

*"With Tension comes a little  
work":*

# Safety and Privacy in the Online Classroom Space

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# Literature Review

- According to digital literacy theorists, the affordances enabled by Web 2.0 technologies have been lauded for their ability to promote:
  - Student engagement (Wheeler, 2010)
  - Increased motivation (Mills, 2010; Vetter, 2014)
  - Emphasis on the process over the final product (Barton, 2005)
  - Deep reflection (Lundin, 2008; National Institute for Literacy, 2006; Vetter, 2014)



# The Technologies

- Web 2.0 technologies include
  - Blogs
  - Wikis
  - Wiki-like platforms (such as Google Drive)
- Web 2.0 Technologies allow students to interact:
  - Asynchronously
  - Anonymously
  - Works are “published” to the class or the world

# Literature Review

- Despite the transparent, public nature of Web 2.0 technologies, to date, there have been no studies examining safety and privacy issues in these online spaces.



# Hypothesis

- Some students would be negatively affected by the perceived lack of safety and/or privacy using Google Drive.

# Research Questions

- What percentage of students feel a lack of safety or privacy in these open spaces?
- Which students are hurt? Male? Female? Particular races or backgrounds?
- To what degree are these students hurt?
- If the safety and privacy issues exist, what can be done to address these issues?



# My Class

- Freshman Composition, ~20 students/class
- Google Drive the homework hand-in and peer review tool.
  - Student able to view one's another works and comments.
  - Students asked to comment on one another's documents.

# Peter Elbow meets Digital Literacy

- Web 2.0 technologies complement the workshop model espoused by Composition theorist Peter Elbow
  - Facilitate learning by placing students as the authorities
  - Allow students to discern for themselves what makes good and bad writing
  - Give students exposure to realistic peer models (Elbow, 1968).
- This workshop model “exemplifies many of the tenets of composition that the field purports to value”
  - Collaboration (Barton, 2005)
  - Emphasis on continual revision
  - communal knowledge formation (cited in Lundin, 2008).



# Participants

- 56 Students Invited
- Male (45%), Female (55%)
- Asian (52%), Caucasian (32%), Pacific Islander (6%), Hispanic (6%), Mixed (4%), Unknown (2%)
- Oahu (52%), Mainland (36%), Int'l (7%), Neighbor Island (4%)

# Method: Questionnaire

- Questionnaire: 33 participated (59%)
- Two sections:
  - Did you feel *comfortable* or *uncomfortable* sharing your work, giving comments, receiving comments from peers, and receiving comments from their instructor online?
  - Did sharing works on Google Drive *motivate* you to write better or revise?



# Method: Focus Group

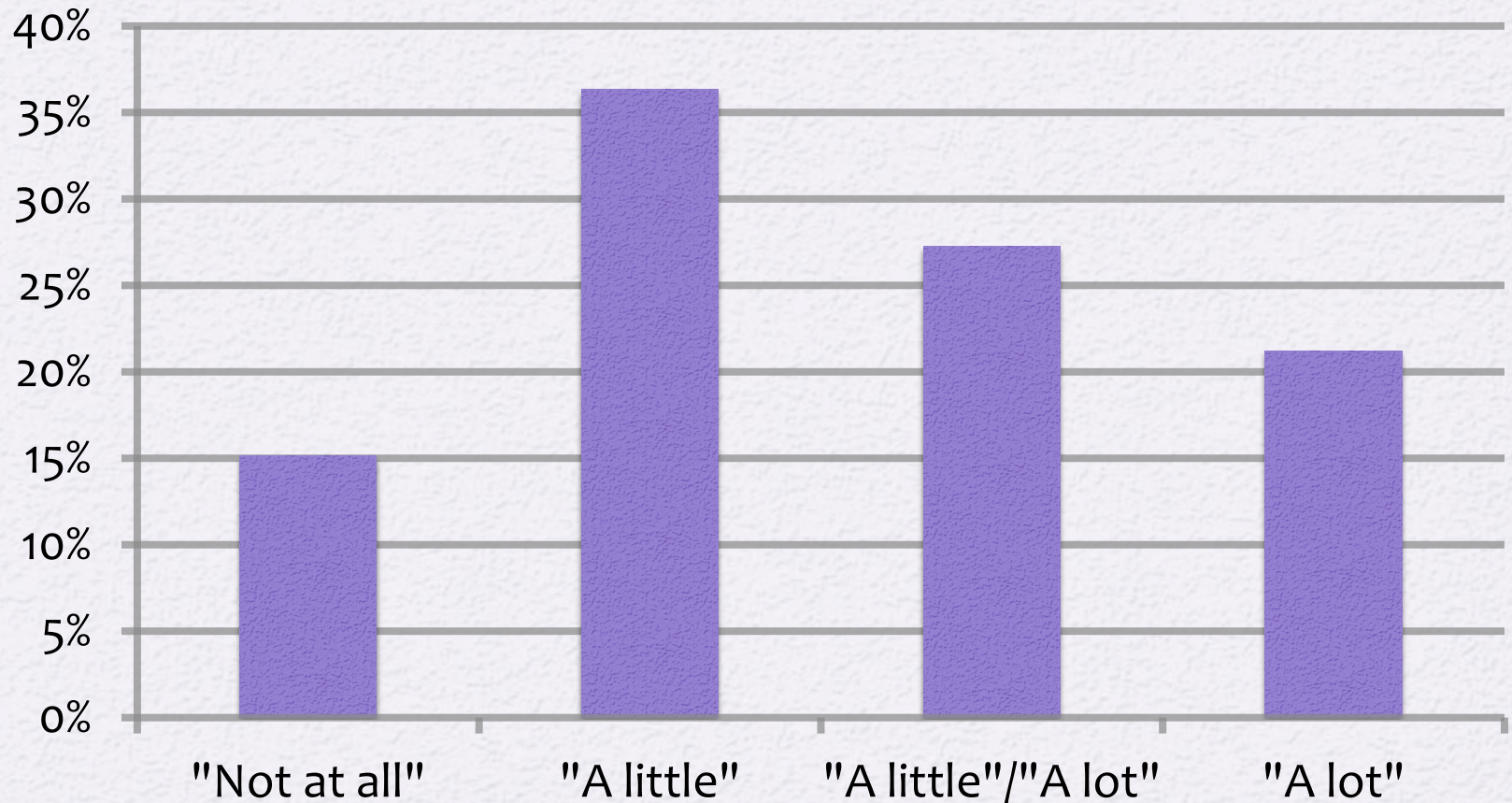
- Focus Group: 18 participated (3 groups of 6)
- A variety of questions centered around the questions:
  - Do you feel *comfortable* sharing your writing and comments on Google Drive?
  - Did sharing your work on Google Drive *motivate* or discourage you?

# Data Analysis

- Based on their responses, individual respondents were characterized as:
  - Totally comfortable, Not motivated (5)
  - Totally uncomfortable, Motivated a little (1)
  - Very Comfortable, Motivated “a little” (11)
  - Comfortable, Motivated “a little” (8)
  - Slightly uncomfortable, , Motivated “a lot” (8 )



# Questionnaire Results: Motivation



# Data Analysis: Focus Groups

- Following the Focus Groups, student comments were organized by themes:
  - “We were all in the same boat.”
  - “With tension comes a little work.”



# Feeling Safe:

*“We were all in the same boat.”*

- “We were all in the same boat.” (Focus Group 3)
- “You were being equal.” (Focus Group 1)
- “Everyone has to do it. It’s not that big a deal.” (Focus Group 3)

too much safety.

*“With tension comes a little work.”*

- “When you get used to who you’re with,” the writing suffers (Focus Group 3)
- “When we know each other.. Nah, let’s not do anything.” (Focus Group 3)
- “I’d work more in a new group, [because] I don’t want to be a douche.” (Focus Group 3)
- “I wouldn’t say that... If you switch groups, you feel more uncomfortable” but “there is a difference in writing.” (Focus Group 2)
- “With tension comes a little work.” (Focus Group 3)



# Discussion

- When asked why they were uncomfortable, students said they were afraid of the judgment of their peers.

# Validity/Reliability

- It does not capture those students who dropped out of the course .
- That said, both the questionnaire and focus groups, did capture student responses who said they were at times uncomfortable sharing their work online.
- Students used the focus groups as a forum to air their complaints:
  - “It was too much freedom.”
  - Google Drive was a problem when Internet was down.



# Limitations

- The study was small.
- One instructor.
- One technology.

# Conclusion

- **Contrary to my hypothesis, some discomfort actually contributed to higher levels of motivation and achievement.**
- This study confirms the findings of previous digital literacy theorists that Web 2.0 technologies motivate through engagement with a wider audience (Mills, 2010; Vetter, 2014; Lammers, 2012)
- This study suggests a possible pedagogical pitfall of transparent digital online spaces worthy of further examination.