2020

"Helping Me Learn New Things Every Day": The Power of Community College Students' Writing Across Genres

Tanzina Ahmed
CUNY Kingsborough Community College

"Helping Me Learn New Things Every Day":

The Power of Community College Students' Writing across Genres

Tanzina Ahmed

CUNY Kingsborough Community College

Abstract

Although community colleges are important entry points into higher education for many American students, few studies have investigated how their students engage with different genres or develop genre knowledge. Even fewer have connected students' genre knowledge to their academic performance. In the present article, 104 ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse students reported on classroom genre experiences and wrote stories about college across three narrative genres (Letters, Best Experience, Worst Experience). Findings suggest that students' engagement with classroom genres in community college helped them develop rhetorical reading and writing skills. When students wrote about their college lives across narrative genres, they reflected on higher education in varied ways to achieve differing sociocultural goals with distinct audiences. Finally, students' experience with classroom and narrative genres predicted their GPA, implying that students' genre knowledge signals and influences their academic success. These findings demonstrate how diverse students attending community college can use genres as tools to further their social and academic development.

"Helping Me Learn New Things Every Day":

The Power of Community College Students' Writing across Genres

Community colleges are increasingly important entry points into higher education for many ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse[1] American students. However, few scholars have focused on how these students engage with different genres, the shifting expressive structures that people draw upon when writing for diverse purposes and audiences (Miller, 1984; Tardy, 2016). Students enrolled in four-year colleges often call upon classroom genres (e.g., essays, scientific reports, and presentations) to integrate their past and developing knowledge and skills, to communicate with a range of relationship partners, and to achieve important sociocultural goals such as passing college courses (Bawarshii & Reiff, 2010; Bazerman, 1997; Devitt, 2008; Driscoll, Paszek, Gorzelsky, Hayes, & Jones, 2020; Paré, 2002). Yet community college students are disproportionately likely to come from underserved populations and must therefore navigate numerous cultural barriers as they participate in higher education (Deil-Amen, 2011). These barriers may cause these college students to struggle with classroom genres in ways that potentially impede their academic progress (Stout & Magnatto, 1998; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2010; VanOra, 2012; 2014). It is surprising, then, that little research has focused on how diverse community college students' engagement with and knowledge of classroom genres impacts their academic performance.

Relatedly, few studies have analyzed diverse community college students' writing within narrative genres, defined here as story-telling genres that allow people to make sense of their experiences. When people write genre-sensitive narratives[2], they interpret and examine their sociocultural contexts and experiences by creating some type of meaningful story containing a plot populated by notable characters (Daiute, 2014). Past research reveals that community

college students can write genre-sensitive narratives in order to demonstrate their college-related competencies to varied audiences, to achieve sociocultural goals related to higher education, to signal their understanding of social and structural relations within college, and to reflect on their engagement with college norms, values, and activities (Ahmed, Ilieva, & Yan, 2019; Daiute & Kreniske, 2016, Ilieva, Ahmed, & Yan, 2018). Thus, when diverse students write genre-sensitive narratives about community college in response to varied genre prompts, they may develop or demonstrate knowledge and skills that could help them thrive in higher education.

Past research conducted within four-year college institutions has explored connections between college students' engagement with genres, development of genre knowledge, and academic performance (Larson, 2016; Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011; Russell, 1997; Tardy, Sommer-Farias, & Gevers, 2020). This article extends that line of inquiry by reviewing how diverse community college students' use of narrative genres might parallel their use of classroom genres. If a connection exists between diverse students' genre-sensitive narratives and engagement with classroom genres, that connection may indicate their development of genre knowledge – that is, their understanding of how to communicate with audiences using discourse forms in ways that are appropriate to their context, achieve their context-specific goals, and draw upon their past linguistic skills (Tardy, Sommer-Farias, & Gevers, 2020). Moreover, diverse students' developing genre knowledge may connect with and perhaps even predict their academic performance, as genre knowledge is often critical to meeting the instructors' expectations within higher education (Crews & Aragon, 2004, Goldstein & Perin, 2008; Southard & Clay, 2004).

To investigate these assumptions, this article reviews how 104 ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse students demonstrate genre knowledge in the context of an urban community college. Students' genre knowledge is indicated by their self-reported engagement

with classroom genres, their development of rhetorical skills within community college, and their genre-sensitive Letter, Best Experience, and Worst Experience narratives regarding college. Finally, the article connects students' genre knowledge to their academic performance, as measured by cumulative year-end GPA. Ultimately, the article demonstrates that diverse students may develop their genre knowledge through interacting with various genres in the context of community college; it also demonstrates that students' genre knowledge may predict and even influence their academic success.

Diversity within Community Colleges

Community colleges are increasingly important institutions in the United States, with almost 30% of American undergraduates currently enrolled in a public two-year college (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2019). Such institutions enroll a population of students who are often under-served by higher education; compared to students in four-year college institutions, community college students are (on average) poorer and more likely to identify as being from first-generation, English Language Learning, and socially disadvantaged populations (ACT Institutional Data File, 2016). Community college students are also disproportionately likely to come from ethnic minority populations; public two-year institutions serve 44% of all African American and 56% of all Latinx undergraduates in the United States (Ma & Baum, 2016). Thus, community colleges offer a vital doorway to higher education for many diverse and disadvantaged students who may have no other path toward achieving their academic dreams.

Diverse and disadvantaged students can derive great benefits from enrolling in community college. Compared to people with only a high school diploma, community college students who are able to achieve a certificate, earn an associate degree, or transfer to a four-year

institution earn higher incomes over their careers, experience better health outcomes, and have a lower likelihood of being enrolled in welfare programs or engaging in criminal activities (Belfield & Bailey, 2011; Carnevale, Garcia, & Gulish, 2017). Ethnically diverse students may draw special benefits from entering community colleges as a first step toward a bachelor's degree; 51% of Latinx, 44% of African American, 44% of American Indians and Alaskan natives, and 40% of Asians and Pacific Islander students who receive a bachelor's or master's degree in science and engineering first attended a community college (Nunez, Sparks, & Hernandez, 2011). Finally, ethnically diverse students who graduate or transfer from a community college can increase their social mobility and raise their household income by age 30 with their college education (Espinosa, Kelchen, & Taylor, 2018). Thus, diverse, marginalized, and underserved students can derive considerable academic, health-related, and economic advantages from attending a community college.

However, these advantages are generally only experienced by community college students who completed a certificate, attained an associate degree, or transferred to a four-year college institution – and unfortunately, many diverse students cannot achieve such academic goals. In general, community college students often experience academic difficulties; almost 40% of students attending public two-year institutions drop out within or after their first school year (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2019). Ethnically diverse students face even steeper odds of achieving academic success compared to other types of students; Latinx- and African-American students are less likely to stay enrolled in or graduate from public two-year community colleges as compared to Caucasian-American students (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2018). These diverse students' relative lack of academic success often connects to their lower grade-point average (GPA), which plays a critical role in

determining whether community colleges students complete a certificate, obtain an associate degree, and/or transfer to a four-year college institution for a bachelor's degree. Latinx- and African American college students tend to have lower GPAs than Caucasian-American students; such gaps are present in both two-year and four-year college institutions (Espinosa, Turk, Taylor, & Chessman, 2019).

Community college students may experience academic problems due to a wide variety of socio-economic, educational, relational, institutional, and psychosocial challenges (21st-Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges, 2012; Brock, 2010; Porchea, Allen, Robbins, & Phelps, 2010). Diverse students who enroll in a community college may face special challenges, such as being unprepared to meet collegiate-level academic challenges, experiencing familial and home-related responsibilities that take time away from academic activities, and lacking the mentorship they need to navigate common college difficulties (Espinosa, Turk, Taylor, & Chessman, 2019; Francois, 20102). From the standpoint of writing scholarship, diverse students' academic struggles could also be attributed to their inexperience with or inability to master the classroom genres they encounter in community college.

Genre Knowledge within Community College

In order to maintain a GPA high enough to reach their academic goals, all college students must perform their rhetorical knowledge and skills across several classroom genres for authority figures (Bazerman, 1997; Beer, 2000; Devitt, 2008, 2009; Stout & Magnatto, 1998; Swales, 1990; Tardy, 2016; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2010). In doing so, students display their genre knowledge – that is, their understanding of how to craft appropriate responses to recurring situations within higher education in a manner that draws upon developing linguistic skills (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Tardy, Sommer-Farias, & Gevers, 2020). As college students

engage in genre awareness-raising activities in classes, they expand their genre knowledge and shift from viewing genres as intractable rules to "tool[s] for getting at the resources that students bring with them, the genres they carry from their educations and their experiences in society, [and]… for framing challenges that bring students into new domains…" (Bazerman, 1997, p. 24). Eventually, students can integrate their past and developing genre knowledge and rhetorical skills to communicate with various partners, engage in recontexualization and metacognition of genre-related activities, and achieve context-sensitive goals in higher education (Tardy, Sommer-Farias, & Gevers, 2020). Both undergraduate and graduate students must master a variety of genres to meet their institution's standards and achieve academic success (Beer, 2000; Driscoll et al., 2020; Hyon, 2002).

Diverse community college students may experience several difficulties that hinder their development of genre knowledge and diminish their ability to utilize genres to achieve academic success. These struggles may partially derive from a lack of prior interactions with genre in secondary school settings. Up to one-thirds of community college students (many of whom come from low-income and ethnic/cultural/linguistic minority backgrounds) lack the ability to perform rhetorical knowledge and skills across classroom genres prior to entering higher education (Ganga, Mazariello and Edgecombe, 2018). These students often enter community college with insufficient prior genre knowledge – i.e., the genre knowledge, rhetorical skills, and discursive resources that students bring to, rather than develop within, higher education (Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011). These students may, in turn, struggle to use classroom genres required by their community college and fail to communicate with enough proficiency to meet their institution's academic standards.

To support these students, public community colleges usually offer English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) and developmental reading/writing courses that attempt to develop students' rhetorical skills (VanOra, 2012; 2014). Such courses tend to have the implicit goal of supporting students' genre knowledge and proficiency with classroom genres, as these knowledges and skills are linked to students' overall rhetorical skills and academic success (Crews & Aragon, 2004, Goldstein & Perin, 2008; Southard & Clay, 2004). Past research has indicated that four-year college students enrolled in similar ESL and developmental reading/writing courses can succeed when they can reconsider and repurpose their prior genre knowledge in light of new sociocultural goals, audiences and standards within higher education (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010; Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011). Similarly, diverse community college students may repurpose their prior genre knowledge, develop their rhetorical skills, and write toward new goals, audiences, and standards when they take part in ESL and developmental reading/writing courses. Such courses may eventually increase diverse students' academic success in community college.

However, ESL and developmental reading/writing courses are not the only resource that diverse community college students can call upon to develop their genre knowledge and rhetorical skills. Diverse students may also develop their genre-related and writing skills by utilizing narrative genres, which are story-telling genres that can help people explore and make sense of their lives and contexts (Daiute, 2014). When community college students write genre-sensitive narratives, they can interpret and examine their lives within higher education, as well as the educational institution they attend, by crafting a meaningful story with a plot populated by important characters. Moreover, narrative genres can give community college students the chance to reflect upon higher education and practice meeting audience expectations *without* facing the academic pressures inherent in classroom genres (Daiute & Kreniske, 2016).

Additionally, any connections between students' engagement with classroom genres and writing of genre-sensitive narratives might indicate their development of genre knowledge. From this perspective, it is important to explore the genre-sensitive narratives that diverse students may write about their college institution and related experiences as they attend community college.

Composing Genre-Sensitive Narratives in Community College

People create oral and written narratives to make sense of their lives across a variety of contexts, including academic institutions such as community colleges (Daiute, 2010). When people write narratives, they take part in a complex sociocultural activity within relevant contexts in the form of notable characters engaged in a meaningful plot (Daiute, 2014). These sense-making processes drive people's development across a variety of activity meaning systems (including college institutions) that seek to perpetuate their values, norms, and practices (Daiute, 2010; 2014). These systems express their meanings in relevant documents (such as policies and curricula), even as people interacting with and across these systems create, integrate, and transform their ways of understanding the world (Daiute, 2012).

Community colleges are activity meaning systems where diverse students can develop by using cultural tools (including classroom and narrative genres) to meet college demands. When students write genre-sensitive narratives about higher education in response to varied narrative prompts, they can recreate and interpret their college experiences and institution by crafting a meaningful story with a plot populated by characters they choose to highlight. In writing such genre-sensitive narratives, students may develop or demonstrate insights, proficiencies, and abilities that could help them thrive in community college.

First, diverse students might use the affordances of genre-sensitive narratives (i.e., the different audiences and plot-rich potential implicit in every narrative genre) to develop their

genre knowledge. They can draw upon their past resources and experiences, which may include cultural and story-telling traditions that differ from American traditions, to create narrative plots that reflect their skill at meeting audience expectations and achieving sociocultural goals (Daiute, 2014). Ultimately, the plots that diverse students embed within their narratives may demonstrate their ability to reorder and repurpose prior genre knowledge toward considering 0new collegiate experiences and challenges.

Second, diverse students may benefit from using narrative genres to help them reflect upon and navigate difficulties in community college, especially since many have little experience with higher education prior to enrollment (Deil-Amen, 2011). Some diverse community college students struggle to reach academic success due to their inability to resolve common difficulties such as contesting poor grades (Francois, 2012). Student's genre-sensitive narratives might reveal their ability or inability to resolve such college difficulties, as well as their understanding of how institutional agents or structures can influence their overall success (Bazerman, 1997). This conjecture is in accordance with research that reveals that college students can use narrative genres to interpret, find support for, and resolve problems across divergent educational institutions (Ahmed, 2017; Ahmed, Ilieva, & Yan, 2019; Daiute, & Kreniske, 2016; Ilieva, Ahmed, & Yan, 2018; Kreniske, 2017; Todorova, 2018). Thus, diverse community college students' narratives may signal, predict, and perhaps even influence their ability (or lack thereof) to overcome college difficulties with the support of varied support systems.

Finally, diverse students' genre-sensitive narratives may reveal their understanding and management of the important relationships that can shape their college journey and influence their academic progress. When community college students compose genre-sensitive narratives, they do so to achieve varied sociocultural goals with different audiences (Ahmed, 2017). Some

of these audience members may include college partners (such as other students, faculty, and staff) within higher education. These partners could contribute directly to diverse students' genre knowledge and rhetorical skills (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Paré, 2002; Tardy, 2016). Moreover, these partners could serve as institutional agents who mentor and support students as they struggle to overcome common collegiate obstacles (Deil-Amen, 2011). Other potential audience members may include friends, family, and mentors who exist outside of higher education. These non-college partners may be less likely to contribute directly to students' genre knowledge or rhetorical skills. However, these non-college partners may still shape students' academic progress through offering, withholding, or demanding emotional, informational, instrumental, and financial support (Francois, 2012; Hill & Torres, 2010; Sanchez, Esparza, Colon, & Davis, 2010).

Ultimately, community college students' genre-sensitive narratives may reveal their understanding of how various relationship partners inside and outside of higher education shape, support, and/or hinder their academic progress and ability to meet their sociocultural goals. Moreover, students' skill at constructing complex narrative plots might reflect or develop their skill at communicating with varied partners and leveraging their relationships to achieve goals (Imbrenda, 2016). Such relational insights and skills may be of special importance to ethnically diverse students, as they may have the greatest need for relational support inside and outside of community college (Deil-Amen, 2011).

Present Study

The cumulative work on genre in higher education indicates that students in four-year colleges must develop genre knowledge and exhibit rhetorical skills across a variety of genres to achieve academic success. If we extend these ideas to two-year college institutions, we can

assume that the ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse students enrolled in community colleges must also develop genre knowledge and exhibit similar rhetorical skills. When we explore how diverse students engage with classroom and narrative genres and develop their genre knowledge, it becomes possible to examine how they understand relationships and structures within their college institution, cope with the challenges of higher education, and achieve academic success in community college.

However, with the exception of Ahmed's (2017), Ahmed, Ilieva, & Yan's (2019), Daiute & Kreniske's (2016), Hull and Rose's (1989), Ilieva, Ahmed, & Yan's (2018), and Tinberg and Nadeau's (2010) work, previous research on community college students has not involved detailed analyses of students' writing within classroom or narrative genres. Additionally, though writing scholarship suggests that students' genre knowledge and genre-sensitive writing should connect to their academic performance, no research study so far has explored how diverse community college students' genre knowledge or engagement with classroom and narrative genres might connect with, predict, or even shape their academic success. This article addresses these omissions by examining how diverse students' engagement with classroom genres and creation of genre-sensitive narratives connects with and predicts their cumulative GPA over a year in community college.

The present article investigates three research questions. First, how do ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse students indicate their development of genre knowledge through their engagement with classroom and narrative genres as they attend community college? Second, how do diverse students use narrative genres to communicate with different audiences, achieve important sociocultural goals, and reflect their knowledge of higher education? Finally, how (and why) does students' engagement with classroom and narrative

genres, and development of genre knowledge, relate to their academic performance in community college? Ultimately, the article suggests that diverse students can thrive within community college by engaging with varied classroom and narrative genres, by writing genre-sensitive narratives that allow them to reflect on higher education, and by developing genre knowledge that connects with, predicts, and perhaps even influences their academic success.

Methods

Participants

104 undergraduates (68 female, 36 male) at a public Northeastern community college in the United States participated in this project in exchange for psychology research credit. This institution is located within a diverse urban district and serves a predominantly ethnic minority, low-income, and first-generation population. In parallel to the general student population, most study participants identified as being from ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds. 51.4% of participants identified as Latinx-, 38.1% as Black-, 5.7% as White-, and 3.8% as Asian-American. 82.9% of participants also identified as being from at least one country outside of the United States and 64.8% of participants spoke at least one language other than English. The mean age for participants was 24.00 years ($SD = 5.91$) and the range of ages was from 18 to 45. Almost a quarter of participants reported taking an English as a Second Language, Developmental Reading, or Developmental Writing course by the current semester. More demographic information is listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Student Participant Demographics.

Age: *M (SD)*	24.00 (5.91)
Year-End Outcomes: M (SD)	
GPA	2.65 (0.92)
Credits Earned	25.65 (17.99)
Ethnicity	
Latinx	51.4%

Black	38.1%
White	5.7%
Asian	3.8%
Missing	1%
Country of Origin for Self and Family	
United States Only	16.2%
One Other Country	76.2%
Two Other Countries	6.7%
Missing	1%
Language(s) Spoken at Home	
Only English	34.3%
One Additional Language	63.8%
Two Additional Languages	1%
Missing	1%
Income	
Less than 19,999	26.7%
20,000 to 59,999	51.5%
60,000 and over	20%
Missing	1.9%
Semester in Fall 2014	
First Semester	44.8%
Second Semester	14.3%
Third Semester and Over	40%
Missing	1%
Total Credits Earned by Start of Fall 2014	
No Credits Earned	30.5%
1 – 29 Credits Earned	56.1%
30 or more Credits Earned	12.5%
Missing	1%
GPA in Fall 2014	
2.4 and below	26.7%
2.5 to 3.4	49.5%
3.5 and above	22.9%
Missing	1%
In Pathways Program	88.3%
Courses Taken	
Taken English as a Second Language by or in Fall 2014	21.2%
Taken Developmental Math by or in Fall 2014	53.9%
Taken Developmental Reading by or in Fall 2014	24.0%
Taken Developmental Writing by or in Fall 2014	26.9%
Employed Full-Time	35.2%
Number of Children	
None	61.9%
One	22.1%
Two or More	15.0%
Missing	1%
Students' Goals: M (SD)	
Transfer to four-year college or university	2.68 (0.60)
Obtain an associate degree	2.63 (0.65)
Self-improvement/personal enjoyment	2.54 (0.74)
Obtain or update job-related skills	2.34 (0.82)
Change careers	1.83 (0.89)
Complete a certificate program	1.79 (0.89)

Following the academic year (i.e., after the Spring 2015 semester), participants' mean

GPA was 2.65 (*SD* = .92), with 50.5% of participants earning a 2.80 or higher GPA. Most

participants made satisfactory progress toward earning a certificate, associate degree, or transfer

as measured by the institution, which mandated that a cumulative GPA of 2.0 was necessary to

stay enrolled without academic probation. Students also needed a 2.0 cumulative GPA to receive

a certificate, achieve an associate degree, and/or transfer to a four-year college.

Procedure

This study employed a mixed methods approach that connects students' narratives (which

were parsed into plot elements) to their year-end GPA. The researcher collected narrative data at

Time 1 (during the Fall 2014 school semester) and year-end cumulative GPA at Time 2 (after the

Spring 2015 semester). The study covered the 2014 to 2015 academic year and complied with

human subject guidelines at all relevant college institutions.

During Time 1, participants had up to two hours to complete the study's questionnaire,

which consisted of a demographic questionnaire, several narrative genre prompts, and the

Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE, 2005). Participants took the

questionnaire within a reserved classroom during their college's designated club hours and most

finished in under an hour. Students first completed a short demographics survey[2] and then wrote

about their college lives across five genres[3] (all prompts are included in Appendix A). The

relational Letter genre prompted students to write a short letter to an important partner about

their journey in community college, while the Best Experience and Worst Experience genres

invited students to write about their best or worst college experiences. The questionnaire

presented genre prompts to students without reference to an explicit audience, as the researcher

wanted students to write about their lives without feeling they had to highlight certain

experiences (be they be of triumph or difficulty) or relationships (be they familial, romantic, or connected to higher education) over others. The results section demonstrates how students wrote within the open-ended genre prompts.

58 participants took version A of the questionnaire, wherein they wrote first within the Letter and then within the Best Experience and Worst Experience genres[4]. 46 participants took version B of the questionnaire, wherein they wrote first within the Best Experience and Worst Experience genres, and then within the Letter genres. Chi-square tests of independence found no significant differences between students who took version A versus B of the questionnaire in how they wrote plots across genres (i.e., the order of genre prompts did not influence participants' writing).

The Time 1 questionnaire included the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE, 2005), which included items on how students ranked the importance of achieving particular goals (such as obtaining an associate degree) on a scale of 1 (not important) to 3 (very important). Students most strongly endorsed the academic goals of transferring to a four-year institution and achieving an associate degree. More information on students' goals is listed in Table 1. The CCSSE (2005) also included items that relate to students' experiences with classroom genres (such as papers, assignments, readings, textbooks, etc.) at their current community college, as well as their self-assessment as to how their college experiences developed their writing, speaking, and thinking knowledge and skills[5]. These items are detailed Appendix B; students' responses are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Student Participants' Reading, Writing, and Genre-Related Experiences in Community College.

In your experiences at this college during the current school year, about how often have you: M (SD) / 4.00	
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	2.93 (0.96)
Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	3.03 (0.86)
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with instructors outside of class	2.11 (0.91)

Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (with fellow students, family members, co-workers, etc.)	2.90 (0.92)

During the current school year, about how much reading and writing have you done at this college in regards to:
   Number of assigned textbooks, manuals, books, or book-length packs of course readings

None	1.9%
1 to 4	45.2%
5 to 10	25%
11 to 20	18.3%
More than 20	8.7%
Missing	1%

   Number of books read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment

None	24%
1 to 4	52.9%
5 to 10	16.3%
11 to 20	3.8%
More than 20	2.9%

   Number of written papers or reports of any length

None	3.8%
1 to 4	24%
5 to 10	42.3%
11 to 20	23.1%
More than 20	4.8%
Missing	1.9%

How much has your experience at this college contributed to your knowledge, skills, and development in: M (SD)/4.00

Writing clearly and effectively: M (SD)	3.19 (0.81)
Speaking clearly and effectively: M (SD)	3.14 (0.85)
Thinking Critically and analytically: M (SD)	3.43 (0.71)

During Time 2, the author collected institutional data on students' cumulative year-end GPA, which has been used as an indicator of college students' academic performance (Blustein, 1986; McClenny & Marti, 2006; Schudde & Scott-Clayton, 2016). GPA was used as an indicator of academic performance since students needed to maintain a cumulative 2.0 GPA in order to stay enrolled and achieve academic goals within their community college. There was a positive relationship ($r(102) = .719$, $p < .001$) between students' self-reported GPA in Fall 2014 and year-end GPA; most students' GPA remained consistent across semesters.

Narrative and Plot Analysis

The author used plot analysis (Daiute, 2014) to understand how students interpreted their community college within diverse narrative genres. By analyzing how students created meaning within genres via different plot elements, the article explored how students made sense of their

college lives and navigated obstacles they encountered. The study focused on the plot element of high points, which serve the plot's most important conflict, turning point, or emotional climax. The high point encapsulates the central issue that the narrative revolves around and, in this article, demonstrates students' understanding of the focal points within their college experiences. Students' emotions, experiences, development, or relationships can serve as a high point's issue, depending on how students structure their plot.

The article also investigated students' resolution strategies, which are a type of plot element that resolves difficulties within the plot and represents students' navigation around obstacles. When students write with more resolution strategies, they demonstrate their ability to solve problems and construct plots in ways encouraged by their college institution. Ultimately, plot analysis demonstrates how skilled students are at writing in audience-appropriate ways and in incorporating the cultural logic of their college institution within their narratives.

Process of Plot Analysis. Plot analysis involves identifying major plot elements presented by the narrative's author (Daiute, 2014). Plot analysis includes parsing each narrative into individual thought-units (t-units), which are the shortest grammatically correct sentence into which a statement can be split (Hunt, 1965). After each narrative was parsed into t-units, each t-unit was coded as any one of the following (and mutually exclusive) plot elements: initiating action, complicating action, high point, resolution strategy, or ending. Every narrative was coded as having a single high point, as each had to feature a climax or turning point that the narrative revolved around. Additionally, any t-units that were coded as high points or resolution strategies were given sub-codes based on the type of high point issue or resolution strategy invoked.

Khadija's narratives illustrate both the plot analysis process and offers exemplars of narratives written by diverse students who met the academic standards of their community

college. Khadija was a 22-year old African-Caribbean-American female student who spoke more than one language at home and who ended the year with a 3.06 GPA. She wrote the following Best Experience narrative, which was parsed into individual t-units and plot elements:

1. "My experience at this college has been good so far. – *Initiating action: begins narrative.*

2. I love the environment and the students. – *Complicating action: adds suspense and further information, building the narrative toward the high point.*

3. I made friends here – *Another complicating action, building tension within her narrative.*

4. and I learn new stuff every day. – *Another complicating action.*

5. The only difficulties I face sometimes is [with] the TAP [financial aid] department – *High point: the narrative's climax. This high point issue revolves around a "turning-point" in the plot that reveals how Khadija's conflicts with college administrators influences her otherwise positive college life.*

6. and every day someone somewhere always delete[s] my information in the system. – *Another complicating action.*

7. But the counselors are helping out in choosing my classes – *Resolution strategy: reveals how Khadija copes with difficulties by connecting with supportive partners in college.*

8. and the professors are helping me learn new things every day. – *Ending: concludes narrative by talking about Khadija's continued development in higher education.*

Students used several types of high point issues and resolution strategies within plots. These issues and strategies were identified after the researcher reviewed a list of the high points and resolution strategies within narratives. Following Daiute (2014), the researcher explored similarities and differences in the themes, ideas, and concerns that students placed at the high

points and resolutions of their plots. Students wrote with four high point issues (college experience, developing, emotion, and relationships) and four resolution strategies (being practical about college, connecting, psychological reframing, and acting by self). Khadija's narrative revolved around a high point issue of relationships and utilized a resolution strategy of connecting with others. These plot elements indicate her genre knowledge of what to focus on while writing a story about college success, as well as her understanding of how to overcome obstacles and reach goals within community college. These issues and strategies were coded into narratives within ATLAS.ti and used as variables in statistical analyses.

Measures

To connect students' interpretations of community college to academic performance, the researcher transformed narrative variables into categorical and/or continuous variables and used them in later quantitative analyses. Participants' high point issues were transformed into variables across genres. The researcher created 12 genre-specific binomial categorical variables for each participant that was coded as either 0 (did not have as high point issue for a specific genre) or 1 (did have as high point issue for a specific genre). The researcher also created continuous "total" high point issue variables to count how often students used a high point issue in an additive fashion across all three genres.

Participants' resolution strategies were also transformed and coded into continuous variables, which allowed the researcher to examine how often students used different types of resolution strategies in each genre and in total. Since there was a relatively normal distribution of strategies across participants, it was appropriate to code students' resolution strategy use in a continuous fashion. The researcher also created 12 genre-specific continuous variables (which measured how often students narrated each type of strategy within each genre) and continuous

"total" resolution strategy use variables (which counted how often students used a particular type of resolution strategy in an additive fashion across all genres). These variables were used in later statistical models.

Reliability

Reliability coding was conducted between the researcher and a colleague across 20% of participants (n = 21, encompassing 63 narratives). Participants were randomly selected to ensure a representative sample. Researchers found inter-rater reliability of 92.06% across high point codes and 86.59% reliability across resolution strategy codes. Differences in coding were resolved through further analysis and discussion.

<div align="center">

Results

</div>

This section begins by covering diverse community college students' self-reported experiences and skill with classroom genres, as well as the connection between said experiences and skill to academic performance. It then reviews how students write within narrative genres by focusing on their creation of high point issues (i.e., the central tension within narratives) and resolution strategies (i.e., coping with difficulties) within narrative plots. It then demonstrates how students' use of classroom genres connects with their genre-sensitive narratives – a connection that indicates their developing genre knowledge within community college. Finally, the section covers how students' engagement with both classroom and narrative genres predicts their year-end GPA, suggesting the impact of students' genre knowledge on their academic performance.

Students' Experience and Skill with Classroom Genres

The CCSSE (2005) included within this article's questionnaire contained 10 items that measured students' experience and skill with classroom genres. All items are in Appendix A,

while the means, standard deviations, and frequencies for all items are reported in Table 2. The majority of students reported some engagement with classroom genres (especially papers or projects that required integrating information from various resources) and relational uses of classroom genres (including the discussion of ideas from readings or classes with partners outside of class) at their current institution. Most students also reported that their college experience lead to a greater facility with writing clearly and effectively ($M = 3.19$ out of 4.00, $SD = 0.81$), speaking clearly and effectively ($M = 3.14$ out of 4.00, $SD = 0.85$), and thinking critically and analytically ($M = 3.43$ out of 4.00, $SD = 0.71$). In summary, students reported that their experiences at this community college often lead them to engage with and develop rhetorical skills related to classroom genres. Although students may enter community college with varied levels of prior genre knowledge, many develop their knowledge of classroom genres and rhetorical skills further within their college institution.

Classroom Genres Connect with Academic Performance

The researcher generated Pearson's product-moment correlations to investigate how students' experiences with and skill at using classroom genres relates to their academic performance (i.e., year-end GPA). Table 5 presents information on all correlations.

Table 5

Pearson Correlations among High Point Issues, Resolution Strategies, Year-End GPA, and Student Experiences that Relate to Genre Knowledge at This Community College

	Year End GPA	More Drafts	Complete Paper	Discuss w/ Instructors	Discuss w/ Others	Textbooks	Books on Own	Papers	Writing	Speaking	Thinking
Year End GPA		.294**	.271**	.075	.370**	.034	-.119	.169	.092	.206*	.175
HP College Experience Total	-.217*	-.121	-.039	-.256**	-.076	-.169	-.031	-.018	.158	.174	.129
HP Developing Total	.050	.043	.204*	.122	-.127	-.054	-.079	-.042	-.038	.020	.171
HP Emotion Total	.040	.001	-.043	.175	.146	.082	.195*	.013	-.009	-.027	-.019
HP Relationships Total	.160	.080	-.056	.014	.031	.118	-.077	.031	-.109	-.144	-.203*
RS Total	.199*	.249*	.113	.027	.213*	-.023	-.106	.080	.150	.290**	.188
RS Being Practical Total	.054	.055	.106	-.140	-.067	.044	-.055	-.006	.238*	.211*	.140
RS Being Practical Letter	.049	.066	.080	-.125	-.058	.041	-.066	-.017	.230*	.230*	.139
RS Being Practical Best											
RS Being Practical Worst	.031	-.064	.158	-.093	-.062	.014	.064	.061	.053	-.106	.013

RS Connecting Total	.307**	.239*	.172	.109	.265**	.115	.066	.203*	.196*	.241*	.190
RS Connecting Letter	.322**	.235*	.262**	.139	.232*	.126	.038	.237*	.189	.217*	.245*
RS Connecting Best	.093	.064	-.055	-.081	.160	.034	.051	-.004	.106	.143	.033
RS Connecting Worst	.068	.134	-.136	.125	.109	-.005	.093	.053	.021	.079	-.126
RS Psychological Total	.024	.101	-.052	.024	.073	-.167	-.181	-.037	-.100	.078	.063
RS Psychological Letter	-.001	.059	-.044	.085	.028	-.144	-.144	-.048	-.127	.049	.092
RS Psychological Best	.068	.076	-.104	-.18	.088	-.024	-.117	-.046	.003	.082	-.090
RS Psychological Worst	.028	.126	.065	-.002	.106	-.151	-.104	.076	.043	.060	.031
RS Acting by Self Total	-.012	.149	.025	-.006	.158	-.063	-.115	-.046	.043	.154	.014
RS Acting by Self Letter	-.040	.100	-.032	.040	.075	-.068	-.193*	-.060	-.015	.069	-.083
RS Acting by Self Best	-.028	.056	.047	.082	-.034	-.028	-.013	-.054	-.141	.030	-.019
RS Acting by Self Worst	.036	.108	.054	-.087	.187	-0.16	.027	.013	.146	.161	.118

Note. * = statistically significant at p < .05 level. ** = statistically significant at p < .01 level. HP stands for High Point Issue. RS stands for Resolution Strategy. Letter stands for Letter genre. Best stands for Best Experience genre. Worst stands for Worst Experience genre. Psychological stands for Psychological Reframing. More Drafts stands for how often students at this college have prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in at this college. Complete Paper stands for how often students at this college have worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources. Discuss w/ Instructor stands for how often students at this college have discussed ideas from their readings or classes with instructors outside of class. Discuss w/ Others stands for how often students at this college have discussed ideas from readings or classes with others outside of class (such as fellow students, family members, co-workers, etc.) Textbooks stand for the number of assigned textbooks, manuals, books, or book-length packs of course readings that students have done at this college. Books on Own stand for the number of books that students have read on their own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment at this college. Papers stand for the number of written papers or reports of any length that students have completed at this college. Writing stands for how much students believe their experience at this college contributed to their writing clearly and effectively. Speaking stands for how much students believe their experience at this college contributed to their speaking clearly and effectively. Thinking stands for how much students believe their experience at this college contributed to their thinking critically and analytically.

There was a positive trend between students' GPA and their engagement with classroom genres, including: preparing two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in ($r = .294$, $p < .01$), working on a paper or project that required integrating ideas from various resources ($r = .271$, $p < .01$), discussing ideas from readings or classes with others outside of class ($r = .370$, $p < .01$), and reporting that their college experience contributed to their speaking clearly and effectively ($r = .206$, $p < .05$). These correlations reveal possible connections between students' engagement with and skill at manipulating classroom genres and their academic performance.

Narrative Analysis: Plots Reveals the Affordances of Diverse Narrative Genres

Students wrote narratives within the Letters, Best Experience, and Worst Experience genres in diverse ways that offered differing interpretations of their community college. Even though students were not informed of an explicit purpose or audience with the genre prompts, students' creation of plots across their narratives demonstrates that they found differing purposes and audiences for each narrative genre. First, an analysis of students' high point issues demonstrates that each genre gave students differing opportunities for interpreting their lives within higher education. Second, an analysis of students' resolutions strategies demonstrates that each genre gave students different ways to achieve sociocultural goals with varied audiences. For instance, students often used the relational Letters genre to demonstrate their ability to thrive within higher education to an intimate audience outside college.

Narrative Genres: High Point Issues, the Central Tensions of the Plot

Each narrative was assigned one high point, defined as the tension that the narrative revolves around. There were four high points issues: college experiences (actual experiences in college), developing (changing due to their collegiate experiences), emotion (expressing

emotion), and relationships (experiences with social partners). A focus on "relationships"

emerged as the most prominent issue, evident in Khadija placing conflicts with college

administrators at the center of her Best Experience narrative. Table 3 lists the number and

percentages of different issues within genres and in total.

Table 3

Distribution of High Point Issues within Genres and in Total.

High Point Issues	Best Experience (%)	Worst Experience (%)	Letter (%)	Total (%)
Relationships	48 (46.15%)	28 (27%)	44 (42%)	120 (38.46%)
College Experience	20 (19%)	53 (51%)	23 (22%)	96 (30.77%)
Emotion	21 (20.19%)	20 (19%)	21 (20%)	62 (19.87%)
Developing	15 (14%)	3 (2.9%)	16 (15%)	34 (10.89%)
Total	104 (100%)	104 (100%)	104 (100%)	312 (100%)

The high point analysis revealed differences in *how* the participants enacted plot across

genres. Most Letters and Best Experience narratives revolved around relationships, while most

Worst Experience narratives revolved around college experiences. Multiple genres elicited

differing high point issues, indicating that students assumed that each genre had a different

intended purpose even *without* an explicit prompt. Across genres, students highlighted

relationships with partners outside college (i.e., friends and family) in the Letters genre,

relationships with college-related partners (i.e., other students, faculty, and staff) in the Best

Experience genre, and college experiences (usually difficulties such as failing classes) in the

Worst Experience genres. These results suggest that students often used the Letters genre to

connect their college experiences to their lives outside of higher education, the Best Experience

genre to reflect on college relationships and align with collegiate values and norms, and the

Worst Experience genre to dwell on collegiate difficulties and criticize the college institution.

Resolution Strategies: Coping with Difficulties

In total, 104 students narrated 337 resolution strategies across 312 narratives,

representing their flexible attempts to overcome college difficulties. On average, each student

narrated 3.24 resolution strategies across three genres. This average adds up to more than 1.0

because spontaneous narrating often involves a sequence of attempts to resolve difficulties,

indicating the dynamic nature of narrating to make sense of one's experiences (Ahmed, 2018;

Ahmed, Ilieva & Yan, 2019; Daiute, 2014). See Table 4 for more information on the distribution

of resolution strategies within and across narrative genres.

Table 4
Distribution of Resolution Strategies within Genres and in Total.

Resolution Strategies	Best Experience (%)	Worst Experience (%)	Letter (%)	Total (%)
Connecting	18 (58.06%)	8 (20.51%)	124 (46.44%)	150 (44.51%)
Psychological Reframing	10 (32.26%)	10 (25.64%)	85 (31.84%)	105 (31.16%)
Acting by Self	3 (9.68%)	19 (48.72%)	21 (7.87%)	43 (12.76%)
Being Practical about College		2 (5.13%)	37 (13.86%)	39 (11.57%)
Total Strategies	31 (100%)	39 (100%)	267 (100%)	337 (100%)
Average Strategies Per Student	0.29	0.38	2.57	3.24

The most common resolution strategy was that of connecting with others (44.51% of total

strategies) to achieve goals and overcome difficulties. One example lies in Khadija working with

college advisers in her Best Experience narrative. The next most common strategy was that of

psychological reframing (31.16%), which appeared when students resolved problems by

changing their interpretation of events. The third most common strategy was that of acting by

self (12.76%), which appeared when students attempted to solve problems on their own, without

support. The least common strategy was of being practical about college (11.57%), which appeared when students focused on the benefits of community colleges to justify attendance.

Students differed in their use of resolution strategies within genres, with students generally writing more resolution strategies in the inherently relational Letter genre (2.57 per person) than in the Best Experience (0.29 per person) and Worst Experience (0.38 per person) genres. These across-genre differences indicate the importance of allowing students to interact with a range of imagined audiences, as some audiences (i.e., close partners within the Letter genre) elicited more resolution strategies and coping mechanisms than other audiences (i.e., impersonal researchers within the Best and Worst Experience genres).

The inherently relational Letter genre elicited the most resolution strategies, as its prompt directed students to write to an unspecified "important person in [their] life" – who students almost always interpreted as being a close friend or family member outside of college. When directing their letters to such intimate audiences, students often used resolution strategies to perform college competencies in order to achieve joint sociocultural goals. Khadija's Letter demonstrates these goals via her creation of plot. (Note that her resolution strategies have been underlined).

"Dear Sister: I will recommend you to attend to X Community College because the staff are really helpful and the professors help you to work and achieve a good grade during the end of the semester. There are writing center, tutor for math, and professors have hours that you can see them if you need extra help with the assignments and etc. The students are wonderful and the school has [a] library, and a lot of computer labs that you can go there and do your work. There is a group study that you can join if you have difficulties in one of your classes. I am glad I attend to this school and about to graduate in 2015."

Within their letters, students like Khadija often strove to fulfill two important sociocultural goals – to demonstrate competency to their partners and to encourage their partners to enter higher education – that required the interest and participation of their audience. To fulfill these goals, they used resolution strategies to position themselves as knowledgeable mentors for their partners, to demonstrate their ability to meet college expectations, and to showcase the advantages of higher education. Later quantitative analyses will reveal that students' use of resolution strategies to achieve social goals within the Letter genre also relates to their facility with classroom genre and predicts their year-end GPA.

Finally, students used different types of resolution strategies across narrative genres. Students wrote more relational connecting strategies in the Letters and Best Experience genres, while they wrote more isolated acting-by-self strategies in the Worst Experience genre. For instance, Khadija's use of connecting strategies within the Best Experience genre contrasts against the acting-by-self strategies she utilized within the Worst Experience genre. Her Worst Experience narrative is as follows (note that her high point is bolded and her resolution strategies are underlined):

"My worst experience in this college is when I wanted to rent a book from the library and they didn't allow me to because I owe the school. For some reason, tap [financial aid] took forever to process and it took a while for it to clear all my bill. I came to the tap department to write me a note to give to the library staff **but they said no**. I ended up using the book in the library because I couldn't take it home. I was real pissed."

However, most students wrote Worst Experience narratives that followed a pattern utilized by Tom, an 18-year old Latinx male student who reported speaking more than one language at home and having a country of origin other than the United States. He ended the

academic year with a 1.54 GPA, indicating his inability to maintain grades high enough to

escape probation. His Worst Experience narrative is as follows (note the high point is bolded):

    "Every day I attend this college, it's the same thing, go to class, come out, go home. **I**

have not had a worse experience other than just having to be here*."*

    This type of narrative – which features a central experience of difficulty that was

unaccompanied by any kind of resolution strategy – was particularly common in the Worst

Experience genre and was linked to lower year-end GPA in later regressions.

Narrative Plot Connects with Classroom Genres and Academic Performance

    Pearson's product-moment correlations demonstrate a connection between students'

creation of plot within narrative genres, experience with classroom genres, and academic

performance (see Table 5 for all correlations). When students use narrative genres in ways that

might align with audience expectations or with college conventions (that is, they focus their

narratives on issues other than college experiences and find resolutions to college problems),

they engage more often with classroom genres *and* have a higher year-end GPA. Students may

use narrative genres in ways that connect with and perhaps shape their ongoing academic

experiences in community college.

    The high point issues that students focused on connected to their academic performance

and experiences with classroom genres. As students write more high points centered on college

experiences, they report having less frequent discussions on ideas from their readings or classes

with instructors ($r = -.256$, $p < .01$) and their year-end GPA decreases ($r = -.217$, $p < .05$). Thus,

Tom's focus on an irresolvable difficulty at the center of his Worst Experience narrative may

connect to his lesser engagement with instructors and his inadequate (as measured by

institutional standards) GPA.

However, high point issues other than college experiences generally connect to more frequent engagement with classroom genres. Students' use of developing high points related to more frequent reports on working on papers/projects that require integrating ideas from various sources ($r = .204$, $p < .05$). Similarly, students' use of emotional high points related to more frequent reports on reading books for personal pleasure or academic enjoyment ($r = .195$, $p < .05$). Thus, Khadija's use of high point issues other than college experiences in her Best Experience narrative generally aligned with her more frequent engagement with classroom genres inside and outside of college, as well as the development of her academic skills within community college.

Students' use of resolution strategies within narratives also relates positively to their experiences and skill with classroom genres, as well as their year-end GPA. These findings are especially strong for the Letter genre, which offers students the affordance of an intimate audience that is located outside of higher education. The relational nature of the Letter genre may give students a chance to perform college aptitude in ways that serve interpersonal goals (i.e., connect with, impress, and/or reassure partners) inside and outside of the college institution.

This interpretation is bolstered by several correlations, which demonstrate that as students wrote more resolution strategies regarding their connecting to others within the Letter genre, they were more likely to report: a higher year-end GPA ($r = 3.22$, $p < .01$), preparing two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in at this college ($r = .235$, $p < .05$), working a paper or project that requires integrating ideas from various sources ($r = .265$, $p < .01$), having discussions on ideas from their readings or classes with others (such as fellow students, family members, co-workers, etc.) outside of class ($r = .232$, $p < .05$), writing papers or reports of any length at this college ($r = .237$, $p < .05$), reporting that their current college experiences

contributed to their speaking clearly and effectively ($r = .217$, $p < .05$), reporting that their

current college experiences contributed to their thinking critically and analytically ($r = .245$, $p <$

.05).

Students' total use of resolution strategies, especially connecting resolution strategies that

rely on relational support, also connected with their use of classroom genres, development of

genre skills, and year-end GPA. For instance, as students like Khadija wrote more connecting

resolution strategies regarding their connecting to others across all narrative genres, they were

more likely to report: a higher year-end GPA ($r = .307$, $p < .01$), preparing two or more drafts of

a paper or assignment before turning it in at this college ($r = .239$, $p < .05$), having discussions

on ideas from their readings or classes with partners outside of class ($r = .265$, $p < .01$), writing

papers or reports of any length at this college ($r = .203$, $p < .05$), and that their experiences in

college contributed to their writing clearly and effectively ($r = .196$, $p < .05$) and to their

speaking clearly and effectively ($r = .241$, $p < .05$).

In summary, there was a generally positive trend in how often students wrote resolution

strategies to solve college problems within narrative genres, how often they engaged with and

developed their skill at using classroom genres, and their academic performance. Khadija's

frequent use of resolution strategies within the Letter genre and across all narratives genres

should (and did) positively relate to her frequent engagement with classroom genres,

demonstrate her skill at conveying higher education to various audiences in ways that aligned

with college norms, and connect with her year-end 3.06 GPA, which exceeds the minimum

standards of her college. These findings suggest that students like Khadija can call upon and

perhaps develop their genre knowledge as they interact with a range of genres and audiences

throughout their college career.

Use of Classroom and Narrative Genres Predict Academic Performance

The researcher conducted a series of standard multiple regression models to predict year-end GPA from a combination of background variables (e.g., students' age, gender, income, semester, number of children, employment status, Pathways[5] status, attendance within English as a Second Language and Developing Reading/Writing/Math classes, and Fall 2014 GPA/credits earned), classroom genre variables (e.g., students' experiences with writing drafts, working on paper or projects, discussing ideas with instructors, discussing ideas with others outside of class, number of assigned textbooks and other reading materials, number of books read on own, number of written papers or reports, developing skill at writing, developing skill at speaking, and developing skill at reading) and/or narrative genre variables (e.g., total and genre-specific use of high point issues and resolution strategies). The background variables isolated the predictive power of students' engagement with classroom genres and genre-sensitive writing.

All of the following regression models were significant at the $p < .001$ level. These models utilized only 98 of 104 participants, as one participant was missing year-end GPA and five other participants were missing data on their income, employment status, and/or classes. Note that regression models excluded the high point issue of emotion, as regression models automatically excluded variables measuring the least common high point issue. Table 6 present the significant regression findings for students' demographic variables, experience with classroom genres, and creation of plot within narrative genres.

Table 6
Regressions Predicting Year-End GPA, Using Classroom Genres and Narrative Genres

	Model 1: Controls	Model 2: Controls, Classroom Genres, and High Point Issues within Narrative Genres	Model 3: Controls, Classroom Genres, and Total High Point Issues across Narrative Genres
Constant	-.002 [-.983, .978]	-.902 [-2.33, .530]	-.993 [-2.416, .429]

Controls

Age	.022 [-.005, .049] †	.027 [-.001, .055] †	.024 [-.003, .051] †
Gender	.044 [-.253, .324]	.017 [-.291, .325]	.020 [-.281, .321]
Income	.016 [-.021, .052]	.024 [-.013, .062]	.024 [-.013, .061]
Semester	.125 -.045, .296]	.071 [-.108, .250]	.054 [-.112, .220]
Number of Children	-.069 [-.279, 141]	.027 [-.212, .266]	.029 [-.217, 272]
Employment Status	.058 [-.115, .231]	-.020 [-.199, .159]	.040 [-.129, .208]
Pathways	-.134 [-.634, .365]	-.009 [-.573, .555]	.024 [-.520, .567]
English as a Second Language	.052 [-.273, .376]	.082 [-.250, .415]	.054 [-.274, .382]
Developmental Reading	.397 [-.015, 809] †	.378 [-.038, .794] †	.464 [.064, .864]*
Developmental Writing	-.282 [-.689, .125]	-.371 [-.777, .035] †	-.348 [-.742, .047] †
Developmental Math	.138 [-.194, .469]	.103 [-.240, .446]	.060 [-.271, .391]
GPA Fall 2014	.530 [.410, .650]***	.436 [.301, .571]***	.440 [.313, .568]***
Total Credits Fall 2014	-.060 [-.201, .081]	.033 [-.122, .188]	.059 [-.088, .206]
Classroom Genres			
More Drafts		-.046 [-.204, .112]	.002 [-.148, .153]
Complete Paper		.176 [-.022, .374] †	.233 [.046, .421]*
Discuss w/ Instructors		.047 [-.110, .204]	.048 [-.103, .199]
Discuss w/ Others		.278 [.107, .448]**	.189 [.030, .348]*
Textbooks		-.138 [-.297, .021]	-.133 [-.292, .025]
Books on Own		-.122 [-.291, .047]	-.069 [-.232, .095]
Papers		.085 [-.079, .250]	.032 [-.124, .188]
Writing		.005 [-.304, .314]	-.067 [-.353, .218]
Speaking		-.046 [-.336, .245]	.072 [-.202, .346]
Thinking		.110 [-.153, .372]	.055 [-.199, .309]
Narrative Genres: High Points			
College Exp Letter		-.279 [-.700, .141]	
College Exp Best		.214 [-.274, .701]	
College Exp Worst		-.427 [-.779, -.075]*	
Developing Letter		-.157 [-.653, .338]	
Developing Best		.040 [-.405, .484]	
Developing Worst		.541 [-.290, 1.372]	
Relationships Letter		-.194 [-.600, .213]	
Relationships Best		.237 [-.119, .594]	
Relationships Worst		-.098 [-.478, .283]	
High Points – Total			
College Experience Total			-.189 [-.413, .035] †
Developing Total			-.078 [-.360, .203]
Relationships Total			-.008 [-.204, .188]
R^2	.571	.729	.694
F	8.610***	5.747***	6.190***

Note. † = marginally significant at p < .10 level. * = statistically significant at p < .05 level. ** = statistically significant at the p < .01 level. *** = statistically significant at the p < .001 level. ESL stands for English as a Second Language class. More Drafts stands for how often students at this college have prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in at this college. Complete Paper stands for how often students at this college have worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources. Discuss w/ Instructor stands for how often students at this college have discussed ideas from their readings or classes with instructors outside of class. Discuss w/ Others stands for how often students at this college have discussed ideas from readings or classes with others outside of class (such as fellow students, family members, co-workers, etc.) Textbooks stand for the number of assigned textbooks, manuals, books, or book-length packs of course readings

that students have done at this college. Books on Own stand for the number of books that students have read on their own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment at this college. Papers stand for the number of written papers or reports of any length that students have completed at this college. Writing stands for how much students believe their experience at this college contributed to their writing clearly and effectively. Speaking stands for how much students believe their experience at this college contributed to their speaking clearly and effectively. Thinking stands for how much students believe their experience at this college contributed to their thinking critically and analytically. HP stands for High Point Issue. Letter stands for Letter genre. Best stands for Best Experience genre. Worst stands for Worst Experience genre. The high point issue of Emotions was not included in any of the regression models due to collinearity.

Note. Unstandardized coefficients (*B*) are recorded, followed by lower bound and upper bound 95.0% confidential interval for *B*.

In Model 2, significantly higher year-end GPA was reported by participants who discussed ideas from readings or classes with others (such as family members) outside of class (*B* = .278, 95% CI [.107, .448], *p* = .002) and who used the high point of college experience within the Worst Experience genre (*B* = -.427, 95% CI [-.779, -.075], *p* = .018). Marginally higher year-end GPA was also reported by participants who attended a developmental reading course (*B* = .378, 95% CI [-.038, .794], *p* = .074) and worked more often on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources (*B* = .176, 95% CI [-.022, .374], *p* = .080). Marginally lower GPA was reported by participants who attended a developmental writing course (*B* = -.371, 95% CI [-.777, .035], *p* = .072).

In Model 3, significantly higher year-end GPA was reported by participants who attended a developmental reading course (*B* = .464, 95% CI [.064, .864], *p* = .024), discussed ideas from readings or classes with others (such as family members) outside of class (*B* = .189, 95% CI [.030, .348], *p* = .020) and worked more often on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources (*B* = .233, 95% CI [.046, .421], *p* = .015). Marginally higher year-end GPA was reported by participants who used frequently placed high point issues of college experience at the center of their narrative genres (*B* = -.189, 95% CI [-.413, .035], *p* = .098). Marginally lower GPA was reported by participants who attended a developmental writing course (*B* = -.348, 95% CI [-.742, .047], *p* = .083).

Table 7 present the significant findings for regressions based on students' demographic variables and creation of plot within narrative genres. In Model 4, marginally higher GPA was reported by students who used more connecting resolution strategies (*B* = .108, 95% CI [-.017 .233], *p* = .089) within the Letter genre.

Table 7
Regressions Predicting Year-End GPA, Using Resolution Strategies across Genres

	Model 4: Controls and all Resolution Strategies across Genre
Constant	-.309 [-1.401, .783]
Controls	
Age	.021 [-.009, .051]
Gender	.076 [-.227, .378]
Income	.011 [-.030, .052]
Semester	.143 [-.058, .344]
Number of Children	-.076 [-.303, .151]
Employment Status	.058 [-.140, .256]
Pathways	-.074 [-.611, .464]
English as a Second Language	.072 [-.278, .422]
Developmental Reading	.404 [-.066, .874]
Developmental Writing	-.245 [-.709, .219]
Developmental Math	.128 [-.234, .491]
GPA Fall 2014	.540 [.400, .680]***
Total Credits Fall 2014	-.050 [-.205, .105]
Resolution Strategies – Genre	
Being Practical Letter	-.005 [-.191, .181]
Being Practical Best	
Being Practical Worst	-.030 [-.657, .597]
Connecting Letters	.108 [-.017, .233] †
Connecting Best	-.074 [-.416, .269]
Connecting Worst	-.030 [-.657, .597]
Psych Reframing Letter	.053 [-.080, .186]
Psych Reframing Best	.077 [-.359, .512]
Psych Reframing Worst	-.125 [-.700, .450]
Acting by Self Letter	.191 [-.073, .455]
Acting by Self Best	-.026 [-.652, .600]
Acting by Self Worst	-.076 [-.377, .225]
R²	.600
F	4.567***

Note. †= marginally significant at p < .10 level. * = statistically significant at p < .05 level. *** = statistically significant at p < .001 level. ESL stands for English as a Second Language class. RS stands for resolution strategies. Letter stands for Letter genre. Best stands for Best Experience genre. Worst stands for Worst Experience genre. Psych Reframing stands for Psychological Reframing.

In summary, regressions demonstrated that students' year-end GPAs can be predicted by their work on complex papers or projects that integrate ideas from various sources, from their discussion of classroom ideas with partners outside of class, from their placement (or lack thereof) of college experiences within the high points of narratives, and from their total use of connecting resolution strategies within the Letter genre. Thus, students' prior genre knowledge (as indicated by their presence in developmental reading/writing courses) and active engagement in classroom genres (including their work on complex papers and projects, as well as their social engagement of academic ideas with partners outside of class) predicts their academic success in community college. Their creation of plot within their genre-sensitive narratives – namely, the high point issues that they place within narrative genres (particularly the Worst Experience genre) and their use of resolution strategies within the Letter genre – also predicts their GPA.

Discussion

This article focuses on the experiences of ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse students within a public urban community college. Such diverse students disproportionately enroll in public community colleges and can experience considerable academic, health-related, and economic advantages from earning a certificate or associates degree, or from transferring to a four-year college institution (ACT Institutional Data File, 2016; Belfield & Bailey, 2011; Carnevale, Garcia, & Gulish, 2017). However, many diverse students struggle to achieve their academic goals in community college due to experiencing many challenges, including that of insufficient prior genre knowledge (Ganga, Mazariello and Edgecombe, 2018; VanOra, 2012; 2014). It is thus important to explore how diverse students attending community college develop their genre knowledge by engaging with a variety of classroom and narrative genres, how diverse

students might use narrative genres to interpret and navigate higher education, and how their

engagement with genres and growing genre knowledge relates to their academic performance.

Almost a quarter of the 104 students enrolled in this study entered higher education with

insufficient prior genre knowledge, as judged by their placement in developmental reading and

writing courses. Over time, as these students took part in developmental and other college

courses, the majority reported at least some engagement with classroom genres (such as writing

complex reports and creating multiple drafts of assignments), as well as some growth in their

reading, writing, and speaking skills. These findings suggest that even when diverse students

enter community college with varying levels of prior genre knowledge, they can develop their

genre knowledge and rhetorical skills further within their institution. These developments may

support diverse students' attainment of a high enough GPA to reach important academic goals

such as attaining an associates degree or transferring to a four-year college. Ultimately, their

achievement of such academic goals will support their achieving later academic, career-related,

and financial success (Nunez, Sparks, & Hernandez, 2011; Espinosa, Kelchen, & Taylor, 2018).

When given the opportunity to write genre-sensitive narratives regarding their college

lives, diverse students drew upon the affordances of multiple narrative genres for various

purposes. Students often used narrative genres as tools to develop and signal their genre

knowledge, to imagine and resolve their college difficulties, to enact the values, norms, and

practices of higher education, and to achieve sociocultural goals with intimate audiences. Diverse

students might experience a particular benefit from writing within the inherently relational Letter

genre, as this narrative genre allowed them to communicate their college journey to partners

outside of higher education; use of the Letter genre can ultimately help diverse students bridge

gaps between their home and college lives (Hannah & Saidy, 2014). Moreover, students' creation

of genre-sensitive narratives related to their experience and proficiency with classroom genres –

a finding that suggests that students drew upon their developing genre knowledge to interact with

a wide range of genres while attending higher education.

Finally, students' engagement with classroom and narrative genres – both genres that

draw upon their prior and developing genre knowledge in community college – seems to predict

their academic outcomes. In particular, students' placement within developmental reading and

writing courses, work on a paper or project that required integrating ideas from various sources,

discussion of ideas from readings or classes with partners outside of class (such as fellow

students, family members, etc.), centering of narrative plots on high point issues of college

experience (both within the Worst Experience genre and across all narrative genres), and use of

connecting resolution strategies within the Letter genre appear to predict their year-end GPA.

These results indicate that students' proficiency with classroom and narrative genres – and use of

genres to demonstrate collegiate competency for and achieve sociocultural goals with different

audiences – relates to their academic progress. Ultimately, this study connects diverse

community college students' ability to develop and express genre knowledge within their writing

to their academic success (i.e., their maintaining a GPA high enough for certificate/associates

degree completion and/or transfer to a four-year college institution). These findings demonstrate

the importance of allowing diverse community college students to engage with multiple genres

within both higher education and research.

The Plots and Purposes of Students' Genre-Sensitive Narratives

When diverse students write genre-sensitive narratives about their college experiences in

response to narrative genre prompts, they may develop or demonstrate knowledge and skills that

can support their growth and success within community college. As demonstrated by a close

reading of the plots that students embed within their genre-sensitive narratives, diverse students

can use narrative genres to communicate divergent stories to differing audiences, achieve a

variety of sociocultural goals, and reflect their knowledge of higher education.

In general, students created different types of plot across the three narrative genres in

ways that reveal their varied interpretations of higher education, as well as their differing

purposes for writing. For instance, most students created plots within the Best Experience genre

to highlight the positive aspects of community college. As seen in students' frequent use of the

high point issues of relationships and college experiences in this genre, students usually used the

Best Experience genre to focus on supportive relationships with college partners and to review

their college triumphs. As they did so, most students demonstrated their engagement with and

acceptance of collegiate norms, values, and expectations. Moreover, though students usually did

not call upon resolution strategies to resolve difficulties within this genre, this absence of

resolution strategies was tied to the relative lack of college difficulties explored within the genre.

Within the Worst Experience genre, most students constructed plots that focused on

problems experienced in community college, as seen in their use of high point issues of college

experiences accompanied by a lack of resolution strategies. For instance, Tom's Worst

Experience narrative used the high point of college experiences to center a reader's attention on

the monotony that he endured as a student – a difficulty that was not alleviated by any coping

mechanisms (i.e., resolution strategies). Many other students utilized a similar plot within the

Worst Experience genre to criticize or even condemn their college institution for its failings.

Within the inherently relational Letter genre, students embedded strikingly different plot

elements to achieve novel sociocultural and relational goals with an intimate imagined audience.

In this genre, students often constructed plots that involved high point relationship issues and

copious resolution strategies that addressed actual and projected difficulties. Students used these

plot elements to relate their college journey to a sympathetic audience of close family and

friends, to connect their college experiences to their lives outside of higher education, and/or to

achieve sociocultural goals relevant to intimate audiences. Students' sociocultural goals could

range from highlighting their college aptitude, enticing partners to join them in higher education,

or soliciting support from partners; all of these goals were enacted within their Letters' plot

structures. For instance, when Khadija wrote a letter containing numerous resolution strategies to

persuade her sister to enter Khadija's community college, she enacted all these implicit

sociocultural goals within her text. Such goals (as well as the plot structures used to achieve

these goals) imply that students draw upon and develop their genre knowledge in order to

respond to the dynamic needs of both relationship partners and institutions (Berkenkotter, 2001;

Tardy, 2003; 2016).

Moreover, in their pursuit of important sociocultural and relational goals, diverse students

like Khadija often used the Letter genre to endorse the values, beliefs, and practices of higher

education. For instance, within her letter, Khadija embedded the value of achieving success

through attending college, the belief that hard work can overcome collegiate difficulty, and the

practice of finding support from collegiate authority figures and structures. In doing so, students

like Khadija demonstrated that their use of the Letter genre was simultaneously shaped by both

their personal goals and norms within higher education. This finding echoes previous research

regarding the impact of sociocultural goals, values, beliefs, and practices on people's genre

knowledge across a variety of academic institutions and positions (Devitt, 2008; Driscoll et al.,

2020; Paré, 2002; Tardy, 2003; Tardy, Buck, Pawlowski, & Slinkard, 2018).

Connecting Students' Engagement with Genres to Academic Outcomes

This article connects students' engagement with various genres – and by extension, their developing genre knowledge – to their academic performance. For instance, the high point issues that students embedded within their genre-sensitive narratives related to their cumulative year-end GPA, with high point issues of college experience (especially within the Worst Experience genre) generally connecting to and predicting lower year-end GPA. In contrast, when students reported completing more written papers or reports of any length at their college, discussing more college ideas with partners outside of classrooms, and/or using more connecting resolution strategies (especially within their Letter narratives), they were more likely to have a higher GPA at the end of the academic year. This section posits several explanations for this connection between students' engagement with and knowledge of genres and their academic success.

Connecting Students' High Point Issues to Academic Outcomes. The high point issues that students embedded in their narratives related to both their engagement with classroom genres and their year-end academic outcomes. As students organized narratives across all genres more often around high point issues of college experience, they reported fewer discussions of classroom ideas with their instructors and their year-end GPA generally fell. Additionally, the high point issue of college experience seems to significantly predict lower GPA within the Worst Experience genre and marginally predict lower GPA within all narratives. In other words, when students centered their narratives on college experiences – and especially when they focused on college difficulties within the Worst Experience genre *without* coping with said difficulties via resolution strategies – they seemed to experience more social disengagement from instructors and worse academic performance at the end of the year. This was true even though students were not explicitly asked to focus on, analyze, or resolve their college difficulties within any of the narratives.

Perhaps when students centered their narratives on college experiences (which almost always feature difficulties within the Worst Experience genre), they signaled their inability to investigate why certain experiences occurred or what their experiences taught them. For instance, Tom wrote a Worst Experience narrative that centered on his college dilemmas without analyzing the reasons behind or finding solutions for said dilemmas. Students like Tom may not have realized the importance of expanding beyond a description of their college experiences or difficulties within narrative genres, as they were not prompted to do so in the study. But through their inability (or unwillingness) to use narrative genres as tools to reframe and resolve collegiate challenges, students like Tom might have demonstrated their inability to cope with college difficulties, find relationship partners who support their rhetorical and other skills, draw upon the values of higher education, or meet ongoing institutional standards (Devitte, 2009; Tardy, 2003; Berkenkotter, 2001).

Moreover, for students like Tom, their inability to use narrative genres to investigate and resolve their college issues may demonstrate their lack of genre knowledge – a competency that may be especially pertinent within the Worst Experience genre as the genre can help students cope with the rigors of their college institution. Students' lack of genre knowledge – and related lack of coping skills, relational support, and ability to meet institutional standards – might play a role in students' (relatively) low academic performance at the end of the school year.

Connecting Students' Social Uses of Genre to Academic Outcomes.

Diverse students' social uses of both classroom and narrative genres, and their writing within the inherently relational Letter genre, also appears to connect with their academic performance. Pearson correlations reveal that as students discussed collegiate ideas with partners outside of the classrooms, embedded more resolution strategies within all narrative genres to

resolve problems, and/or used more connecting resolution strategies (particularly within the

Letter genre) to resolve problems with relational support, their GPA generally rose. Furthermore,

regressions revealed that students' use of connecting resolution strategies to find or offer social

solutions to difficulties within the Letter genre apparently predicted their having a higher year-

end GPA. This section explores why diverse students' social use varied genres – particularly

their use of resolution strategies (especially connecting strategies) within the Letter genre –

might connect to their academic performance.

First, perhaps some students who engage in the social use of both classroom and narrative

genres (particularly the Letter genre) develop greater competency in genre knowledge – a type of

knowledge that develops in part due to students' continual engagement with genres as they

attend college – and in utilizing genres to achieve goals within community college (Berkenkotter,

2003; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2010; Tardy, 2016). This interpretation is supported by data

demonstrating that most students reported some development of their rhetorical skills within

community college. Even when students come in with relatively poor genre-related skills, they

can develop their genre knowledge as they practice genre-related skills while attending college

(Tardy, 2016). Students' genre knowledge develops from them de- and re-constructing their

genre-related skills in response to ongoing challenges instituted by higher education (Bawarshi &

Reiff, 2010; Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011). Moreover, their genre knowledge may manifest in their

ability to use the Letter genre as a tool to imagine and address novel challenges that may hold

some similarities to previously encountered problems (Bazerman, 1997).

Second, student's social use of genres reflects the relational aspect of genre knowledge,

which develops in part due to students' engaging with partners who can help them develop their

genre-related and rhetorical skills (Berkenkotter, 2001; Paré, 2002; Tardy, 2003). Students like

Khadija who utilize numerous resolution strategies within the Letter genre may demonstrate their ability to attract partners who help them navigate community college. This ability may be especially critical for diverse students who lack personal experience in, cultural familiarity with, or familial support regarding higher education (Beer, 2000; Deil-Amen, 2011; Hyon, 2002). Students who communicate their college ideas to partners outside of college and who write letters with many resolution strategies may be students who have more social support inside and outside of higher education. In turn, their greater social support may prove critical to their success in community college (Carrasquillo, 2014; Francois, 2012; VanOra, 2014).

Third, student's use of genres may predict their academic outcomes because they reflect the practices of students who enter higher education with greater college competency and/or genre knowledge – that is, a better understanding of how to meet the rhetorical demands of college audiences (Hannah & Saidy, 2014). Some students may have entered community college already prepared to take on its challenges and/or equipped with the prior genre knowledge needed to engage competently with classroom genres (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010). Their prior level of college competency and genre knowledge might have led them to write resolutions to college difficulties within their narratives – particularly the Letter genre – that demonstrate their collegiate competencies to partners.

Finally, relational narrative genres may give diverse students a unique chance to develop their genre knowledge by allowing them to extend their rhetorical skills and knowledge of higher education to partners outside of college. Specifically, the Letter genre give diverse students like Khadija the chance to demonstrates college competencies to and uphold institutional values, beliefs, and practices with an intimate audience of friends and family. Ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse students like Khadija often have friends and family who need support in

academic settings; due to these social connections, such diverse students may feel the need to act

as guides to higher education for their partners (Deil-Amen, 2011; Hill & Torres, 2010; Sanchez,

Esparza, Colon, & Davis, 2010). Thus, in accordance with recent work by Driscoll and

colleagues (2020), diverse students and their partners may especially benefit from the social

affordances of an epistolary Letter genre that allows students to address partners outside of

college. These relational functions did not take place within the Best and Worst Experience

genres, demonstrating the importance of allowing community college students to communicate

with and offer their support to close partners via their hard-won experience in higher education.

Implications and Future Directions

This article adds to genre scholarship in several ways. First, this work draws upon the

notion of genre as dynamic rhetorical forms that people use in response to their sociocognitive

needs within their sociocultural contexts (Bakhtin, 1986; Bazerman, 1997; 2004; Berkenkotter &

Huckin, 1993; 1995; Daiute, 2014; Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011; Russell, 1997; Tardy, 2003; 2016).

The focus on ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse community college students' use of

classroom and narrative genres adds to previous research on diverse people's use of genres to

review experiences and enact sociocultural goals in relation to specific audience members

(Ahmed, 2017; Ahmed, Ilieva, & Yan, 2019; Beer, 2000; Daiute & Kreniske, 2016; Driscoll et

al., 2020; Hyon, 2002; Jovic, 2014; Kreniske, 2017; Tardy, 2003; Todorova, 2018). This article's

results ultimately contribute to genre-related research that indicates that genre-sensitive writing

is developmental and supports diverse people's rhetorical, academic, and socioemotional growth.

This work also demonstrates that ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse students

use both classroom and narrative genres in varied ways to interpret their community college, as

well as to enact culturally sensitive goals, values, beliefs, and practices with partners inside and

outside of higher education. Its findings highlight the importance of allowing diverse students to

utilize multiple writing stances, address a variety of audiences, and engage with diverse relational

and educational goals. By exploring the connections between students' uses of narrative and

classroom genres, and by examining students' varied experiences with multiple genres as they

attend community college, this article reflects the development of diverse students' genre

knowledge within higher education. The articles' findings suggest that even when diverse

students enter community college with insufficient prior genre knowledge, they may develop

their genre knowledge through exposure to a range of classroom and narrative genres in college.

This work also highlights the importance that genres hold as tools that students may use

to support their development and academic progress in higher education (Bazerman, 1997). It

found that community college students are more academically successful when they used

classroom and the Letter genres to communicate and achieve goals in tandem with partners

situated inside and outside of their college – a finding that dovetails with past research on

students' use of genres to communicate with potential audiences within recurring situations as

they strive to reach context-relevant goals (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010; Bazerman, 2004; Devitt,

2008; 2009; Berkenkotter, 2001; Driscoll et al., 2020; Miller, 1984; Schryer, 1993; Tardy, 2003;

2016). This article extends past research by demonstrating that community college students may

attain greater academic success (as measured by their year-end GPA) when they draw upon their

genre knowledge to write narratives that help them navigate college challenges, achieve

sociocultural goals, and address audiences situated outside college. This connection between

diverse students' genre knowledge and academic success may eventually impact their ability to

achieve their academic, financial, and career-related goals. Given the many barriers that diverse

students experience while striving for such goals, it is critical to support their development of genre knowledge and engagement with varied genres in order to support their success.

Finally, this article indicates that since diverse students come to community college with a broad range of sociocultural goals related to intimate audiences, building goals and social relations into their writing activities can help students grow their genre knowledge and achieve greater academic success. Future researchers could extend these findings by creating workshops wherein community college students write about their college journey for a variety of partners (such as close friends, advisers, and student peers) in order to support their important personal goals. Students' resultant text would add to our field's understanding of how diverse community college students use genres to guide their personal development, achieve their sociocultural goals with partners, engage with collegiate values, beliefs, and practices, and build relationships with partners inside and outside of higher education. Ultimately, by exploring diverse community college students' use of genres and growing genre knowledge, we can further support their academic success. Eventually, such academic success will bolster students' future socioemotional, academic, career-related, and economic development.

Appendix A: Genre Prompts

1. Best Experiences: Write a story about your best experience in college so far. What happened? Who was involved? How did it all turn out?

2. Worst Experiences: Write a story about your worst experience in college so far. What happened? Who was involved? How did it all turn out?

3. Letter: Please write a short letter to an important person in your life. This person can be your parent, your romantic partner, your sibling, your child, your friend, your professor, or your boss – anyone who is important to you. What would you like to tell them about your experiences in community college?

4. Newspaper: Imagine that you have completed your first year of community college and that you are going to write a short article for your college newspaper. This article will be read by freshman students at your community college. What advice would you give them for their first year? Feel free to give examples from your own experiences.

5. Third Person: Terri is a student who started attending your college when you did. Write a story about Terri's first year in college. What had he (or she) hoped? What happened? Who was involved (positively or negatively)? How did she (or he) think and feel about that year?

Appendix B: CCSSE (2005) Items that Explore Classroom Genres:

1. In your experiences **at this college** during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following:

[On scale of 1 – 4, 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often, 4 = Very Often]

a. Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in

b. Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources

c. Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with instructors outside of class

d. Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (with fellow students, family members, co-workers, etc.)

2. During the current school year, about how much reading and writing have you done **at this college**?

[On scale of 1 – 5, 1) None, 2) 1 to 4, 3) 5 to 10, 4) 11 to 20, 5) More than 20]

a. Number of assigned textbooks, manuals, books, or book-length packs of course readings

b. Number of books read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment

c. Number of written papers or reports of any length

References

21st-Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges. (2012). *Reclaiming the*

    American dream: Community colleges and the nation's future. Washington, District of

    Columbia: American Association of Community Colleges. Retrieved from

    https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/files/21stCentReport.pdf

ACT Institutional Data File. (2016). *National collegiate retention and persistence-to-degree*

    rates. Retrieved from

    https://www.ruffalonl.com/documents/shared/Papers_and_Research/ACT_Data/ACT_20

    16.pdf

Ahmed, T. (2017). *Narrating the future: Understanding how student narratives relate to*

    outcomes in community college. Retrieved from CUNY Academics Works. (Accession

    No. 2376).

Ahmed, T. (2018). Evaluating how community college students' understanding of success

    influences outcomes using a mixed-methods research design. SAGE Research Methods

    Cases. doi:10.4135/9781526439918

Ahmed, T., Ilieva, R. T., & Yan, A. (2019). Values analysis within narratives: In the context of

    food insecure students in community college. *SAGE Research Methods Datasets*. doi:

    10.4135/9781526493798

Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). The problem of speech genres. In C. Emerson & M. Holquist (Eds.),

    Speech genres and other late essays (pp. 60–102). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Bawarshi, A. S., & Reiff, M. J. (2010). *Genre: An introduction to history, theory, research, and*

    pedagogy. Indiana: Parlor Press.

Bazerman, C. (1997). The life of genre, the life in the classroom. In W. Bishop & H. Ostrom.

Genre and writing: Issues, arguments, alternatives (pp. 19 – 26). Portsmouth:

Boynton/Cook.

Bazerman, C., (2004). Intertextuality: How texts rely on other texts. In: Prior, P., Bazerman, C.

(Eds.), What Writing Does and How It Does It: an Introduction to Analyzing Texts and

Textual Practices (83–96). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, N.J.

Beer, A. (2000). Diplomats in the basement. In P. Dias & A. Paré (Eds.), Transitions: Writing

in academic and workplace settings (pp. 61 – 88). Creskill, NJ: Hampton.

Belfield, C. R., & Bailey, T. (2011). The benefits of attending community college: A review of

the evidence. *Community College Review*, *39*(1), 46-68. doi: 10.1177/0091552110395575

Berkenkotter, C. (2001). Genre systems at work: DSM-IV and the rhetorical recontextualization

in psychotherapy paperwork. Written Communication, 18, 326- 349. doi:

10.1177/0741088301018003004

Berkenkotter, C., & Huckin, T. N. (1993). Rethinking genre from a sociocognitive perspective.

Written Communication, 10(4), 475 - 509. doi: 10.1177/0741088393010004001

Blustein, D. L. (1986). Identifying predictors of academic performance of community college

students. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 27*(3), 242-249.

Brock, T. (2010). Young adults and higher education: Barriers and breakthroughs to

success. *The Future of Children*, *20*, 109 – 132.

Carnevale, A. P., Garcia, T. I., & Gulish, A. (2017). Career pathways: Five ways to connect

college and careers. Center on Education and the Workforce. Washington,

DC: Georgetown University.

Carrasquillo, C. A. (2014). *In their own words: High-achieving, low-income community*

college students talk about supports and obstacles to their success (Doctoral

dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 1420365116)

Community College Survey of Student Engagement. (2005). *About the Survey*.

Retrieved from http://www.ccsse.org/aboutsurvey/aboutsurvey.cfm

Crews, D. M., & Aragon, S. R. (2004). Influence of a community college developmental

education writing course on academic performance. *Community College Review*, 32(2),

1-18. doi: 10.1177/009155210403200201

CUNY OIRA (2018). *Total enrollment by race/ethnicity, gender and college: Percentages – fall

2017*. Retrieved from

http://www2.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/oira/institutional/data

Daiute, C. (2010). *Human development and political violence.* New York: Cambridge

University Press.

Daiute, C. (2014). *Narrative inquiry: A dynamic approach*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Daiute, C. (2016). A relational theory of human development in the 21st century crisis of

violence and displacement. *Human Development*. 59(2-3), 128–151.

doi: 10.1159/000448230

Daiute, C. (2017). Developing with diversity in the third decade of life and beyond. Budwig, N.,

Turiel, E. and Zelazo, P. (Eds.). *New perspectives on human development.* (pp. 447 – 468).

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Daiute, C. & Kreniske, P. (2016). Hopes, misunderstandings and possibilities of narrating for

inclusive education. In Surian, A. (Ed.), *Proceedings of open spaces for interaction and

learning diversities*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Deil-Amen, R. (2011). Socio-academic integrative moments: Rethinking academic and

social integration among two-year college students in career-related programs. *Journal of Higher Education, 82*(1), 54 – 91. doi: 10.1080/00221546.2011.11779085

Devitt, A. (2008). *Writing genres*. Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press.

Devitt, A. (2009). Teaching critical genre awareness. In C. Bazerman (Ed.), *Genre in a changing world* (pp. 337 – 351). Indiana: Parlor Press.

Driscoll, D. L., Paszek, J., Gorzelsky, G., Hayes, C. L., & Jones, E. (2020). Genre knowledge and writing development: Results from the Writing transfer project. *Written Communication, 37*(1), 69 – 103. doi: 10.1177/0741088319882313

Espinosa, L. L., Turk, J. M., Taylor, M., & Chessman, H. M. (2019). Race and ethnicity in higher education: A status report. Retrieved from the American Council on Education website: https://www.equityinhighered.org/resources/report-downloads/

Francois, B. (2012). *First-generation college students' descriptions of the experience of community college.* Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 1034590714)

Ganga, E., Mazzariello, A., & Edgecombe, N. (2018). Developmental education: An introduction for policymakers (ESC/CAPR Brief). Retrieved from Teacher's College Columbia University, Community College Research Center website: https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/developmental-education-introduction-policymakers.pdf

Goldstein, M. T., & Perin, D. (2008). Predicting performance in a community college content-area course from academic skill level. *Community College Review*, 36(2), 89–115. doi: 10.1177/0091552108322631

Hill, N. E., & Torres, K. (2010). Negotiating the American dream: The paradox of aspirations and achievement among Latino students and engagement between their families and

schools. *Journal of Social Issues,* 66, 95 – 112.

Hull, G., & Rose, M. (1989). Rethinking remediation: Toward a social-cognitive understanding
of problematic reading and writing. *Written Communication*, 6(2), 139–154.

Hyon, S. (2002). Genre and ESL reading: A classroom study. In A. M. Johns (Ed.), Genre in the
classroom: Multiple perspectives (pp. 121 – 141). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Ilieva, R. T., Ahmed, T., & Yan, A. (2018). Hungry minds: Investigating the food insecurity of
minority community college students. *Journal of Public Affairs*. Advance online
publication. doi: 10.1002/pa.1891

Imbrenda, J. P. (2016). The blackbird whistling or just after? Vygotsky's tool and sign as an
analytic for writing. *Written Communication*, 33(1), 68 - 91. doi:
10.1177/0741088315614582

Jovic, S. (2014). Evaluative devices as a narrative tool for enacting relational complexity: A
window into implicit meaning in adolescents' narratives. *Narrative Inquiry, 24*(1), 113–
131. doi: 10.1075/ni.24.1.06jov

Karp, M. M., Raufamn, J., Efthimiou, C., & Ritze, N. (2015). Revising a college course for
sustained impact: Early outcomes. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice,
41*(1), 42 – 55. doi: 10.1080/10668926.2016.1152929

Kreniske, P. (2017). Developing a culture of commenting in a first-year seminar. *Computers in
Human Behavior, 72*, 724-732. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2016.09.060

Larson, B. N. (2016). Gender / Genre: The lack of gendered register in texts requiring genre
knowledge. *Written Communication*, 33(4), 360 - 384. doi: 10.1177/0741088316667927

Ma, J., & Baum, S. (2016). Trends in community colleges: Enrollment, prices, student debt, and

completion. *College Board Research, Research Brief*. Retrieved from:

   https//trends.collegeboard.org

Miller, C. (1984). Genre as social action. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70, 151 – 167. doi:

   10.1080/00335638409383686

McClenny, K. M., & Marti, C. N. (2006). *Exploring relationships between student engagement*

   and student outcomes in community colleges: Report on validation research. Retrieved

   from The Community College Survey of Student Engagement website:

   http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED529075.pdf

National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2018). Snapshot report: First-year persistence

   and retention. Retrieved from https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-

   content/uploads/SnapshotReport33.pdf

National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2019). Current term enrollment estimates:

   Fall 2019. Retrieved from https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-

   content/uploads/CTEE_Report_Fall_2019.pdf

Nunez, A.-M., Johnelle Sparks, P., & Hernández, E. A. (2011). Latino access to community

   colleges and Hispanic-Serving Institutions: A national study. *Journal of Hispanic Higher*

   Education, *10*(1), 18–40. doi: 10.1177/1538192710391801

Paré, Anthony. (2002). Genre and identity: Individuals, institutions and ideology. In R. Coe, L.

   Lingard, & T. Teslenko (Eds.), The rhetoric and ideology of genre (pp. 57 – 71). New

   York, NY: Hampton Press.

Porchea, S. F., Allen, J., Robbins, S., & Phelps, R. P. (2010). Predictors of long-term enrollment

and degree outcomes for community college students: Integrating academic, psychosocial, socio-demographic, and situational factors. *Journal of Higher Education, 81*(6), 750 – 778.

Reiff, M. J., & Bawarshi, A. (2011). Tracing discursive resources: How students use prior genre knowledge to negotiate new writing contexts in First-Year Composition. *Written Communication*, 28(3), 312–337. doi: 10.1177/0741088311410183

Russell, D. (1997). Rethinking genre in school and society: An activity theory analysis. *Written Communication*, 14(4), 504-554.

Sanchez, B., Esparza, P., Colon, Y., & Davis, K. E. (2010). Tryin' to make it during the transition from high school: The role of family obligation attitudes and economic context for Latino emerging adults. *Journal of Adolescent Research,* 25, 858 - 884.

Schryer, C. (1993). Records as genre. *Written Communication*, 10, 200 – 234. doi: /10.1177/0741088393010002003.

Schudde, L., & Scott-Clayton, J. (2016). Pell grants as performance-based scholarships? An examination of satisfactory academic progress requirements in the nation's largest need-based aid program. Research in Higher Education, 57(8), 943-967. doi: 10.1007/s11162-016-9413-3

Southard, A. H., & Clay, J. K. (2004). Measuring the effectiveness of developmental writing courses. *Community College Review*, 32(2), 39–50. doi: 10.1177/009155210403200203

Stout, B. R., & Magnotto, J. N. (1988). Writing across the curriculum at community colleges. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 36*, 21 – 30. doi: 10.1002/tl.37219883606

Swales, J. M. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Swales, J. M. (2004). Research genres: Explorations and applications. Cambridge, England:

    Cambridge University Press.

Tardy, C. M. (2003). A genre system view of the funding of academic research. *Written*

    Communication, 20(1), 7 – 36. doi: 10.1177/0741088303253569

Tardy, C. M. (2016). *Beyond convention: Genre innovation in academic writing*. Ann Arbor, MI:

    University of Michigan Press.

Tardy, C. M., Buck, R. H., Pawlowski, M., & Slinkard, J. R. (2018). Evolving conceptions of

    genre among first-year writing teachers. *Composition Forum*, 38.

Tardy, C. M., Sommer-Farias, B., & Gevers, J. (2020). Teaching and researching genre

    knowledge: Toward an enhanced theoretical framework. *Written Communication, 37*(3),

    287–321. doi: 10.1177/0741088320916554

Tinberg, H., & Nadeau, J. P. (2010). *The community college writer: Exceeding expectations*.

    Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.

Todorova, R. (2018). Institutional expectations and students' responses to the college application

    essay. *Social Sciences,* 7(205), 1-15. doi: 10.3390/socsci7100205

VanOra, J. (2012). The experience of community college for developmental students: Challenges

    and motivations. *Community College Enterprise*, 18, 22-36.

VanOra, J. (2014). *Desperate to achieve: Understanding the lives, struggles, and*

    identities of community college students assigned to developmental classes. New York:

    AMS Press.

Endnotes

[1] In this article, I use the term "diverse community college students" (i.e., "diverse students") to refer to variance in students' self-identified ethnic identity, cultural backgrounds, and linguistic skills. In terms of ethnic identity, I worked with students who predominantly self-identified as belonging to ethnic groups outside of the Caucasian (i.e., "White") American group that makes up the majority of the United States population. The diverse student sample primarily consists of students identified as being Latinx- (i.e., Latino/a-Hispanic, 51.4% of our sample), Black- (i.e., African or African-Caribbean-American, 38.1% of our sample), or Asian- (i.e., East-Asian, South-east-Asian, South-Asian, or Pacific Islander, 3.8% of our sample) American. Students' diversity also manifest in terms of their cultural backgrounds and linguistic knowledge, as 82.9% of student reporting come from at least one other country of origin outside of the United States, 64.8% report speaking at least one other additional language at home other than English, and roughly a quarter of students (ranging from 21.2% to 26.9%) reported taking a developmental reading, writing, or English as a Second Language course while attending community college. Thus, I considered the student sample (and the population I generalize about) as being diverse on multiple sociocultural levels, including ethnic identity, cultural background, and linguistic skills.

[2] I use the term "genre-sensitive narratives" to refer to the short texts (i.e., narratives) that students write about their college lives in response to this article's Letter, Best Experience, and Worst Experience genre prompts. I consider students' resultant narratives to be "genre-sensitive" because narrative plots differed substantially based on whether their genre prompt encouraged them to focus on the positive aspects of community college (i.e., the Best Experience prompt), allowed them to criticize or even condemn their community college (i.e, the Worst Experience

prompt), or connect with close relationship partners who may be situated outside of community

college (i.e., the Letter prompt).

[3] The demographics survey in this study contained a total of thirteen questions, including

those regarding students' gender, age, ethnic background, country or countries (besides America)

that their family came from, language(s) spoken at home, fluency in speaking/reading/writing

English, total household income, number of people supported by that income, number and age of

children, use of on-campus or off-campus childcare services, identities of roommates,

employment status, marital status, and full name. The complete demographics survey can be

found in Appendix A of Ahmed's (2017) dissertation.

[4] Participants originally wrote narratives for five genre prompts. In addition to the Letter,

Best Experience, and Worst Experience prompts, participants wrote within the Third-Person and

Newspaper genres. The Third-Person genre prompted them to write about the college experience

of a third-person character (Terri) who was new to their community college. The Newspaper

genre prompted them to write a story for their college newspaper geared at an audience of their

peers. Thus far, I have not analyzed narratives from either of these genres.

[5] While the Best and Worst Experience genres are similar insofar as they prompt students

to write about their college experiences, they are treated as two separate narrative genres for

three reasons. First, the genres are adapted from Daiute's (2016) study on the writing of

community college students and were treated as separate genres therein. Second, the two genres

afford different opportunities for students to make sense of their college lives. Students often use

the Best Experience genre to ally with their college's values and opportunities, even as they

usually use the Worst Experience genre to confront their college-related disappointments and

regrets. Third, students' writing within the Worst Experience genre connects with and predicts

their year-end GPA, while their writing with the Best Experience genre has no such connection

to academic progress. Given these differences in students' use of genre and connection to

academic outcomes, I treated the Best and Worst Experience genres as two separate genres with

differing purposes and affordances.

[6] The CCSSE (2005) included seven items that related to students' experience with

classroom genres within their current community college. These items asked students to report

on how often they have read or written within various academic genres (papers, assignments,

readings, textbooks, manuals, books), and discussed ideas related to various academic genres

(readings or classes) with their instructors or other partners outside of class.

The CCSSE (2005) also contained items regarding how much students' experience at this

college contributed to their knowledge, skills, and development in terms of writing and speaking

clearly and effectively, and thinking analytically and critically, on a scale of 1 (very little) to 4

(very much). Though these items are not exact measures of students' genre knowledge, they

offer insight into how skilled students are in communicating with a collegiate audience in ways

supported by higher education. They also measure the development of students' genre-related

skills within community college, as well as students' relational engagement with their college's

rhetorical requirements.

[7] In 2013, the public university system that encompasses the community college of this

study instituted the Pathways program to establish new rules for students' general education

requirements. This article tracked student's enrollment within Pathways program due to the

changes instituted by it.