this study describes the ways in which these five fundamentals were and were not evident in three academic departments in a large U.S. land-grant institution.

Methods

Context

This study was conducted at a university with little policy regarding the use and function of peer observation. University governance provides only one policy statement on peer observation. That statement is available to all university faculty via electronic PDF format, *Guidelines for Promotion and Tenure, 2011-12*, accessible through the website for the university's Office of the Provost. The full statement is as follows: "Provide at least two letters or reports from departmental or college peer reviewers regarding the candidate's teaching and advising effectiveness" (p. 7). An unguided post-observation narrative [letter of review] is required as one aspect of a faculty member's tenure review process, to be included in the faculty dossier.

Study Design

A mixed method design based on *sequential explanatory design – participant selection model* (Cresswell, 2007) and case study (Merriam, 2001; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009) was used. The study was divided into two phases: a participant identification phase and a case study phase. Using the sequential explanatory design – participant selection model, academic departments were surveyed to identify departments with peer observation programs in which the five fundamental attributes of peer observation were most clearly and abundantly evident. Academic departments identified as having the five fundamentals present in their peer observation practices were then invited to participate in the case study phase. The case studies were used to arrive at a description of the five fundamentals in authentic contexts.

For the first phase of this study, 76 academic departments received a web-based questionnaire, designed and administered via SurveyMonkey.com (see Appendix A). The likert-

scaled questionnaire was designed to ascertain the level of agreement between the academic department's practice of peer observation and the aforementioned five fundamentals. The level of agreement was illustrated through a final summed numerical score. A higher numerical score indicated a more clearly observable presence of the five fundamentals in the department's practice of peer observation than did a lower numerical score. The population of potential questionnaire participants was a limited group of individuals (e.g. academic department chairs); therefore a pilot-test of the questionnaire using qualified participants was not completed. Four scholars – each expert in either survey construction, educational/academic assessment, or educational administration in higher education - examined the questionnaire and provided feedback which was used to modify the questionnaire, to provide a suitable level of validity. The questionnaire was also found to be reliable; Chronbach's alpha was .82. Of the 76 academic departments surveyed, 35 departments responded and completed the questionnaire. The respondent departments were ranked, according to the level of agreement, from highest to lowest numerical score. The five highest scoring departments were invited to participate in the case study phase of this project. Three academic departments accepted the invitation: English, Agricultural Technology, and Theatre and Cinema.

For the second phase of this study, case study method was then employed to provide a thick and rich description of how the five fundamental attributes of peer observation were (and were not) manifest in context in these three departments (Cresswell, 2007; Merriam, 2001; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). For this study, a case was defined as a common “organizational form that has a particular function”, the academic department and its program of peer observation (Vaughan, 1992, p. 174). The three participating departments function as “instruments” or lenses, that through which, the five fundamental attributes were studied. The primary interest of this study

was the five fundamentals. The participating departments, or the case, “is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 549; Stake, 1995). A program of peer observation was defined as the organized practice/set-of-procedures for the peer observation of classroom teaching within an academic department.

A distinguishing feature of case study method is the collection of abundant data and the varied forms of data collection (Merriam, 2001; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). The triangulation of multiple data sources bolsters the trustworthiness of inferences and conclusions drawn by the researcher (Merriam, 2001; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). This study drew from a total 11 individual interviews and one focus group of four participants (see Appendix B for list of case study participants). Five members of the English faculty participated in the study, along with five members of the Agricultural and Technology faculty, and five members of the Theatre and Cinema faculty. Relevant departmental documents such as departmental observation protocol, copies of faculty letters of review, departmental faculty handbook, and a draft of a departmental peer observation policy document were collected and analyzed.

Data collection and analysis were concurrent operations, in keeping with the widely accepted constant comparative process (Merriam, 2001). Data was segmented into the smallest appropriate and relevant “unit of data” (Merriam, 2001, p. 179). For this study, a unit of data was a clearly demarcated division of meaning that agreed with attributes of one of the five fundamentals peer observation. A label, or code, was attached to each unit of data along with the corresponding fundamental (Merriam, 2001; Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Coded units of data were placed into predetermined categories and organized thematically within each category (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). The five fundamental attributes of peer observation served as the

predetermined categories (Merriam, 2001; Rubin & Rubin, 2005) derived from the examination of the available empirical peer observation literature (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). All case study data was analyzed within each individual case and across all three cases (Merriam, 2001).

Case Studies

As previously mentioned, the goal of this study is to understand how the five fundamentals are and are not evident in empirical cases. Therefore, the three academic departments that make up the cases are of “secondary interest” to the five fundamentals (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 549; Stake, 1995). Instead, the cases provide the opportunity to explore each fundamental in practice. Rather than using English, Agricultural Technology, and Theatre and Cinema as the organizational headings, the five fundamentals serve as headings and analysis relates to how each case agrees with each fundamental. Before turning to the five fundamentals, the case study section begins with a description of the *observation process* for each case in order to provide a context for how each department conducts peer observation. The section then explores each fundamental.

The Observation Process

The observation process includes information regarding the preliminary organization, observation cycle, observation review, and/or concluding organization. The process also describes the various responsibilities and practices required by departmental faculty to conduct and participate in peer observation. The university has no overarching policy that articulates requirements and/or procedures for peer observation. Therefore academic units ranging from the organizational level of college and school to academic department and program develop their own policy and procedures for peer observation. In addition, these academic units develop their own policy and procedures for the construction of the “letters or reports...[of]...teaching

effectiveness.” University faculty commonly refer to these “letters or reports” as a *letters of review*, which are customarily written following the observation one’s classroom teaching. No university policy dictates the style or structure of a letter of review.

Following the description of the observation process, analysis turns to the five fundamentals – design, community, control, training, and reflection – as manifest in the English, Agricultural Technology, Theatre and Cinema cases. Finally, a brief discussion at the end of each fundamental heading examines the fundamental comparatively across the three academic departments.

English. The English department is a sizeable academic unit comprised of multiple program areas. The department houses undergraduate and graduate degree tracks, several hundred undergraduate majors, 50-60 graduate teaching assistants, and nearly 80 faculty. The faculty is split into two ranks, a non-tenure track Instructorate, and a tenure track Professoriate. A departmental personnel committee governs all employment related promotions, and recommends a faculty member for promotion by sending forward a ratified faculty dossier, for final approval by college and university administration. All employment contract renewals and promotion related movement by a member of either the instructorate or professoriate requires two letters of review that address the individual’s classroom teaching. Each letter is to be written by a member of the English faculty that out-ranks the instructor/professor being considered for promotion. The letter functions as an assessment of the individual’s teaching performance and is based on the direct observation of their classroom teaching.

The coordination of the peer observation program is divided between the department chair and the associate department chair. The department chair coordinates peer observations for the professoriate, and the associate chair coordinates the peer observations for the instructorate.

The observation process varies only slightly between the two groups of faculty, regarding the required faculty rank/position of the observer. The observation process includes three stages: preliminary organization, the observation cycle, and the observation review.

Preliminary organization. The observation process begins several months before a faculty member is slated for a promotion or contract renewal. During this preliminary stage, the department chair or associate chair notifies a member of the respective faculty group that they are eligible for promotion/contract renewal. Notification is usually given near the beginning of the academic year, allowing for the observation process to be completed over the course of the entire academic year. The observee is asked to generate a list of higher-ranking faculty that he/she is comfortable with conducting the observation. The list should also include those members of the faculty that the observee would be uncomfortable with conducting the observation. Those in the tenure-track professoriate must generate a list of tenured senior faculty, and those in the instructorate must generate a list of instructors with a higher rank and/or junior or senior tenure-track faculty. In the English department, tenure-track faculty, junior or senior, out-rank the instructorate. The list of possible observers is provided to the respective chair. The list is provided in a written form, via email. The chair then goes about selecting the observer. Observer selection is made based on congruent schedules, how recently the observer has conducted other observations, and whether or not the observer agrees to conduct the observation.

After the chair has made the observer selection, the coordination and schedule of the observation process is dependent on the observer and the observee. Prior to the observation, the observer is to gather an assortment of teaching related classroom data. The English department requires that the observer collect syllabi from all courses being taught by the observee, student evaluation scores from at least the prior five years or dating back to the previous promotion, and

a selection of graded assignments (graded student work) that illustrates teacher/student feedback. These documents, or classroom data, are to be carefully reviewed by the observer before the observation.

The observation cycle. The observation cycle consists of three steps: the pre-observation meeting, observation, and the post observation meeting. The observation cycle must be completed at least twice, before any review-oriented documentation is sent forward to the department administration. The pre-observation meeting is a flexible conversation intended that can occur in informal settings. A physical meeting between the observer and the observee is not required. The pre-observation arrangements can be made via email and inner-department correspondence. The pre-observation includes, but is not limited to, the date and time of the observation, sharing the class lesson plan, the role of the observer, and any specific classroom practices that the observee wishes to have critiqued. The observation occurs, and depending on the observer and observee, there may be a post-observation conversation directly following the observation. Frequently, there is no post-observation conversation until two classroom observations have been conducted. At which point, the post-observation conversation is synopsis oriented and intended to align the memory of events between the observer and observee.

Observation review. Following the observation cycle, the observer constructs a letter of review that addresses the observee's classroom teaching and general instructional practices. A meeting is once again scheduled between the observer and the observee to openly discuss the content of the letter. The design of this meeting and its ultimate impact on the language and content of the letter is held private between the observer and observee. If there is significant disagreement between the observer and observee, the observee may construct a rebuttal to the letter. When the letter of review and possible rebuttal are completed they are both delivered to

the respective chair and archived together in the faculty dossier. At this point, the faculty dossier is sent forward to departmental personnel committee.

Agricultural Technology. Agricultural Technology is a two-year Associate degree-granting program housed within the College of Agriculture. The program provides an applied degree for various agricultural related industries. The program serves a large regional student body. Students that complete the two-year program, in good standing, have the opportunity to continue enrollment as a four-year degree-seeking student. A faculty position in the Agricultural Technology program is an instructor ranked position with the primary responsibility of teaching. All contract renewal and promotion opportunities for Agricultural Technology faculty rely heavily on peer assessments of teaching. Contract renewal and promotion require the submission of a faculty dossier, that includes two letters of review that address an instructor's teaching.

Program practice, as established by a consensus of the faculty, requires that a letter of review only be composed after the completion of the accepted observation process/cycle. The observation process includes four stages: preliminary organization, the observation cycle, observation review, and final concluding organization.

Preliminary organization. Several months prior to contract renewal, the program chair will notify an instructor that it is time to begin the observation process. The program chair notifies the observee privately via email, and will also inform the program faculty during the bi-monthly faculty meeting. The observee then selects two colleagues of a higher rank to observe his/her classroom teaching. The observee privately and autonomously conducts the selection of observers, and notifies the program chair when observers have been selected. The program chair then ensures that both the observee and the observer have any and all required documentation and the program's observation guide/instrument.

The observation cycle. The observation cycle has three elements, the pre-observation meeting, the observation, and the post-observation meeting. The pre-observation meeting can either be an in-person meeting or it can take place through email correspondence. During this pre-observation time, the observee and observer will jointly select dates for the observation and the particular class to be observed. The observee is expected to provide the observer with a copy of the course syllabus, lesson plans and class handouts relevant to the day of the observation, and the role of the observer during the observation. The observation occurs according to the arrangements made by the two participants, and then a short post-observation meeting is conducted immediately following the observation. This post-observation meeting is optional. The observation cycle is repeated, and then letter of review is drafted.

Observation review. The observation review includes a meeting between the observee and observer to discuss the letter of review. The observer presents his/her commentary and assessment of the observee's teaching, and the two jointly determine the final content of the letter. The content of the letter is organized following the program's observation instrument. The letter is written collaboratively.

Concluding organization. The letter is delivered to the program chair and the observation cycle is considered complete. The program chair finalizes any accompanying documentation for the instructor's dossier, and then delivers the dossier to the department chair and the department's promotion and tenure committee. During the following faculty meeting, the program chair will announce that instructor has completed the observation process.

Theatre and Cinema. The department of Theatre and Cinema is housed in the university's School of the Arts. The department offers multiple undergraduate and graduate degree programs and serves a fairly large student body. The department is entirely composed of

tenure track faculty responsible for classroom teaching, scholarship, and annual public performance and exhibition. The observation process includes three loosely categorized stages: preliminary organization, the observation cycle, and concluding organization.

Preliminary organization. A department personnel committee oversees all contract renewal, and promotion and tenure, decisions for the department. The personnel committee is comprised of a rotating group of senior faculty. The committee reviews relevant tenure materials and qualifications during the second and fifth year of a faculty member's employment with the university. Promotion and tenure related judgments during the second and fifth year include the assessment of classroom teaching by peer observation.

The personnel committee encourages untenured faculty to arrange their own peer observation experience during their first year. First-year observations are completely autonomous. They are arranged and organized by the observee, and the department's personnel committee is not involved. The first year observations are intended to encourage pedagogical reflection, and to introduce and build familiarity with the observation experience. In contrast, the second and fifth-year observations are organized and conducted entirely at the pleasure of the department's personnel committee.

The observation cycle. The observation cycle, for the second and fifth-year observations, is wholly the discretion of the observer, a member of the personnel committee. The observer/committee member may or may not notify the observee when and in what class the observation will occur. Whether or not there is any pre-observation meeting or post-observation meeting is also at the discretion of the observer. The observee has little to no input or decision-making power for the second and fifth year observations.

Concluding organization. Following the second and fifth year observations, the observer composes a letter of review, which is submitted to the personnel committee. All letters of review are included in the faculty dossier.

The Five Fundamentals: Design

The design of a peer observation program is a documented plan that explains how the practice of peer observation contributes to a department's educational/teaching mission, and how a participant's peer observation experience will be structured. A peer observation design consists of the following four components:

Firstly, a statement of purpose is a rationale for why peer observation has been selected as a tool for the review of faculty, faculty express that the motivation to participate and personally invest in peer observation is linked to feelings of membership in a self-determined pedagogical community (Bell, 2001; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004). A carefully constructed statement of purpose underscores the self-governing nature of higher education in that members of the faculty actively contribute to their own assessment and evaluation. A statement of purpose may also serve as justification for future pedagogical development initiatives, such as department-wide pedagogical improvement plans (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Swinglehurst, Russel & Greenhalgh, 2008).

Secondly, objectives and outcomes entail an explanation constructed by the program designers that articulates both the department's pedagogical aspirations and the expected results of participation in peer observation. Faculty are keen to support and participate in peer observation when their individual efforts contribute to a larger-department wide effort raise pedagogical standards (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008;

Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Swinglehurst, Russel & Greenhalgh, 2008).

Thirdly, faculty responsibilities comprise an exhaustive list of specific requirements of faculty peer observation participants. Faculty express unease regarding the ambiguity in institutional expectations of professional performance (Bell, 2001; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004); therefore, it is necessary that specific expectations are known before participation and accordingly documented upon the completion/fulfillment of expectations. Subsequently, faculty offer greater reflective effort and trust in the developmental promise of peer observation when all requirements and responsibilities are known (Bell, 2001; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004).

Lastly, a detailed document management plan explains how a peer observation program is administered, monitored, and governed. A management plan offers a clear distribution of labor, and details the inclusion and boundaries of additional administrative paperwork. The use of a management plan lessens the apprehension felt by faculty that participation in peer observation will alter and disrupt research and service agendas (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005). A management plan should also include a program coordinator, a fellow faculty member charged with providing program guidance, resources, and monitoring the progress of participants (Bell, 2001; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004). A program coordinator not only eases the administration/management of a peer observation program, the inclusion of the role underscores the value placed in peer observation, by a department, as a meaningful pedagogical practice (Bell, 2001; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004).

English. The faculty of the English department has an informal, socially accepted, design for peer observation. It is a stout consensus about the overall purpose, function, and method for peer observation. Amy, a tenured faculty member with thirty-five years of service to the university, reflects on the department and its peer observation history by saying that, “as long as I remember there’s been a pretty comprehensive understanding of peer observation, clear expectations for it. It’s always been a part of the promotion and tenure process. It’s just been built into the system for a long time.” Bill, another senior faculty member and the associate chair for the department, describes the general practice of peer observation as being “very much bound by rules...I mean you may have a half dozen operating rules in the community that are understood, not always articulated.” Faculty in the English department possess a tacit knowledge for how peer observation works in their community, and consequently, there is no formal document or policy governing peer observation beyond the university’s requirements for promotion and tenure.

The absence of formal policy is not due to casual or inattentive governance. It is rather, an intentional characteristic of the English department’s peer observation program. Bill explains, that faculty believe that their peer observation program must be organic and responsive to the needs of faculty and that the purpose of peer observation be mutable and

moving in two directions, one towards the candidate and one towards the department, toward the candidate it can help provide, through the observation, some things that will make you a better classroom teacher. For the department, it ensures that we have quality in our classrooms.

Peer observation is discussed as a practice that benefits the individual and the community. Peer observation not only “moves in two directions” but possesses a tri-fold purpose

and function in the department. For the individual faculty member, the observee, peer observation is a tool for the evaluation and assessment of one's teaching. Jimmy, an advanced instructor in the English department, describes the purpose as "an opportunity for somebody to get an honest assessment of what's being done in the class. Hopefully a balanced assessment as to what they are doing well and what can be done better in the classroom." For Amy, peer observation underscores the department's collective educational mission and helps to break apart various boundaries of teaching.

Classrooms are such very private spaces and yet they address, fundamentally, issues what we all care about. So, just from the point of view from being mutually informative and nothing else, I mean even if observation had no value in an evaluation or whatever. I think as a community of teachers we need to be occasionally inside each other's classroom.

Lastly, peer observation has at its core a bureaucratic function. Peter reflects on peer observation, from his perspective as the chair of the English department, as a required part of the promotion and tenure practice of the university and that it "provides the department with a formal document that concerns your pedagogy, what you are actually doing in the classroom."

While the department had no formal policy on peer observation, as this study was being conducted, the English faculty were in dialogue to create a formal structure and a policy document. The anticipated document was to layout rationale, objectives, expectations, and methods of peer observation. Drafts of the document were provided for this study and it was included in the data analysis. The document echoes faculty belief that peer observation has a multifaceted purpose.

The primary goal of peer [observation] is improved teaching. It should represent one of several ways by which we share ideas and constructive suggestions...the secondary goal is to document the quality of the teaching we do, for various uses beneficial to the individual and to the department.

Despite the collective understanding that peer observation is beneficial for both the participant and the community/department, there are hints of disconnect between what is articulated and what is practiced. Amy reflects that

very often the only time people are really thinking about [peer observation], as in, when do we get our required peer reviews done...people are in and out of other people's classes for reasons of their own, but in terms of peer observation it is very much connected to promotion.

Some individual members of the faculty believe that the larger professorate and instructorate associate organized or formal peer observation with professional performance assessment. As a strong supporter of the formative merits of peer observation, Frank laments that this connection tends to overshadow peer observation's pedagogical function. "Faculty would probably talk about, and do peer observation more if it wasn't so linked to promotion and tenure. I think because it's so linked, people tend to view it more as an obstacle that has to be done". Bill's reflections on the letter of review, which follows the observation cycle, tend to echo Amy and Frank's comments about the employment related nature of peer observation. Bill feels that the letter of review is

in part is to congratulate people for a job well done. It's also to function as a shot across the bow, when people get their student evaluations, they may not read them at all. If

you're going through the contract renewal process and those letters say to do something, you better do them.

Bill believes that faculty identify the letter of review as influential, if not the central component, to the contract renewal process. He feels that faculty will correct and/or adjust their workplace behavior, specifically their instructional practices, in response to the letter, precisely for its connection to employment.

There is no formal position in the English department charged with the responsibility for coordinating the peer observation program. Currently, the position is shared by the chair and associate chair of the department, yet coordination is not a formal responsibility of these leadership positions. The position of coordinator is a feature of the program's flexible structure and can be assumed by any member of the faculty. The position is modestly recognized by the faculty as one of several positions of service to the department and departmental governance. Peter describes that he retained the role and responsibilities of coordinator while his formal role within the department changed over time "I was the chair of the department's personnel committee...and started [coordinating peer observation] for the professors, and then when I became department head, and I just kept doing it." While the program is not fully transparent, general information regarding the scheduling of observations and the number of peer observation participants is maintained on simple spreadsheet that is kept "on a shared drive that various administrators in the department have access to."

Procedures and responsibilities for peer observation participants, the observer and the observee, are extensive and time-consuming. Bill describes the process as being "manageable, but a commitment" and that the bulk of responsibility and labor is placed on the observer.

[Observers] are supposed to go and visit a class at least twice. They need to look at syllabi from all of the courses that the person teaches. They are to look at student evaluation forms going back at least five years. They need to look at an array of graded papers. Some [assignments] where the grade was pretty good, some that were in the middle and some that were not so great, so they get a notion of what the students are getting back from the teacher [the observee].

The expectations for peer observation participants are often delivered by word of mouth, through conversations between Bill or Peter and the various participants. Letters of review composed by previous observers are also frequently shared with newer participants, as a way of contextualizing the process.

Almost all of our letters tend to be long. They tend to have a fair amount of detail. It's as if people really want to prove to you they were there [and what they did]. They'll cover all the parts of the [observation] try to take a snapshot of it. (Bill)

Bill feels that the letters communicate the overall design to participants and function as a template for new observers. He feels that "some people think that to have a little bit of negativity in a review legitimizes it, rhetorically" and that, this point in particular, illustrates how previous letters influence the ongoing, year-to-year, process. Peter also feels that the letters serve a unique roll in conveying the peer observation design, specifically the end of the process. "Faculty [professors and instructors] know when they get they get their letter, that it's done."

The observation process falls into a pre-observation, observation, and post-observation format. The observer will inquire about the observee's preferred class time and day for observation, and together they will determine a suitable schedule. Bill explains that it is an accepted custom in the department for the observer to visit a class multiple times, to observe for

the duration of an entire instructional unit. Classes should be “visited in sequence. If it’s Tuesday/Thursday...a week or week and a half. Monday, Wednesday, Friday...a whole week so you can get a sense of continuity.” The pre-observation meeting is also intended to introduce the observer to the instructional arc of the class, and to the instructor’s/professor’s daily lesson.

The first thing I do is I get the syllabus and the assignments, and get myself oriented to what’s going on in the class. What’s happening now? What kinds of things might be going on...you’ve got to have an overall picture of the whole course, and you really get a sense too, from the syllabus, of the teacher’s voice. What they’re relaying to the students, and the way the goals have been articulated, and the rhythm of the semester as well. And for the most recent [class I observed], it was important for me to know before I went to the classroom that the professor was trying a somewhat different approach. (Amy)

For the observation, the observer collects whatever data he/she considers relevant. The department has no sanctioned observation instrument or protocol. Amy explains that during the observation, it is preferred that the observer adopt a passive role and not be an “active factor in the classroom...to be invisible enough, so you can really see what’s going on.”

A post-observation meeting that directly follows the observation is not required, yet faculty often find it useful for contextualizing the observation. Much like the pre-observation meeting, the post-observation meeting allows the observer some insight to the observee’s instructional decisions and behaviors. Amy describes her reasoning for conducting a particular post-observation meeting.

I met with the faculty member again asking for some additional material. He had read aloud in class. Students [were required] to create discussion questions each week, so he read some of those aloud, and I wanted to see a set of [discussion questions] so I could

see what he had chosen from and [how he used the discussion questions] to get where he was going. And I wanted to see some of the students' papers and how he had responded to them, and those kinds of things.

Following the observation cycle, the observer generates a letter of review, as required by the university. The letter is submitted to the department personnel committee and a copy of the letter is provided to the observee.

Agricultural Technology. The design of Agricultural Technology's peer observation program is strongly rooted in the program's origin and the process of its construction. Seven years before this research, the university created a system of seniority and rank for the university instructorate that includes Instructor, Advanced Instructor, and Senior Instructor. In order to be promoted through the ranks of the instructorate one must provide a dossier that includes evidence of high quality teaching, service, and research activities. The department of Agricultural Technology had no program of peer observation prior to the creation of the seniority system. The departmental faculty is primarily made-up of members of the university instructorate and created and implemented the program of peer observation to meet the newly established promotion requirements.

Alex was the department chair at the time the seniority system was created and continues to hold the department chair at the time of this research. The university's seniority system introduced various incentives for instructors to move up through the ranks. Two particular incentives were/are a salary increase and employment contracts are lengthened from a one-year term to multiple-year terms, depending on rank. Alex humorously reflects on how there were strong incentives to organize a useful peer observation program. "Everybody wanted to go [up for promotion] because there were benefits. If you go from instructor to advanced instructor your

contract will be three years, you will have a \$2,000 increase in your salary.” A salary increase and contract security are also incentives for successfully advancing from Advanced Instructor to Senior Instructor.

Alex and his colleagues were motivated by personal professional goals to create a program of peer observation. They also felt the need to balance their personal motivations with their desire to improve the instructional and pedagogical effectiveness of their department. Alex reflects, “for us, it was both, share experiences for improving teaching and at the same time complete the documentation and requirements for promotion.” As the chair of the department, it was important to Alex to

talk with other professors that know more than I know about [peer observation and to] collect some good readings, to have a good conceptualization, to know what peer observation means, and [to determine] the goals. [To consider] how we will organize and how we can utilize [peer observation] for improving teaching.

Faculty in the department are dedicated to teaching, and to the scholarship of teaching and learning. Annually the entire department faculty attend a national conference on agricultural teaching and pedagogy, participate in ongoing faculty development programs, and as Alex describes,

We talk about teaching a lot. We talk a lot because the faculty in this program are 100% teaching faculty. The mission for this [department] really is teaching, it’s not doing research or doing a lot of outreach. And...twice per year, at the beginning of each semester, we [have a faculty] retreat and focus on what we’ve done well, what we need to change...in equipment, in using technology, and evaluation, and in all these things.

Yet, while department faculty place great emphasis on the quality of teaching, there is a pervasive summative, evaluative side of peer observation. Patrick, a recently promoted advanced instructor, feels that the department's instructional and pedagogical aims are not part of the every-day operations of peer observation.

I would encourage a colleague to come and see my class if it were more formative to help me with difficult classes, students, or subjects...I'd love to say that we do this for the enjoyment of [teaching]...trying to expand what we are doing in our classroom. The fact is our time is pretty well taken up here and we stay busy. The real importance is generally because of some sort of promotion or evaluation or something that is required as part of something else.

The general design for the peer observation, such as objectives, procedures, and participant expectations have not been written into departmental policy. Many of the current faculty were present when the peer observation program was created and share a firm understanding of the various responsibilities and expectations of peer observation participants. As department chair, Alex coordinates the program and oversees the progress of its participants. His role as coordinator is minimal, he notifies instructors when they are eligible for promotion and that peer observation is a requirement for promotion. Yet, from this point forward, participants are entirely self-coordinating. Observees will notify Alex when they have made their selection of observer, and observers submit their final letter of review to Alex at the end of the peer observation cycle.

The faculty created, and accepted into common use, an observation protocol or instrument to be used by the observer. The instrument is intended to guide the observer through the observation. It highlights various teacher and instructional qualities that the department

considers relevant and important to its instructional and pedagogical aims. The instrument lists various items that span from body language and speaking voice, lesson plans, objectives, and student participation. The instrument also includes a set of summary questions intended to focus the observer's overall assessment of observee's teaching. David, a tenured professor for the department, with nearly forty years of college teaching, reflects that

The first time I used this [instrument] I thought "holy cow, what a mess"...[however] it did structure how I approached it. It is a bit redundant, some of the same stuff comes up again and again, and you are probably overkilling it a bit.

The department has no formal structure or policy for the observation process, however the observation instrument is laid-out in a pre-observation, observation, post-observation structure, and effectively guides the participants through this cycle. The observation instrument leads participants through the collection of pre-observation data. David describes the usefulness of the instrument. "[It reminds me to ask] for class material, so I have an idea of what the syllabus looks like...and that kind of prepped me before I went in and visited." The instrument can also guide participants in the collection of relevant data during the observation.

What I do is that I comment on the things that need a comment and otherwise if it is well done, I don't bother, but if there was a place I could make a suggestion, a short sentence was enough. Again, when I first saw [the instrument] I wasn't overjoyed, but it did structure what I did, and it gave me a little more detailed information than I would have remembered to write had I just written a paragraph (David).

Consequently, the instrument also structures the way that data are presented for the post-observation meeting and the subsequent letter of review. As a recently observed participant, Patrick believes that the instrument "is handy, it's useful to get the feedback in this format. It

organizes your feedback and helps you know how to use it.” However, he also points-out that the observation instrument does not offer the observee any security against observer biases.

If there’s some [professor] that just writes stuff up on the board and never turns his face to the class, I don’t want that guy evaluating me...we have a form [obs instrument] but we’re all going to interpret the form through our own experiences and way of teaching.

The observation instrument is, and was originally intended to be, a tool for the observer during the classroom observation, yet it clearly functions as map and/or set of guidelines for the entire observation process. Following the observation cycle the observer drafts a letter of review and submits the letter to Alex, the department chair and department personnel committee.

Theatre and Cinema. The department of Theatre and Cinema, at the time of this research, was experiencing a surge of growth due to the university’s effort to boost its various arts related programs. An influx of newly hired untenured junior faculty had caused the department to struggle with reconciling its peer observation policies with its peer observation practices. For example, the department of Theatre and Cinema maintains a departmental faculty handbook with several elements of the design fundamental. However, department administration and senior faculty, charged with a bulk of the department’s peer observation responsibilities, lack familiarity with their own design and policy for peer observation laid out in their handbook. Debbie, a senior member of the faculty, serves as the chair for both the department and the department’s personnel committee. Debbie earnestly declares that she has little knowledge of the history and nature of peer observation in the department.

I don’t know that [peer observation] wasn’t a requirement at some point along the way, or that it has just been perpetuated...I genuinely don’t know the answer to that. Other

[senior faculty] might know, but it's been going on as long as I've been here so if it was a requirement it started way back in the early 80s at least.

Consequently, untenured faculty receive little information about the peer observation process or receive information that conflicts with language in the department's faculty handbook, which includes a multi-paragraph section on the process and function of peer observation. It further describes expectations of participants and even provides guidelines for rebuttal by the observee. Below is an excerpt about peer observation from the Theatre and Cinema's handbook:

Peer [observations] of teaching are intended to serve two functions: to document teaching skills, and to help the faculty improve skills. Documenting teaching skills is essential to the Department in making a strong case at tenure time and to support nominations for College or University teaching awards (Faculty Handbook: Department of Theatre and Cinema, 2010, p. 19).

Despite the departmental policy that peer observation serves a dual purpose for pedagogical development and promotion and tenure decisions, there is a strong agreement among senior faculty that peer observation is chiefly aligned with promotion and tenure. Thomas, a long-standing member of the faculty, claims that peer observation, "is not used as a mechanism for improving somebody's teaching. It has been, and is, a mechanism for providing the personnel committee with information about a person's teaching capacity beyond the student perceptions of teaching scores". Ron, another senior member of the faculty and a member of the department's personnel committee, boldly disregards any notion of peer observation as a formative practice.

I think it's pretty simple. If you are not on a tenure track it's purely about contract renewal. If you are on a tenure track it's to grant you that ticket to receive tenure or

promotion. [Peer observation] is not because of care, but because it's an expectation...It's just one more piece of bureaucracy obviously. It's not really a fun thing to do. I don't take joy in it at all.

And Mary, a member of the Theatre faculty for just over thirty years, says that "what it is not being used for here...is helping people be better teachers". For much of the senior faculty, peer observation is simply an embedded part of officialdom.

The contradictory messages from senior faculty and the department's faculty handbook can cause peer observation to appear as a rather enigmatic practice. Junior faculty that turn to the department's faculty handbook for guidance on peer observation can develop erroneous expectations for their peer observation experiences as actual practice does not always align with, or even take into account, departmental policy. Betsy, an untenured member of the department that had recently participated in several peer observations, does not indicate any familiarity with the department's policy on peer observation. She states:

It would be helpful to understand what that person is evaluating. I think it would be helpful to know what they are looking at or looking for, and what is the purpose of that observation. Is it to teach me, because that's a different purpose than evaluation?

Betsy's experience with peer observation did not include a free-flowing stream of information between her, as the observee, and her observers. Neither Betsy nor her senior faculty observers expressed knowledge of, or adherence to, departmental policy or convention. It is clear that Betsy experienced peer observation without a well-articulated design. Betsy expresses some frustration about her lack of knowledge of the process and paradoxically states that she would detail somewhere...that somebody appointed by the personnel committee will come into your class once a semester or twice a semester or once a year or whenever. I

think it would be helpful to say how many people are going to and then where, what, the how.

The department's faculty handbook briefly describes a few of the items that Betsy is unfamiliar with, such as when observations are to be conducted, and by whom.

During the pre-tenured faculty member's first year, there occurs an informal process in which a faculty member chosen in consultation with the Department Head evaluates him or her...in the second, and fifth years the Department's Personnel Committee is responsible for coordinating these peer evaluations of teaching (Faculty Handbook: Department of Theatre and Cinema, 2010, p. 19).

The department's faculty handbook also provides some post-observation guidelines and optional recourse for the observee. "Faculty who are evaluated receive copies of the evaluation and have the right to meet with the committee to discuss the evaluation and to include in their file any response they wish to make to the evaluation" (Faculty Handbook: Department of Theatre and Cinema, 2010, p. 20). The general lack of knowledge and adherence to policy, or departmental custom, for Betsy's post-observation experiences created some confusion. "There have been times that I've gotten people's letters and times I haven't. I don't even know what the result of those letters is. [I don't know] what I can see, or what I can't see." Once again, senior faculty are not confident in their own knowledge of the process. As Thomas expresses,

As far as I know [the post observation letter] is given to the personnel committee, and I don't know after that. I've had junior faculty come back to me after I sat in a class and asked me directly, and you know I can't remember right now whether it's meant to be a confidential statement or if it can be shared. I don't remember. I don't know that it's always shared. I think it's not in fact.

It should be noted that it is unclear what positive benefits and/or departmental goodwill would have emerged from the strict adherence to, or citation of, departmental policy or routine practice. However, it is clear that a program of peer observation can be well structured and adopted into departmental policy, yet suffer in its implementation. A program of peer observation can align with scholarly dictates and not produce edifying results, that without a collective understanding for its implementation, peer observation can produce considerable frustration and anxiety. As Betsy concludes, “I felt that I was OK for the last two years, but this experience has put me off balance in a big way.”

Design – Across the departments

What emerges from across all three departments is that each department, in this study, uses some form of written document – letters from previous observers, observation protocol, and faculty handbook – to communicate the goals and objectives, the expectations of participants, and the outcomes/results of participation. Essentially, a documented design for peer observation is present in each department, as the participant identification survey suggested. For English and Agricultural Technology, these two departments rely on a written medium to loosely direct observers and observees through the process. It is important to note, that the letters and the observation protocol are not governing documents, as they are not departmental policy. Rather, they are documents relevant to and used in the peer observation process - they guide, not govern the participants. The letters and the observation protocol are not perceived as overly taxing by the faculty, nor does the faculty view them as administrative intrusion. The impact of a guiding document is underscored by the Theatre department’s lack of knowledge and use of the department’s own faculty handbook, and the consequent anxiety and frustration illustrated by Betsy’s observation experience.

Additionally, the faculty handbook for the Theatre and Cinema department, the English department's own policy draft for peer observation, and the observation protocol created and used by Agricultural Technology; affirm the notion that peer observation is or can be used as a tool for pedagogical improvement. These documents prioritize the relatively intangible and optimistic role that peer observation plays among the community of teachers. Yet, the language of the faculty indicates that such positive ascriptions are entirely secondary to peer observation's function as a workplace and job performance assessment. The individual impact of financial and occupational rewards and/or punishments connected to peer observation are the chief motivation and focus for those participating in these peer observation programs.

The Five Fundamentals: Community

Peer observation moves toward a pedagogically meaningful experience for faculty when participants and program stakeholders regularly come together as a community of peers (Kohut, Burnap, & Yon, 2007; Martin & Double, 1998; Yon, Burnap & Kohut, 2002). Peer observation participants need regular, planned and unplanned opportunities, to openly discuss and examine their teaching and the teaching of colleagues (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron 2009; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005). The recurrent opportunity for meeting and discussion helps to minimize the assumed and/or real power distance between observers and observees (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008). Peer observation participants also become more readily accepting and forthcoming with critique and suggestion and develop a strong commitment to the overall academic program (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005). On the whole, recurrent meetings of peer observation participants and program stakeholders strengthen the community's desire to broaden its pedagogical knowledge (Ackerman, Gross, & Vigneron, 2009; Hammersley-Fletcher &

Orsmond, 2005; Hatzipanogos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Martin & Double, 1998; Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008). The following section describes how community influences both positive and negative peer observation experiences.

English. The English department is a large faculty divided into a professoriate and an instructorate. Faculty have various responsibilities and expectations related to their area of expertise, seniority, and/or any leadership or service position they may hold for the department or the larger university. It is a department with a wide range of uniquely talented individuals, and yet the department is closely bound by a collective sense of commitment to teaching. Department faculty will often substitute for one another in the case of absence or guest lecture for colleagues teaching interrelated courses and topics. For Amy this community of teachers also fosters a sense of commitment toward peer observation. She says, “I think [peer observation] is a good thing. I think both parties learn something from it, and I think that we have an obligation to know and to share what we do in our classrooms.” Peer observation underscores the act of teaching as a community-wide effort. Peer observation and the department’s commitment to teaching function symbiotically. Amy continues:

We talk about teaching...even having conversations among faculty about [what] learning outcomes should be, and about what we want to see archived in the [student electronic portfolios]. That along with occasionally being inside a classroom that does create a culture that values teaching.

The practice of supporting one another’s classroom, substituting, and guest lecturing sustains a momentum for the department’s courses and curriculum and breaks up the privacy of a classroom. The classroom is understood as a public space, which helps diminish the feelings of

intrusion that are sometimes fostered by peer observation (Blackmore, 2005; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Martin & Double, 1998).

The English department not only maintains a collective notion of responsibility toward teaching, but also articulates its teaching obligation through intentional programming and governance. Amy describes the more casual programming by the English department in this way “We have department coffees, and workshops, and things like that that help the conversation.” These spaces provide a comfortable platform for various conversations, let alone pedagogically oriented conversations. Within the more formal governance structure, the English department created and installed an Instructors Concerns committee to respond to pedagogical issues brought to light by the department’s instructorate. The instructorate is a larger body of teaching faculty than the professoriate, and it carries a greater responsibility for teaching within the department. Bill, the associate chair of the department, explains, “In my committee, which is, Instructor Concerns, we talk all the time about [peer observation]. On instructor concerns we’re more concerned with the teaching.” The English department holds multiple streams of a broad and ongoing pedagogical conversation, for which peer observation is simply one component. The department’s community approach towards instruction, along with both formal and informal spaces for pedagogical dialogue, helps to develop trust and care among colleagues and level hierarchy. As Bill explains,

When I know the observee is panicked or anxious, it makes me want to assure them more. I don’t want them to feel insecure. I don’t want them to feel as if their shoulders are being looked over, or being scrutinized, that they might lose their job. We don’t want that. You don’t want a fearful teacher in the classroom by any means.

Agricultural Technology. The university is compelled, by its land-grant status, to respond to the agricultural needs of the state and surrounding local communities. A large portion of Agricultural Technology's student body is either concurrently, or upon degree completion, employed in local agricultural industries. The department's closely linked responsibility to community agribusiness necessitates the immediate application of skilled practice on the part of students. Thus, the primary responsibility of the Agricultural Technology faculty is teaching.

Alex explains that the priority placed on teaching by the university dictates that the practice of teaching be an intentional and regularly included topic in departmental business "we talk about teaching a lot, we focus on teaching...and almost in every faculty meeting – this is the way how we start a meeting – 'any issue with the students'...and then, 'okay, any good or bad experiences in our teaching'." David, who has held multiple faculty and administrative positions throughout his career, also speaks to the department's unique emphasis on student needs and teaching.

I've never been in a place, university setting or a high school setting, where the faculty start-off by saying "who's having trouble and who do we need to prop-up and who's not getting to class? That I really think sets the tone for this [department].

The formal structure and space of the department faculty meeting underscores the importance of teaching. Teaching is a practice in which all Agricultural Technology faculty participate, and the regular emphasis on teaching focuses the work and goals of individual faculty member toward a singular end. Patrick states,

There is very little hierarchical structure to this department. The only hierarchy is what's needed to help the department run efficiently...we open all our meetings with

conversations on students and their well-being. We [the faculty] meet every two weeks and the first order of business is ‘are there any students that are having problems?’

Patrick continues to state that he feels that the department’s commitment to student development and its emphasis on pedagogy and instruction are both formally and informally supported, via the distribution of physical space. “We’re all in the same building; we all advise students...we have an informal structure to talk about [instructional] strategies and students with proximity”. He goes on to describe the formal nature of pedagogical discussions: “And we have a formal structure in meetings and faculty study groups”. The strong focus on the practice of teaching supports, and increases, the desire to broaden pedagogical knowledge. David explains:

Our department is closely aligned with [national conference/organization] and all of our faculty are paid [travel expenses/funding] to go to a three day teacher improvement conference. So we’re reaching-out on a professional level to look at teaching improvement. We don’t have multiple events like that, but we do have an annual event where teaching-centered work is what we do.

David describes how the department uses professional development funds provided by university programs to support faculty improvement of teaching: “And, we get funding from CIDER’s faculty study groups [Center for Instructional Development and Educational Research], that we turn around and put into the trip as well”.

Through both formal and informal structures, the department of Agricultural Technology has a robust community of teachers. The faculty/professional community is cultivated as response to the department’s educational mission, and its link to the greater agricultural community. The department’s sense of community is also, supported by a variety of professional and university organizations.

Theatre and Cinema. The Theatre and Cinema faculty interviewed for this study were tenure-track faculty responsible for scholarship, performance, the direction and production of student performances, and teaching undergraduate and graduate students. While the work of the faculty consists of a sizable commitment of instructional time spent with students, conversations regarding teaching and pedagogy do not characterize the formal or informal gatherings of faculty. A community of peers or colleagues may be present in a variety of manifestations, but a community focused on peer observation and the practice of teaching was not evident. As Thomas describes his typical experience when conducting observation, as an observer,

I do have a bit of an agenda going in, and the agenda usually is support of colleagues.

You know, quite often I have taught with them and, I can't ever really remember having had an axe to grind with a colleague; so, I have made suggestions about, you know, particularly in their early years.

Thomas has no ill-will toward his colleagues, he will offer instructional suggestions if he feels inspired to do so, yet for Thomas, peer observation is simply the process that produces a letter of review. It is important for Thomas to demonstrate professional support to his colleagues. Ron adds to Thomas' sentiment, as he feels that peer observation is meant to be a professional evaluation. Ron sees that criticism of an observee's instruction can be pedagogically detrimental.

Making an objective observation of that person is destructive to their confidence that you're trying to build, you know what I mean, and if you offer criticism, you know, to anyone, but to a colleague or something like that, then you limit their self-conscientiousness because all of a sudden they're worried about you or they're worried about themselves or they're worried about something else.

Collectively, Theatre and Cinema faculty understand the purpose of peer observation as evaluation rather than a formative critique. Peer observation is not framed as a practice or vehicle employed for pedagogical discussion or development. Thomas continues, “I really try to do an honest observation but what I’m really looking for is a way to compose a letter that would be in support of their retention or their tenure or something like that.” Thomas feels that his role as a supportive colleague is to draft a positive letter of review. Once again, Ron echoes Thomas’ motivation as an observer, “the peer observation is about writing a letter, you know, going to the class and writing a letter is something, but the only reason I do it is because the Personnel Committee demands that I do it.” While Ron and Thomas demonstrate support for their colleagues, peer observation is clearly recognized as a required element of professional advancement and contract renewal. Lastly, Thomas offers his feelings on the conflict between the bureaucratic, and negative, nature of peer observation, and its positive qualities.

I guess the thing that’s weird is how much you resent having to do official things...because that’s not the candy of the job, but then by having to do them, sometimes they’re, you know, they’re good for you...it’s just interesting to find out what other people are doing, and I think that may be the advantage of a peer observation. That it gives you a reason to go into a colleague’s classroom and see what they do.

Community – Across the Departments

It’s clear that for the three departments studied, the value and function of peer observation is linked to the departmental faculty community. Both English and Agricultural Technology have strong community aims to develop pedagogy across the department. Both departments maintain an ongoing pedagogically centered conversation. Accordingly, peer observation is understood as a part or small piece of the larger goal and mission of the

department. Conversely, the faculty of Theatre and Cinema frame peer observation as an element of career advancement. Members of the faculty enter into the peer observation experience nearly void of pedagogical concern. How individual faculty from each of these departments approach the practice of peer observation, and how the members of the faculty comprehend and define the purpose of peer observation is mirrored by the larger department community.

The Five Fundamentals: Control

A peer observation program is pedagogically valuable in proportion to the amount of control its participants have in shaping their peer observation experience (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Ackerman, Gross, & Vigneron; 2009; Bell, 2001; Yon, Burnap & Kohut, 2002). On a departmental level, a peer observation program with a democratic, self-governing, structure provides faculty with a sense of professional safety and diminishes the appearance of and/or actual administrative intrusion (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009). Faculty control over the peer observation process, and the program's over-all structure, offers faculty/participants the personal and professional ease to reflect on their peer observation experience – the critical element for pedagogical improvement (Donnelly, 2007; Hammersly-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005).

On the individual level, characteristics of control can be, but are not limited to, participants' control over a) the time and place of observation, b) the type of data collected and collection method, c) how meaning is attributed to the data, and d) the final storage and/or destruction of and/or the accessibility to the peer observation data (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Ackerman, Gross, & Vigneron; 2009; Bell, 2001; Yon, Burnap & Kohut, 2002).

English. Over the last several years, the English department has made great efforts to democratize the peer observation program. The department has worked to shift much of the control of the peer observation experience from departmental leadership to the peer observation participants. Frank remembers that during the early years of his service to the university, control of the observation process was completely in the hands of senior faculty, “They would say, ‘I’m going to show up on this day and observe.’ Wow! Talk about creating tension, stress!” Frank believed that the stress and anxiety of parachute observations was unnecessary, and clouded any data regarding the quality of the observee’s teaching. Frank took it upon himself to give the observee more control of their observation experience, “So I [began to] say, ‘when would you like for me to come [and observe]?’ So I know that that person can teach to his or her strengths. So I see the person on a potentially really good day.” Frank’s simple question, that hands-over some of the decision-making power to the observee, influenced his peers to do the same. Amy followed suit and began asking her observees for their preferred observation times.

I’ve had people be very honest with me and say “I prefer that you don’t come during this block, because this is something I’ve never taught before, and I don’t know how it’s going to go, or this is material that is fairly dry, but it has to be done in this course. So they’ve been up front saying that this is when I would like for you to come. It’s worked out.

Frank’s tiny seed of influence has grown into the department’s current observer-centric practice. Bill explains that one of the motivating factors for establishing a strong observer role was to communicate the value of faculty autonomy to junior faculty.

Autonomy is really important. I think everybody probably has a slightly different version of what that means to them...to [the English department] it is, ‘you’re not going to tell

me what to do, you're going to observe me, you're going to advise me, but you're not going to push me around.'

Bill feels that peer observation can be perceived as strictly an administrative exercise and can alter the dynamic within a classroom.

Everybody in the room senses something different when there is a visitor there, and faculty can be feisty and defensive. There is always this perceived tension, whether it's there or not, between faculty and administration. Teachers think, why doesn't the administration just leave me alone and let me do my job.

For Bill, observer-centric peer observation helps to alleviate the intrusiveness of the overall peer observation experience, felt by the observee. The observer-centric practice is intended to moderate any administrative work required of the observee, so to allow the observee to focus on the classroom observation experience. Bill rationalizes that this practice strikes a balance between the work-place pressure felt by the observer and the observee, and describes many of the worries that observee's experience.

You want it to be a day where everybody shows up. You want it to be a day when they've done the reading well...you worry about silences or long silences. You worry about a class where the timing is off. Where the goal you were heading for you never quite got to, those sorts of things. And I also think you worry about your own comforts. You want to be yourself in the class and you always are with your own students when it's just you.

The observer-centric practice carries over to the post observation meeting. A post observation meeting can generate significant unease for an observee. It is a time of professional critique and the observer should take care to provide feedback in a way that is helpful and administratively

useful. Frank describes how he approaches the post observation meeting and the subsequent letter of review.

The model that I use is if I notice something, I first acknowledge this is my point of view, I sit down with the person and talk about the issues, the positive issues and then I talk about negative issues. I then draft a letter and try and allude to [negatives] or say if it's something negative because the department chair wants to know the truth, but I don't go into details about this, because I know there are going to be other eyes seeing this document. So I show a draft to the [observee] first...[and say], 'is there anything you object to in this letter?'

The faculty and administration of the English department take great strides to provide observees with a sense of control during their peer observation experience. The faculty believe that their observer-centric practice communicates the value of instructional autonomy and the value of an observee's experience. In the English department, it is the responsibility of the observer to fully understand the observee's instructional style, course objectives, and grading principles. And to also, allow for the observee's input and opinion concerning the final letter of review. However, as mentioned earlier, a dissonant thread exists regarding the connection between peer observation and professional performance assessment and contract renewal. The faculty's careful attention to observee's experience is ultimately expressed through positive written assessments, the letter of review. Yet, some members of the faculty worry that the connection between peer observation and employment inhibits useful pedagogical critique. Bill feels that the letter of review becomes a clouded assessment.

It's not just simply for statement of appreciation. I think that unfortunately it becomes that because people say 'I don't want to say anything bad about my colleague'.

Especially, because I know the person is coming for tenure or promotion or award, so I'm going to write nothing but a positive letter.

Peter agrees with Bill, that peer observation is limited by its connection to professional assessment, yet he feels that it is a necessary aspect of the university's system of shared governance, and that peer observation is the "kind of assessment in this day and age that people object to the least."

Agricultural Technology. The Agricultural faculty rely on Alex, the department chair, to stay aware of university business and policy related to promotion and tenure. At the beginning of each academic year, Alex receives notification from the academic dean as to which instructors are eligible for promotion and advancement. He notifies those instructors and reminds them that peer observation is a required component of their promotion materials, and offers his assistance with any business related to their promotion dossier. Alex's involvement with an instructor's promotion process is minimal and rarely progresses past this point. He simply notifies the instructor, the observee, and then manages the initial correspondence between the observee and the observer. Alex requests a list of possible observers from the observee, "I organize it...but I don't assign. I ask them, okay you'll be up for promotion this year, would you have any preference for who visits you." At this point, the observation process becomes self-directing. The observee and the observer control the entire process through their own negotiations.

As mentioned earlier, the Agricultural faculty view teaching as the primary responsibility of an instructor. The high value placed on teaching influences how participants approach peer observation. Patrick, who at the time of this research project had recently gone through the observation process, feels that the value placed on teaching compels observation participants to strike a unique balance between pedagogical usefulness and performance appraisal. For Patrick,

pedagogical usefulness “depends on the qualifications of that person. Is this someone that is well regarded as a teacher? Can they give techniques and advice that I would be willing and able to use.” For Patrick, as an observee, pedagogical and/or instructional alignment between the observee and observer is needed to ensure that peer observation is a useful and formative practice. Alignment between the two participants is also important for the performance appraisal component of peer observation. Patrick feels that observees choose observers, not only for their helpful pedagogical and instructional critique, but also for the increased likelihood of a positive assessment. “If there’s some [professor] that just writes stuff up on the board and never turns his face to the class, I don’t want that guy evaluating me.” Patrick, however, laments that the dichotomous nature of peer observation stifles collegiality, and fosters hesitancy among faculty to use peer observation as a means toward pedagogical improvement and community building. “I would encourage a colleague to come and see my class if it were more formative to help me with difficult classes, students, or subjects.” The Agricultural Technology faculty believe that pedagogical and instructional improvement often requires one to reflect-on or confront practices that are not received well by students. That unrefined lesson plans or a new approach toward specific content can benefit from collaborative teaching and analysis. However, as Patrick continues, that as an observee

You’re going to self-select those days where you know you got good, interesting, or fun things that are going to help you have a good day on that evaluation day. You’re going to self-select and schedule [the observation] for that day. Why wouldn’t you?

The self-regulating, or participant-regulating, observation process is one illustration of the control fundamental, wherein individual participants maintain control of the process. It is also important to highlight that the process was designed and adopted by faculty consensus, and that

the process requires participants to move through observation cycle twice. For Patrick, and other members of the Agricultural Technology faculty, multiple observations account for, and guard against, unusual occurrences or events that can disrupt teaching/instructional performance.

Patrick describes one such event.

David [the observer] walked in on what was historically one of the worst mornings I've ever faced, and then another class where I thought things went very well. The first class that David observed, I came in late. Before class, in my office, I had a student with a very serious personal issue. I had 50 students in a classroom, but they just had to wait...so then [for that class] you do things and you make adjustments, and that's why it's a very good idea for the same person to [observe] twice.

In short, multiple observations provide a sense of insurance against one-time, or singularly occurring, anomalous events.

Theatre and Cinema. The first year for a junior member of the Theatre and Cinema faculty is largely a year of exploration, introduction, and orientation. Senior faculty and department administration hold a variety of teaching and performance expectations for their new colleagues. They feel that peer observation is one way to communicate these expectations to the junior faculty. For several years prior to this research project, the department chair and the department's senior faculty have encouraged new faculty to seek-out and arrange multiple peer observation experiences during their first year. As mentioned earlier, at the time of this research, Betsy had recently compiled her faculty dossier and tenure materials, and had recently submitted these to the department personnel committee. Betsy's fresh, and to some degree, raw, peer observation experiences contributed significantly to the descriptive profile of the Theatre and Cinema's peer observation program.

Betsy spoke extensively about her peer observation experiences, specifically contrasting her first-year and fifth-year observations. For Betsy, considerable emotional turmoil and workplace/professional uncertainty stemmed from the differences between first and fifth year observations. Betsy's first year observations were self-directed and intended to serve as collaborative and formative pedagogical experiences. "I'm always open to learning. It is my own personal curiosity. I'd always go to the person afterwards, and say 'do you have any feedback for me, is there anything you think I should work on?'" Betsy also felt that her first-year observations provided an opportunity to build relationships with her departmental colleagues. "We talked, we had coffee...and I look at this as a teaching opportunity. Okay, let's be transparent, and let's put it out there. I am a teacher at heart, and pedagogy is what I do. I like feedback." The peer observation experience opened an avenue for conversation about departmental culture and responsibilities, as well as pedagogical concerns. Overall, Betsy found the first-year observations to be positive experiences for herself and the larger, departmental pedagogical community.

Betsy's experience with her fifth-year observations changed dramatically. The department's personnel committee organizes second and fifth-year observations. Observations are scheduled at the convenience of the observer, not the observee, and very little communication about the observations pass between the participants. Details about the observations such as, where, when, and how many observations are to occur were not discussed with Betsy during her fifth-year. The austere, top-down, nature of these observations unbalanced Betsy's familiarity and confidence with peer observation.

There is definitely a sense that so much rides on that class that they observe. Somebody comes into my class, and it feels like I've done this, I've done this forever right? And

then it has that added thing to it, which shifts the whole process; they're not just watching, stepping in on a class and watching it. It's a performance. It's performance for [the observer], that's kind of an unacknowledged thing...I don't know how much weight this [peer observation] has in the tenure process.

For Betsy, peer observation shifted from a collaborative and formative process, to an evaluative performance review, drenched with tenure related implications. Betsy's fifth-year included multiple observations, by multiple observers, and each observer followed a slightly different operating protocol.

This past year, [observers] came into my class in the fall, toward the end of the semester, [two observers] came in on the same day, they sat in on the same class. [One observer] wrote a letter and he copied me on it, and it was very complimentary and also talked about my growth as a teacher. [The second observer], I just got an email from her two weeks ago saying, 'I need to come into your class again'.

In Betsy's experience, there was no identifiable pattern or consistent observation protocol. She worked her second and fifth year in a regular state of apprehension, expecting an observation at any time/day. The mixture of observation procedures rendered Betsy's experience confusing and unclear.

I find it really strange because [the first observer] wrote a letter based on one class, and for some reason [the second observer] is back in my class. I don't even know if [he/she] wrote a letter based on the first class at all. I don't know what's going on!

Betsy's frustration and concern at her inability to control the observation experience led her to unsavory conclusions. She felt that some senior observers/colleagues used the fifth-year observations to communicate their position of seniority, "to have their egos stroked" and as "a

territory thing” Betsy interpreted these parachute observations as attempts, by her senior colleagues to test her pedagogical resolve. “This is that point in the course of the class you're working to finish-up; somebody can come in, but I can't tailor the class for [the observer]. “Tailoring” the class, or controlling the instruction, assignments, and general flow of the class being observed is reiterated by faculty in this study as an essential aspect of control. Had Betsy known when her observations were scheduled, she would have tailored her teaching, as she notes, “so people can see what I want them to see.” Whatever the motivation of Betsy's colleagues, it is clear that Betsy's lack of control cast an adversarial light onto the peer observation process. Interestingly, Ron gave little mention of the parachute style of second and fifth year observations, yet he voiced a similar perception that peer observation might take-on a disruptive role.

It's a little bit like the difficulty of teaching a performance art. I think the grading system is a bit inimical to that. What I'm trying to do is create some confidence so the students make some artistic choices. And then the process of making an objective observation of that person is destructive to their confidence that you're trying to build, and if you offer criticism, to a colleague or something like that, all of a sudden they're worried about you or they're worried about themselves or they're worried about something else.

For Ron, peer observation can actually pollute collegiality and mentorship and hinder pedagogical development. Both Ron and Betsy see peer observation as having a detrimental impact on classroom teaching, yet neither fully articulates that observee agency is linked to their interpretations. Regrettably, Betsy's experience with unannounced and uncontrolled parachute observations have not been positive. She concludes,

When [the observers] have come in, it's been four times I think; it has been a difficult situation for me. I have gotten incredibly nervous. The classes that I taught those days were horrible. I am a good teacher, but they were some of my worst classes. This felt like another 'what the fuck is going on moment?'

Control – Across the departments

The matter of control is a noteworthy theme found throughout the scholarly work on peer observation (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Ackerman, Gross, & Vigneron; 2009; Bell, 2001; Yon, Burnap & Kohut, 2002). Control, as defined by the literature, spans across a spectrum from the individual participant to a cadre of self-governing participants. The faculty of the English and Agricultural Technology departments have lowered apprehensions among participants by intentionally distributing control of the observation process to its immediate participants, the observer and observee. In the department of Theatre and Cinema, faculty have been blind to the anxiety and fear generated by a lack of control. The contrast suggests that participant control impacts the collegial nature of a peer observation program.

The Five Fundamentals: Training

Three concerns commonly expressed by faculty are (a) is peer observation a valid practice for pedagogical assessment/development, (b) what are reliable methods or ways-of-doing peer observation, and (c) who among the faculty are qualified to conduct observations (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009; Blackwell & McLean, 1996; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Martin & Double, 1998)? An intentional and comprehensive introduction and/or training session for peer observation can effectively eliminate any anxiety and/or skepticism associated with the aforementioned concerns (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Martin & Double, 1998). Carefully

planned and organized training should address current themes in peer observation research, methods/practices of peer observation, and relevant institutional policies related to employee performance appraisal (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Martin & Double, 1998). Also, training that specifically focuses on data collection procedures guard against unqualified observers and/or observers being politically biased in their data collection (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009; Blackwell & McLean, 1996, Courneya, Pratt, & Collins, 2007). Training must also focus on how faculty make meaning and find usefulness of data collected, and should introduce reflective practices for the organized analysis and deconstruction of the observation experience (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004).

English. Frank initiated a more collaborative and personable method of peer observation, several years prior to this research. His influence encouraged the faculty of the English department to shift the operational burden of peer observation toward the observer, and to incorporate the observee's voice and needs into the overall practice of peer observation. Frank's own experience, as junior faculty, with unannounced, stressful, peer observation encouraged him to conduct peer observation as a more mutual and shared practice. Frank's efforts were successful at influencing the way English faculty practice peer observation, yet he continues to wrestle with the stunted collective conversation about peer observation. For Frank, an ongoing conversation within the English faculty, about peer observation, is essential for passing-along the community held and agreed upon practice. Yet in this regard, little has changed. "I think it is the same as 20 years ago. As new faculty come in, they are told this is going to happen, but this is the only time when [peer observation] gets discussed." Frank believes that for junior faculty, peer observation looms above them as a mysterious experience. He feels that "Faculty don't talk

about the process because it is so entrenched” and that the English department should make a greater effort to hold intentional discussions about peer observation.

The English department has no formal method for disseminating information about peer observation or about the responsibilities of peer observation participants. Instead, the department relies on Bill and Peter to guide observers through the observation experience. Bill explains, “the first time somebody ever observes, I would sit down with them. Nobody is ever going to [observe] if they have not been observed themselves.” One-on-one conversations, between the chair (Peter), or associate chair (Bill), and the participants, function as a subtle and quiet form of training. Bill believes that by having experienced peer observation as an observee, the newly tapped observer will generally “have a sense of what all goes into it.” Bill and Peter use the one-on-one conversations to communicate the department’s expectations for the observer, the accepted protocol for carrying-out the observation and the expectations for the letter of review. In particular, Bill feels that the one-on-one training conversations provide him with an accurate sense of faculty mood and disposition toward peer observation “Some people really like conducting peer reviews. Some are reluctant, but they know they will be asked at some point.” The training conversations help Bill coordinate the program, to maintain healthy relationships between participants and balance participants contributions to peer observation. It’s important for Bill that he and Peter delegate the needs and responsibilities of peer observation fairly. As Bill says plainly, “you just can’t have the same people doing it all the time.”

Overall, the faculty of the English department feel that the training conversations are effective and useful. The one-on-one nature of the training gives the act of peer observation an appropriate sense of importance, and members of both the professoriate and the instructorate, express their confidence in Bill and Peter’s leadership. As Jimmy recalls,

When I needed a peer review done I know the associate chair spoke with me at length as to what that entails, we had spoken individually about that. I don't know if we have discussed it as a large group.

However, for Jimmy, the one-on-one training conversations also cloak peer observation with a sense of mystery and encourage furtive chats among faculty.

I think what people typically do the very first time [they observe] is ask a colleague "how did you do this"? What are the pitfalls of mastering this? How can I keep my job after this? How can a person still like me after this?

The lack of open community conversation underscores the seriousness of peer observation, as a workplace, professional evaluation, and yet the conspicuous absence of conversation enhances the fear of wrongly evaluating a colleague. With some irritation in his voice, Jimmy exclaims that the department should hold "a workshop or have some handouts available or some kind of document that people can look at."

Nonetheless, Amy provides her own balanced perspective on various models for training faculty for and about peer observation.

[Training] workshops or instruction would be valuable, but it's like everything else, it is a time commitment that might be difficult. I think it's a good idea, but honestly I don't know whether I would be one of those to show up.

Agricultural Technology. Agricultural Technology has neither a formal method for training peer observation participants nor does it have an informal practice that conveys the responsibilities and obligations for peer observation. Yet, it would not be faithful to state that training was simply absent from the department's peer observation program. More accurately, the program is governed by faculty consensus, which they have not yet established regarding

training. The department/faculty is best described as locked in continual deliberation. Mark's question, "what is the function of the evaluation?" summarizes the underlying cause for lack of consensus. The faculty does not reject the concept or value of training for peer observation; they are however, skeptical of how, and if, training might influence the formative and summative essence of peer observation. David stresses,

I don't fault the idea, the question is if [training] can be simple and intuitive...if it gets to be one of those deals where you have a clip board and you're scoring things then you lose track of what's going on, you're spending all of your time looking at the individual components and you never see the whole show.

Faculty believe that training could potentially transform peer observation into a bureaucratic function, an equivalent to wearing pedagogical blinders. As a department that places great value on the practice of teaching, the faculty struggle-over how to appropriately and practically implement training. Mark continues, "if you were really trying to do a more formative [observation] then you would want a reflective piece...where the goal is not to put a check in the box, but to expand teaching." The faculty emphasize that training should guide participants toward a formative peer observation experience, and also serve a summative, performance appraisal end. David believes that, to accomplish this, training must be closely connected to the department's peer observation process, "there would really be value to training but it needs to be done in a form that is [relevant], maybe addressing the instrument that we are using as opposed to a global [view of the classroom]."

The faculty express some doubt whether or not the department will come to consensus. That self-designed or custom-designed training for peer observation is time and labor exhaustive.

Alternatively, they would presume any formal training offered through a university-wide platform to be irrelevant or inapplicable. David summarizes,

There is a whole science of not only teaching but of evaluating teaching, which practically none of us ever had...and if we did have it, it was one of those things we went to because we had to and we sat there waiting to get done.

He pithily adds, “that’s the biggest problem with training.”

Theatre and Cinema. Theatre and Cinema has no intentional practice or conversation about peer observation. The department exercises no procedure for the dissemination of peer observation policy, protocol, or purpose. As previously mentioned, peer observation is strictly related to professional advancement/assessment and limited only to a summative function. David recalls his participation in peer observation, in either the roll of observee or observer, “I don’t remember ever being told anything...the only time I can remember having my teaching observed was when I was going up for tenure. That’s been a lot of years ago now.”

While there is no intentional effort by the department or its members to train colleagues for peer observation, it is clear that the absence of training is no less significant than a description of a robust culture of training. The absence of training has motivated some faculty to seek-out methods and techniques for peer observation independently.

Ron and Mary have both served several appointments to the department personnel committee. As members of the committee, they were charged with conducting multiple peer observations for the department. Ron and Mary, individually, began self-guided study or self-training for peer observation, in response to their service on the personnel committee. Ron plainly states, “I was put on the promotion and tenure committee...that’s what set me on kind of my own training, on how I want to do this.” Ron’s motivations for improving his own peer

observation knowledge grew in reaction to his exposure to multiple faculty dossiers. “They were just gigantic, they were full of teaching observations. I think that was the first time I got to experience [post observation letters]. Ron found many of the post observation letters, the letters of review, to be impersonal, and in his opinion rather poorly constructed appraisals of the faculty member’s teaching effectiveness. “Some of them were just so bizarre, just so robotic. You know, this cold analysis of what the teacher did, when they sat, when they started, and what they said. This was so cold.” Ron felt that post observation letters lacked a necessary collegial spirit, “you observe the human being, and you make observations on the human being, rather than the robotic response to what things that they are doing.” Ultimately, Ron’s discontent with the inadequate materials, produced by the peer observation practice, set him toward self-training.

Mary’s service to the department personnel committee was important, yet her stint on the college personnel committee gave her a more global view of peer observation. “I have seen how some other departments do it. I have read the letters, and I have learned from some of that, and I started doing more than had ever been asked of me, or told me to do.” Realizing the multiple ways of doing peer observation, Mary began to study many of the practices she read about and began to incorporate these in her observations.

I would often ask for a syllabus or a schedule of what they were doing or when students are on this day when I am observing and what are the goals to get a framework. In some departments I know that they do that. Plus they meet with the professor before they go in and observe and I have done that too. Maybe I have not set up a big formal meeting but just I am going to be coming in on this day, what’s happening and what should I look for?

Ron and Mary's service to the personnel committee, and their self-training, lead them to practices and methods that are found in the scholarly peer observation literature (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009; Blackwell & McLean, 1996; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Martin & Double, 1998) However, importantly, self-training did not offer them the full spectrum of topics that could be found as part of an intentional scholarly based training for peer observation, as laid-out in the opening description of training. What is unclear is whether or not Ron and Mary would have chosen to participate in a formal training program, should one have been offered.

Training – Across the Departments

Training for peer observation is fraught with complexity. A brief scan across each department illustrates that training can inspire confidence, it can be too tightly focused toward select participants, and that it can be useful to faculty. Training should be relevant and germane the specific needs and pedagogical practices of the individual department and faculty. Yet, glaringly, and perhaps singularly, training is considered supplementary. Faculty of each department, explicitly or implicitly communicate indifference toward intentional organized training for peer observation. Faculty interest and general unwillingness to participate in an organized training for peer observation resonates with the findings of previous studies (Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Martin & Double, 1998). Faculty of all three departments carefully guard the power to use and distribute their work-time independently. An intentional organized training program that is developed beyond the department boundaries may directly clash with notions of autonomy.

The Five Fundamentals: Reflection

It is important to note that the fundamental of Reflection will not be discussed within the context of each participating academic department as the preceding sections discussed the fundamentals of Design, Community, Control, and Training. None of the three participating departments included intentional/purposeful reflection in their peer observation program. Nor did any of the individual study participants identify reflection or reflective practice as a component of their peer observation experiences.

Indeed, the absence of reflection is striking as purposeful reflection/analysis of peer observation data and the overall observation experience leads towards pedagogical development (Donnelly, 2007; Hammersly-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005). The intentional and purposeful practice of reflection is the chief medium through which faculty develop and critique their pedagogical beliefs and practices. Various methods of peer observation provide the essential cognitive fodder for reflection, such as talking about teaching with colleagues in formal and informal settings as English and Agricultural Technology do. However, that alone does not facilitate reflection. Reflection requires intentionality on the part of the observer and observee (Bell, 2001; Bennett & Barp, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersly-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Peel, 2005; Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008). Previous literature has highlighted specific peer observation practices that easily align with intentional reflective practice such as the following: (a) a post-observation narrative, (b) structured post-observation discussions, (c) observer only peer observations with follow-up narratives; and (d) multiple observations with corresponding narratives/discussions (Bennett & Barp, 2008; Hammersly-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Peel, 2005; Schuck, Aubusson & Buchanan, 2008). Purposeful reflection can occur at any singular point along the

observation process or throughout the observation experience. Without intentional dialogue on pedagogy, as it relates to participants' observation experience, peer observation is quickly reduced to a set of empty operations. English and Agricultural Technology hosted robust ongoing conversations on instruction and pedagogy, yet no study participant connected such conversations as being initiated by a peer observation or occurring as part of a department's peer observation program.

Seemingly, there is a fine theoretical line separating pedagogical conversation with purposeful reflection. Reflection requires a meta-awareness on the part of the observer and observee which is exceedingly difficult to measure and/or identify. A peer observation participant may reflectively engage with any part of the peer observation process, and another participant may not, even if reflection were a stated operation (Peel, 2005). The elusive nature of reflective thinking is indeed a limitation of this study.

Conclusion

The central purpose of this study was to identify and describe the various manifestations of the five fundamentals of peer observation within three academic departments at a United States land-grant institution. Three academic departments were selected for participation according to the results of a peer observation survey, completed by a departmental representative or administrative chairperson. English, Agricultural Technology, and Theatre and Cinema each demonstrated peer observation programs uniquely imbued with individual departmental culture. Ultimately, this study underscores that a one-size-fits-all framework for peer observation is unnecessary and highlights some of the peer observation obstacles faced by academic departments. It is clear that the five fundamentals can exist within, and be built into, a program of peer observation in a variety of ways that suit its participants.

Additionally, a guiding claim of this study is that, when present, the five fundamentals – design, community, control, training, and reflection – diminish the negative attributes of peer observation. While no cause and effect relationship can or should be asserted, this study does reveal that in three academic departments, positive and negative faculty views on peer observation align with the presence and absence of the five fundamentals. More specifically, faculty of the English and Agricultural Technology departments believe that peer observation can be a meaningful experience, in that, it positively contributes to individual and departmental pedagogical needs and goals. Whereas, conversely, faculty in the department of Theatre and Cinema view peer observation as a somewhat empty professional performance assessment and an administrative burden. Peer observation can indeed be structured and implemented in ways that promote a formative and/or summative end.

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Appendix A

Peer Observation Questionnaire

Peer Observation is typically defined as the practice of directly observing a peer’s classroom teaching in order to assess teaching performance. Using this definition, please consider the following questions.

Design: A program of peer observation may be designed to include a written statement of purpose, a step-by-step process that leads towards completion, and a coordinating individual or group.

In my department...	Never	Very Rarely	Rarely	Occasionally	Almost Always	Always	Do not know
Faculty that have been observed receive a written assessment of their teaching following the in-class Peer Observation.							
Faculty that have been observed compose/write a response to any assessment generated by the peer observation experience.							
Faculty that have been observed are encouraged to reflect on their peer observation experiences.							
Faculty have been observed reflect on their Peer Observation experiences through an organized method.							

Reflection: A program of peer observation may include opportunities so that faculty members that participate in peer observation can critically reflect on their peer observation experience.

In my department...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Tend to Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Do not know
Faculty understand the purpose of Peer Observation.							
Faculty are familiar with a step by step process for conducting and completing Peer Observation.							
Faculty know when they have completed a Peer Observation requirement.							
Faculty are guided through the Peer Observation experience by other faculty.							

Control: A faculty member that is being observed, the *observee*, may have some or total control over the peer observation process and the type of data generated from the observation process.

In my department...	Never	Very Rarely	Rarely	Occasionally	Almost Always	Always	Do not know
The observee chooses who his/her observer will be.							
The observee chooses the time and location for the observation to take place.							
The observee determines what aspects of the class the observer will focus on.							
The observee determines what happens to the feedback and data collected from the observation after the observation.							

Training: A program of peer observation may have a training program for all faculty participating in peer observation (those observing and those being observed).

In my department...	Never	Very Rarely	Rarely	Occasionally	Almost Always	Always	Do not know
Faculty participate in an organized training program for Peer Observation							
Faculty receive an overview of the benefits and critiques of Peer Observation							
Faculty receive guidance on <i>how to observe</i> another faculty member's teaching							
Faculty receive guidance on <i>how to give feedback</i> to another faculty member							

Community: Faculty participating in peer observation may, formally or informally, develop a cohort or group of peers that discuss peer observation.

In my department...	Never	Very Rarely	Rarely	Occasionally	Almost Always	Always	Do not know
Faculty discuss the practice of Peer Observation with their faculty peers.							
Faculty discuss the practice of teaching (pedagogy).							
Faculty are welcoming and professional when receiving feedback about their teaching.							
The level of faculty rank/position between observee and observer is discussed.							

Appendix B

Case Study Participants

Department of English

Peter – Professor, Department Chair

Bill – Associate Professor, Associate Department Chair, Instructor Concerns Committee
Chair

Frank – Distinguished Professor, 35 years service

Amy – Professor, 35 years service

Jimmy – Advanced Instructor, 6 years service

Agricultural Technology Program

Alex – Program Director, Advanced Instructor, 12 years service

David – Emeritus Professor, 34 service

Patrick – Advanced Instructor, 6 years service

Mark – Advanced Instructor, 8 years service

Robert (not quoted) – Advanced Instructor, 13 years service

Department of Theatre and Cinema

Debbie – Professor, Department Chair, 28 years service

Mary – Professor, 31 years service

Ron – Associate Professor, 33 years service

Thomas – Associate Professor, 30 years service

Betsy – Assistant Professor, 7 years service

Conclusion to the Dissertation

Higher education in the United States is marked by a strong tradition of faculty peer assessment and evaluation, commonly referred to as *peer review* (D'Andrea, 2002). Peer review is a broad, macro system/culture, which is used for the evaluation of research and scholarly publications, representative-based consensus building in the governance of institutions, and for the assurance of quality in regard to faculty teaching effectiveness (D'Andrea, 2002).

University/college teaching faculty are assessed and evaluated through a variety of means, yet chiefly by their peers through the *peer observation of classroom teaching* (Miller, & Seldin, 2014). Over the last several decades, peer observation of classroom teaching has become a well-established institutional based component of peer review. For many colleges and universities in the United States, peer observation has become an important factor in promotion and tenure decision-making (Kemp & Gosling, 2009; Miller, & Seldin, 2014; Seldin, 2006; Braskamp & Ory, 1994).

While the role of peer observation in United States higher education has grown in significance, only a small body of scholarship has addressed its efficacy and/or the ways in which it is conducted. The body of available literature is rather evenly divided between work that provides suggestions and guidelines for practitioners (written by practitioners) and empirical work that focuses on specific peer observation schemes. A majority of the empirical scholarship on peer observation has also been conducted, by and about, scholars and institutions outside of the United States. The aims of this dissertation have been to bring these various literatures into conversation, and to address peer observation as it is used and practiced in an institution in the United States.

Dissertation Overview

Composed of two manuscripts formatted for publication, this dissertation has provided a synthesis of the literature and provided an empirical study. The manuscripts address a gap illuminated by the review of the available body of peer observation literature. The questions that guided this dissertation were the following:

If peer observation is of increasing importance to faculty assessment/evaluation, then

(a) What is known, through scholarship, about peer observation; and

(b) Based on what is known, how can institutions implement peer observation?

The first manuscript of this dissertation, *Understanding Peer Observation: A Review and Synthesis of Peer Observation Literature in Higher Education*, highlighted matters of effectiveness, illustrating that peer observation has been shown to be pedagogically advantageous. As a practice, peer observation can revitalize a teacher's desire and willingness to examine a spectrum of pedagogical issues, including re-envisioning curriculum, improving basic instructional skills, and reflecting on one's underlying assumptions about human learning (Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell, 2002; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Bennett & Barp, 2008; Blackmore, 2005; Donnelly, 2007; & Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004 & 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Pressick-Kilborn, & Riele, 2008). Additionally, peer observation makes the private, public. By its very make-up, peer observation introduces multiple parties to the classroom and requires faculty to engage in a triadic relationship of (1) the observer, (2) the observee, and (3) pedagogy (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009; Bell, 2002; Donnelly, 2007).

The benefits of peer observation, however, can only be realized when various pitfalls are averted. Faculty that participate in peer observation carry with them a set of common and

collective criticisms and personal apprehension. Faculty often question the ability of peer observation to render a fair and accurate assessment of classroom teaching (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009). Faculty express concern that peer observation can be used as a vehicle to manipulate institutional politics or simply create superfluous paper-work and bureaucracy (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009; Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell, 2001; Blackmore, 2005; Blackwell & McLean, 1996; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Swinglehurst, Russel & Greenhalgh, 2008). In short, faculty skepticism and unease stand as predominant obstacles to meaningful, pedagogically beneficial peer observation (Ackerman, Gross & Vigneron, 2009; Adshead, White, & Stephenson, 2006; Bell, 2001; Bell & McClam, 1992; Blackmore, 2005; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Martin & Double, 1998; Peel, 2005). As these strengths and weaknesses were considered as a whole and as the literature was synthesized in the first manuscript, a set of five fundamental attributes emerged as a guiding framework for the peer observation of classroom teaching. *Design, community, control, training, and reflection* function as non-hierarchical principles that provide for meaningful peer observation and notionally minimize the range of negative issues associated with peer observation.

The second manuscript of this dissertation, *A Description of Peer Observation of Classroom Teaching at a Large Land-Grant University*, served as an empirical account of the five fundamentals as they existed within an authentic land-grant university environment. The mixed-methods study incorporated questionnaire and case study data to *put flesh to bones*. The questionnaire was first used to identify departments where the five fundamentals were evident in peer observation programs. The departments of English, Theatre and Cinema, and Agricultural Technology were identified as case studies. The case studies wrapped description and

representativeness around the skeleton of the five fundamentals. They provided a tangible illustration of peer observation aligned with the five fundamentals, albeit to varying degrees. Interestingly, the research also provided a description of a peer observation program in which elements of the five fundamentals were present yet not fully realized. Three general conclusions can be asserted: Firstly, the department of English and the Agricultural Technology program possess programs of peer observation that clearly align with the five fundamentals. Both academic units maintain faculty that believe peer observation is beneficial for the individual faculty member and to the larger academic community (department/program). Secondly, as shown by the department of Theatre and Cinema, a program of peer observation can retain elements or qualities of the five fundamentals and yet not put the five fundamentals into practice. Therefore, while the questionnaire was able to successfully identify a program aligned with the five fundamentals, it was unable to measure the degree to which the five fundamentals are implemented. Thirdly, and importantly, data from the case studies support the notion that when the five fundamentals are present and adhered to faculty do not express anxiety and skepticism about peer observation.

Future research

These two manuscripts serve as the starting point for a future line of inquiry. The five fundamentals offer a framework for meaningful peer observation, and these two manuscripts begin to address the features and characteristics of that framework. Future research endeavors should include more in-depth descriptions of each individual fundamental, as well as descriptions of the five fundamentals as they exist in other university and college structures. For example, community colleges and liberal arts institutions serve unique student populations and retain faculty that are expertly trained and suited for the institution-type. Therefore descriptions

of the five fundamentals in other contexts may be a useful set of resources for institutions that are not easily relatable to a land-grant context and/or mission.

Future research may also address how an institution or academic unit develops a program of peer observation using the five fundamentals as a guiding framework. Program development is briefly discussed in the second manuscript, as it pertains to the Agricultural Technology program, yet detailed information and/or suggestions for peer observation program development would be useful. Specifically, how is the development process structured? Is the peer observation program to be developed by departmental personnel, general faculty committee, or specialty taskforce? What groups and/or individuals should be represented and present for development process? Are institutional reward structures desirable, effective, and/or warranted? These questions begin to address the logistics and details of program development.

Lastly, as stated in the opening paragraph, peer observation is linked to the nature of representative and/or shared governance in higher education. Shared governance is a traditional structure founded in the notion of the university as a citizen democracy (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Delbanco, 2012). The substantial body of scholarly empirical and practitioner literature cited in this paper focuses exclusively on peer observation as it relates to classroom pedagogy. However, scholarly attention has not yet focused on peer observation as a functionary cog of institutional governance. Aspects of the five fundamentals that address faculty and departmental/program autonomy may conflict with institutional governance as higher education in the United States becomes increasingly hierarchical and less democratically structured (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Giroux & Giroux, 2004; Smith, 2009). Regardless of its historical permutations, shared-governance is a cornerstone value for a large population of those in

academe (Lucas, 2006; Smith, 2009). Peer observation should be explored as an expression of that value.

Final Words

Peer observation of classroom teaching is not only woven into the fabric of higher education, it is becoming an increasingly vital thread in the professional lives of academic faculty. It is likely that peer observation will continue to influence promotion and tenure decision-making, and it will continue to impact the day-to-day lives and responsibilities of faculty. Therefore, it is only prudent and sensible to explore the ways in which peer observation adds value to our institutions of higher learning.

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