

THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF RACISM AND COMMUNITY-BASED
ASSESSMENT PRACTICE

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of
ASAO B. INOUE find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

Chair

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Abstract

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Chair: Victor Villanueva, Jr.

This is a discussion that theorizes the epistemology of racism and incorporates it into a critical writing pedagogy. It uses primarily a critical sophistic pedagogy, a set of community-based assessment practices, and a rhetoric of hard agreements, all theorized. This discussion draws primarily from three areas: (1) sophistic rhetorical and pedagogical theory, primarily discussions around *nomos-physis*, Protagoras' man-measure doctrine and his antilogical heuristics for rhetorical invention; (2) cultural theory and theories surrounding the ideological and rhetorical construction of race, class, and power; and (3) composition theory, primarily assessment theory and critical pedagogical theory.

The epistemology of racism attempts to reveal the consubstantial, social matrix that forms hegemony (like epistemology of whiteness) and personhood by connecting *habitus* (dispositions acquired historically through one's life experiences engrained in the body), common sense (discourse and logics circulating in societal networks), and institutions (ministering structures that validate authority and agency to people, ideas, logics, and knowledge). This interconnection offers a set of concepts that aid in addressing race in the classroom by discussing racism as structural and epistemologically constructed in discourse and material practices. It shows how assessment can be a powerful way to critically interrogate knowledge in the classroom if reflection is used to help students theorize their practices. Sophistic antecedents of antilogic and Protagoras' "measuring" are translated to contemporary

understandings of writing assessment, so that a community-based assessment pedagogy is promoted, one that incorporates writing for peers, focused peer assessment practices, class-constructed rubrics, a portfolio system, and public reflection that allows students to theorize their own practices in order to make these practices more critical, forming critical praxis.

Finally, a rhetoric of hard agreements, one not based on notions of “consensus” but on conflict through discussions of epistemology and hermeneutics that are informed by the epistemology of racism, is defined. This rhetoric attempts to address some of the important objections and concerns that many may have about community-based assessment practice, the encouragement of conflict in the classroom (particularly surrounding race and the epistemology of whiteness), and the call for critical resolutions by students around race, writing, and assessment.

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An Introduction: Enlightenment Categorization and Rhetorics of Racism

From Kant to our current politicians, from the exclusion of somehow “essentialized” notions of race to ongoing English-Only laws and the end of Affirmative Action, we are steeped in racism. And we are steeped in a colonial discourse, one which continues to operate from a developmental rather than dialectical model – despite our best efforts. (657-58)

“On the Rhetoric and Precedents of Racism,” Victor Villanueva

A Recent Job Interview

I’m in a room with about fifteen WSU administrators and staff, mostly from offices in the Administration building and the Marketing Communications Department. They’re interviewing me for a communications position. It’s a technical writing job of sorts with some marketing in it. The room is dark, kind of quiet, but friendly enough. Most smile or seem interested in what I’ve said.

“Don’t you think that your image and face attached to university marketing materials would encourage other Asian Americans and minorities to succeed in college, to even go to college? Don’t you want to be a role model for other Asian Americans?”

Reflecting back on this awkward moment, a moment I'm sure helped decide for many my inability to do that job (at least not in the manner they were looking for), I realize that question was sincere and honest. It was meant to help me see the error of my logic in a parental fashion. I remember the mid-ranking female staff member who asked it and her kind voice and sincere eyes. Earlier in the discussion, the committee implied that I might be asked to "participate" in marketing campaigns, to be on "marketing collateral" that advertised WSU's "World Class, Face to Face" environment. How did I feel about this? I talked about a time that I'd refused a similar offer for similar reasons as a faculty at another educational institution. As they continued to ask me questions, the session turned into an examination of sorts. It all began to make sense. You see, I was invited to this interview by one of them, asked to apply for this job. I had some background that applied. I had a good portfolio of work that a few had seen in another context. I was known by several in this particular hiring committee as a "strong candidate." I was there to put "color" into their hiring processes.

It felt as though they were testing me: would I be a good token? Did I buy into their notions of "diversity" and "multiculturalism"? I wanted to raise my voice to her and the others nodding in approval to her response concerning my comments about how race is really a political construct, not a marketing strategy, that it's used intentionally and unwittingly to marginalize and objectify people of color – to keep us in certain places by providing a few better places for some, always has. And I wanted to tell them that by implication, any marketing material that uses people of color to sell a university to prospective students when, in fact, the school in question has barely any students of color on its campus, is dishonest and unethical. Furthermore, this tactic constructs people of color as part of the exotic scenery for the vast majority of white students. I wanted to explain that there's no biological link to race – it's a social and political

construct, used to classify groups of people (and thus control them); it has been deduced scientifically, and reinforced through historical legislative actions and laws in the U.S., over and over.¹ I couldn't let an institution make money from the use of my image, selling education like an exotic "oriental" rug. I wanted to *ask them* if they knew that 44.1% of those who identified themselves as "Asian Americans" on the 2000 census who were 25 years of age and older had a Bachelor's degree, compared to only 26.1% of whites (U.S. Department of Commerce 5). Why do we need urging to go to school? We are already going to school, and achieving higher rates of graduation than any other racial group identified on the U.S. census. I wanted to tell her, "look, see my perspective. The facts of my life do not bear out your conclusion. Me a role model? That's what *you* and *your* multicultural agenda say." But of course, my presence and success in school is not so simple as being *not* a model. In many ways, I am a "model minority," but my story is also more complicated than this what myth allows. It intersects with class and economic issues. My appearance is not always identified by others as "Asian," but usually as colored of some kind.

Instead of offering my complications to this myth to the committee, I said, "hmm, yes, I see how it could offer that, but I feel it's more complicated. I'm just not sure." And then I told them with a smile that I understood my racial designation as a political construct and that I could not knowingly allow it to be used in that way. From their puzzled looks, even by the African American and Filipino committee members, I could tell they did not understand. They could not see why I was so against the idea. Some smiled, some nodded, but no one said a word. They just scribbled on their yellow tablets. Maybe they thought I was just a bitter, little, brown man, seething with anger, inscrutable. Maybe they just couldn't put the logic together because of their investment in WSU, its multicultural agenda, their personal commitments to institutional

diversity. Maybe they really thought that displaying bodies of color for primarily white students to see was a good idea, that it wasn't in this context some kind of conspicuous multicultural consumption. This is how my time at WSU has gone for the most part. These exchanges are always congenial, always pleasant, usually non-confrontational, and always encouraging, friendly, and explicitly about tolerating "different voices" and "celebrating diversity." In other words, they usually listen to what I have to say, smile, and move on to business.

A few years ago, I could only say that I felt racism but couldn't put my finger on how it operated in my life, my education, my day-to-day dealings. I wouldn't have thought much of the above situation. In fact, it would have seemed "normal" and fair. I may have even said I'd love to be on WSU marketing materials. Usually, there was this sense that I was paranoid, overly sensitive about race as usual – about *me*, the guy in the room who is always the racial body (even if usually racially ambiguous). Upon meeting new people, nine out of ten times, I'm asked immediately: "what nationality are you?" or "what's your background?" I know what they mean. They see my black hair, brown, wide almond-shaped eyes, and olive skin and wonder: Is he Asian, Native American, or Latino? Or maybe he's Greek or Italian? My mom would tell me, "you've had a good life, son. No one has been bad to you. You've succeeded. Look how well you're doing; besides you're not a minority." We would argue on occasion about these things, talking past one another.²

As an undergraduate at another land grant university (equally as homogenous and white as WSU) ten years ago, I thought racism was all about individual prejudice, bigotry, and unkind words. And yet when a classmate told me with a kind smile that he didn't see me as a "minority," instead I was "just like any other normal guy," it hurt. I didn't know why it hurt then, but it seemed unfair. He was a nice guy, trying to reassure me (and maybe himself) that I was

okay, that I was not some pariah, that I belonged there with everyone else, all of whom were white.

Today, I see the tacit racism in kind-hearted comments like my friend's. Because my "normalcy" needs affirming, it also needs a white yardstick, and so I was measured against whites and classified. Whiteness becomes academic orthodox, and I am proof of the boundaries of that orthodoxy. My brownness must be whitewashed. While I am not white, I am a special kind of off-white fellow, a model-minority, an anomaly outside the usual black-white binary of race. When I talk to my brother about this, about being educated in racist institutions our entire lives, he laughs an uncomfortable laugh, one that tells me that he doesn't *want* to believe me but can't fully deny it. Instead he chooses not to think about it by joking about "the man bringing us down." It is a white response, parodied through an African American commonplace, one that trivializes the political relations of power that racial designations construct and refuses to look at reasons or solutions, and effectively turns its back on the whole thing. Today, racism rarely appears antagonistic, malicious, or spiteful, rarely sounds evil, hateful, or overtly contemptuous of the Other – discussions may even be disguised as racially neutral, as inclusive. In fact, it is more likely that discussions around racism center on seemingly positive, empowering assumptions of equality, fairness, and opportunity, like the explicit motives for both schools that have asked me to be a part of their image campaigns. I appear to be the model of the Horatio Alger myth, but I have seen few (if any) other models beside me along my educational journey. And so without a framework to filter these experiences, it's hard not to blame whites, teachers, administrators, and colleagues, when you're a person of color in a university (no matter what your position is, student, teacher, staff, or administrator). And in this societal space, it's even more difficult not to sound like the point of each dialogue is to bash white folks. My purpose

here is to provide a way not to play a blame game, to acknowledge the good intentions of all agents, to honor my mother's and brother's perspectives, yet find a productive way to discuss race and racism with those who most need it, college students.

In the rest of this introduction, I'll provide a historical groundwork for critical discussions of racism and rhetoric,³ with an eye toward applying it to the writing classroom and composition studies. I'll link Enlightenment epistemologies and scientific discourse to the study of rhetoric and its ubiquitous product: the ordering of society, "the mind," and bodies into various "scientific" taxonomies, such as race, gender, class, and citizenship. These epistemologies were not only influential in constructing rhetorical instruction in western society, but carried with them racist structures. I'll argue that Richard Whately was influential in transferring these Enlightenment philosophical and scientific epistemologies into the field of rhetoric. I'll then show how this informs the main rhetorical tradition of the twentieth century, the current-traditional paradigm of writing instruction, which still influences the academy.

Aristotelian Classification and Teleological Method

A brief history of Greek rhetoric and its connections to Enlightenment philosophical traditions, especially the method of categorization, shows why the politics of citizenship and the Other lead to contemporary issues around race within rhetoric and the writing classroom.⁴ The method of classification, seen as far back as Plato, was a consistent feature of Greek philosophy and rhetoric, and was integral to discussions around citizenship. In terms of ordering bodies, and the ordering of society, defining and classifying citizens was a precursor to European racial classifications of the 1400s and later (Sanjek 1).⁵

Ancient Greek rhetorical and philosophical traditions show that many of rhetoric's origins stem from the political needs of Athenian citizens and the state.⁶ In fact, the virtuous

person was synonymous with the good citizen (Goldberg 15), which encouraged the heated debated over the presence of the usually foreign-born (i.e. non-citizen) sophists who claimed to teach virtue through rhetoric to young Athenian men, who would later participate in government. Rhetoric was linked to citizenship, as well as virtue, even if this connection was contested (and still is) by Plato. How could those classified as foreigners teach virtue to citizens? At the basic level, Plato saw rhetoric as flattery, sham, and artifice, while the sophists, like Protagoras, saw rhetoric as a way to urge the polis toward the best, most probable decisions in any given moment.⁷ The debates over rhetoric were not just about whether virtue could be taught and by whom, but where at their most basic level ones about classification. How should rhetoric be classified? How should citizens be classified? Should foreigners be re-classified in order to allow them some share in virtue and its teaching?

In ancient Greece, there were simply citizens, wives, slaves, and barbarians. None, not even slaves, were identified or distinguished “racially” in the ways we do today. More likely, they were identified by their region of origin. In fact, slaves were property and could be a result of voluntary servitude for debt, and were typically considered non-Greeks (*The Politics* 72). Wives managed the home and bore children, but were not citizens. They could not be a part of public decision-making through deliberative speeches or voting. Goldberg says that “[a] barbarian was one of emphatically different, even strange, language, conduct, and culture, and lacking in the cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice” (21), all of which often were associated with citizenship and rhetoric. In effect, citizens were the polis, slaves and women were not, but they were “living tools” for their owners (*The Politics* 64-5), and barbarians were literally outside the walls of the city. So to be virtuous was in part to be a citizen, which also meant to function as a part of the polis and be trained in rhetoric. In fact,

Aristotle observed that “[w]hat effectively distinguishes the citizen proper from all others is his participation in giving judgment and in holding office,” and not “mere residence” (*Politics* 169).⁸ Therefore the learning and use of rhetoric was an integral part of what made a citizen function well, and conversely, it helped define a citizen through his function and relation to the state. Barbarian, as Goldberg argues, was a political distinction, just as wife, slave, and citizen were. What’s common in all three non-citizen categories, wife, slave, and barbarian/foreigner is their lack of virtue and participation in the polis. Rhetoric was a key component to both of these things, even if contested. For the Greeks, as it is today, to teach rhetoric was an important enterprise that reproduced not only Greek citizens (virtue displayed in male bodies and voices) and culture (*paideia*),⁹ but also the polis itself. Rhetoric held the germinal seeds of the Athenian city-state and the means by which one could be fully actualized as a citizen, at least in the eyes of the Greeks.

Rhetorical training as a process of citizenship and “manhood” can also be understood as a way to categorize people in formal ways (i.e. “legal ways”), to structure society into political haves and have-nots, as well as to preserve and consolidate power and privilege. In a city-state where more and more foreigners were coming and going, affecting commerce and the workings of the polis (like many of the sophists), it would be important to construct ways to categorize the citizen from the non-citizen, the decision maker from the non-decision maker, the insiders from the outsiders. And it would be important to articulated in public spaces as well as legislation and judicial decisions the qualities of a citizen in opposition to non-citizens. This would not only reinforce one’s sense of virtue and rightful place as a citizen, but keep the barbarians out of the polis. And of course, it’s contingent on a method of classification, a science, that searches for inherent qualities in things and people.

Race, as we think of it today (as complicated as it is), was “a morally irrelevant category for the Greek social formation” (Goldberg 21). In fact even in English language traditions, Meta Carstarphen explains that “race” wasn’t a designator for ethnicity until around the sixteenth century. Up until then, it was primarily used to refer to “a ‘trial of speed,’ a ‘line,’ and a ‘root’” (24).¹⁰ Additionally, it wasn’t until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with philosophers such as Descartes, Bacon, Locke, and Hume, that the understanding of knowledge and rhetoric began to move toward the explicit use of epistemologies we see today (e.g. a reliance on “scientific method,” empiricism, and inductive proof for the production of “facts” and “truths”), all of which develop and work from taxonomies and methods of and for categorizing. This method comes from rhetorical and philosophical traditions initialized by Plato, and formalized by Aristotle.

In fact, Aristotle’s inductive and teleological method for finding truths in nature might be viewed as an antecedent to Enlightenment scientific and empirical traditions, and his notion of rhetoric, defined as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion” (*Rhetoric* 24), a way to place primacy on the discovery and delivery of truths that exist *essentially* “out there,” waiting to be found. Even a cursory glance at his famous definition suggests two assumptions that get used extensively later on (and even today): first, that the primary method for rhetorical invention is observational and inductive by its nature; and second, that the “means” necessary for persuasion are pre-existing and “available” somewhere. Assuming these things would almost demand that a catalogue of “available means” be constructed.

Additionally, it would seem “natural” for Aristotle to use an inductive teleological method when discussing politics and societal roles when we consider his zoological research

earlier in his life, as both Jonathan Barnes and Trevor J. Saunders (in his 1992 Penguin Classics summations before each chapter) note. Barnes, however, offers a way to understand Aristotle's teleology in *Politics* by thinking about it as a logic of "goals" and "final causes." He says, "[f]inal causes are not imposed on nature by theoretical considerations; they are observed in nature" (73). To put it another way, the observable, final cause of something in nature is what is good (73). He uses the example of ducks' webbed feet: "if ducks have webbed feet *for the sake* of swimming, then it is *good* – that is, good *for ducks* – to have webbed feet" (Barnes' emphasis 73). This kind of teleology allows him to structure the interior, exterior, and epistemological/rhetorical realms in *Rhetoric*. For instance, in Book I of *Rhetoric*, he not only categorizes rhetoric into modes (i.e. *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*) and kinds (i.e. deliberative, forensic, and epideictic), but also classifies governments into types (i.e. democracy, oligarchy, aristocracy, and monarchy). In Book II, he distinguishes emotions in audiences (e.g. calmness, Friendship and amnesty, pity, envy, etc.), lines of argumentation, and, of course, the use of enthymemes from maxims (i.e. induction from deduction). In Book I of *Politics*, Aristotle organizes and defines the state and provides a justification for its "nature" through a teleological and inductive method as well. In Book III, he defines citizenship and makes distinctions between citizens and "foreigners and slaves" (196), as well as types of kingship (216-19). Most importantly, Aristotle's epistemology and notions of rhetoric's purpose do not escape a relationship to the polis, and are framed around a need to categorize, which help construct the very things he's attempting to understand (i.e. rhetoric, citizenship, the state, governments, etc.).

While for Aristotle rhetoric was for persuasion, not necessarily for fact finding or truth seeking, it was also a way to persuade others of what inherently exists. To articulate definitions and categories as teleological is, in effect, to justify these distinctions rhetorically. For instance,

Aristotle might say that a citizen's observable ability to participate in the politics of Athens was a "final cause" and convincing proof of his "natural" abilities to be a citizen. The use of rhetoric was undeniable proof of one's citizenship status (while not the only indicator), and in a tacit way reinforced the categories that it itself produced (e.g. citizen, barbarian, slave, etc.).¹¹ And so Aristotle is important because his codification of rhetoric and citizenship status might be seen as classical example of a scientific epistemology, what it's meant to do, and how it can help *men* master *subjects* through careful categorization and definition of empirical elements. And maybe inadvertently, he illustrated in an implicit way that rhetoric was itself a teleological taxonomic art that could master its subjects through classification. And so Aristotle is not only the grandfather of science in western traditions, but is the key figure who legitimized a rhetoric of classification and hierarchy.

Enlightenment Discourses of Scientific Classification

Taking its cues from the tradition of Aristotle, the Enlightenment project in general attempted to do exactly this, master the world through rhetoric – that is, scientific codification and stratification. In fact, one might characterize the period's overall intellectual push as a move from discovering and justifying virtue and truth from/in texts, such as Holy Scripture, to discovering and justifying it in the world through the categorizing and analysis of empirical data. Descartes began this trend by dividing intellectual inquiry into two sites: mind and body. And of course, it was the mind, epitomized in his *cogito ergo sum* ("I think therefore I am"), that helped him build his epistemology based on doubt and skepticism.¹² But what he produced was taxonomies of "first causes," like his *cogito*. In fact, in his concluding section of *Method*, he explains his categorizing method:

First, I have tried to find in general the principles or first causes of all that is or can be in the world, without considering anything by God alone, who created the world, and without deriving these principles from any other sources but from certain seeds of truths that are naturally in our souls. (36)

Descartes method reveals several things about his science, all of which closely match Aristotelian epistemology. First, his method for finding first causes, truth, assumes a telos, God, which is both an origin and an endpoint. The main characteristic of this telos is that it pre-exists and created the world; therefore, “certain seeds of truths that are naturally in our souls” can be assumed to exist somewhere and are waiting to be found empirically. Second, this knowledge of an existing telos demands that we “find” it “in our world,” not rationalize it, conjure it, or construct it. By design, Descartes’ scientific method is inductive and empirical, despite the fact that he is often thought of as a rationalist.¹³

In his third mediation on the existence of God, he more explicitly discusses his philosophical job to categorize by grouping “all [his] thoughts into certain classes, and ask in which of them truth or falsity properly resides” (Descartes 71). Not only in Aristotelian fashion is knowledge categorized into “truth” and “falsity,” but he distinguishes between various “thoughts,” such as “ideas,” “volitions or affects,” and “judgments” (71). All of his “general principles” and “classes” construct binaries that favor one side. Truth is preferred over falsity, ideas over judgments, mind over body, etc. So while Descartes is most remembered for his methodological skepticism and *cogito*, his philosophical products work from a strikingly similar rhetorical epistemology as Aristotle. They each articulate inductively produced categories that implicitly (and often tacitly) construct hierarchies that structure values, like the mind/spirit/logic over body/material/emotion.

Around the same time as Descartes, Francis Bacon used a more obvious Aristotelian epistemology. In *The Advancement of Learning*, Bacon categorized the mind's five functions: understanding, reason, imagination, appetites, and will. In *Novum Organum*, he categorizes aphorisms, separated in four distinct areas: "idols of the tribe," "idols of the den," "idols of the marketplace," and "idols of the theater." Much like Descartes' need to list first causes, Bacon arranges the human mind and its processes for understanding in order to scientifically explain them. However, maybe his greatest influence on science and its discourses was his method for "the interpretation of nature," the precursor to the scientific method. In Book II of *Novum Organum*, he categorizes knowledge into two broad categories, metaphysics and physics. He separates each branch of knowledge into "practical" areas: for physics, there is "mechanics" and for metaphysics, there's "magic" (section IX). This allows him to describe his scientific method as one that is categorical by necessity and function, and inductive by nature:

Having thus set up the mark of knowledge, we must go on to precepts, and that in the most direct and obvious order. Now my directions for the interpretation of nature embrace two generic divisions: the one how to educe and form axioms from experience; the other how to deduce and derive new experiments from axioms. The former again is divided into three ministrations: a ministration to the sense, a ministration to the memory, and a ministration to the mind or reason.

For first of all we must prepare a natural and experimental history, sufficient and good; and this is the foundation of all, for we are not to imagine or suppose, but to discover, what nature does or may be made to do.

But natural and experimental history is so various and diffuse that it confounds and distracts the understanding, unless it be ranged and presented to

view in a suitable order. We must therefore form tables and arrangements of instances, in such a method and order that the understanding may be able to deal with them.

And even when this is done, still the understanding, if left to itself and its own spontaneous movements, is incompetent and unfit to form axioms, unless it be directed and guarded. Therefore in the third place we must use induction, true and legitimate induction, which is the very key of interpretation. (section X)

Clearly, Bacon is interested in inducing categorical “axioms,” scientific truths, from observations in nature, and these truth-claims are accomplished through a method that uses human sense, memory, and reason. In the vein of Aristotle, induction is key to this method. In fact, it is the heart of the method. And the telos in nature is truth, which is out there to be found and interpreted. This is close to Descartes’ telos, and in fact, God and “nature” could be thought of as synonymous in Bacon’s method.¹⁴ But more striking in this passage is Bacon’s attention to what is done with one’s observations. Reason alone is often “incompetent and unfit to form axioms,” so “natural and experimental history” must be arranged and “presented to view in a suitable order.” Method and order provide understanding. Teleological induction is not enough. What this means is that science is teleological. Truth is not so much discovered as it is arranged, justified, and constructed.

One notable exception to the corps of Enlightenment thinkers, besides Vico (whom I’ll discuss in chapter 1), was David Hume. Despite the fact that he still gives himself the typical Enlightenment task of categorizing the mind, defining “impressions” and “ideas,” and distinguishing them from sensed data (Hume 10, 13), Hume eventually questions inductive methods for understanding cause and effect and conclusions of “necessary connection” based on

empirical data in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. He explains that chronological events do not necessitate a certain cause and effect relationship: “All events seem entirely loose and separate. One event follows another; but we never can observe any tie between them. They seem *conjoined*, but never *connected*.” Therefore, since we can’t ever observe a conclusive connection or tie between chronological event A and subsequent event B, “the necessary conclusion *seems* to be, that we have no idea of [their] connexion” (Hume 49). Furthermore, the connection we do give to these events is really only in our minds (51). To use his own example, when a billiard ball hits another and the second one moves in a certain direction, the first ball as the cause of the second’s movement, according to Hume, can only be probable, not certain. This kind of skepticism makes room for not only a questioning of empirical methods, like Aristotle’s and Bacon’s, but a possible questioning of the primary epistemological logic in categorization as a science and rhetoric – that is, just because there *seems* to be distinctions that one might classify as “racial,” does not mean it’s valid to make them. It calls into doubt the validity of the inherent naturalness of empirical data about subjects that are taxonomized. This could lead to a questioning of whether to name and categorize something is at all a task that can identify Descartes’ first causes or Bacon’s “Light” of truth. It offers room to problematize teleological methods, the methods of empirical science, as anything more than stating one’s own judgments about perceptions. It critiques empiricism and the naturalness of conclusions based on observations, even though it ultimately reinforces a rationalism similar to Descartes’ and Bacon’s, one that relies on the mind’s ability to reason through problems and interpret results.

Now, Hume never goes this far with his analysis. He still finds a need to construct categories, a need for “accuracy” (Hume 5), as he says, or rather careful definition and categorization of the subjects and terms he uses. He works from a Cartesian dichotomy of mind

over body, and a skepticism that places primacy on the mind's faculties of reason and subordinates the body's physical sensations – that is, he creates a hierarchy of “thoughts and ideas” (formed in the mind) over “impressions” (felt in the body) that are secondary (Hume 10). So while he may not have moved epistemological discussions toward the questioning of categorization as a rhetorical method itself, he does highlight metaphysics as a science of judgments and rhetoric, which is Sophistic in the vein of Protagoras.¹⁵ Hume emphasizes the weakness in empirical methods and induction, and ironically classifies sensations as different from impressions and ideas that are based from them – that is, flawed judgments humans make based on perceptions of the material world.

Just as Greek citizens were distinguished from non-citizens rhetorically, Enlightenment scientific discourse categorized the subjects it constructed, implicitly using a teleology already known or believed in. In this way, Enlightenment discourse justified what seemed apparent in nature and society. While cause and effect may have been questioned by Hume via questioning inductive methods, the mind's ability to reason, arrange, and categorizes nature in order to make meaning explicit through science was not. The scientific discourse of the time solidified and further codified into method Aristotelian traditions of knowledge. These traditions would become a key method for institutionalizing the concept of race, supporting racism and racial subordination, and justifying colonial endeavors. Roger Sanjek provides some proof for this conclusion from a “turn-of-century British imperialist,” Gilbert Murray. He quotes Murray as saying: “There is in the world a hierarchy or races . . . [T]hose nations which eat more, claim more, and get higher wages, will direct and rule the others, and the lower work of the world will tend in the long-run to be done by the lower breeds of man. This much we of the ruling colour will no doubt accept as obvious” (quoted from Banton vii in Sanjek 1). Teleological inductive

science and the rhetoric of categorization and hierarchy are key to justifying a world constructed in terms of “a hierarchy of races” and one that allows nations that consume more to feed on those that seem to consist of “the lower breeds of man.”

By functioning as a way to organize and communicate empirical data and the rational faculties of the mind, Enlightenment scientific rhetoric soon could name and define “race” authoritatively. It gave “race” similar weight and force in published form as Scripture. Words made things true. Taxonomies solidified what seemed already inherent and observable in “nature.” Teleological inductions about others revealed the truth about their ontological essences.¹⁶ The effect was that an arbitrary or inconsequential differentiation among humans could be named, categorized, broken down into its smallest elements, and used as a justification for any number of social and economic injustices (e.g. slavery, colonization, etc.). Additionally, virtue and beauty became empirical qualities seen or interpreted in nature, essential, static, and attached to the concept of “race” and its implicit hierarchies, constructed by the scientific rhetoric of the time.

What we get then is a new kind of subjectivity articulated through the old method of a citizen-building rhetoric turned into a racialized scientific rhetoric in the new fields of anthropology and biology (Goldberg 29). Enlightenment scientific rhetoric perfected Aristotle’s rhetoric of hierarchy by adding purpose to the means of persuasion. For the sciences in general, Enlightenment science justified ideas and their hierarchies through rhetorical classification; for later political and colonial purposes, this same rhetoric justified social arrangements and hierarchies as scientific and racial ones. Edward Said illustrates these conclusions in his study of Orientalism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He says, “[t]he Orient that appears in Orientalism, then, is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought

the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western empire” (Said 202-03). The system of representations he speaks of are sets of classifications, taxonomies, definitions – “structures inherited from the past” (Said 122) – that were generated and used by scholars, historians, philologists, explorers, and scientists.

Said names these forces, and points to Enlightenment science and rhetoric. These forces are traditions of categorization interpreted from scientific methods (inductive methods that work from teleologies). In effect, these forces construct an essential, racialized Other. In his chapter, “Orientalist Structures and Restructures,” he argues that there were four main “interlocking elements” that prepared the way for nineteenth and twentieth century Orientalism, which we can loosely correlate to contemporary structural racism:¹⁷ expansion, historical confrontation, sympathetic identification, and classification (120). The first, the *expansion* of “travel literature, imaginary utopias, moral voyages, and scientific reporting” (117) wasn’t just a European fascination with the exotic, but “brought the Orient into sharper and more extended focus” (117). This proved “objectively” the need for the work – and their catalogues, indices, and other texts – of anthropologists, scientists, explorers and the like. The second, the *historical confrontation* by historians who consciously compared the Orient to European experience (117), worked from a Cartesian binary that, as all binaries do, favors one side (e.g. good and bad, white and black, right and wrong). The act of comparing cultures, peoples, and places produces categories, even if these categories are simple binary ones: them and us, East and West, Orient and Occident, etc. Through a seemingly non-judgmental, detached view of the Orient, the categories established and their relative values become naturalized and unquestionable. Everything is exactly as it seems, or can be reasoned out through academic and “objective” discourse. The third, the *sympathetic identification* of selected regions and cultures, “wore down the obduracy of self and

identity, which had been polarized into a community of embattled believers facing barbarian hordes” (120). This identification provided a seemingly neutral way to know of, and construct in terms of one’s self (i.e. the White self), the Other. In short, the general conception of the known world, the “borders of Christian Europe,” broadened (Said 120) but did so only in terms of the Western subjectivity. The fourth, the need for the *classification* of nature and humankind by most academics, explorers, anthropologists, and scientists, according to Said, systematically multiplied the possibilities of human categories. Coupled with a sympathetic identification, scientific classification was then an unquestionable way to powerfully construct “physiological-moral” designations and hierarchies (Said 119) for the Other. Not only were racial hierarchies reinforced at a rhetorical level, but an ideologically structural level, as Said implies.

Underneath these forces was an implied epistemic centered around hierarchy and scientific method. Hierarchy helped make sense of – rationalize through arrangement, as Bacon tells us – the empirical data that composed the growing known world. This epistemic mimicked the chain of being from God to humanity and the social arrangements that were present at the time (e.g. animals as inferior to humans, women as subordinate to men, slaves as inferior to masters, etc.). The chain of being was a kind of archetypal telos. Hume saw all other “species of men” inferior to whites in 1748 (Goldberg 31, Eze 33). In 1776, Kant postulated that the “races of man” came from “the same natural genus,” a “single natural cause” or “stem,” (Eze 39), the “white brunette” (Eze 48). When discussing causes for the different species under this genus, Kant says, “air and sun seem to be the causes which can penetrate most deeply into the generative force and can produce a lasting development of the germs and dispositions; i.e. that can found a race” (Eze 44). Race was seen not only categorically, but internal to the body’s deep “generative forces.” It was *essential*.

Making this epistemic more explicit in 1776 was Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, who offered a degenerate theory of races in which all races are degenerate versions of the Caucasian race. Each of his four degenerate races (the Malay and Ethiopian on one side and the American and Mongolian on the other) are distinguished by purely physical (i.e. empirical) characteristics, the color and texture of skin and hair, body proportions, outward demeanor, shape of eyes and nose, geographic location of inhabitation, etc. The “first causes” of degeneration are very Kantian: “stimuli which act upon the body” producing degeneration from the Caucasian (Eze 81), and of course, seem very empirical, natural, and definitive. They attempt to classify by offering a seemingly neutral, “objective,” observation-based, inductive conclusion and a sympathetic identification that favors the European subject. “Race” is constructed by gathering empirical data, interpreting that data through a chain of being telos, and arranging corresponding bodies into scientific and rhetorical hierarchies. Essential traits are naturally observable just as Aristotle’s wife, slave, and barbarian were naturally non-citizens by an observable non-participation in the polis (among other things). Hierarchy is implied, as in all classification. And of course, all of this rests on moral and value designations generated by a governing teleology and key binaries in the discourse (and maybe the two most fundamental being God/man and master/slave). Goldberg points out that categorization and hierarchy “rested upon the long-standing assumption that the universe is perfectly intelligible to reason and on the *principle of gradation* inherent” in these methodologies (50). In other words, value was inherent in all categories – scientific discourse was meant to construct hierarchies of valued subjects. To talk about race was to talk about the inherent value of people.

However, Kant, Hume, and Blumenbach were all taking their cues from John Locke. Locke exhibits the four key features of Enlightenment scientific discourse that I have discussed

up to this point: (1) the construction of taxonomies and hierarchies, (2) an assumed teleology, (3) an emphasis on rationality, and (4) an empirical method (induction). These features constitute a Foucauldian episteme, one I'll term the *primary Enlightenment epistemology*. To illustrate this epistemology, his discourse on slavery and of civil government can help. While Locke was undeniably against slavery in his 1689 *First Treatise on Government*, Locke found the institution to be justifiable in the case of "just wars" in which the losers of such wars "forfeit their claims to life" (Goldberg 27). In the opening of Chapter II of his *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, Locke says that "all men are naturally in . . . a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the will of any other man" (Locke). This perfect freedom consisted of two elements, equality and liberty. For Locke, virtue was inherent and natural – that is, stemming from a natural state – in "men," not necessarily women, slaves, or property since these "possessions and persons" could clearly be "disposed of." Sounding much like Aristotle in both sentiment and method (Locke was a rhetorician as well as a philosopher), he uses an empirical rhetoric to justify virtue, or perfect freedom. Perfect freedom can be seen in "nature," therefore it's inherent. And as Goldberg identifies in Locke, it is "rationality" that marks human subjectivity, or those who exhibit perfect freedom. Goldberg continues, "[r]ational capacity . . . sets the limit upon the natural equality of all those beings ordinarily taken to be human" (Goldberg 27). For the seventeenth century European, skin color, among other physical features, correlated with rational capacity, thus race was empirical grounds for inequality (Goldberg 28). A white, male, bourgeois mind is primary in this setup, and the rhetoric of classification helped scientifically justify it in contradistinction to the Other.

Clearly Locke works from binaries (e.g. liberty and anarchy, equality and subordination, etc.), and produces hierarchies (e.g. legislative, executive, and judicial powers; and paternal, political, and despotic power; master and slave/brute) throughout his *Second Treatise of Civil Government*. Despite Locke's theories of equal rights and democracy, he articulates the individual citizen and the state much like Aristotle did, empirically and through a teleology that favors the scientist's subjectivity, a white, male, bourgeois, rational mind.¹⁸ While his ideas of civil government were somewhat radical for the seventeenth century (e.g. consensual government and citizens' right to revolution), he didn't escape the governing teleologies of the time.

Locke was also a rhetorician, prone to making categorical and rhetorical distinctions in terms, ideas, sensations, and abstractions (i.e. decontextualized and generalized ideas from experiences) – in fact, he was careful to categorize these things as well. This may be clearest in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, in which he discusses innate principles, ideas, words, knowledge, and opinion by first invoking Descartes. In Book II, Chapter 1, “Of ideas,” Locke begins:

Idea is the object of thinking. Every man being conscious to himself that he thinks; and that which his mind is applied about whilst thinking being the ideas that are there, it is past doubt that men have in their minds several ideas,- such as are those expressed by the words whiteness, hardness, sweetness, thinking, motion, man, elephant, army, drunkenness, and others: it is in the first place then to be inquired, How he comes by them? . . .

All ideas come from sensation or reflection. Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas:- How

comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from EXPERIENCE. In that all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself.

In effect, Locke constructs a hierarchy of rationality in his discourse and method. In order to have access to ideas, like perfect freedom or equality, one must be able to use the “sensations” from one’s experiences and reflect upon them in order to create ideas. Not only has he categorized the building blocks for ideas, but he implicitly constructs rationality as a European, male, bourgeois mind. If race was empirical proof of one’s rational ability, then race could also be proof of one’s inability to reflect properly and produce understanding. Since slaves and other property, say a wife, did not have access to the kind of experience that Locke assumes, then he or she could not reflect upon it. The Other’s mind remains “white,” or rather dark and void of ideas. The “perfect freedom” described by Locke and mimicked in the Declaration of Independence, therefore, is not applicable to the racial Other. This might be read as the epistemological and rhetorical foundation for much of the later Enlightenment and American racism.

What this means is that the fundamental principles of the Enlightenment project, such as skepticism, rationalism, and scientific method, were really better at constructing hierarchies that reinforced teleological assumptions about truth, not ontological questions of essence and being. The discourses of the time did not discover “truth” as much as they established taxonomies that structured Western thought. From its roots in Enlightenment philosophy and science, race was a political construct, intersecting with scientific phenotype designations, gender, nation status, and geographic location. It was made rhetorically as much as “discovered” in “nature” and

rationalized empirically and justified in hierarchies. Like Greek citizenship, race could determine, and did, the haves and the have-nots. It could explain social arrangements, and strange civilizations in far away lands in terms of the European male. But more to my point, the discourse that defined, categorized, and rationalized “race” actually constructed race as a taxonomy that agreed with a governing teleology that demanded value in the system through a chain of being logic, and this discourse arranged *a priori* characteristics at each level of the hierarchy – thereby creating the concept of race as we know it today. Additionally, the Enlightenment project in general pushed epistemologies that racially interpreted reason, rationality, and subjectivity. The result: whites, the rhetorical progenitors, got almost sole possession of beauty, virtue, citizenship, reason, and of course their corollaries: power, wealth, and opportunity.

Ronald Takaki draws out the product of the Enlightenment’s racialized ideas and rhetoric in the U.S. in *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19th-Century America*. In the early stages of U.S. formation as a nation, Protestant asceticism (e.g. a distain for “luxury” and carnal desires, and a need to accumulate commodities as a sign of God’s favor) and republican theory (primarily from Thomas Paine, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams) provided for virtue in citizens (8-9). Virtue came from within (Takaki 20), an association to reason that would quickly become explicit. While Takaki links this mostly to Descartes, it seems equally plausible to link early American notions of virtue and citizenship with Locke’s ideas around rationality and perfect freedom, as well as Bacon’s notions of reason and empirically developed truths. Locke had a great influence on the ideas in the Declaration of Independence, on the rationales for the American Revolution, and on the development of our particular three-branch governmental system. Additionally, protestant asceticism seems a product of attempting to rationalize one’s

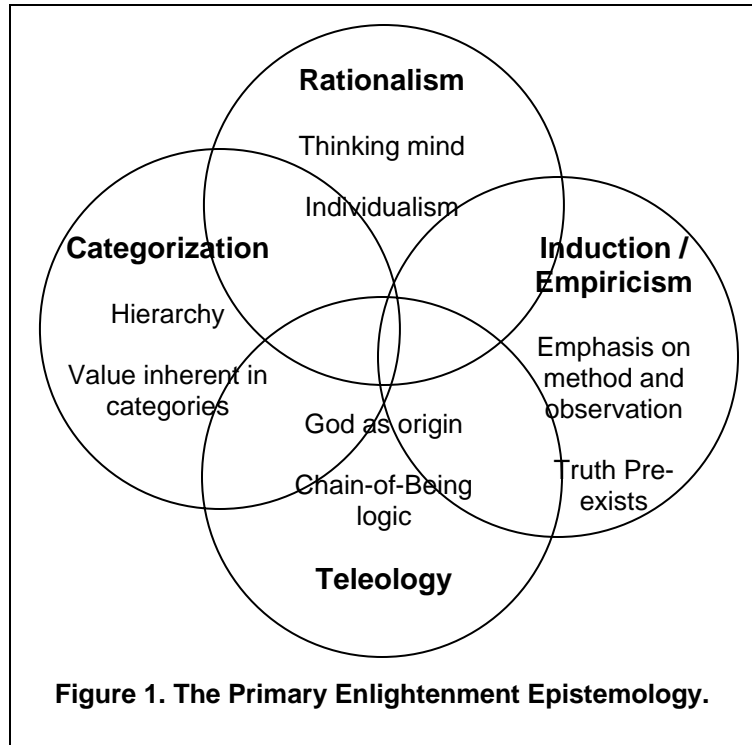
virtue through empirical evidence, which could be a link to Bacon.

Regardless of exactly who influenced what in U.S. traditions, we can say that the primary Enlightenment epistemology aided in the formation of the U.S. government, notions of citizenship, and subjectivity (see Figure 1).

Each element in the primary Enlightenment Epistemology shares

or invokes others in the tradition of ideas. So when an authorized and institutionalized document states claims about “men’s” “inalienable rights,” it not only uses a teleology of God as the origin of knowledge, but it invokes empirical traditions rational, European men inducing the “Light” of truth from “Nature” into arranged structures, hierarchies of being, that is, scientific categories. Using the primary Enlightenment epistemology meant the knowledge produced in discourse, the categories and definitions made in our government’s early documents, would be authorized, scientific, and almost unquestionably true. While Takaki doesn’t speak in these terms, clearly his revealing of the workings of protestant aestheticism and republican theory in the formation the U.S. as a nation provided for scientifically and morally supportable justifications for racial subordination and injustice.

This epistemology is nowhere clearer than in the issues around U.S. citizenship. Takaki explains that U.S. citizenship was based not only on a reflective and educated mind, but



commodity accumulation by a white body, something that Locke's attention to property rights and the right (for men) to dispose of possessions shows. Thus in early America, "ownership of property would provide the basis of social stability and civilization" (Takaki 38), while education, a little later on, would "teach the masses how to work out their own greatest happiness," creating a "consensus of values and interests," as well as homogeneity (Takaki 39). As for Blacks, in typical binary-fashion, they (along with other people of color, mainly Native Americans at this time) were associated primarily with their bodies, sensuality, carnality, and thus were less than citizens (i.e. not virtuous because they were "brutes" unable to reason properly) (Takaki 48-9). This pattern of association would not change, even into the twentieth century.¹⁹ And rhetoric is not left out. It is the rhetoric of nationhood and science, encapsulated in our most revered documents (e.g. The Declaration of Independence, The Constitution, judicial decisions, etc.), that validates racial categories and logics by invoking the primary Enlightenment epistemology or using explicitly some of its elements to justify universal "natural" laws, which then invoke the others.

Goldberg provides us with a compelling argument for how the primary Enlightenment epistemology might lead to a "racialized discourse." For Goldberg, a racialized discourse consists of "conceptual primitives," which are "manifestations of power relations vested in and between historically located subjects, and they are effects of a determinate social history" (48). They include: "classification, order, value, and hierarchy; differentiation and identity, discrimination and identification; exclusion, domination, subjection, and subjugation; as well as entitlement and restriction" (49). Goldberg's explanation of classification is illuminating for us as a connection between the primary Enlightenment epistemology (and its discourses) and contemporary rhetorical practice. He highlights three of the four epistemological elements,

categorization, empirical scientific method, and teleology (the fourth, rationality is invoked in discourse):

Classification is basically the scientific extension of the epistemological drive to place phenomena under categories. The impulse to classify data goes back to at least Aristotle. However, it is only with the “*esprits simplistes*” of the seventeenth century and the Enlightenment that classification is established as a fundament of scientific methodology. With its catalogues, indices, and inventories, classification establishes an ordering of data; it thereby systemizes observation. But it also claims to reflect the natural order of things. This ordering of representations accordingly always presupposes value: Nature ought to be as it is; it cannot be otherwise. So the seemingly naked body of pure facts is veiled in value. (49)

In effect, discourse that uses classification, as Goldberg defines it, creates value in the objects it produces from the material subjects in the world. This value is presupposed by a teleology that determines the “natural order of things.” Scientific method, then, is simply a way to interpret data into categories from this teleology, which in turn presupposes value and hierarchy. And assumed in this is the Enlightenment subjectivity, a reasoning mind that collects, analyzes, and arranges the data. One could read Goldberg’s “conceptual primitives,” like classification, as a way to break down further teleology, helping us see how Enlightenment discourse (re)produced very particular power relations, and could more easily help justify European exploration, colonial expansion, or the denial of U.S. citizenship to the Other.

In terms of citizenship, slavery, and property, the U.S. inherited this rhetoric in a sense, one perfectly suited to structure U.S. society and classify its citizens. Again, Goldberg makes

clear how racialized rhetoric works and can be so powerful: “what is generally circulated and exchanged is not simply truth but truth-claims,” he says, “or representations. These representations draw their efficacy from traditions, conventions, institutions, and tacit modes of mutual comprehension” (46). The tacit modes of mutual comprehension are, in effect, Said’s “inherited structures,” and Bourdieu’s *habitus* (I explicate this term in the next chapter). They are also the elements of the primary Enlightenment epistemology. Much of the power and validity of this epistemology comes from the fact that it is canonized in discourse, preserved and built upon in scientific and lay traditions. In fact, through the ubiquitous use of the primary Enlightenment epistemology, “modes of mutual comprehension” become tacit, and passed on. They then can migrate easily into other intellectual realms, as I’ll show in the next section.

The Art of Rhetoric and the Ordering of Society and the Mind

Post-Enlightenment rhetoricians and teachers of rhetoric also found it hard to avoid the primary Enlightenment epistemology. Influenced by Enlightenment philosophies and scientific methods, eighteenth and nineteenth century rhetoricians like George Campbell (1719-1796), Hugh Blair (1718-1800), and Richard Whately (1787-1863), would use appeals to science and the empirical methods of the time to support their rhetorical work and teaching. Additionally at the time, rhetoric was primarily considered as elocution or methods of delivery (particularly for clergy, like Campbell, but also for others such as Thomas Sheridan and Gilbert Austin), a matter of taste (in the case of Blair), and as a way to explicate plain and clear logic (for Whately). Part of the reason training in rhetoric was mostly training in eloquence and proper delivery of orations was due to the fact that one’s speech was usually a marker of social class (Herrick 176). Upward mobility meant mastering gentlemanly or lady-like speech. In fact, in his *A Course of Lectures on Elocution*, Sheridan categorizes the ways of proper deliver, defining things like tone

and gesture. Maybe a more obvious example of rhetorical categorization was Gilbert Austin's *Chironomia*, which carefully detailed (with diagrams) in scientific fashion various positions of the hands, arms, legs, head, body, and fingers. However, Sheridan claimed in his *British Education* that the poor quality of preaching at the time would eventually destroy the health of religion in England (Herrick 177). Proper speaking was not only necessary for persuading audiences, being a gentleman or lady, but for encouraging and leading souls toward righteousness – one might even say, through inference, it *was* a marker of righteousness, a way to empirically identify virtue in people and society.

Thus rhetoric as primarily elocution was about showing outwardly the signs of upper class sensibilities, socially admirable qualities, and religious piety or astuteness. In effect, it was a way to display how one's inner faculties were properly organized, and so, rhetoric powerfully organized socially the English (and American) mind, body, and society. It arranged society and the individual simultaneously from various fronts: through formal education, the pulpit, mundane verbal interactions – all of which operate from hierarchical epistemologies that structure power relations. The epistemological foundations of Protestant aestheticism and republicanism in the U.S., discourses based on Enlightenment notions of accumulation, rationality, and property preservation and rights, are strikingly similar to elocutionary rhetoric's primary epistemology. Each takes empirical and outward signs as indicators of inner virtue. Just as the ancient Athenian citizen needed to participate in the polis in order to be a full citizen, so must the U.S. citizen display his markers of class, religiosity, and quality through his speech, commodity accumulation, and property.

Blair too, in his promotion of taste and style, helps to solidify the ways in which the mind, soul, and body are arranged, and thus implicitly (and explicitly) categorized. In *Lectures*

on *Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, he devotes a lot of space on “perspicuity,” which he defines as “the fundamental quality of Style; a quality so essential in every kind of writing, that, for the want of it, nothing can atone” (Blair 185). He claims that perspicuity has three qualities: purity, propriety, and precision (186). Purity is using the proper words and linguistic constructions “as belong to the idiom of the Language,” while propriety is using the “best and most established” words and constructions for one’s ideas (187). The first deals with the range of proper and available linguistic options for expression, while the second concerns itself with the appropriate application of those options. Precision, Blair’s final term that defines perspicuity, gets more attention. He begins with an etymology that justifies the nature of the word as it applies to style, which is “to cut off” or “prune” (Blair 189). For Blair, precision was finding and using exactly the right words for one’s ideas, no more, no less. Precision is the right language pruned perfectly. But he doesn’t leave it at this, he ends this section with a catalogue of words, grouped to show their similarities and shades of difference, partly as an illustration but mostly for the “necessity of attending, with care and strictness, to the exact import of words” (196).²⁰

Through his discussion of perspicuity, Blair shows how rhetorical training and practice can cultivate inner virtue. In effect, the ability to appreciate good taste or style, to identify it when one sees or hears it, could be a marker of virtue in the same way Sheridan or Austin used elocution. And of course, for Blair constructing catalogues of taste made perfect sense. If one is to justify the study and practice of rhetoric, one must study it like any other “science,” *systematically* and *categorically*. This can be seen in George Campbell’s extremely popular rhetorical text, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*.²¹ He opens his introduction with: “All art is founded in science, and the science is of little value which does not serve as a foundation to some beneficial art” (Campbell lxix). The art he speaks of is, of course, rhetoric, whose main purpose

is to inform, convince, please move, and persuade the soul (Campbell lxvii). Using elements of the primary Enlightenment epistemology, Campbell's text categorizes and defines the various states, qualities, and reactions the human mind might move through. He calls it a "map" and a "tolerable sketch of the human mind" (lxvii). Because catalogues, indices, and dictionaries hold great scientific weight, in part because of the traditions built by the primary Enlightenment epistemology, they easily canonize their data's arrangement. And when a catalogue's subject is rhetoric, then the discourse's subject is also a subject – that is, the reader. This means arranging rhetoric using the primary Enlightenment epistemology meant ordering society and the mind.

Whately's Influence on Contemporary Classroom Rhetorics

As popular as Sheridan, Austin, Blair and Campbell were, Whately's rendition may have ended up being more influential, especially for contemporary writing courses. Whately attempts to offer an objective, neutral-sounding, managerial rhetoric in *Elements of Rhetoric*, one in contradistinction to others popular at the time; however, he never fully escapes these other rhetorical traditions. In his rhetoric, science ceases to be just a backing for rhetoric. Rhetoric now can not only explain science, but it can be science, or at least studied just like one. The logic works because Whately's rhetoric uses the primary Enlightenment epistemology. *Elements* attempts to be scientific, impartial, and objective, avoids those tangled briars of taste and style, emphasizes a rational Cartesian mind and ignores the body almost completely, opting for a pragmatic approach based on clearly defined categories of rhetorical rules and "elements." Whately conceives of rhetoric as a discipline apart from the subjects it classifies. It's a management system for data arrangement, at least on the surface. And in this way, it could be mistaken as a system of rules and strategies to apply to a subject or to an occasion of discourse. But as I've shown, all rhetoric has epistemological and ontological ramifications.²²

In many ways today's students see writing courses very much as Whately did, and work from Enlightenment divisions of rhetoric and science. To them, writing classes are really about managing ideas, stating opinions well or correctly, while the sciences offer truth and "hard facts." This tendency is also seen in the university in general around some WAC, WID, and writing programs. Even in industry, tech writers and editors are often viewed as grammarians and wordsmiths who fix the language and syntax that others have compiled, but not originators or collaborators of ideas. It's hard not to see writing in Whatelian terms when all of these institutions and societal forces push students and teachers to treat the study of writing as a service to the university and other entities. Thus discussions of race as an epistemological part of all academic discourse, even the rhetoric of the writing classroom, is not a part of first year composition course. It's not a rule, nor a strategy. And this assumption is dangerous to our students and the academy because it allows for structural racism, embedded in the rhetorics we use and inherited from the primary Enlightenment epistemology.

If my claim is correct, that Whately's ideas of rhetoric carry great influence into the contemporary writing classroom, and that it uses the primary Enlightenment epistemology, then it will help to see in detail what his rhetoric offered the nineteenth century student, and how it fit within elocutionary and belletristic traditions, which seemed to more aggressively order society and the mind. In his introduction to *Elements*, Douglas Ehninger provides a simple way to conceive of the rhetorical tradition that Whatey comes from and reacts to, identifying "three directions" that influenced him: *belles lettres*, elocutionary, and "psychological-epistemological rhetoric" (Whately xxiii-xxv). In the *belles lettres* tradition (dating from around the 1760s to Blair in 1783), "rhetoric was conceived of not as an independent discipline, but as a facet of the field of polite letters"; it was "the Science of Literature, or Literary Theory and Literary

Criticism universally,” characterized in “the principles of Historical Writing, Poetry, and Expository Writing, as well as Oratory” (Whately xxiii). According to the tenets of *belles lettres*, rhetoric has two primary purposes: to “guid[e] in composing” and to promote “standards in judging” (Whately xxiv). It was a tradition of rhetoric as “appreciation of written and spoken discourse” (Herrick 178). Epitomized in Blair’s discussion of perspicuity, *Belles lettres* placed a premium on style, sublimity, and aesthetics. Thus Whately “rejects out of hand” the *belles lettres* paradigm because of its “tendency to make rhetoric a criticism of written discourse,” says Ehninger (Whately xxviii). As Blair points out in his own introduction to *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, “rhetoric is not so much a practical art as a speculative science” for the “relishing” of “the beauties of composition” and to “enable genius . . . [and] taste” (8). Much like the Sheridan, Austin, and the elocutionary school, *Belletristic* rhetoric pushed for rhetoric as culture. The appreciation of genius and taste was a way to validate upper class sensibilities, constructing them as natural through binaries such as good and bad taste, high and low art, etc. Whately understands rhetoric more pragmatically and systematically, not in inventive and organic ways, as Blair implies, yet, as we can already see, there is room to read Whately as somewhat in agreement with Blair, given Blair’s own incorporation of reason within rhetoric’s purview and both men’s categorical methods.

For Whately, *Belles lettres* moves too far from Aristotle’s classical distinction between rhetoric and dialectic. While Blair preserves the “inventive” aspects of rhetoric by defining rhetoric as a “speculative science” that achieves “genius” (a kind of *episteme*), it does not acknowledge the primacy of logic (dialectic); instead, it emphasizes a rhetoric of *a priori* good taste. So while Blair says “there are principles of reason and sound judgment which can be applied to matters of taste” (31), most of these principles seem to be “covered with an

impenetrable veil,” mysterious, whose “first principles” are by (their) nature covered from view (Blair 44), yet empirically discernable – we’ll all know good taste when we see or hear it.

Whately, on the other hand, follows Aristotle’s lead, defining rhetoric as a kind of “off-shoot” of dialectic, calling it dialectic’s “counterpart.” In his own introduction, Whately identifies his book’s scope and helps us see his alignment with Aristotle:

I propose in the present work to adopt a middle course between these two extreme points [rhetoric as “all ‘Composition in Prose’” or as “Persuasive Speaking”]; and to treat “Argumentative Composition,” *generally*, and *exclusively*; considering Rhetoric (in conformity with the very just and philosophical view of Aristotle) as an off-shoot from Logic. (4)

Whately encouraged an Aristotelian rhetoric, that is “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.” In many ways, Whately sets out for himself to do his version of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, systematizing its components in order for his students to have more readily the available means of persuasion. In fact, he identified Aristotle as “the best of the systematic writers on Rhetoric” (7).

For Whately, a *belletristic* approach simply smacked of lay-opinion, *doxa*, or “the common opinion of the ordinary man” (Schaeffer 2), which simply wasn’t authoritative enough – it was un-scientific. A rhetoric that talked about and commented on itself in order to cultivate “taste” was no rhetoric at all. It could show no consistent evidence for the truths it might “prove” to an audience. It’s rules were always half-concealed and tended to rely too much on what appeared to be lay sentiment and taste. Whately’s rhetoric, on the other hand, was predicated on constructing empirical proof that could establish truth-claims about subjects to a broad audience. It pulled from other authoritative disciplines (e.g. science and law) for *a priori* claims and

teleologies that audiences would not question, both in his rhetoric and in orations built from it. And like all taxonomies, Whately's rhetoric worked tacitly as a canon by virtue of its scientific-like arrangement of its subject, which of course was two-fold in effect (i.e. implicating rhetoric and society/mind).

Whately's rhetoric attempted to be more explicitly logical, and appealed to empirical proofs for its own assessment (or appreciation). The ultimate sign of a good argument would be to see clearly how it manages its proofs and claims. This kind of assessment (and thus invention strategy) is empirical as well as rational. Whately's migration of "scientific" and legal rules to the discipline of rhetoric assumed the authority these rules had in their other discursive and material realms. And much of this authority and right-ness assumes a universal truth that can migrate among disciplines. Whately's rhetoric inherits its authority from other traditions and canons, which hints at a shadowy teleology, a universal origin of truth. For instance, in chapter 3 of *Elements*, Whately lists various "presumptions" when discussing "burden of proof" that come from legal practice: presumption in favor of existing institutions (114); presumption of innocence of books and people (115); presumption against paradox (115); etc. In chapter 2, he categorizes two classes of arguments: *a priori* and *a posteriori* (which he further divides into arguments from sign and example). At the surface, Whately's rhetoric is a catalogue of rules and strategies much like the others produced at this time, but just underneath this catalogue is a strong appeal to the primary Enlightenment epistemology that's explicitly invoking other disciplines, ones that have constructed scientifically and legally the Other as racial and subordinate, one's the classify citizens, rationalize colonialism, and other practices. Particularly in his canonizing of presumption and burden of proof as rhetorical strategies, Whately migrates institutionalized racism as codified, legitimate logics and "reasonable" language. From this

rhetoric, one could (and did) argue for slavery or the subordination of the Other by “logical” means, for instance, that slavery as an institution must be presumed to be right because those who would say otherwise have the burden of proof on their side.

But it was pulpit rhetoric with which Whately was primary concern. It needed to make universal appeals, ones that only science at the time seemed to offer. Whately’s rhetoric would seem to be the epitome of a service rhetoric, one that offers categorically the tools for persuading audiences of truths found elsewhere, and one that fundamentally ignored its own epistemic influence on the truth-claims it itself produced and claimed to offer students in their own orations. It mimicked all of the elements of the primarily Enlightenment epistemology and reinforced the relations of power inherent in them, ones that arranged and evaluated subjectivities by race and citizenship.

As for elocutionary influences, Whately resisted them because the elocutionists emphasized the categorization of “a body of rules and procedures which could successfully be imparted to students.” It was too prescriptive or mechanical for oratorical delivery. They focused on the least important element of rhetoric, delivery, when they should be emphasizing arrangement and invention. Whately preferred an “unprescriptive or ‘natural’ method” (Whately xxv), which he called a “qualified ‘naturalism’” created through “tones and manners of earnest conversation” (Whately xxviii). Whately’s resistance to the elocutionists may make sense given the tradition he accepted, one that divided rhetoric from dialectic, since it was a scientific reasoning process that led to truth and rhetoric that imparted it to others. Plato gives voice to Socrates in his dialogue *Phaedrus* on the advantage of oratory over written texts, which provides us with an interesting gloss to Whately’s stance toward the elocutionists:

Yes indeed, dear Phaedrus. But far more excellent, I think, is the serious treatment of them, which employs the art of dialectic. The dialectician selects a soul of the right type, and in it he plants and sows his words founded on knowledge, words which can defend both themselves and him who planted them, words which instead of remaining barren contain a seed whence new words grow up in new characters, whereby the seed is vouchsafed immortality, and its possessor the fullest measure of blessedness that man can attain unto. (522)

The dialectician plants words (*logoi*), “founded on knowledge” (*episteme*) achieved from a reasoning process (dialectic), within the soul of his interlocutor. There they sprout and grow, urging the soul to truth. The *logoi* are alive within the soul, defending themselves all on their own by their *reasonableness*, their *natural* and immortal power to reveal *episteme* – in a way, by their common sense. But only in a “soul of the right type,” which hints at the division and categorization of the soul Plato delineates in the same dialogue. Similarly, Whately works with the reason inherent in the mind to discern truth in *logoi*. There is little need for prescriptive tactics or tropes of delivery when scientific and legal rhetoric, tempered in the furnace of logic, will win the day. What Whately doesn’t address is *why* certain *logoi* appear right or true.

Finally, Ehninger says that Whately clearly accepts and extends the theoretical directions offered by the psychological-epistemological tradition, epitomized in George Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. The psychological-epistemological view approaches rhetoric from the audience’s perspective, not the proofs in the oration or text; “[h]ence they tended to make the audience rather than the speech the focal or controlling point in the communicative act” (Whately xxvii). This tradition relied on internal faculties, or psychological states of mind, much like the ones that Locke and Bacon individually categorized, and Aristotle established in Book II

of *Rhetoric*. Rhetoric was viewed as “instrument of thought,” not as the inquiry process itself – that was taken up by the scientific method (Whately 20). Dialectic, the reasoning process for discovering truth and facts, is revealed to an audience through the art of rhetoric, correcting the errors in opinions. And just like the elocutionists and *Belletristic* traditions, the psychological-epistemological tradition attempted to order the mind and society. Instead of markers of speech or sensibilities, it compartmentalized the various faculties in audiences and the ways an orator might persuade such groups. Its result, of course, was to construct essentialized groupings of people into categories, something other scientists (biologists, anthropologists, metaphysicists, etc.) at the time were already doing.

Most important in Whately’s rhetoric was reasoning, something inherited from the primary Enlightenment epistemology working in science and law practices. Ehninger says that for Whately “while logic is the process of establishing truth by reasoning, rhetoric becomes the process of conveying truth to others by reasoning” (Whately xiv). The common root in both processes is the reasoning of an independent mind, that is, of a white, male mind. Inherent in oratory, poetry, or “good writing” is logic, structure, categorization, hierarchy – epistemologies that make (common) sense because the science and legal systems of the time demonstrated this. Inherent in the mind’s independent ability to judge what is right and true knowledge, what is appropriate and correct to offer an audience as proof, are the “faculties” of white, male reason. The reasoning, white, male mind by de facto was all that Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, Austin, Sheridan, Blair, Campbell, and Whately could conceptualize. In fact, by working from the traditions he did, and ignoring the elements of the primary Enlightenment epistemology, Whately canonized “reasoning” in the context of rhetoric for the contemporary writing classroom.

Whately's reasoning is attractive because of its appeal to the primary Enlightenment epistemology. He categorizes reasoning as having two purposes: "inferring" and "proving." Inferring is the "the *ascertainment* of the truth by investigation" and proving is "the *establishment* of it [the truth] to the satisfaction of *another*" (5). Whately understood the faculty of reason as a central, ongoing process by which the orator discovered knowledge first, then "established" it in the minds of an audience.²³ Consequently, reason was the back end of a linear process that began with logic and scientific methods and data collection. In this paradigm, taste, style, and delivery don't count for much if one's audience is attempting to reason through your words to the truth in them (just as an orator had done before he composed them). As a teacher of rhetoric and logic, Whately prided himself in encouraging independent reasoning. To Lady Osborn, he instructs: "Any one who tries to imitate me, is sure to be unlike me in the important circumstance of being an imitator; and no one can think as I do who does not think for himself" (Parrish 164).

This "independence of mind," as Parrish calls it (164), should be of no surprise when we look at Whately's own education at Oxford under the tutelage of Edward Copleston.²⁴ Parrish in his historical sketch of Whately provides a definition by Copleston that helps us see Whately's theoretical roots. Copleston states in *The Examiner Examined*:

Logic regulates. This may be placed at one extremity of the series. At the other extremity is Poetry, where language, as well as thought, is made subservient to the production of a refined pleasure. The several gradations of the scale between these extreme points are occupied by the various branches of Rhetoric, taking Rhetoric in its most extensive signification as the art of good writing. (Parrish 160)

Whately's mentor was clearly also a product of Enlightenment epistemology. He saw scientific methodologies of categorization and hierarchy as important to the conceptualization of rhetoric as an subject of study. The "logic" of his categories, as we see in the passage above, sets up binaries and hierarchies (e.g. logic vs. poetry, "gradations" of rhetoric), which suggest a telos that regulates them. Furthermore, Copleson states that logic, through the discipline of philosophy, helps us "measure" the "anomalies" in "polite literature," allowing us "to estimate their propriety, their congruity, their relative force, and their utility" (Parrish 160). It's through this measuring that rhetoric has utility for us, but logic is first and primary. It "regulates" all processes that lead to truth and allows for the independence of mind that Whately focuses on. All these processes are, for Whately and Copleson, internal, rational processes of the mind. And rationality is closely associate with, is linked to, the other three elements of the primary Enlightenment epistemology, categorization, a governing teleology, and empiricism.

Add to Whately's reasoning the degree to which mind and reason was in effect racialized, and we get a scientific, managerial rhetoric that is predicated on the active production of a white, male, European, bourgeois agent – that is, the construction and maintenance of the *primary Enlightenment subjectivity*.²⁵ If the job of rhetoric was to persuade souls, and souls must be able to reason, and only white men had this faculty, then the Other (whether distinguished in racial, citizenship, gender, or class terms) needed careful guidance, were damned to hell, or did not have souls. Enlightenment epistemology and rhetoric are key to making this ontological leap. Whately's rhetoric and his notion of a reasoning mind shared in this ontology.

For Whately, reason acts upon and resides in the rhetoric delivered, as well as the logical processes that come beforehand. He takes pieces from the three main rhetorical traditions available and incorporates scientific epistemologies and legal discourse and rules. Reason isn't

exactly a calculus, but it does have rules that can be identified. Reason therefore is categorical – that is, there are ways to categorize logic in Aristotelian fashion, something he would have seen in Campbell.

While Campbell draws from “Hume’s doctrine of ideas,” as well as the “faculty psychology and ‘common sense’ philosophy of [Locke, Bacon, and] Thomas Reid” (Whately xxvi), Whately is not interested in explaining the epistemological aspects of rhetoric; instead he opts for a more pragmatic approach that assumes a rational, scientific epistemology and arranges it empirically. *Elements*, says Ehninger, provides a “systematizing [of] the selection and inventional” elements of an orator, and an “application of cogent ‘reasons’ (Whately xxviii). If Campbell offered his contemporaries “*the philosophy*” of rhetoric, then Whately gave them *the scientific primer*, complete with categories, definitions, and logical hierarchies. Rhetoric was not only an impartial way for science to communicate and archive findings, but it was a science itself, a science linked to structural racism.

First and foremost, Whately approached rhetoric as science that could be defined and categorized like any other, and so it shares many of the logics and epistemologies of science and law. He explains that language is not just “to *communicate* our thoughts to each other,” nor is it “peculiar to man,” but it is an “*instrument of thought*, -- a system of General-Signs, without which the Reasoning-process could not be conducted” (20 Whately’s emphasis). Thus the system of signs he speaks of are the categorical “tools” of language delineated in *Elements*. *Elements* persuasive force, the power of rhetoric itself, comes directly from its empirically scientific nature, the objectively arranged categories of rhetorical elements, their appeal to a rational mind, and a telos migrated from other authoritative disciplines.

Connection between Whatelian rhetoric and rhetoric of the twentieth century can be seen in the debates around university curriculum in the first two decades of the century and in the dominant paradigm for writing instruction (even in today's classrooms), current-traditional rhetoric. According to James Berlin, this rhetoric was originally promoted as a method of writing instruction by Harvard and Columbia, but used by many other schools between 1900-1920 (*Rhetoric and Reality* 35). Berlin describes it as "positivistic and practical in spirit . . . designed to provide the new middle-class professionals with the tools to avoid embarrassing themselves in print" (35). "Harvard and Columbia," Berlin states, "held that if writing instruction were offered it ought to be open to everyone and ought to emphasize practical competence" (40). Additionally, it was, as might be expected of the time, "designed to emulate the scientific method" (36). Berlin offers a detailed example of two course curriculum from the University of Illinois, typical of large state universities of this early period. The first term's writing course, Rhetoric 1, "consisted of exposition" and was meant "to remove such traces of illiteracy as still remain, and at the same time to give some advanced instruction in the principles of composition which will enable the student to write unified and coherent, if not emphatic, exposition" (quoted from Tiejé 590 by Berlin 41). The second term's course was geared toward arguments and reasoning, the emphasis was "formal and rational" (41). Student writing was "evaluated on the basis of the use of evidence and reasoning from premises to conclusions, structural fluency, and a tactful and forceful presentation" (Berlin 41).

It's not difficult from this cursory look at current-traditional rhetoric to see a Whatelian influence, or maybe more directly, an influence from the primary Enlightenment epistemology. Current-Traditional rhetoric dictates that the writing classroom present composition as a categorical method of arrangement. Its assessment is empirically-based on the observation of the

proper use of evidence and its textual arrangement, which most likely was influenced by legal argumentation (as Whately codified in *Elements* just a half century earlier²⁶). Current-Traditional rhetoric was rational, scientific, and Aristotelian (and thus Whatelian), emphasizing rules for practical competence in argumentation (e.g. enthymeme, arrangement, and logic), thus, as Berlin points out, it was in contradistinction to the other main paradigm of the time, the rhetoric of liberal culture, which drew from Blair and the belletristic tradition.²⁷

Charles Sears Baldwin's "highly successful" textbook, *College Composition* (1917), is a good illustration of both current-traditional rhetoric and its Whatelian influences. Berlin describes the text in this way:

He [Baldwin] paid only passing attention to invention, defining rhetoric instead as primarily an art of "composition," meaning by this arrangement and style. This capitulation to current-traditional rhetoric was further demonstrated in Baldwin's use of the four modes of discourse, which he drew along classical lines only insofar as he divided them into the rhetorical – exposition and argument – and the poetic – description and narration. Baldwin regarded rhetoric as a managerial art – simply arranging what is discovered outside the rhetorical act – and he accordingly emphasized the inartistic proofs, the modes, and stylistic abstractions.

(Rhetoric and Reality 42)

The teaching of writing was a "managerial art," articulated as a science (i.e. empirically assessable) that could be mastered by learning how to apply certain rules and proofs in the same way that Whately conceived of his rhetoric. Current-Traditional rhetoric was Whatelian rhetoric. What made this rhetoric so attractive was its appeal to democratic and protestant values – that is,

the primary Enlightenment epistemology's appeal to scientifically empirical, categorical, teleological, and rational traditions of knowing.

At the beginning of the twentieth century in the U.S., a growing group of middle-class men were looking to compete for jobs in the marketplace. Universities were trying to keep up with the larger number of students enrolled in their programs, as well as serve their different needs. These needs were not based on an aristocratic elite whose positions in government, law, the church, and business were guaranteed, as was the case just a few generations earlier. This new university was being designed to train men to compete on merits as managers, scientists, lawyers, and engineers. Part of their training was rhetorical, but the grounding of their entire education was based on the primary Enlightenment epistemology. Baldwin confirms this, saying that “[t]he ability to use language logically ‘is one of the most valuable parts of a college education’ since ‘rhetoric may then be made to serve in particular each course on which it depends for material and in general the great object of all the courses together’ (xxiv)” (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* 42). This paved the way for contemporary notions of writing and rhetoric as service-oriented, scientific, and a discipline that teaches primarily a list of rules and strategies for argumentation.

Rhetoric and the Contemporary Classroom

Because of these philosophical and rhetorical histories, in the contemporary college classroom, we can't escape Whatelian rhetorical assumptions, discourses of science and reason, nor their connections to and associations with the primary Enlightenment epistemology, the main avenue that historically legitimized structural racism. Our disciplines, and the academy in general, are structured institutionally by racism. Our philosophies, histories, sciences, and rhetorics have implicitly constructed intellectual endeavors primarily from the perspective of a

white, male mind thinking. In order to teach writing, we must reveal our complicity in the durable fabric of our racist cultures and disciplines, examine and articulate the hidden machinations of institutions and individual practices, and hopefully in the long run move toward better ways of making meaning and communicating with those around us in order to produce change. Why else do we communicate?

As many have already said, our political orientations are inherent in our classrooms and pedagogies.²⁸ I'm not asking us to "teach the conflicts" as Gerald Graff suggests, although I'm sure in effect this will happen much of the time,²⁹ nor do I push for a proselytizing pedagogy that forces students to take positions they do not believe in or feel forced into in order to get the grade they seek. I'm not even suggesting we accept a cultural studies approach to writing instruction, even though many of my courses can be seen to embrace this strategy. I do urge us, however, to center on racism and whiteness as an inherent part of the networks we live in by engaging with epistemologies and discourses that construct our knowledge and assessment practices. This makes the teaching of writing what it always has been: a political endeavor, one that teaches methods for constructing the world, knowledge, citizenship, gender, and race. To say this another way, the teaching of rhetoric can be thought of as a way to critically explore the politics inherent in social living, a way to search for understanding by constructing resolutions to problems, and to see the making of meaning in societal decisions and arrangements.

If in the contemporary writing classroom, we teach how to be citizens, how citizenship is articulated in society, how rhetoric works, how the structures of knowledge, categorization, and logical hierarchies function and can be manipulated for certain ends, then we must be careful not to perpetuate racism by implicitly reinforcing and reifying discursive structures that will inevitably interpellate (in Althusserian terms) students in unreflective or blind ways – that is, in

ways that construct them as racial, gendered, and class-based bodies (among others) that are essential, static, and teleologically grounded. Because of this, writing instruction should explore the discursive and material realms of structural racism in order to understand how we are complicit in these structures and how we might work against them. Keith Gilyard affirms this stance by discussing how “race” is a “dominating nexus of constructs” that produce dominating social spaces (i.e. the “norm”) and hierarchical frameworks that rank human populations (Gilyard 49). He pulls from Ruth Frankenburg’s discussion of whiteness as a culturally full space and Roger Sanjek’s historical look at race as a categorizing framework.³⁰ Frankenburg and Sanjek lead Gilyard to conclude that the concept of “race” is an “ideology developed in the interests of imperialists” and functions as a “rationalization for continuing systems of oppression,” even today (50). While race isn’t just a chimera constructed by language, Gilyard admits that in the classroom we need “fuller explanations of the racialized disparities [that] we see” (52). In short, Gilyard calls for race to be discussed with students as systems, structures, and institutions that are linguistic and material. Our discussions of things like “critical thinking” and “epistemology,” evidence and logic, rhetoric and writing, fallacy and style, are all laced with race because in large part they come from a history of Enlightenment discourses and Whatelian rhetorics. Without saying it, Gilyard calls for what this introduction argues for, the need for the writing classroom to address significantly structural racism as an integral part of our academic traditions, institutions, and rhetorics – a need to critically question in the classroom the very epistemologies we teach, use, and theorize.

Our students come to the writing class typically believing the fundamental dichotomy between empirical science (which reveals facts and truths about our world) and rhetoric as the categorical and managerial system of rules about writing and speaking. The traditions our

popular culture holds on to about writing are very much Whatebian, governed by “elements” of the primary Enlightenment epistemology. This means to teach without regard for the politics of race inherent in our systems of science, truth-making, and citizenship, we will inevitably reproduce a white subjectivity that’s still pervasive and damaging in the academy and popular culture, keeping us not from “truth” – surely many already claim to have found this – but from a critical understanding of how our world is structured for truth, how the epistemology of whiteness pervades all that we do and say, and thus what is materially and rhetorically possible. In other words, it’s not enough to allow students to support any claim they can in their discourses. Writing instruction isn’t just about this kind of managerial practice, that is, finding the available means of persuasion. We must ask our students to interrogate the political networks by which ideas, agents, and discourses are validated, and the ways in which knowledge is not just constructed but structured as iterating mechanisms that reproduce determined, social arrangements, like racism and racial subordination in society.

While not speaking explicitly about race or racism, James Berlin’s “Conclusion and Postscript on the Present” in *Rhetoric and Reality*, when considering the connections I’ve made between contemporary writing pedagogy and the primary Enlightenment epistemology, suggests much about the centrality and importance of the politics of race in the writing classroom:

We have begun to see that writing courses are not designed exclusively to prepare students for the workplace, although they certainly must do that. Writing courses prepare students for citizenship in a democracy, for assuming their political responsibilities, whether as leaders or simply as active participants. Writing courses also enable students to learn something about themselves, about the often-unstated assumptions on which their lives are built. In short, the writing course

empowers students as it advises in ways to experience themselves, others, and the material conditions of their existence – the methods of ordering and making sense of these relationships. (188-89)

The “often-unstated assumptions” that build students’ lives are, in fact, derived from the primary Enlightenment epistemology. The way in which we shape students’ ways of experiencing themselves, others, and their material conditions of existence is fundamentally epistemological and hermeneutical. For these reasons, writing courses also teach about race and racism. The question is, how are we implicitly teaching race? Are we teaching it as a nexus of forces, traditions, and discourses? Are we teaching racism or teaching how it has been, and is, constructed for various purposes and with particular effects (namely, those around power, economics, and subordination). Are we ignoring or avoiding it?

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, writing teachers should ask their students to explore questions around epistemology and the structures of discourse that shape meaning making endeavors. For instance, we might structure our classrooms and writing pedagogies to address questions like:

- How have the traditions of scientific discourse, particularly Enlightenment scientific discourses, affected our scientific and popular discourses today? How have they shaped what we traditionally call “knowledge”?
- How have the traditions of rhetoric as a science and managerial art constructed the way we view and teach writing today? How do our rhetorical and scientific traditions affect what is valued in college writing today?
- What methods of engagement and interaction can we use in the classroom to help us discuss more critically the hegemonic forces (discursive and otherwise) in the academy

and popular culture? How do we move beyond status quo ideas concerning rhetoric, racism, and scientific traditions?

- How do we assess writing in such a conflicted and contested environment without reinforcing, and or perpetuating, institutionally racist discourse and ideology? How do we get any other voices than those situated in the status quo to be acknowledged and taken seriously? How do we activate Other perspectives (other than the dominant white perspective) in the academy, in the classroom, in political and popular cultural discourses?
- If structural racism is a part of our rhetorical and scientific heritage, a part of the academy, then how might we effectively construct discussions about it in the writing classroom in order to critically address it? How do we construct conflict and difference in the classroom that is educative?

To explore these questions, I begin in Chapter 1 by theorizing the mechanism by which hegemony is accomplished in society. I talk about this hegemony as structural racism, which is not only a good way to introduce discussions of racism in the writing classroom but a way to articulate “the critical” for purposes like “critical thinking” and “critical inquiry.” I build a theoretical model, the epistemology of racism, that offers a broad dynamic that explains the consubstantial nature and interplay between the social and individual aspects of ideology, rhetoric, and hegemony, particularly around racism. The epistemology of racism connects *habitus* (dispositions acquired historically through one’s life experiences), common sense (rhetoric and logic circulating in the networks of our society that are often tacit), and institutions (mediating structures that minister authority and authenticity). This epistemology offers one way to explore race and racism in the classroom as systemic and structural, which is why it focuses

on the structural elements of racism (epistemology), and not individual acts of prejudice or bigotry. The epistemology of racism also provides a set of concepts usable for defining the critical in the classroom. I borrow analysis and theory primarily from Pierre Bourdieu, Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci, Stuart Hall, and E. San Juan. In chapter 2, I provide a brief analysis of a popular cultural text in order to show how the epistemology of racism can be used in the classroom to critically interrogate cultural sites for structural racism.

I discuss in Chapter 3 the origins of the writing classroom in order to create a picture of the classroom in which an epistemology of racism can be used successfully. I explain what seems the most useful from sophistic rhetorical and pedagogical theory, primarily Protagoras' man-measure doctrine and his antilogical heuristics for rhetorical invention. This discussion concludes by showing how writing courses, if they are based on sophistic antecedents, also have an implied theme beyond "writing": assessment. The notion of "measuring" as both sensing and judging, and antilogic as a heuristic, if taken seriously and incorporated into pedagogy, means writing classes must be spaces where various assessment practices are performed and discussed as socially contested and derived decisions. The implications to an explicit sophistic approach also provides a way to fertilize the ground for the deconstruction of race in the classroom and interrogate it critically. Critical sophistic pedagogy constructs the writing class as a space where various antilogical positions can be posed and explored as epistemological and understood as sets of rhetorical/ideological assessments themselves. It allows for non-dominant subjectivities to be valid perspectives from which to write and assess while keeping the class from willy-nilly relativism.

To illustrate a sophistic classroom that is structured on assessment practices, I offer in Chapter 4 my rendition of a writing course and focus most of my attention on a new element:

community-based assessment practices. I incorporate assignments that ask students to write for their colleagues in class, to engage in peer assessment practices, use a portfolio system, and offer public reflections that help students produce theory about writing and assessment. Through this discussion, I justify the pedagogy's usefulness and effectiveness through student voices and theory from the fields of assessment and composition. Not only do I hope to illustrate a sophisticated writing course, but also one that focuses on the necessary foundation of self-reflective assessment.

In chapter 5, I discuss the necessity of conflict when using community-based assessment and the epistemology of racism. My main concern in this chapter is to examine the consensus/dissensus debate in composition studies in order to show how antilogical discussions are more educative in the writing classroom. Constructing a classroom rhetoric around dissensus minimizes the erasing of difference and weaker voices (or perspectives not backed by the status quo) while acknowledging that ultimately tough decisions about writing, knowledge, and value must be made. I theorize these concerns as a rhetoric of hard agreements. I answer some of the important objections and concerns that many may have about a community-based assessment pedagogy, particularly ones around issue of normative discourse. Additionally, I elaborate more fully on an important issue that a rhetoric of hard agreements brings up, critical hermeneutic reflections by students that help construct classroom theory on writing and assessment. This is the final ingredient to community-based assessment practice.

In Chapter 6, I offer one critique of one opposing rhetoric to a rhetoric of hard agreements, a phenomenological rhetoric, voiced by Barbara Couture. I analyze her critiques of relativism, conflict, and historical determinism as they pertain to my pedagogy. Additionally, I show how a phenomenological rhetoric, one that is premised on a common truth found in all

experience and one that denies conflict and difference as productive, ends up reaffirming the white *habitus* in the academy and society, thus effectively silencing people of color and any perspective not of the status quo.

In Chapter 7, I broaden the scope of the epistemology of racism and a rhetoric of hard agreements. I summarize the epistemology of whiteness (discussed in this introduction), the epistemology of racism (chapters 1 and 2), a critical sophistic pedagogy (chapter 3), community-based assessment practices (chapter 4), and a rhetoric of hard agreements (chapters 5 and 6). It closes by offering a narrative that articulates my education as one structured by racism. My intention is to provide some nuance to the critical practice I promote, showing why it is difficult to enact, believe in, and live with.

Chapter 1: The Epistemology of Racism

Further, it isn't, I've come to see, making connections between literacy and black culture that offers the best solutions to the problem of student retention (or for my own retention as a faculty member for that matter). Instead, making those connections implicates the literacy classroom as a site that reproduces the retention problem it's designed to eliminate. (696)

[E]verything we do in the classroom is – whether it involves devaluing BEV [Black English Vernacular] or valorizing it, allowing students to act white or black – is a function of – in fact, a contribution to – the continuing racialization of our society. And as we continue to race society, we simultaneously class it, gender it, and sex it. (708)

“Your Average Nigga,” Vershawn Ashanti Young

In the contemporary college classroom, talking about race and racism is always difficult because the vast majority of our students, around 27-29 out of 30, are white (TuSmith and Reddy 3).³¹ Most whites (and some students of color), especially young students enculturated in homogenous and isolated suburbs, simply refuse to see racism as a factor determining life chances, opportunity, and access to capital and education in the U.S. – and, many will argue, racism certainly has nothing to do with writing well or thinking critically. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, a sociologist researching student racial attitudes, shows how many white students from various U.S. universities³² use certain discursive “frames” (i.e. abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural

racism, and minimization of racism) to articulate their racial ideology and cloak it in linguistic “styles” (e.g. “I’m not prejudiced, but . . .” (57), “I’m not black, so I don’t know” (58), “anything but race” (62), “they are the racist ones . . .” (63)). This color-blind racist discourse used primarily by Whites attempts to ignore as irrelevant, erase as if non-existent, or minimize as inconsequential, structural racism (and race as a socio-cultural factor), usually by making it historically a thing of the past, or a personal psychological issue. It also attempts to secure a non-racist position for those using the frames. Furthermore, Bonilla-Silva’s discussion of racial stories and testimonies by white students illustrates how a color-blind racist discourse often works with cultural myths that tend to reinforce racism as a non-issue, hiding and allowing it to continue unabated. Bonilla-Silva’s research suggests there is still much work to be done in the classroom around race and a critical engagement with the rhetoric and racism.

From my own classroom experience teaching courses on race (at the community college level) and writing courses with themes or readings engaging issues of race, I’ve heard all of these discursive frames and “story lines” many times.³³ The difficulty is in deconstructing student attitudes in order to critically engage with race and hegemonic discourse in the classroom without demanding that students to change their attitudes (since this tends to put many on the defensive and entrench attitudes). Instead, we might ask for a change in the way rhetoric is taught to students. Not only should we introduce rhetoric as a part of the ways in which hegemonic forces articulate societal patterns, form larger networks of meaning, and construct the world, but as a crucial way Western cultures have constructed race and citizenship, rationalized and empirically constructed racial subordination,³⁴ and interpellate each of us within ever-shifting economies of power, identity, and nationhood. The classroom community must be able to understand a sophisticated theoretical framework that shows rhetoric and writing as structured

by racism. In short, our commonsensical notions about race and knowledge (truth) dialectically play with structural factors in the lives of our students, their individual evolving psychological/emotional/rational/bodily dispositions and histories. These elements are generated by and react to each other within a milieu that also (over)determines the play in the system. Discursive frames and story lines, like the ones Bonilla-Silva offers, gain validity and reinforce social myths by their pervasiveness and their appeals to an abstract rationality and systems of values that seem to go beyond race – they become common sense, logical, and true. They establish and reinforce structural elements in society and our own private discourses, which also happened to have a part in their creation. Both the dog and the tail seem to wag each other simultaneously. And the result is that in our classrooms, a high level of resistance can be heard and felt by both undergraduate and graduate level white students (and students of color).³⁵ As teachers who are committed to a critical pedagogy that engages with the ideological, discursive, and cultural elements of structural racism – our tacit assumptions and values, conventions, and material practices – we must be prepared for a color-blind racist discourse and its affects on personhood. And by personhood, I mean the ways in which we validate our agency, find ourselves interpellated, and articulate our citizenship statuses. In short, the writing classroom should address how and why we act the way we do and articulate what we do within our networks of agency.

As I point out in my introduction, the writing classroom and the teaching of rhetoric is fundamentally about discursive practices that have implications for subjectivity, and are inherited through scientific and discursive traditions that use the primary Enlightenment epistemology. As I outline in the introduction, rhetorics that categorize, imply teleologies, or work from a tacit racialism and/or empiricism are never neutral systems of conveyance, but are part of

epistemologies that structure practices, discourse, and even our very bodies. They construct their subjects (in both senses of the word, as *the* subject of study and the subject who is the *audience* for the rhetoric). The teaching of writing is never just about commas and semicolons, supported and warranted arguments, the “effective” use of appeals, the understandings of audience and context, nor about “clear,” “concise,” or “natural” writing. The teaching of writing is always political and always concerns race and whiteness (as well as gender, sexuality, and class) because the elements of the primary Enlightenment epistemology construct whiteness as a fundamental aspect of the “academic” subjectivity. Much academic discourse, especially the kind taught through current-traditional rhetoric, often constructs discourse in rational and empirical ways as “elements of rhetoric,” to borrow Richard Whately’s textbook’s title. Our contemporary college classrooms have inherited the primary Enlightenment epistemology, and it’s reified in much of their language. In this way, the political in rhetoric is always constitutive, always constructs the playing field on which the rhetoric itself attempts to win the game. The difficulty today, then, is that our writing pedagogies must offer opportunities to interrogate the constituents of structural racism on a macro level (the institutional, structural, and hegemonic), while still engaging with them on the micro level (the personal and limits of agency). We must talk about race and racism in discourse as constructions that can be interrogated – a historical game with rules which favor a white, male, heterosexual subjectivity.

In *The Racial Contract*, Charles Mills, writing from a philosophical perspective, makes a similar case that I make for the inclusion of political discussions as discussions of race in the classroom by arguing that the U.S. polity is firmly rooted in a racist structure: “What is needed . . . is a recognition that racism . . . is *itself* a political system, a particular power structure of formal or informal rule, socioeconomic privilege, and norms for the differential distribution of material

wealth and opportunities, benefits and burdens, rights and duties” (3). Mills persuasively shows how the racial contract, from its roots with Locke, Hobbes, and Kant – and as I’ve shown, we can add Bacon, Descartes, Hume, Blair, Campbell, Sheridan, and Whately to this list – “codifies morality,” based on universal ideals of “equality” and “rights,” categorized for white men (Mills 14-16), which naturalizes the subordinate place of Others, even their nonexistence (Mills 16, 28). Historically, Mills explicates the racial contract as developed from a colonial contract that legitimized conquest, first of the Americas then of Africa, Pacific, Asia, and now the Middle East (21, 25). It’s not hard to see how a racial hierarchy, based on the inherent power and primacy of a reasoning, white, male mind, could justify slavery, cultural genocide, and colonial practices. Most important for our exploration, from these practices and the history of decisions made, there is also a codified set of linguistic practices and discursive conventions that naturalize racism, construct a racist discourse that continues to hide behind its pretensions to “objectivity” and discursively institutionalize racism. In the preceding introduction, I called these practices ones that used the primary Enlightenment epistemology.

Here, I focus on structural racism as a product of epistemological traditions, ones traceable to the Enlightenment. This kind of discussion offers a way to see rhetoric as constitutive of our world and worldviews, subjectivities and knowledge itself – an act that’s not simply managerial but political. Our epistemological traditions provide the connective tissue in society’s web of practices, including the rhetorical. Rhetoric constitutes the ways in which we identify, describe, show, explain, celebrate, rationalize, and support what we do, think, and see, but we do these acts by constructing simultaneously discourse and ideological frameworks. Moreover, this discursive connective tissue provides the universe of possible articulations of the

self and the Other, of what's right, wrong, or otherwise, good, bad, or neutral. One possibility in a closed discursive system, or rather inevitability, to come full circle, is structural racism.

In this chapter, I theorize racism as a set of epistemological concepts, consubstantial to one another, that we can use in the classroom to teach writing and the critical analysis of cultural or literary sites as structural in nature and function. This epistemology of racism attempts to connect the material with the rhetorical, the individual with the social, practices with ideology, base with superstructure, so that classroom and academic discussions and analyses do not have to be just about one or the other – because they never are. Additionally, the epistemology of racism allows us not to have to have an explicit revolutionary agenda, a kind that pushes students unwillingly oftentimes toward political action and participation that they simply aren't ready for or willing to believe in.

Additionally, I will offer a way to see more agency within hegemony, so that students do not think that there is no room for change, that we are simply automatons. Part of my claim for more agency is a *faith* in agency. This faith is purely irrational,³⁶ but then, as should already be clear and will become clearer in this chapter, faith may be all we actually do rest our logics, discourse, and theories on since all discourse and its attached conventions and logics are irrationally (but not arbitrarily) based anyway. While we could name this faith “assumptions,” the term doesn't get at the emotional involvement around racism and its rhetoric, around revolution and the spirituality of belief – illustrate the ways feelings for security, love, hate, anxiety, equality, family, individuality, communion, desire, sanctity, and liberality are structured into our lives and discoursed. My *will to faith* is vital to my spiritual and psychological well-being because it alone acknowledges my irrationally human impulses, which warrant otherwise unwarrantable claims to truth.

Another part of my claim for more agency comes from a *will for change*, which keeps our discourse from being arbitrary. I sincerely believe that our current racist-democratic-capitalist and educational systems perpetuate a network of injustices and inequalities, and must be done away with. Those who stand at the top of this pyramid of privilege and power do not want to relinquish their positions at the societal apex. Their decisions, discourses, logics, and practices will always seek to benefit them and maintain the status quo, in other words their supremacy and Others' subordination. This is a *will for stasis*. Call it laissez faire economy, survival of the fittest, meritocracy, or tradition, the current socio-economic arrangements in the U.S. ask us (those forming the "base" of the pyramid) to believe that things are getting better, that it just takes time, that we can't expect everything at once. Why I ask? Claims like these are all half-honest lies that, most likely, those in power may believe to be true, but probably never actually critically inspect, because if they did, they'd have to give up too much. In addition, the structures that place these individuals and groups in power do so deliberately, so the system and all of its structures reinforces its own naturalness, validating its own truth and reasonableness. Because of this, the system also gives those of us at the bottom or in the middle of the pyramid a need and desire for a will to faith and change.

My explanation for a will to faith doesn't offer anything new, and I know I'm borrowing from Nietzsche in my phrasings, but I use "a will to" because this makes clear my assumption, which is essentially the same as a racist assumption for inequality and white supremacy, except I'm using it to balance the societal scales. We must have a *desire* for change that is linked to a critiquing of the status quo (and for me, this equates almost directly to ideological and material societal structures) – that is, a rhetoric that gives voice to what is not speakable, is inexpressible, or spoken of poorly, in the current discourse, all in order to effect change. We cannot simply

hope for change, or wish for it, or wait for it, or assume others “in power” will make it happen for us, nor can we rely on the sheer power of declaration, nor on solely abstract rational or logical appeals to equality, communion, or justice. All sides use these appeals, and they aren’t working by themselves. Our discourse must incorporate, articulate, and even problematize³⁷ our own irrational and unwarrantable faith in our agency, our will to change the current societal arrangements of power and privilege, as well as use rhetorics that critically engages with and deconstructs racism at the epistemological level; otherwise we simply seek a new un-reflexive power arrangement, complete with its own hegemony, to replace the old one.

My theory comes primarily from a consideration of E. San Juan’s *Racism and Cultural Studies: Critiques of Multiculturalist Ideology and the Politics of Difference*, Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of *habitus* (primarily from *Outline of a Theory of Practice* and *Language and Symbolic Power*), Antonio Gramsci’s discussions on philosophy, praxis, and commonsense, and Giambattista Vico’s theorizing of *verum-certum* and *verum-factum*. Because whiteness is so important to the maintenance of structural racism, to the make up of most college students today, I’ll spend significant time discussing it as a constituent and product of an epistemology of racism.

Structural Racism and Whiteness

As suggested by Mills, today we are all complicit in racial-political and discursive systems. We write from them and in them. We engage with them daily in a multitude of ways and through a plethora of discursive strategies. As Mills shows both philosophically and historically (which he traces from the Enlightenment philosophies around contractarianism), theories like “the racial contract” can deconstruct the “mythical” pictures of America and American citizens held up as objective and true (122). So in contemporary discussions, how do

we decenter and make explicit whiteness (and I place inside this term maleness, heterosexuality, middle-classness, and to some extent Protestantism) as a hidden discursive scaffolding that frames all discourses in the academy and popular U.S. culture, and how do we argue that this scaffolding is an integral and important aspect of the teaching of writing.³⁸ Learning to write and assess writing well, think critically, and confront our racist discourse, practices, and societal structures are consubstantial. And so structural racism, as discursive practices and self-iterating structures, touches everything we say and do. I theorize it as a master paradigm for classroom discussions that aims to make more critical student writers and citizens, even at the cost of their discomfort, which is inevitable.

Drawing from Charles E. Mills, David R. Roediger, George Lipsitz, Antonio Gramsci, Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Pierre Bourdieu, among others, E. San Juan offers a macro-level view of institutional racism as a part of the U.S. “racial polity” (San Juan 26). San Juan begins by critiquing the idea that the U.S. racial polity is organized exclusively around and through a *herrenvolk* democracy³⁹ in order to produce a certain unequal “division of labor and allocation of property” delineated by race. San Juan emphasizes, in fact, that “[t]he whole racial polity should . . . be mapped as a battleground for ideological and political combat” (San Juan 53). Consequently, this differently conceived political arrangement illustrates an “unequal distribution of material resources on which differential power relations depend” (San Juan 26), and is organized through hegemonic racial structures that work in concert with “everyday life” (San Juan 52-3).⁴⁰ In other words, institutional racism has structured and maintained in daily practice and discourse what George Lipsitz calls the “possessive investment in whiteness” by all agents. Lipsitz’s idea reinforces San Juan’s emphasis away from individual prejudices or acts, and on systems that “encourage white people to expend time and energy on the creation and re-

creation of whiteness” (thus “investment”), and stress the importance and centrality of maintaining opportunities for “asset accumulation and upward mobility” (thus “possessive”) (Lipsitz vii-viii).⁴¹ I, however, would like to emphasize the organizing principle by which Lipsitz’s “possessive investment in whiteness” and San Juan’s critique of the U.S. as a racial polity both work: it is a principle grounded in a structural racism.

As I show in my introduction, structural racism is not a twentieth century phenomenon. It didn’t pop up with the emergence of the middle class, nor with heightened labor competition among groups residing at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder in the U.S. I trace structural racism back to the primary Enlightenment epistemology, which in contemporary historical contexts I’ll refer to as the *epistemology of whiteness*. This epistemology drives structurally racist hegemony as San Juan describes it (although he uses the term “institutional racism”). Our historical discourses and societal structures (like governmental programs and judicial decisions) construct a cult of citizenship developed over time. What this ultimately means is that in order for discussions about racism to be profitable, they cannot center on how white people are bad to people of color, demonizing the oppressor (as easy as that may be); instead, as San Juan points out, we must talk in terms of structures that both function as oppressive systems and structure what appears to be “natural” in our world. Additionally, we must be able to see and interrogate these structures in discourse and in our material conditions.

As implicit in Mills and expressed by Lipsitz and Reodiger, whiteness is key to all societal and discursive structures. Lipsitz reminds us that whiteness never speaks its name. It is an “unmarked category against which difference is constructed” (1).⁴² This allows whiteness to be an implicit organizing principle, structural, institutional, governmental, and tacitly logical. And so, underneath structural racism is an unspoken, generative and logical possessive

investment in whiteness that works against people, programs, and institutions who are themselves legitimately fighting against racism. To see this investment (and its tensions) in the university, we only need to read the educational experience as one packaged as “diversity.” The assumption is certainly not, for example: “hey, look at the diverse experience Asao is getting around all those white people.” To be legitimate (and profitable), universities need bodies of color to show off, but whiteness, is assumed to be present (for obvious reasons). Because the white body, just as whiteness, remains central to the identity of the university and its constituents, the university attempts to make the itself more “diverse” by recruiting and retaining staff, students, and faculty of color, but ends up oftentimes commodifying the body of color inadvertently. Good intentions get co-opted and become de facto racism. San Juan, in his introduction, says that “[t]he racial polity is a thoroughly nationalized machine for reproducing racial hierarchy anchored to and intensified by class antagonisms” (8). Certainly universities work in this same fashion, reproducing hierarchy through the classification – and display – of its “multicultural” students. Despite the absence of overt, socially sanctioned racism, structural racism remains in the contemporary context. This racism is often hard to see, combat, and counter because it is encased in whiteness, a whiteness that we and our students are invested in and are a part of.

The function of agency is important to understand in whiteness and structural racism. San Juan identifies three types of institutional racism (summarizing David Mason) and critiques how each lacks engagement with individual agency. They are: (1) a “conspiracy or instrumental type . . . predicated on prejudice, or the concealed interest of the state or a hegemonic class as the motive behind discriminatory policies” (e.g. Jim Crow laws, slavery, alien land laws, etc.); (2) a “‘structural Marxist’ [type which] locates institutional racism ‘neither in the purposes nor the

articulations of interested groups and their agents but in the consequences of state policies” (e.g. property tax laws, court decisions, “separate but equal” laws, etc.); and (3) one tied to “‘colonialism’ and focus[ed] on the conditions under which groups are incorporated into the ‘host society’” (44-5).⁴³ San Juan concludes that in all of these iterations of institutional racism, “[w]hat is at issue then in elucidating the analytic value of the concept is the ratio of structure to agency, of object to subject, which it defines, a calibration crucial for a politics or ethics committed to changing power relations” (45). Today we can’t escape “the subject-object dialectic” inherent in political economy, as San Juan emphasizes. Institutional racism is “an effect of structural determinants of a social formation,” not simply produced by individual biases or prejudices (45). “What seems to be lacking in such accounts,” says San Juan, “is the linkage between the structural characteristics of a social formation and the actions by which subjects (interpellated by various state and civil-society apparatuses) produce and reproduce their positions/modalities of social existence” (45). In effect, he sees part of the solution to institutional racism to be an understanding of the linkage between racist structures and agents’ actions and wills to act. This structural understanding and linkage to agency is important when seeing how institutional racism becomes hegemonic and why we can more aptly name it *structural racism*. This is really what San Juan is talking about as I read him: structures that (re)produce racism in effect, and do so through (and despite) the good intentions of the agents involved. These structures, which shape governmental policy, economic decisions, social and racial formations, and other environmental factors, allow individual agents to be complicit in racism, and see their larger societal patterns and effects as unconnected to racism or race. An agent, for instance, can claim to be non-racist, support a system that awards academic scholarships based on “merit” (rationalized as a system where “everyone” has an “equal

opportunity” for the awards), yet the system awards its scholarships by measured merit in ways that disadvantage students of color (for a host of economic, geographic, academic, and social reasons). This merit-based system purports to be anti-racist (even tries in its language and mission), but by ignoring how the system allocates its scholarships – that is, how its definition of “merit” works with and is situated around other economic, social, and environmental structures – racism is perpetuated and denied by a rationalized proof that the system “does not discriminate” because it doesn’t account for race. Discourse that argues against “reverse discrimination” of whites uses similar appeals. Reverse discrimination arguments often use logics that work from empirical notions of merit, worth, and qualifications that draw directly from the epistemology of whiteness.

While Lipsitz offers us tacit motive and purpose, even motive not fully realized by many (maybe most) – hidden or displaced motive is part of the hegemony of whiteness – San Juan calls for ways to understand agents acting within and around racist institutions, seeing agents’ willingness to go along with inequality, injustice, and hegemonic forces. For our purposes, we might ask how we can explore connections between our agency, sense of identity, and articulations of citizenship status and the structures that give us the power (or restrict power) to understand, articulate, and act within the classroom or university? Another way to ask this question, given the rhetorical traditions built from the primary Enlightenment epistemology, is: what critical rhetoric can we use to theorize, critique, and address structural racism in the classroom that doesn’t unconsciously perpetuate the epistemology of whiteness, structures (discursive and societal), and everyday racist practices?

We must keep in mind that racism, as a set of practices, isn’t always malicious, nor today meant to “keep people down” as a rule. It is natural and logical. While discussing Philomena

Essed's *Everyday Racism*, and drawing from Pierre Bourdieu's sociological theories, San Juan says that "racist notions are integrated into meanings that make practices immediately definable and manageable," and therefore are "familiar and repetitive." Racism doesn't feel like coercion, or even consent. It's logical and clothed in neutral rhetoric. It feels like free will, like agency. Through the repetition of practices, "racial and ethnic relations are actualized and reinforced" (San Juan 49), naturalized. For example, San Juan claims, by implication, that multicultural programs, like WSU's Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Multicultural Center, are "provisions," "ethnic niches" that pacify folks and "objectify and marginaliz[e] people of color and thus control them within the repressive milieu of a pluralist order" (49).

We might see multiculturalism this way: the bunching of so many diverse peoples into an "Asian American and Pacific Islander" category (for reasons San Juan defines in his third type of institutional racism, one based on "the conditions under which a group is incorporated into the 'host society'"), exemplifies an objectification and marginalization of the Other, and therefore takes agency away from AAPI students, for instance.⁴⁴ It acts out the ethnicity-based paradigm,⁴⁵ a paradigm that essentializes race, culture, class, and other markers of status by using static key "determinants" to group people and erase real diversity in favor of a "multicultural" that serves the dominant white subjectivity. Asian American Pacific Islander students become a group of faceless Others, or to use Raymond Williams' term for the disenfranchised working classes, the "masses,"⁴⁶ which keeps attention away from those seeing the masses as mobs (or mass-mobs). It also illustrates how through a grouping of Others in an arbitrary category based loosely on geography (practically half of the planet) can not only keep whiteness from being identified but can invisibly control the Other's agency. It's a slight of hand maneuver, or as Donna Haraway says, a "god-trick" that is produced by an "illusion" of "infinite vision," an objective one (189).

The eye from which the Other is seen is universalized and its subject(ive) position erased by “seeing everything from nowhere” (189).⁴⁷ It’s an unsituated line of sight, sort of speak, or rather a sight/site without a line from a controlling viewer.

By keeping the gaze away from whiteness, by performing a god-trick, the formation of multicultural programs and centers on school campuses contains, pacifies, and manages people of color while maintaining the primacy of white agency. Patti Duncan in her discussion on decentering whiteness in the classroom, illustrates the god-trick and its effect on students: “the assumption is made that white students are the true ‘subjects’ of the learning experience [in the university], while students of color are expected to diversify the classroom and university space, enabling white students to receive a more ‘multicultural’ and diverse experience” (46). This is not that different in its consequences than all of the past overtly repressive acts that the U.S. has accomplished: alien land laws, immigration and naturalization laws (or rather restrictions), Asian miner taxes, WWII internment of Japanese, Native American genocide and forced relocation to reservations, etc.

All of these are tactics that have centered on a rhetoric of labeling non-whites as aliens, invaders, yellow hordes, heathens, and inscrutable devils. They have also organized around, been nurtured by, a *herrenvolk* republicanism that defines whiteness by referring to Others as a common enemy, and staying invisible and unexamined by deflecting the gaze away from the gazer. It appears to be scientific, neutral, empirical, and not rhetorical or positional. Structural racism allows us to “celebrate diversity” (for the sake of its white majority), but not confront difference and inequality (at the expense of its populations of color). University multicultural centers, in fact, are predicated on these differences and inequalities as essentialized categories, as “diversity.” Like so many butterflies pinned down in glass boxes, programs like these put the

body of color on display much like the Chinese museums of the nineteenth century, the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago,⁴⁸ minstrel shows, and Harlem's Cotton Club did in their times. This is the structural racism on most college campuses today, and multicultural agendas help construct the boiling pot – whose ingredients do not melt together – that our students steep in outside our classrooms. Programmatic multiculturalism reasons that racism is diminishing, that more people of color are going to college, that racism doesn't exist as it once did, that anyone can “make it” as long as he/she works hard enough.⁴⁹

San Juan uses his discussion of Essed to make a larger point about “institutional multiculturalism,” or the “ethos of racial diversity and heterogeneity” (40). In a sense, San Juan's discussion is also his way of addressing questions concerning agency and its linkage to institutions of power – and why it's difficult to escape racism, to see it, and critique it. However, for classroom discussions, San Juan is too complex, too embedded in the discourse of cultural studies. It's simply too theoretical for a first-year writing course, even many upper-division writing courses. Even though institutionalized multiculturalism is a defense of “a legacy of a common culture” (i.e. a culture of whiteness) by using race as a “fundamental organizing principle” (49), as San Juan says, arguments around multiculturalism to many often sound like so much complaining. It's tough for white students (and many students of color) to see racism as anything but skinheads burning crosses and pre-1960s white men with evil scowls yelling “nigger.” So how can we teach within academic spaces that are predicated on multicultural agendas that for the most part reproduce structural racism? How can we teach rhetoric and writing as the fabric from which U.S. citizenship is tailored, and racism as a weave in that fabric – maybe even the needle – yet balance other institutional and writing program goals for our classes? It seems that if racism is structural, and an unspoken epistemology of whiteness is an

organizing and stabilizing principle of it, then our rhetorics might most profit from theories that define racism and epistemologies structurally.

***Habitus* in the Epistemology of Racism**

In order to form a critical rhetoric and pedagogy around the practices, logics, and discourses of structural racism (hereafter SR), we can look to two concepts that work dialectically and theorize individual practices (material and rhetorical) and hegemonic structures (informal institutions, conventions of media and public discourse, and societal norms and values): *habitus* and common sense. Quoting Pierre Bourdieu, San Juan uses this definition of *habitus*:

Bourdieu means “the conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence that produce *habitus*, *systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures*, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them” (San Juan 52; Bourdieu, *Outline* 72 my emphasis)

For Bourdieu, *habitus* is a historically situated structure composed of and conditioned by ideology, material conditions, and discourse, that iterates into new structures (i.e. it’s a structuring structure), all the while these new structures maintain their original, kernel ideology (i.e. their systems of durable, transposable dispositions). This means they transport hegemony. *Habitus* helps form SR and tacitly perpetuates it by not looking like the racism of the past. Bourdieu himself in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* defines the term within a dialectic. Environmental and historical factors, like material conditions, produce *habiti* that shape the

universe of actions possible for agents (72). In turn, our daily practices (the products of *habitus*) reinforce and reproduce (in various iterations) their originating *habitus* (80). In a sense, *habitus*' dialectical nature makes its end construct its means, and its means define its end.

In his introduction to Bourdieu's *Language and Symbolic Power*, John Thompson explains that the "key concept" for *habitus* is "dispositions." He says that "*habitus* is a set of *dispositions* which incline agents to act and react in certain ways. The dispositions generate practices, perceptions, and attitudes which are 'regular' without being consciously co-ordinated or governed by any 'rule'" (12). Dispositions have four main qualities, Thompson explains: (1) *inculcation*, a gradual and mundane process of experiences and training, particularly in childhood; (2) *structured*, a reflection of the social conditions from which agents come; (3) *durable*, "ingrained in the body in such a way that they endure through the life history of the individual, operating in a way that is pre-conscious"; and (4) *generative and transposable*, "capable of generating a multiplicity of practices and perceptions in fields other than those in which they were originally acquired" (12-13). Agents' dispositions are unseen structuring devices, produced from and informing our daily practices over time. These dispositions construct *habitus*, and they reinforce each other dialectically. One's gradual life experiences and practices, social conditions, durable sets of bodily markers, and all of these elements' ability to migrate from one field of operation to another form *habitus*.

If Mills, Lipsitz, Roediger, and San Juan are right about the historical precedence of racism as an organizing principle for politics in the U.S. and Europe, then a racist *habitus* is inevitable, and will seem natural and logical, even ethical. SR, as a *habitus*, will reinforce itself in various ways through agents' discourse, their participation in institutions and other social structures, and by an accumulation of individual experience. SR will produce seemingly

objective, neutral, and non-racial discourse that hides behind its whiteness. This suggests that we need to include in critical pedagogies room for a theorizing of whiteness as a *habitus* that surrounds and penetrates our students' lives and discourse, a discourse that continually iterates yet remains racist. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's research in *Racism without Racists* illustrates this "white *habitus*" forcefully and persuasively in contemporary America (Bonilla-Silva 104, 124). Of his four frames of racial ideology, "abstract liberalism" seems the most applicable here.⁵⁰ He defines this frame as: "using ideas associated with political liberalism (e.g., 'equal opportunity,' the idea that force should not be used to achieve social policy) and economic liberalism (e.g., competition, individualism, and a free market) in an *abstract* manner to explain racial matters" (28). Bonilla-Silva's research shows how clearly white students from various institutions use abstracted Protestant ethics of hard work (like the Horatio Alger myth as an archetype for minority educational success, or lack of it) and Enlightenment reasoning (along with their assumptions for the primacy of whiteness) to justify racial inequality and unfairness. His numerous examples illustrate how all four dispositions within a white *habitus* can work to generate rhetoric that, like its Enlightenment precursors, appears at the surface to be non-racist, a seemingly empirical, statement of facts, but actually these students' rhetoric is embedded in racist epistemologies and reasoning that only seems logical because of a tacit white *habitus*.

But what is usually most salient about discussions of race is the body that is associated with its discourse. Assumed in his descriptions of *habitus* is Bourdieu's ideas of bodily *hexis*, an important theoretical underpinning. Thompson briefly describes *hexis* as "a certain durable organization of one's body and of its deployment in the world." As we've seen in Takaki and the early discourse of nation building in the U.S., Bourdieu's concept of *hexis* allows the body to be "the site of incorporated history" (Bourdieu, *Language* 13). *Hexis* is the product and a

constituent of the dispositions that make up *habitus*. And *habitus* is dialectically formed by evolving dispositions that the agent accumulates over time in practices generated by past dispositions mapped, in a sense, onto current experiences and practices. Furthermore, one's dispositions, as the French word (and English) suggests, are not just "predispositions, tendency, propensity, or inclination," they are also bodily "way[s] of being" (Bourdieu, *Outline* 214). We might think of *hexis* as a way to see the physical inscription of alleged inner propensities and attitudes onto our bodies – that is, our ways of seeing and thinking, that spring from our mundane and unreflexive practices, as material, habitual ways of being. Bourdieu explains *hexis* and its connection to *habitus* in this way:

In a class society, all the products of a given agent, by an essential *overdetermination*, speak inseparably and simultaneously of his class – or, more, precisely, his position in the social structure and his rising or falling trajectory – and of his (or her) body – or more precisely, all the properties, always socially qualified, of which he or she is the bearer – sexual properties of course, but also physical properties, praised, like strength or beauty, or stigmatized . . . The child imitates not "models" but other people's actions. Body *hexis* speaks directly to the motor function, in the form of a pattern of postures that is both individual and systematic, because linked to a whole system of techniques involving the body and tools, and charged with a host of social meanings and values. (*Outline* 87)

Hexis allows *habitus* not only to be an abstract way of understanding dispositions that are in the mind (perceptual), but also to be durable, material, bodily markings. *Hexis* is the outward showing of the inner dispositions of others we see. Bodily markers of race, sex, class, and citizenship are both socially and individually constructed. While Bourdieu uniformly neglects

connecting *hexis* with race, it's easy for him to do so given our traditions of whiteness as the default *hexis* in academic discourses. From our Enlightenment roots on race as a set of disembodied characteristics, to contemporary notions of race as “ethnicity” and sets of essentialized cultural practices, race is still primarily understood as bodily *hexes*, not primarily political affiliation, social construction (i.e. political acts), or identification (i.e. acts of agency and the interpellation of racial ideology).

Bourdieu's *hexis* can be read as a set of “sexual” and “physical properties,” “motor function,” “postures,” and “techniques involving the body and tools.” Since *hexis* is reinforced by other dispositions, all with their own social and individual histories of whiteness (e.g. we can call the epistemology whiteness a *habitus*, which means it too has a set of *hexes* implied), we can risk whitening *hexis*, allowing the white, male, heterosexual body to remain primary, which I argued was a key aspect of Enlightenment thinking and discourse around rationality.⁵¹ Furthermore, none of us can fully escape our dispositions that are weaved into, or mapped onto, *hexis*. And I must admit that when I am occasionally surrounded by other people of color, at conferences or special gatherings, I feel *safer*. It feels better. I feel more connected, more a part of the group, than the usual situations I find myself in, one brown fellow in a room full of white folks.⁵² My emotional response is almost purely visceral, but it is also a symptom of structural elements in society that help construct particular *hexes* that then produce in me this feeling of security and communion.

In a sense, we could say that Goldberg's racialized discourse, particularly through his notion of “conceptual primitives” (e.g. categorization and hierarchy), was durable and transposable (to U.S. and other discourses outside of “science”) because it was inscribed onto the white, male body (e.g. through associated empiricism and rationalism); however, racialized

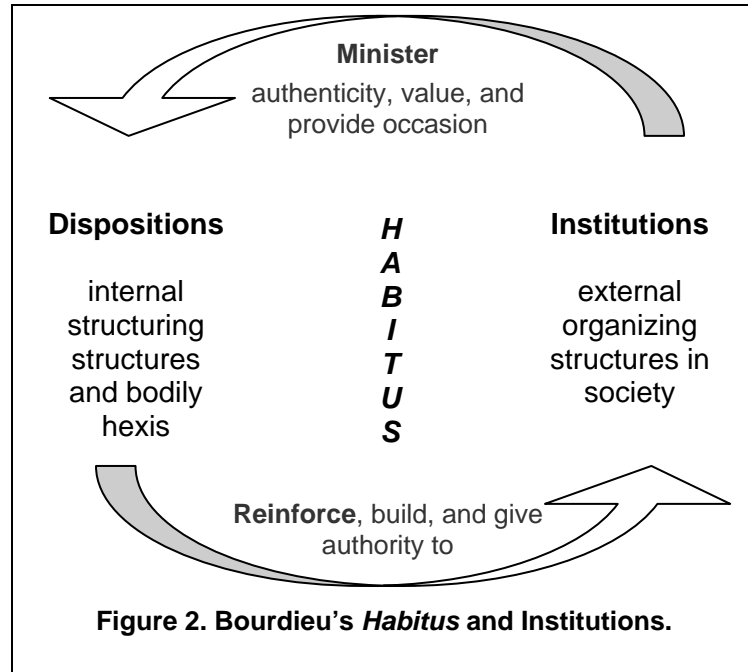
discourse embedded markings on the body of color as well (as Edward Said shows in *Orientalism*). As every selection in the section “Authority and (II) Legitimacy,” and several in the other two sections, of the recent anthology *Race in the College Classroom* (edited by TuSmith and Reddy) illustrates and explains, the professorial body is a site culturally inscribed as primarily white and male. We could say the same about *hexis*. As TuSmith’s and Reddy’s volume illustrates through various discussions, the typical college professor’s *hexis* is one associated with detached, “objective” discourse (invoking elements of the epistemology of whiteness), whiteness (often marked by white skin, but not always), and a masculine persona (i.e. declarative, straightforward, “logical,” and reasoned). In fact, according to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*’s 1997 survey of all faculty (tenure and non-tenure), “only 13.4 percent of all faculty were people of color, with the great majority of that tiny group clustered in the non-tenurable ranks” (TuSmith and Reddy 2).⁵³ Bonnie TuSmith describes faculty women of color’s *hexis* as primarily a site of denied authority (as most, if not all, of the teachers in the anthology do). TuSmith says, “For faculty women of color, professorial authority cannot be taken for granted. ‘English professors don’t look like you’ continues to be the prevalent student response to my physical presence” (123). She identifies students’ *hexis*-informed logic in a syllogism: “Professors are white men. You are not a white man. Therefore, you are not a professor” (123).⁵⁴ Bourdieu helps us see, in scenarios in which this logic functions, the constructed nature of how we read the bodies of those around us in various contexts. His notion of *hexis* gives us a way to see a social and historical structuring of the attitudes that TuSmith and others identify in their students. If classrooms had a rhetoric that revealed these structures, like *hexis*, discussions between teachers and students about their attitudes, desires, and profiles of Others, say of the college professor, would not have to sound or seem like proselytizing sessions where *teachers*

shame their students for feeling the way they do or seeing and understanding their worlds in the ways they do. Instead this rhetoric can situate students within the networks that produce meaning and value, and by which they manipulate to produce meaning and value for certain ends.

The final element that Bourdieu offers us – institutions – comes from his critique of Saussurian and Chomskian linguistics.⁵⁵ In everyday linguistic exchanges, according to Bourdieu, institutions mediate meaning, symbolic power, and linguistic capital. Linguistic exchanges, according to Bourdieu, are “economic exchanges,” in which producers and consumers gain and give “material and symbolic profit.” He continues, “utterances are not only . . . signs to be understood and deciphered; they are also *signs of wealth*, intended to be evaluated and appreciated, and *signs of authority*, intended to be believed and obeyed” (*Language* 66). When discussing the example of just “anybody” shouting in the public square, “I decree a general mobilization,” Bourdieu explains: “The logical exercise of separating the act of speech from its conditions of execution shows . . . that the performative utterance, as an act of institution, cannot socio-logically exist independently of the institution which gives it its *raison d’être*, and if it were to be produced in spite of everything, it would be socially deprived of sense” (*Language* 74). And further along in the same discussion, he explains that the “real source of the magic of performative utterances lies in the mystery of ministry . . . More precisely, it lies in the social conditions of the *institution* of the ministry” (75). As Thompson explains, for Bourdieu institutions vest power and authority in agents and their utterances. They define social relations, and provide the conditions under which an agent/rhetor can speak or write to an audience and have it make sense as well as be imbued with authority and validity. Institutions provide ground rules and occasion for speaking, as well as legitimacy for the speaker/rhetor (Bourdieu, *Language* 8-9).

Translating *habitus* outside the classroom and theoretical discussions, organizations like AAPI centers, by their structured nature, reproduce structural racism partly by being structures that proclaim an essentialized Asian and Pacific Islander identities (and thus a location where one can gaze at contained bodies of color). Yet they also reproduce an essential AAPI identity by being an institution with “ministry.” The layers of institutions (e.g. the university, the division of Multicultural Affairs, the Department of Ethnic Studies, and the AAPI center) give validity and authority, value and authenticity, to what the AAPI center proclaims or demonstrates by its presence and apparent function. Not only does the presence of the institution shape individuals’ dispositions, but individuals’ dispositions shape the institution itself, how the institution is “read” in community and who they see associated with it. Everyone is complicit to some extent. Multicultural organizations like these *embody* institutional structures that both structure the lives of all students (e.g. where they go or do not go, who they see or see from afar, under what conditions they interact with other, what they talk about or hear, how they are perceived by others or how others perceive them, etc.), and thus inform the individual dispositions of students. *Habitus* and institutions work closely together, neither coming first, but instead tautologically looping back to each other (assuming there’s no change in the system). This produces and is connected to a network of equally tautological commonsense frames, which I’ll discuss shortly. Western intellectual and philosophical traditions urge us to find origins and linear paths, chronology. Is it the egg or the chicken that came first here? My reading of Bourdieu’s *habitus*, which includes a dialectical relationship with institutions, is a way to escape the tendency to see only linear paths, and see the meaning-making structures and agents as elements that are simultaneous, relational, looping, situated, and even “illogical.”

While Bourdieu's discussion of institutions has more to do with his mapping of linguistic exchanges as an economy of cultural and linguistic production of power, it is equally useful to transpose it onto a theorizing of *habitus*, making *habitus* more complete for a rhetoric meant to address agents'



dispositions and actions, discourse, and the structuring structures within the networks of agency and the agents themselves (see Figure 2). Additionally, Bourdieu doesn't label institutions as a part of *habitus*, using the term solely as a kind of kairotic force and ministering context, but it seems that institutions themselves also can be thought of as a kind of external and common *habitus* (or at least, embodying a part of a community's range of available *habiti*), providing a common, stable reservoir for the production of *habiti* in a community. Our democratic electoral system for electing public officials is a good example of this. The presence of the voting and electoral institution in our society, which is associated to its history in U.S. culture (and individual histories of participation), helps produce a set of fairly stable and uniform *habiti* that predispose different individuals to see "democracy" and "freedom" in similar ways. In this way, we might think of institutions as structured structures that structure agents' dispositions and practices. *Habitus*, then, is not just internal and purely psychological, but it's also a good way to

conceptualize part of the matrix around us that disposes us to do and see things, act and talk, in similar ways – a kind of “peer pressure” in which there are no peers, only pressure.

In some ways, contemporary structural racism is even worse than the 1893 Columbian Exposition, in which bodies of the Other were literally on live display. In terms of AAPI students on college campuses, a multicultural center encourages an individual psychology of limited inclusion, a separate community on the fringe of the larger white university community – aligning dispositions and thus harmonizing (in various ways) *habiti*. These kinds of centers offer ways to resist white hegemony yet implicitly work with it by reinforcing a naturalized, essentialized AAPI identity.⁵⁶ This collective “identity” then is both a way to unify students and separate them from the larger community and place them on display as “diverse.” It effectively “matches the structures of civil society and the state” to racist, exclusionary notions. I belong in a special category of students because there is an institution that assumes it and demands it of me.⁵⁷ Students, staff, faculty, and others willingly and coercively submit to the AAPI multicultural center. It forms consent on the part of AAPI students based on arbitrary determinants of personhood – a consent to be unequal and ostracized. We often march willingly to our concentration camps and reservations, but we do so for very good reasons, and this is what makes this critique difficult. There is an element in these centers that actually does work against SR (e.g. the ability to form resistance to the larger academic institution, a localized place to become more critically aware of race and politics, an avenue to inform people, to critically engage in issues of racism, etc.), but all are countered by SR, by our complicity in the institution, which is both destructive and necessary. The *habitus* of the academy, like agents’ *habiti*, is durable and transposable – it’s dispositions work to co-opt efforts at change and resistance. And

because agents' *habiti* are primarily white in the U.S. (and the academy), even for students of color, whiteness, as the default reasoning, gets the presumption, as Whately would say.⁵⁸

Common Sense in the Epistemology of Racism

The other element of an epistemology of racism, is common sense. In his critique of Essed's paradigm of everyday racism, San Juan critiques Essed's notion of common sense as more than just a historical and "ideological apparatus for reproducing ethnic labor segmentation" and more than an accounting for the orchestration of the "racial mechanisms of marginalization, problematization, and containment" with "other liberal democratic institutions of civil society and the welfare state" (San Juan 51). Common sense is a larger entity in society. While this agrees with Charles Mills' theory of the racial contract and Roediger's thesis in *The Wages of Whiteness*, it's really an application, not a theoretical definition. It does, however, offer us a link to SR and the material culture that quietly reproduces it. Additionally, it shows how a *herrenvolk* republicanism is a tacit common sense of expected white privilege, a common ideology unarticulated much of the time but invoked and assumed often. Common sense is also a web of logics (implicit and explicit, as observable in discourse) that weave the world together into a *sensible* and *rational* domain for a community. Quoting Stuart Hall, and working from Gramsci's notions of common sense, language, and folklore as constituents of each person's "philosophy" (Gramsci 325), San Juan explains commonsense as an unstable river of practices streaming through history:

Every philosophical current leaves behind a sediment of 'common sense'; this is the document of its historical effectiveness. Common Sense is not rigid and immobile but is continually transforming itself, enriching itself with scientific

ideas and with philosophical opinions which have entered ordinary life. Common sense creates the folklore of the future. (San Juan 53)

For Hall, and San Juan, common sense is contradictory and shaped by political, philosophical, scientific, and pedestrian society. Gramsci himself defines common sense as fragmentary, even sensual and experiential, not “unitary” or “coherent,” like a philosophy. Common sense is “the ‘realistic’, materialistic elements,” and “the immediate product of crude sensation” (Gramsci 344). It’s “popular ideology” (Villanueva, “Considerations” 259). Additionally, it comes from folklore (defined as popular religion, systems of beliefs, superstitions, ways of acting, etc.), which are often articulated or codified for communities. Finally, common sense is embedded in language when it is articulated, which is itself “a totality of determined notions and concepts” (Gramsci 325). In distinguishing common sense from philosophy, Gramsci states that common sense is “the diffuse, unco-ordinated features of a generic form of thought common to a particular period and a particular environment” (331-32). Truth in Gramsci’s notion of common sense slides around, but he suggests we shouldn’t take it for granted if we are to develop a philosophy of praxis.⁵⁹ He says that “common sense is an ambiguous, contradictory and multiform concept, and that to refer to common sense as a confirmation of truth is a nonsense” (346). And a little further along in the same discussion, Gramsci suggests that Marx in his references to common sense considers the concept in similar terms. When Marx refers to common sense, he uses it as a way to reveal common sense’s “formal solidity” in producing “norms of conduct,” and not truths or historical facts (Gramsci 346). So common sense isn’t “truth,” or even common knowledge, instead it’s the material that helps produce social norms and logics.

Another way to see common sense generally is as metonymic artifacts that are both the American archetypes of common sense and material and rhetorical by nature (i.e. they seek to persuade, inform, explore, celebrate, argue, symbolize to “Americans” implicitly and explicitly who we are at various given historical points): the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, laws, the Bible, court rulings, news media, movies, TV programming, advertisements, literary canons, etc. Part of their materiality, and what makes their common sense so powerful and tacit, is their connections to the cultural economies of the U.S. They aren’t abstract, “literary” documents floating in a vacuum, holding static meaning that’s waiting to be discovered, divorced from economies, modes of production, agents’ practices of cultural production and motives, etc. – at least, we shouldn’t read or talk about them in this way. In fact, this is the starting point, and Raymond Williams’ important insight, in “Culture is Ordinary” (originally published in 1958). In this essay, Williams’ first “wish” is for the academy “to recognize that education is ordinary” and that it should offer “the process of giving to the ordinary members of society its full common meanings, and the skills that will enable them to amend these meanings, in the light of their personal and common experience” (20). The “common meanings” Williams speaks of are our common senses, encapsulated in rhetorical sites like the above mentioned ones.⁶⁰ Popular cultural documents embody the ordinary, the common sense of our culture, as well as create it. They offer historical, textual spaces (material and discursive) to interrogate for the apparatuses of cultural production that reproduce and even complicate whiteness, as a well pumping life into commonsense expressions and assumptions. While *habitus* can show us how individual agents think, talk, and do the things they do, without simply calling people “racist” or psychotic and most people of color whiners, common sense (as a theoretical concept) can offer us a way to

isolate and deconstruct the codified and reified shared reasonings, logics, and truths that float and mix with, and are embodied in, *habitus*.

In a practical sense, Henry Giroux pushes for a critical examination of the common sense in classrooms when discussing cultural texts. In “Racial Politics and the Pedagogy of Whiteness,” Giroux discusses his pedagogical use of two films (*Dangerous Minds* and *Suture*) in college courses that engage with whiteness.⁶¹ He says,

One pedagogical task is to get students to think about how *Dangerous Minds* portrays the ethical and racial dilemmas that animate the larger racial and social landscape and how this film reworks and affirms their own intellectual and affective investments as organized through dominant racial ideologies and meanings at work in this highly racialized text. (307)

Implicit in Giroux’s analysis above is more concrete problematizing within the classroom of the common sense of whiteness. As teachers, we might ask what common sense feeds the “ethical and racial dilemmas” in the agents and groups at odds in the class, and in the movie as a cultural artifact and “racialized text.” Considering common sense can help put a finer point onto Giroux’s excellent example. How is common sense reified in a movie that portrays a white, female teacher trudging into the ghetto to save the illiterate souls of mostly black and Latino/a students, who all seem to have either drug or gang problems? What effects does this common sense have on those in the movie, on us as an audience? Discussions might also spend time parsing out where students’ “affective investments” come from. What social norms of conduct seem to be affirmed and necessary for each film to make sense? How is the audience implicated through our affective investments? The concept of common sense, even at a general level, can be used to parse out whiteness in films like *Dangerous Minds*, and thus see how it powerfully structures our reactions

to cultural texts and how possibly this structuring helps reify individuals' *habiti* and notions of race. This kind of discussion can bring a class closer to critically examining SR.

Common sense, then, can be understood as practical and often implicitly warrants truth-claims made in various networks. Additionally, it makes up a part of, dwells in, American culture. Alan W. France, in *Composition as a Cultural Practice*, identifies “culture” as “the *dominant* process of identity formation that is reproduced by American institutions . . . and that provides the basis for generalizing about contemporary social life” (xv). While this explains how culture might shape agents, how commonsense is produced through culture as an environment and set of structures, it doesn't address how agents affect culture, nor does it account for the contradictory elements, countercurrents in culture that often evolve into mainstream elements. Culture might more profitably be thought of as a matrix of coordinating and conflicting power relationships and dynamics, institutions, and social and discursive practices that (re)produce the *habiti* of agents, which in turn (re)produce culture.⁶² It's a closed circular loop that encompasses both base and superstructure, but doesn't place primacy on either one.

As we've seen, culture is enacted and represented primarily as a white culture – its common sense is steeped in whiteness, institutions of whiteness, individual and collective white *habiti*, and a common sense shares in the epistemology of whiteness. As I demonstrate in the introduction, most cultural production has been defined by a whiteness that has infiltrated and been fed by science, philosophy, rhetoric, and “ordinary life.” Contemporary academic settings are not much different from those of a hundred or more years ago, only now our common sense about racism and racial politics tends to evade discussions of subordination and inequality, avoid economic realities, and ignore key structuring elements in the histories that produce the academic traditions we canonize. Common sense today is still fed by an epistemology of whiteness.

The power, validity, and reasonableness of SR as common sense doesn't just come from our shared or common dispositions (certain overlapping parts of our *habiti*). This would make racism an almost purely psychological problem. It also comes from the discursive and material practices that play with and surround our *habiti*, which may often be shared by many. SR is *common* sense, or communal sense – tacit and generally experienced and accepted. The eighteenth century intellectual Giambattista Vico offers us some new ways to see how common sense is constructed in communities, and why SR is so pervasive and hard to escape. Vico claimed that common sense sprang from, and could be found in, reoccurring language practices, like the sharing of myths and stories or the use of metaphors and language. In effect, his opus, *New Science*, is an illustration of this inductive method, delineating the various forms in which the “law of the heroic gentes,” a archetype of common sense, reoccurs historically (43, 50):⁶³ the establishment of nobility and families (79); fathers, priests, and kings (83); the law of authority (*auctoritas*) and property (104-05, 135-37); the distinction between “citizen” and “stranger” (164-65); etc. While common sense for Vico is woven into rhetorical practices, I will not confine my notion of common sense to language alone, but it is primarily how I am considering common sense in the epistemology of racism. Mainly, Vico give us pause to consider the ways in which common sense is manufactured and maintained across both discursive and material practices, something San Juan, Goldberg, Hall, and Williams, do not theorize as well. Gramsci comes much closer, but ultimately stops too short.

There are two terms that Vico uses to categorize common sense, *verum-factum* and *verum-certum*. John Schaeffer quotes from Vico's *De antiquissima italorum sapientia*, published in 1710 before *New Science*. In this treatise, Vico offers one of his first insights into the *verum-factum* principle: “intellect is a true faculty since, when we understand something by the

intellect, we make it true. Thus arithmetic and geometry and their offspring, “mechanics,” lie within human faculties, since in them we demonstrate the true because we make it” (Schaeffer 81). In short, once our minds “make” (*factum*) something, it’s true (*verum*).⁶⁴ Highlighting the way in which epistemologies produce knowledge and “facts,” Vico offers a powerful, anti-Cartesian way to see the hidden illogical-ness of our logics and the “facts” that come from them. Additionally, we can see how they get accepted as logical and reasonable by communities. If common sense is *verum factum*, then, of course, for most whites (as Bonilla-Silva’s research shows), the fact that they cannot see racism makes true the claim that “racism is no longer a factor in our daily lives.” We might even think of this logic as a way to see how dispositions work. Who can argue with the common sense inherent in appeals to one’s experience? “Well, I haven’t seen any structural racism. You can’t tell me I’ve seen it when I haven’t. It must be gone,” goes the common sense.

Then again, maybe we can argue with this if we claim it as pregnant with a common sense of whiteness that dismisses all claims from perspectives other than white ones and thus validates white claims to truth without the need for support or close scrutiny of its warrants. The support comes from the white perspective, the rational, objective perspective, the one urged by a will to stasis. This truth-claim about racism is formulated – constructed – through our mind’s internal and semi-mysterious workings and recollections, shaped by dispositions stamped from multicultural institutions that proclaim in *verum-factum* fashion that this is a “discrimination free zone,” that the institution has special processes, programs, and administrators, whose sole job is to search out “minority” students for admittance, and therefore the *fact* of the matter is that the institution is the opposite of racist. The rhetoric around the institution appeals to an Americanized Protestant common sense of individualism, equality, fairness, the “self-made

man,” and of hard work paying off – all materially linked to historical patterns of white domination in the U.S., namely *herrenvolk* republicanism, meritocracy, and the “iron cage” of nationalism and republicanism (Takaki 1). But when “standards,” like SAT scores and GPAs are raised each year, disproportionately excluding most candidates from urban and poorly funded schools (who are also mainly students of color), then the common sense constructed by this abstract liberalism, as Bonilla-Silva terms it, is nullified by the material results of larger conflicting programs and agendas. At an individual level of analysis, we might ask: Who benefits – has benefited – most from this common sense of merit and why? Why does the mere absence of evidence, seen from one vantage point in society, a white vantage point, allow us to conclude a broad, universalized claim about racism (that encompasses many vantage points)? Does this not sound like a god-trick? Our minds make our experience into truth, which simultaneously becomes and works from dispositions within us that are then recycled back into the system as essentialized common sense, daily practices, and accepted norms of behavior.

This is very much in line with San Juan, as I read him, and it helps us see further how and why SR can be so pervasive to invade the psychology of people of color too, who have no stake in the possessive investment in whiteness and are victims of the U.S. racial polity. If people of color accept claims of objectivity as true, or even as possible, we will eventually fall into the trap of accepting and voicing notions of abstract liberalism, which will inevitably reproduce our current system. *Verum-factum* also offers a further connection to *habitus*. Taking our earlier example, once multicultural centers are established across the country, once multicultural programs and offices propagate as common, repeated institutional entities at universities, once the refrain of “diversity” and “multiculturalism” are repeated and chanted in a mind-numbing, simulacra-fashion, they become *verum*, true. Just like the faces of color on academic marketing

materials that sprinkle out to prospective students (at my last count about one face of color for every two white faces at my current institution), these *made facts* about the university and its educational experiences become *true* by virtue of their existence. The facts about the university's diverse educational experience is fabricated and constructed through a common sense of whiteness. Who can argue with a picture? But maybe more to the point – and what I hear Gramsci, Williams, and Giroux saying⁶⁵ – *who is really going to argue with the picture?* White suburban kids who don't see racism as an issue in their lives? No. It only confirms their common sense about the world they perceive, which is not their fault but nevertheless their responsibility. Furthermore, because there is a history of commonsense whiteness, a precedence of actions and actors, documents and materiality, that promote multiculturalism from a white vantage point, SR becomes a repeated *verum-factum* and more stable over time. In fact, we could call it a *habitus* as well. It's the old Cartesian self-motivation trick in which you say over and over something you wish to be true in order to make it so: "I am not a racist. I am not a racist. I am not a racist." But then a racist isn't made solely from words, but apparently from a lack of praxis in the Gramscian sense.

We can make this same critique of news media and images of Blacks. If most middle-class, whites attending college in the U.S. today have not had much contact with students of color in their neighborhoods growing up, in the public schools they attended, and of course, in college, then we can safely assume that most images of people of color on TV and in other media are all whites have to go on when formulating opinions concerning Blacks. There's a double god-trick played. First, media coverage and movie images make (*factum*) people of color into essentialized identities (*verum*), erasing or ignoring the white gaze that manufactures this common sense. Second, this repetitious and constant gaze (e.g. the O.J. Simpson trial coverage,

the Kobe Bryant coverage, the Michael Jackson coverage, MTV’s barrage of Black rapper and hip hop coverage, etc.) fools everyone into thinking they know people of color: they watch videos, like Eddie Murphy, laugh at Dave Chapelle’s reverse-racist jokes, root for and idolize Kobe Bryant, and buy rap CDs and hip hop fashions. Not only does contemporary media images construct common sense about people of color (and, by the way, in primarily “black and white” terms, which leaves out Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans), but it reifies for all *habiti* around bodies of color. Most white students will inevitably associate the body of an African American male, for instance, with thugs, rappers, athletes, comedians, criminals, or even a combination of these.

Not so ironically, as Takaki points out in his discussion, all these associations connect the body of color with sensuality, carnality, brutishness, and unrestrained passions. This is the historical common sense about

Blacks in America. It’s a very narrow band of subjectivity, and it becomes *verum-factum* for all students at the university by the simple repetition of images and colored bodies the are available.

These images, which reify common sense, do so by constructing *habiti* that in turn seems commonsensical.

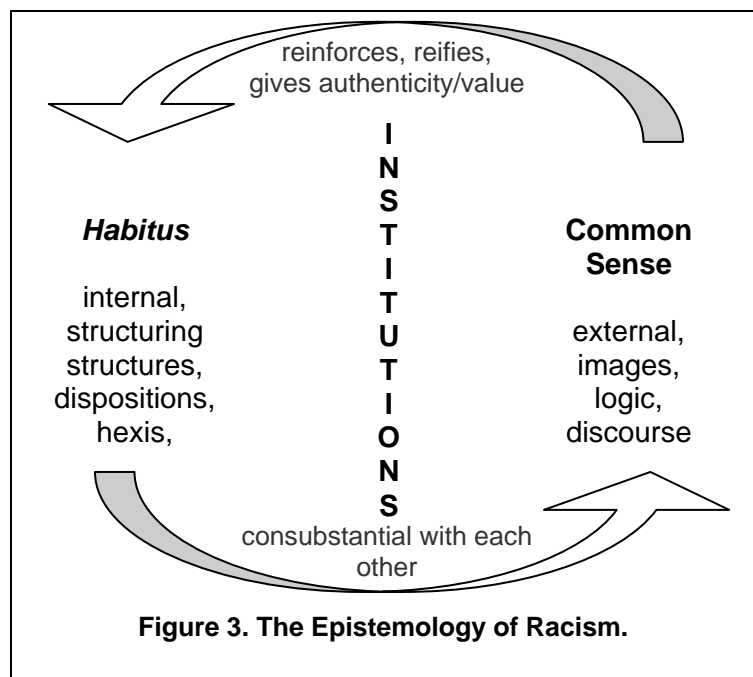


Figure 3. The Epistemology of Racism.

Additionally, this common sense is institutionalized through lax or non-existent affirmative action programs and admittance practices, in hiring practices, urban gentrification projects,

suburban real estate and renting practices, school funding laws, etc. And we can't forget that the white students who pass through our courses will go into the world and reproduce the culture that makes "common sense" for them, as bankers, lawyers, doctors, janitors, administrators, politicians, engineers, voters, etc.

The dialectical workings among *habitus*, institutions, and common sense begin to take shape (see Figure 3). *Habitus*, the web of structuring structures built with dispositions, generate facts and truths about one's existence, which often become common sense (or externalized logic, clichés, images, representations, and rhetoric that's shared or tacit in a community) and thus unexamined – like the common sense of a liberal whiteness as salvation for people of color (as seen in Giroux's discussion of whiteness in the cultural texts of movies). Additionally, common sense and *habitus* reinforce and reify each other through formalized discursive and material institutions (loosely thought of as common sense and *habitus*, respectively), making it impossible to separate out any of the three elements as distinct from the others. For instance, discursive conventions which are common sense, such as Bonilla-Silva's discursive racist frames, construct a subordinate *habitus* for people of color, and this common sense of whiteness is reinforced not only by the institutions of academic discourse that appeal to merit and fairness, objectivity and god-tricks (labeled as empirical truths), but by the very *habitus* of whiteness it constructs. And so, from another vantage point, it is the *habitus* of whiteness that structures common sense, just as common sense structures *habitus*, and as institutions mediate (a structuring of a different sort) the two other elements. *Habitus* determines behavior, interactions, and epistemology as well as the formal institutions that validate and minister authority to these things. All three elements, common sense, *habitus*, and institutions, in this epistemic are consubstantial. Your position in the network and what you are looking for will determine which aspect is primary.

Whiteness as *the* accepted, objective point of view, for instance, is a common sense, and it's used as such in movies and advertisement, yet it is also a part of individual *habiti*, which reinforce their common sense natures. These *habiti* are usually unexamined and tacit, and therefore hard to see. Because they are “common sense,” and so understood as outside the individual (white) mind, most don't see them as “personal biases” or “subjective” stances. But as we can see in this epistemology, people embodying *habitus*, logic, and rhetoric slide back and forth in this system, never completely residing in any one location. This makes the subjective – that is, the interpellation of identity – both interior and exterior, social and individual simultaneously, as Althusser points out in *Ideology and the State*.⁶⁶ Clearly this complicates western dichotomies and notions of objectivity and discreteness of subjects and objects. While I am my own subject, I'm also an object to others (and myself at times). This ambiguity of subjectivity, the sliding of subject and object, is similar to Althusser's ideas of ideology's interpellation of identity; however, I draw more from Bourdieu because his theorizing of *habitus* offers a more nuanced and fuller account of this ambiguity, connecting it explicitly to bodily *hexis* and allowing me to connect it to common sense.

The other kind of common sense that Vico offers us, the principle of *Verum-Certum*, covers communal practices and mores, which is related to the first principle. And it fleshes out our epistemology of racism more completely by accounting for material practices and decisions as common sense. Schaeffer provides a clear explanation:

By the “certain,” [in *verum-certum*] Vico means those particular decisions and judgments that a community makes, such as declaring war or honoring marriages. Such practical judgments are “made certain,” that is, they are established and become *res gestae* (things accomplished), and as such they become true. (81)

The accomplished practices, the enactments of judgments and decisions, enshrined in educational institutions, multicultural programs, and months of “observance,” construct truths about people of color and the need for those programs. *Verum-certum* means that decisions and practices themselves can be common sense, as well as institutions that structure our daily lives. The principles (whatever folks choose) of a formal institution are true because as a network of decisions, actions, and material practices, they have been accomplished. SR as diversity and “equal opportunity,” as celebration, from this vantage point, is *verum-certum*.

The difference primarily between *verum-factum* and *verum-certum* is the difference between a common sense embodied in discourse and images, a rhetorical common sense (*verum-factum*), and one embodied in material practices and decisions, either habitual or historic (*verum-certum*), which may be symbolized in structures or monoliths (like buildings, statues of memorial, holidays of celebration, institutions, programs, cultural practices, etc.) or expressed in language. Both *verum-factum* and *verum-certum* are important in fully theorizing common sense as a dialectical element in how society manufactures consent, and how agents accept certain ideas and practices as common sense. *Verum-certum* also provides another way to see how *hexis* is constructed and evolves.

Structural Racism and Hegemony

All three aspects of the epistemology of racism share conceptual space, and no one element comes before any of the others, nor are any discrete or conceptually apart from the others. So while the epistemology is a three-part dialectic, it assumes a tautology. The flow of the diagram is not linear, which makes Figure 3 somewhat misleading. In fact, the diagram should really be three-dimensional. Each side is a sphere, one of dispositions of the individual that’s both internal and private and external and socially derived (*habitus*), and one of rhetoric,

representations, judgments, and decisions that is primarily thought of as external to the mind yet also internally generated (common sense). Each element has material as well as ideological swirls within it, like clouds of chemicals and vapor, base and superstructure, changing shape and density over time, moving from one sphere to the other. Each sphere shares some area with others, like a Venn diagram, and thus each influences, or plays with, each of the others' motions and substances. There are consubstantial areas and areas of difference, depending on which angle you view the epistemology from. Thus the blending of these spheres makes finding individual elements and structural factors, private dispositions and public knowledge, very tricky and difficult. If anything, it illustrates how problematic it is to operate from a Cartesian mind-body, outside-inside, individual-societal split. This epistemology shows not only how SR is produced and functions, but how the practices and discourse of our lives as agents-in-community blend and are consubstantial.

The epistemology of racism shows how racism is SR. It shows how SR is “structural” because it is structured in society and discourse in a number of ways: as a set of personal dispositions, *habitus*, structured structures predisposed as structuring structures, a part of one's history of practices and experiences in life; as a product of external formal institutions that minister and validate dispositions, daily practices, discourse, and the common sense circulating in the networks of meaning; and as common sense, logics, and rationales. The main organizing principle of the epistemology of racism is its structuring dynamic – that is, the epistemology of racism shows us a way to see SR around us, in our language and behaviors, through our actions and complicity with institutions and daily practices by seeing the iterations of racist discourse, practices, institutions, and logics. The epistemology of racism shows us how pervasive and ubiquitous SR is because each element within it is a structuring agent.

Because of this epistemology, which I'm saying functions around us today, I'm not suggesting to eradicate multicultural centers or programs, but we must change the way they are situated in, talked about, and used in the university. One way to do this is to not use them as ways to show or exemplify "diversity," instead the university itself needs to be a site for combating the historical effects of SR, a mechanism to balance the societal racial scales. We must individually and institutionally acknowledge that we, our cultures, histories, languages, and practices all reproduce in varying contradictory ways SR. In fact, that sometimes our very good intentions may actually lead to racist effects, and we all should be on the look out for this very common occurrence. Diversity should be redefined, not as a small interest group, an isolated program, but as an incorporated network of values and decisions that affect everything: curriculum, funding, spending, admission, dialogue, academic culture, etc.

Things like meritocracy and individualism should be questioned, not just for theoretical or abstract validity (which means very little when it comes to change), but for their effects and products on the populations they touch. Additionally, these values and programs should be interrogated for the reasons and purposes they are being used or implemented. What do these policies, procedures, programs, and initiatives produce, and do these results match our goals for a diverse and fair education and society? What are our goals and why have we set them in such a manner? How is success structured into the plans and institutions used to accomplish projects of diversity? Addressing SR in the academy would mean creating the university in such a way that multiculturalism is not a program, center, or fringe interest group, but an integral, interlocking part of the matrix of our lived world which the university is supposed to help us understand and critically engage with. This is not about "equal representation," but about establishing equality, finding historical and contextual fairness, eradicating the epistemology of whiteness as a guiding

principle in the academy and culture, and eliminating the subordinating structures in our society, all of which are very different agendas. The mere presence of bodies of color in the academy do not make an equal and just society.

But there are difficulties to doing something like what I propose. I realize it is impossible to do any of this overnight, or even in a decade or two. Vico's understanding of common sense helps us articulate these difficulties. *Habitus* and common sense work together through agents and institutions, practices and discourse, to form SR in overdetermined and naturalized ways. Individual "self-interest" often coincides with the dominant classes' interests and hegemony, as Villanueva points out ("Considerations" 251). We find ourselves in a cultural matrix of SR that is varied, uneven, unstable, and ever-changing, but its purpose and function remain constant: to encourage a possessive investment in whiteness and to feed that possessive investment through what David Roediger calls "the wages of whiteness," benefits, legacies, heritages that mean tangibly more than others' (ones delineated by race). Because of its almost endless iterations and tacit influence, SR is difficult to talk about, hard to show without qualification, and very persuasive to whites (and many people of color). Things never quite look the same in different locations (geographically, gender-wise, race-wise, or class-wise), in various texts and cultural sites, yet the dynamic is.

Typically, when people ask for a universal or essentialized statement of affairs on matters of race, equality, or racism, they are really looking for claims based on the epistemology of whiteness. Show me a lynching. Where are these skinheads that are keeping people of color out of jobs and communities? Where is the inequality if you have an multicultural center to help you out, yet whites have nothing? When many white people ask me to show them racism on campus and I turn to incidents like my opening interview, they inevitably claim the white individualized

personhood that Ross Chambers discusses, the “unexamined whiteness” that forms the primary perspective and ruler by which all these matters are judged. It is Donna Haraway’s god-trick as *the* universal epistemology. They may say that the administrator who asked me about my willingness to be on marketing materials for the school as being anti-racist. She was actually showing an honest concern for AAPI students. In fact, she was trying to work against racism by encouraging students of color with a model. But as Richard T. Schaefer explains, we’re talking past each other. Understanding and acting against SR in an educational setting isn’t about turning individuals from their racist ways – it may not even be about institutionalizing non-racist programs, discourse, or ideology (if this is even possible?). Understanding and acting against SR is about problematizing racist *habitus* and common sense, and about seeing how the institutions we must work within and around perpetuate (even as they attempt to break down) racism and racial subordination. As an educational mission, it’s about seeing everyone’s participation in SR and a culture that is racist by function and product – that is, understanding SR is about seeing agency itself as a racist construction.

Because of SR, I seemingly cannot be the perspective from which to judge things as exhibiting SR in many settings, even in the university. It is the white perspective only that may judge, who gets the moniker of “objective” (which, of course, is historically created by a white colonial gaze as Edward Said shows in *Orientalism*). It’s a white gaze that always provides the answer, that validates through its god-trick. Common sense can help us see the good in this scenario, see my anxieties and insecurities, not SR. But then, why do I even have these anxieties? The common sense that demands an unexamined whiteness always asks us to look at effects as autochthonous, individual issues (like my anxieties, my refusal to be hired, the “difference” inherent or apparent in AAPI students or African American students). This white common sense

ignores the larger producing societal structures, *habiti*, and considers only the expressed motives of whites, which usually shares in the common sense of meritocracy and abstract liberalism. Common sense deflects away from itself as a white vantage point through the dispositions of individuals and draws from the epistemology of whiteness, with its long history as a ministering institution that validates facts and knowledge. Common sense becomes *habitus*. Institutions become common sense, as well as *habitus*. Most of all, SR, as a possessive investment in whiteness, is hegemonic, and the epistemology of racism illustrates how it is so.

This may sound like an unnecessary complication of Gramsci's concept of hegemony, thereby I believe the epistemology of racism offers us a way to see hegemony as a dynamic, fluid process that allows for the ambiguities of the agent and society, showing them explicitly consubstantial, thus we can reconsider a Cartesian splitting of base and superstructure as well as the individual and society (but, of course, we can't fully escape these binaries). The epistemology of racism also provides a way to discuss SR as a social and historical epistemic, and connect that epistemic to agents and their actions and judgments. San Juan, when discussing Gramsci's influence on Raymond Williams' *The Long Revolution*, explains hegemony in this way:

Hegemony refers to the central system of practices, meanings, and values that are experienced as practices and appear reciprocally confirming. Hegemonic rule then translates to our experienced or lived reality invested with a sense of the absolute whereby it induces consent and thus exercises effective dominance over us. It is not an imposed ideology or manipulated set of opinions, as Althusserian and Lacanian versions tend to convey. Hegemony is, in Williams's singular rendering, the "whole body of practices and expectations; our assignments of energy, our

ordinary understanding of the nature of man and his world” (1977, 110). It saturates public consciousness as the substance and limit of common sense, the “common sense” of the average citizen presented as majority consensus. (296)

In the epistemology of racism, SR is not hegemony, per se, although it is hegemonic, and so the two concepts are not mutually exclusive. In this rendering of things, hegemony is the product of an historical acting out of the epistemology of racism. SR is hegemonic, and thus is often a metonymy of hegemony, just as it can be for the epistemology of whiteness.

If I’m even able to make this critique of SR, then hegemony must account for, as San Juan suggests earlier, human agency and will. It’s easy to see the absence of agency in a structural approach, one that determines actions and ideology for agents. Students don’t buy this typically. My own will to faith doesn’t allow me to either. And for this reason, it’s unlikely that “hegemony,” as a concept for critique and the classroom, is enough to account for agency, regardless of how San Juan and Williams define it. Hegemony, for San Juan, is fed by common sense, which provides “substance and limit.” While generically this definition appears to work, it doesn’t account very well for variation and change, nor does it explain the consubstantial nature of all the elements in the network, which includes agents, communities, *habitus*, common sense, and institutions. Hegemony, in the epistemology of racism, is one way to understand what the dialectic illustrates, but it’s not an element in the process. So to see hegemony as the “substance and limit” of common sense is to make an observation after the fact, a kind of teleological induction that may be too simple. Instead, as an outcome (but not a direct product), hegemony can be a label for the universe of inevitable possibilities that stem from the epistemology of racism. My theory merely shows where the current substance and limits are in any frozen historical moment, which of course partially melts away as we begin to examine it. This leaves

more room for us to find agency, contradictory practices, rhetoric, and logics that work against or away from the dominant system.

For San Juan, *habitus* seems outside a classical Marxist theoretical framework, except as it interacts with common sense and folklore within the individual in a Gramscian notion of philosophy. I contend, however, that *habitus* provides for a way to see the problematical nature of individual dispositions as autonomous and private, and the societal currents of shared ones, or ones that are similar. The epistemology of racism is a better formulation for what goes on around us in our world because it forces us to confront our agent-in-community relations and racism as structural. We aren't simply products of our histories and environments, nor are we completely free-willed, autonomous agents. Racism is a determined, structured aspect of our lives, which means our identities and subjectivities are also determined in many ways. This epistemology could be used as model for individual consent and ideological acquisition or as a cultural model for understanding the societal processes of ideological production. It is the blend of the two approaches that I think is more productive in the college classroom since it has less chance of placing blame on individuals, but keeps its focus on structural, societal problems and how they work with individual judgments, decisions, and discourse (agency).

Critical Personhood

The above section leads us to ask more explicitly about the processes of agency, identity, and citizenship, all key parts to rhetoric's historical educational project. What does understanding the epistemology of racism mean to an individual's level of agency? To her understanding of who she is (her identity)? San Juan's attempt to insert agency into a larger mechanism that accounts for racism as structural and historical ultimately is unclear, but then he doesn't talk a lot about how agency functions, how we are interpellate as individuals, nor how

citizenship is articulated and what it means individually, discursively, or socially. He does acknowledge Essed's attention to the micro-level of SR, but ultimately criticizes her for not incorporating a macro-level view of "structures of racial inequality." In short, he says that "institutional racism is concretely actualized in specific practices of agents that 'activate existing structural racial inequality in the system'" (48), but doesn't theorize this dynamic clearly.

My conclusion to this chapter offers a way to intersect more fully these three domains of SR (the micro, or personal level; the macro, or societal level; and the discursive level), in order to understand the layers of complicity and resistances: that is, the levels of agency, the limits of understanding identity (personally, in others, and as generalized structuring concepts and images in society), and the universe of possible articulations of citizenship. Additionally as Giroux encourages us, the epistemology of racism, as a basis for a critical rhetoric, offers avenues to interrogate how we as agents with faith that we have some degree of freewill, can effectively problematize and counter SR, as well as hegemony of other sorts, and change our world, our communities, and ourselves.

Micro-level SR works dialectically from the two loci identified by San Juan: (1) agents and (2) their practices that activate existing structural racial inequality (macro-level SR). But SR is also in dialectical play with institutions, as Bourdieu reminds us. Institutions minister meaning and provide occasion and authority. Agents may act in certain overdetermined racist ways because of the way they participate with SR (even in spite of their desires not to) and the ways in which they are situated within or around various institutions, which may be racist. In the epistemology of racism, we can locate agents on all sides and in the middle.

People work in, for, and establish, even constitute, structures that structure our lives and ways of knowing (*habitus*); thus people are often structuring structures.⁶⁷ In addition to the

rhetoric we produce, people of color, for instance, often embody racist common sense in society. We form *verum-certum* through our very modest presence in institutions (tokenism), and our use as icons or commodified fetishes (which can act as *verum-factum*). Agents' daily practices activate the existing structural, racial inequality in society, and they themselves embody SR, as Pierre Bourdieu's *hexis* ("dispositions" that are "ingrained in the body" (Bourdieu, *Language* 13)) explains to us, so we might say that SR is inscribed onto our very bodies. But agents also may find a critical space in which to operate in order to make more self-conscious, critical, and reflective choices. Using a rhetoric that self-consciously draws attention to the epistemology of racism, we can form a praxis, as Gramsci asks of us. The key is: how do we form praxis if most of the cultural and ideological iceberg of SR is submerged, if the institutions we must work in and around minister whiteness, effectively cloaking SR and validating only racist practices, or practices that produce inequality and unjust effects? Critical terms like the ones I've offered here are a beginning. They offer alternative lines of sight, and thus maybe construct alternative and additional sites of meaning. For instance, *hexis* shows us that *habitus* is not only mental and behavior dispositions, histories, but dispositions imprinted on the body, and so the body it a social site, not just a private one. Seeing this consubstantial aspect of the body also reveals how other things reside in this site, the common sense associated and mix with *habitus*. And as Gramsci says, a coherent philosophy, a theory like this one, offers spaces for critique and critical praxis, especially in the classroom, where this is supposed to be one of our goals.

How does all this reveal some possible conclusions about agency, personal identity, and citizenship in the writing classroom? If the epistemology of racism is accurate, then *everyone enacts personhood in productive, yet contradictory, racist ways that must be self-critical and*

reflexive if they are going to lead to transformative praxis. Critical personhood, then, is a mixed bag of candy and worms.

At the most basic level of personhood, we *validate* our *agency* through acts of discourse and materiality. We join clubs, sororities, fraternities, associations, and professional organizations. We participate in activities associated with these organizations and our communities. We use names that are marked in certain racial, historical, and cultural ways (e.g. Asao, Michael, or Eve). We choose to go to school (or not). We marry or don't. We participate in religious, civil, and spiritual traditions. We put bumper stickers on our cars. We identify with certain people for particular reasons, see certain courses of action as the most prudent and best, etc. In the writing class, we author texts, give analyses, and participate in discussions. These kinds of practices allow us to proclaim agency in a world that would seem to deny us it, especially if we are people of color. They give us value and merit, credentials and qualifications, satisfaction and communion, but they only do so because they are connected to institutions that minister authenticity and worth to those practices, and thus to agents. Additionally, there is a network of common sense in our society, and within institutions, that reinforce these practices as good practices that are valuable, shaping individual *habiti*, which in turn prove to each of us that they are what we see them to be (that is, a product of our own freewill and right choices). Agents then return this capital to the institutions by the *verum-certum* principle of common sense, as well as through *verum-factum* judgments and declarations, which are usually memorials, encomiums, and celebrations. What these practices do not do is allow us to ask why, unless we predispose ourselves to practicing the art of problematizing.

However, often our actions and wills do not always match up because they're done in a matrix of SR, especially if we proclaim ourselves to be non-racist. I may say I am not a token,

but I'm sure that I'm perceived, even treated oftentimes (as I have in the past), as one. At the same time, there is a part of me that realizes the value in a token, a symbol of what *could be in the future*, as well as what *is wrong in the present*. My male students, for example, may wish to belong and feel a sense of commitment to a larger cause, so they join fraternities, but the issues and problems of drinking, parties, date rape, homophobia, racism, and sexist attitudes embodied in the Greek fraternity system, historically present on our campuses means that those young men in my class are complicit in the perpetuation of all of those problems, even if individually they fight against many of these wrongs. My students actually gain agency from them by converting them implicitly into unquestioned cultural capital. We have no other choice but complicity oftentimes, but this doesn't mean we are automatons without responsibility or motive (whether examined or not). We must buy and drive cars, consume gas, clothing, and food, but we do not have to do these things blindly, nor think of them as unconnected to aspects of our personhood. If the epistemology of racism shows us how we validate our agency – how it is “networked” to a variety of practices, dispositions, common sense, and institutions – and how this validation process (re)produces agents in determined ways – then isn't there room for reassessing validation practices if we can see the elements of these processes more clearly? Can't we problematize how we validate our agency, and what agency this validation actually produces socially?

At another level, the epistemology of racism *interpellates* our individual *identities* in fragmentary ways, which has consequences that Althusser did not account for. For Althusser, we are hailed as concrete subjects by ideology – this is to say, we are interpellated by ideology through ideological apparatuses (like ideological state apparatuses and repressive state apparatuses, ISAs and RSAs) and their practices, which construct subjectivity, or rather the subject. It gives subjects agency, in a sense (Althusser 163, 167).⁶⁸ Althusser states

hailing/interpellation in this way: “all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects” (162). Ideology and interpellation happen simultaneously since they are “one and the same thing” (163). From this we see that Althusser uses interpellation as the defining function of ideology to construct the subject. The problem with Althusser’s rendering of ideology is that it’s too static and comprehensive, too unified, as if all practices contain complete and unified ideology (or that “ideology” is ever materially unified or comprehensive). Discourse and material practices often (usually) are fragmentary. Additionally, the term assumes a kind of classical scientific, non-positionality. “Ideology,” as a concept, constructs its system of referents – like racism – as an abstract, coherent system of values and ideas that are outside bodies, despite Althusser’s theorizing. It might be mistakenly used as an abstraction that is beyond positionality and discourse. Therefore, I prefer either *habitus* (*hexis*) or common sense. These concepts are not only fragmentary, but invoke each other, so to discuss racist common sense is to discuss the racist structures that interpellate identity from the social towards the individual.

And so while “ideology” as a concept isn’t useful for me, interpellation is quite helpful as a way to describe the hailing or interruptive process of identity construction, not just agency. When interpellation is used with the epistemology of racism, agents have an explicit link to the other structural elements in a positional way. Just using “ideology” erases the subject position of a critique. If we use “common sense” instead as an interpellating structure, we focus on to social structuring affecting the agent (a theoretical position primarily looking from the social). If we use “*habitus*” as the interpellating structure, then we focus on the agent’s dispositions, however socially constructed, engrained in the body (a position looking from the agent to the social). Agency, as I’m thinking of it here, is a different category under the larger rubric of personhood (comprised of agency, identity, and citizenship). Agency provides clues to our worth and value

within a system and in contexts. It's validated through practices, discourse, and decisions, as well as through institutions. Identity as an interpellation, on the other hand, explains the shape of our agency in the system, what we think that means personally, and how socially and politically we are constructed and situated. My rendition of interpellation, and its significance to the epistemology of racism, then, is closely tied to agency, but it's more about the specific products of agency, the identities possible for each of us, and their material consequences. Again, it leads us to a fuller theory for transformative and liberating praxis since it urges us to articulate and critique identity, which is always situated in networks that simultaneously construct citizenship.

If we adjust Althusser's formulation to instead assume not ideology but the dialectic between *habitus* and common sense in society (a web of institutions) – that is, instead of ideology, it is the epistemology of racism that produces hails within a network of institutions that minister meaning and value to those hails – then the interpellation of identity (in Althusser's terms, the interpellation of concrete individuals as subjects) is mediated by assumptions of whiteness and racism. All identities, in public forums and discourses, judgments and practices, are now constructed around whiteness. It is not ironic or surprising then to see the use of the term “nigger” in contemporary hip hop culture and rap music. People of color are so interpellated as sub-individuals, as less than white, many Blacks hail themselves as slaves, commodified objects, “niggers.” This interpellation is done discursively through a common sense expression, encapsulated in a term, that's linked to a history of use and transformation. The term is also linked to a *habitus* (which has changed historically) that interpellates African Americans as racial insiders and objects bought and sold. The use of the term must be understood as a signifying practice that stems from the formal institution of slavery, the codifying of Jim Crow laws, the practice of lynching, and the *hexis* of slaves, as well as contemporary hip-hop figures.

When used by an African American, the term can deconstruct racist discourse, can produce a solidarity among African Americans, but it will inevitably share in other interpellations seen at other vantage points in the system. The structuring of racism is too ubiquitous for a completely positive use of the interpellation “nigger” to be anything but a mixed bag.

As bell hooks demonstrates in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, the representation of the Other in media always ends up objectifying people of color. And this happens because the hails by/to people of color can signify a liberating identity, an individual with freewill and agency, but these hails are never isolated, nor independent of other interpellations. These hails are heard and interpreted by others who do not have to acknowledge the hail, but nevertheless are exposed to it within a culture of whiteness and commodification. In my view here, it is the epistemology of racism that is simply redecorating its own house, and doing it in the same ways it always has – by the blood, sweat, discourse, and labor of people of color. While it doesn’t always have to be this way, it often is.

The key to interpellation within the epistemology of racism and within this articulation of personhood, then, is to use interpellation as one way to find a critical space for understanding ourselves as both an “I” and an “it,” as a subject and an object. One might see most interpellation of people of color as object-hails, not subject-hails. This narrows and focuses the limits of identity by mediating it through whiteness, but we don’t have to look at interpellation strictly from a social (i.e. primarily white) position. We can see interpellation as an act simultaneously coming from epistemological structures (the social) and from individual discourse, motives, acts, and behavior. Most fashion and “women’s magazines” (e.g. *Glamour*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Style*, etc.) offer an unrelenting white, male, middle-class, heterosexual gaze that not only objectifies women as sex objects and as an assemblage of blemish-free, slender, smooth, white, body parts to men,

but causes women, the primary audience for these magazines, to interpellate themselves in the same exact way – or rather see a dissonance between what’s in the mirror and on the page. Identity becomes a site of tension, anxiety, and devaluation. While women have the option to hear the hail that is represented in the image of the (usually) white supermodel, painfully thin, and oversexualized or ignore it, the interpellation is not isolated and so reaches out into the network to other agents, even those not associated explicitly hailed, like men, or some women of color, young women, and older women. Again, the primacy of whiteness (which is primarily a male gaze) is reproduced. Conveniently, capitalism has an answer to this obvious dilemma: consumption, which adds an “until” to the hail. She is not a woman *until* she buys the products that are associated with the hail. Again, her identity is, like most in our consumerist culture, predicated on objectification, objects she wishes to emulate, objects she wishes to accumulate, or objects she wishes to display (i.e. conspicuous consumption). While interpellating our identities does not have to be an objectifying process, our culture currently offers us few alternatives, which is why Gramscian praxis is so important to our understanding of our identities.

Finally, the epistemology of racism illuminates how we *articulate* our *citizenship*. Stuart Hall conceives the theory of articulation tied to hegemony, and as a way to see “how ideology discovers its subject, rather than how the subject thinks the necessary and inevitable thoughts which belong to it” (Grossberg 142). But it’s instructive to understand his fuller notion of the term “articulation” for our purposes:

In England, the term has a nice double meaning because ‘articulate’ means to utter, to speak forth, to be articulate. It carries that sense of language-ing, of expressing, etc. But we also speak of an ‘articulated’ lorry (truck): a lorry where the front (cab) and back (trailer) can, but need not necessarily, be connected to

one another. The two parts are connected to each other, but through a specific linkage, that can be broken. An articulation is thus the form of the connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. (Grossberg 141).

Articulation is a kind of connection or linkage. Keeping in step with the acts of validation and interpellation, we might call it a process of connecting agency and identity. In this view, citizenship is then a “language-ing” of individual acts of agency and identity.⁶⁹ This final term within personhood sews the three processes together, making validation, interpellation, and articulation simultaneous processes. Additionally, I use articulation to identify citizen-making processes because it differentiates it easily from the first two processes/acts, which are very different in consequences and scope, yet all three blend and mix at various times. It also demonstrates the flexibility inherent in citizenship and identity, the points of bending, the fluid and ambiguous meanings, and attachable and detachable aspects of each. Acts of articulation, which are often products of validation and interpellation, continually (re)construct citizens. Whether it’s my participation in a classroom, the use of my birth name, my discourse here or in person, my participation at the AAPI center, a designation on a loan form, or as a teacher for a summer Upward Bound program for high school students of color, I construct myself as an Asian American U.S. citizen, which itself has various contradictory meanings. And this construction, already participates in the *habiti* reproduced by the media representations of Asians, the commonsense around Asian Americans, and the institutions I move in and between – my articulations become ambiguous and these links get detached and attached continually, despite my futile efforts to keep them unified. For example, I must always work from/against/with common sense about Asians, our language ability and aptitudes, the ambiguity

in my physical appearance for most, and assumptions about my maleness and masculinity, among other things. I am always situated around the commodity fetishism of bodies of color, capitalist consumerism, the system of meritocracy and tokenism in the field of education, and the exploitation of Asian labor globally, and the white preoccupation to eroticize people of color, among others. While I can use the epistemology of racism to provide a critical space for my agency, the system (which I am a part of) also works to objectify me, de-humanize and reduce my agency, overdetermine my identity and solidify my status as a special kind of U.S. citizen. And if I'm not careful, my articulations of citizenship can hide and reinforce my own possessive investment in whiteness that my citizenship is base *off* of (not on).⁷⁰ I am not an American citizen, I am an "Asian American" citizen.

The Epistemology of Racism as Pedagogical Imperative

For our classrooms, the epistemology of racism offers a lot in explaining how agency, identity, and citizenship is produced, and how they function to both construct personhood in liberating and racist ways. It provides a critical rhetoric for producing spaces that help reveal SR; reveal the consubstantial nature of *habitus*, institutions, and common sense that validate agency and interpellate identity; and reveal issues around agency, identity, and citizenship that we articulate in contradictory ways. Maybe most importantly, the epistemology of racism offers ways to practice problematizing our assumptions, constructions of our worlds, and the discourses we encounter and use in them. It asks us to be more critical, self-reflexive, and active agents – in effect, form praxis in the classroom. The epistemology of racism can form a pedagogy, heuristic, or rhetoric, that is not a proselytizing one, not one that pushes students to believe in certain ideas or truths, but one that asks us to question our epistemological grounds for knowing in various ways, seek responsibility (or at least ask what our responsibility might be and why), and confront

our complicity without blaming people for racism. The choice to believe, act, or see is then up to our students'. It is their praxis, not ours. This accomplishes what Catherine Fox calls "disarticulating critical thinking from whiteness," a pedagogical stance that demands teachers "move away from whiteness," which she rightly attaches to many critical pedagogical approaches, and instead "construe critical thinking as a self-reflexive process that is pragmatically oriented, rather than as a right answer or a point of arrival" (204). The epistemology of racism can demystify the god-trick played on all of us, although I'm not sure we can every fully escape it. It can also help interrogate how the teaching of writing is always political, and education, as a social and institutionalized practice, forms citizens in specific ways, for specific reasons, and from particular epistemologies.

My position on rhetoric and the teaching of writing, as I'm sure is clear to this point, is also about understanding how power is structured in discourse and society, how citizenship is constructed and articulated, how epistemological structures validate and interpellate, and how the social, structural, and personal aspects of language and identity are consubstantial. Alan France offers a way to see power in discourse as having material effects. In his writing courses, based on a materialist rhetoric, France says that his course should help students "see knowledge not only as a means to exert power over nature or as a way to control people, but also as a way of 'naturalizing' the control over people" (118). While he doesn't articulate it, France emphasizes the power-producing relationships between common sense and individual *habiti*, between institutions and *habiti*, as well as between our practices and institutions, all that circulate around and in texts. Additionally when analyzing Bartholomae and Petrosky's *Ways of Reading* as a "reader that introduces writing students to the major texts of contemporary literary and cultural criticism" (10), France explains:

Foregrounding acculturation as a primary process of identity formation is, in my view, a progressive step toward situating writing pedagogy and rhetorical practice in the material world of power/knowledge relationships. It subverts both the expressivist positioning of writers as autonomous individuals *and* the identification of knowledge as the property of institutional discourses (with the consequent effacement of public life). (11)

Writing pedagogy desperately needs to be situated in “the material world of power/knowledge relationships,” but it can’t *just* subvert agency and knowledge within institutional discourses or cultural sites the classroom discusses. Our writing pedagogies must offer ways to critique agency, as well as show affirmations of complicity (but not contentment). We must give our students a way to insert their own agency, their acts of nonconformity, and they may start as rhetorical ones.

What I mean is this: the practice of writing (and the teaching of it) is not just a communicative act that bears rhetorical meaning and material consequences, it is an enactment of personhood, which is one reason why it is inescapably political. For example, in contradictory fashion, the student of color, like white students, always negotiates her personhood, simultaneously in opposition to and in coordination with, all the elements of the epistemology of racism. She validates her agency, is interpellated by common sense (which is simultaneously *habitus*, hence we see how *habitus* is consubstantial with common sense), and articulates her citizenship status in conflicting and coordinating ways and produces contradictory and unified results. And because of the ubiquitous possessive investment in whiteness that permeates all *habiti* and common sense, all institutions and historical memories, all cultural texts and sites, there is always tension built within the person of color’s enactments of personhood – and she

typically knows this – just as Bonilla-Silva’s work shows the tension in whites’ rhetoric. Additionally, my experience has been that most whites (and disproportionately more men than women) do not feel this dissonance. So while many people of color, when pressed, tend to focus on the dissonance in their personhood, whites tend to focus on the unity and cohesiveness in it. It makes sense because it replicates the pyramid of power. Those with more power and privilege do not have to question where they get it from, why, and who pays for it, while those with less can complain, resist, but ultimately consent through small institutional concessions, and brief moments of clarity and unity in their enactments of personhood. But there is always both, just in different degrees and with different effects. The fact that I can write this discourse in order to proceed toward an advanced degree from a primarily white institution – which is a drive toward conformity and reinforcement of systems of white privilege, an act that embodies those systems and the “model minority” myth, a drive toward retaining my non-agency status as an Asian object in U.S. society, as an essentialize identity, as just one more Asian with a college degree – that I can say the things I’ve said here in the hopes that it can counter the affects of SR, can liberate and suggest that there may be room for play in the academy. It is my will to faith and change that demands I claim this with no reservation and support. I am sure that volumes would not be enough for many to support what I’ve just said, and for others – primarily my colored and white brothers and sisters in this same struggle – need no proof. I can’t be completely overdetermined to reinforce SR, to simply accept common sense or only work within the confines of my *habitus*, which is steeped in whiteness too. Maybe I can work *from* it all. Maybe I can ask my students to do the same with me. Maybe we need to point our fingers accusingly, and call the kettle *white*, and then throw it away, and replace it with something else.

Chapter 2: An Application of the Epistemology of Institutional Racism

Maybe I look Japanese and my father and mother and brothers and sisters look Japanese, but we're better Americans than the regular ones because that's the way it has to be when one looks Japanese but is really a good American. We're not like the other Japanese who aren't good Americans like us. We're more like you and the other, regular Americans. (33)

From *No-No Boy*, John Okada

To illustrate the epistemology of racism as a theoretical framework for cultural and textual analysis, I'll discuss one popular cultural site/text; however, because my purpose in this dissertation is pedagogical, I'll discuss this text in terms of possible classroom applications, which also hints at why I've chosen this Web site as a site for application. This chapter will not attempt to make a complete critique of the McDonald's ad campaign, nor to present a fully realized lesson plan for a classroom; instead, I offer a generative discussion, one meant to illustrate the usefulness of the epistemology of racism as a guiding rhetoric of sorts and a network of conceptual elements for interrogating cultural sites and practices from various positions in the networks of meaning and agency. My analysis here also illustrates how the teaching of rhetoric is and should be a critical activity since it always concerns the structuring of personhood that is embedded in capitalism, economies of power, and racism.

McDonald's "I am Asian" Website

In May 2004, McDonald's launched an ad campaign and Web site to celebrate Asian and Pacific American Heritage Month (May). The campaign and Web site is dubbed "i am asian."⁷¹

Its homepage offers this paragraph as an introduction to the Web site:

We're Asian and Pacific Islander Americans "living on the rim," where our diverse cultures and the everyday American lifestyle become one. We're hanging on to our great traditions while we move to the beat of the times. We honor our heritage - but we love being Americans. From high fashion to high tech, from Asian Pacific American hip hop to haute cuisine, we're weaving the threads of our culture into the fabric of everyday American life. Whether we're sipping green tea or enjoying a Big Mac® sandwich, we're helping make the magic mix called America become even richer. And McDonald's is right there with us, everyday!

(McDonald's)

This text is accompanied by a square frame with pictures of what appear to be Asian and Pacific Islander American (hereafter AAPI)⁷² youths having fun, smiling, and eating McDonald's products (see Figure 4). The frame above the text cycles through seven pictures continuously. In all, there are five young men, two young women, two unidentified persons (lying in a Volkswagen Bug with only their feet sticking out of each side window), and one dog (a pug with a shirt on that says: "i am asian," seen in Figure 4). The information offered is uniformly spare, and barely informative, which suggests McDonald's primary intention: to sell more products to the growing AAPI demographic, starting with the impressionable teens. And as a marketing tactic, this makes economic sense. According to the U.S. census, AAPIs are the fastest growing population in the country (Barnes and Bennett 3).⁷³ This census information was

made available in February 2002, and not so ironically, by May 2003, McDonald's was officially celebrating AAPI Heritage month.

The site offers brief information broken up into seven Web pages: (1) "Asian American Heritage Month," a brief history of the founding of the month, focusing mostly on Jeanie F. Jew's struggle to institute it in the late 70s; (2) "McDonald's Celebrates Asian Pacific Islander American Culture," a limited selection of "AAPI cultures [sic]" that one can read about, describing mostly new year holidays and annual celebrations; (3) "Asian Pacific Islander Americans Who Have Made A Difference," a page that basically links to Goldsea's Web site listing influential or "inspiring Asian Americans"; (4) "McDonald's In Your Community,"



Figure 4. Screen capture of McDonald's "i am asian" Web site's homepage.

providing nine pictures total of San Francisco's, Hawaii's, and Chicago's 2004 Chinese New Year celebrations; (5) "Great To Be A Part of McDonald's," which offers short biographies of

five McDonald's owner/operators who are AAPI; (6) "Scholarship Programs," a short description with links to two scholarship sites, the Asian American Pacific Islander Scholarship Fund and the Ronald McDonald House Charities/Asia Scholarship Program; and (7) "McDonald's Trivia," a trivia page that includes some "fascinating facts about McDonald's" revolving around Asian countries and McDonald's stores.⁷⁴

In classroom settings in which teachers wish to examine a cultural text such as the McDonald's Web site, students might question how this site constructs AAPIs rhetorically. What elements are used to create this construction? How are these elements set up and arranged on the site? What inferences and assumptions is the audience to make as AAPI readers/consumers, or non-AAPI readers/consumers? How would these assumptions and inferences be different, why, and to what effect? What class and economic representations do we see on the Web site? What assumptions are we to make plausibly by the absence of any direct attention to class or sexuality? Is there a dominant gendered reading we can identify here? While these kinds of questions may provide a detailed and concrete first impression of the AAPI representations offered by the Web site, they also isolate this cultural text in a hermeneutical zone in which empiricism and rationality (regulated by whiteness) determine meaning and use; and of course, because these two elements are a part of histories of various epistemological practices, readings of the Web site will tend toward unreflexive reinforcement of SR, even when intentions are otherwise. These kinds of readings tend to naturalize readers' responses without questioning where and how those responses are constructed. Additionally, cultural practices and identities invoked by the Web site are read as essential and static (depending on how one answers the above questions), which can be seen as a kind of telos (another element in the epistemology of racism). These teleological identities are sometimes projected into the future, while at other times idealized in the past. And

most importantly, the initial questions posed don't address important and salient issues raised by the epistemology of racism, ones that offer a reading of the site that helps students understand how SR iterates itself in cultural spaces and structures power relationships.

By incorporating the epistemology of racism into discussions of this web site, a teacher could examine the epistemological structuring structures from a several perspectives: the *habiti* the site invokes, the formal institutions (corporate and otherwise) that minister agency meaning, or the common sense that structures the site's messages. Starting from this macro level would allow us to make connections to agents through the consubstantial elements of the site, like the common senses invoked concerning AAPIs and the Web site's associated institutions that minister value and create context. Once we see the ideological, societal, and discursive structures that work around and behind this Web site, we can map the site and its rhetoric onto a historical terrain that intersects political and monetary economies, colonial practices, governmental laws, and legal decisions with agents and their beliefs and practices. This provides a fuller, richer picture of the Web site and its effects on personhood, providing a powerful example for students of how the relationships between language and power work, how various societal structures – *habiti*, common sense within discourse – are determined and determine knowledge, identity, and citizenship.

Because it's a corporate site, we can't forget that the Web site does sell a brand, the McDonald's "i'm lovin' it" lifestyle, but it also purports to celebrate AAPI Heritage Month. So it's a nexus of rhetorical, institutional, and cultural elements that lend themselves to the kind of analysis that I'm suggesting. However, in a classroom with students inexperienced at doing this kind of cultural analysis, a more purposeful heuristic that not only generates cultural and rhetorical analysis, but also organizes and synthesizes that analysis structurally and historically is

more useful for forming critical praxis. And if agents are understood to have a consubstantial nature with social and discursive structures, then an analysis of this cultural text implicates the students in their own readings of the Web site and its cultural dialectics, and these readings lead to more meaningful discussions about the validation of agency, interpellation of identity, and articulation of citizenship. And most important, we stay away from the god-trick when discussing identity and citizenship, always keeping in the discussion where our readings and views *come from* since this positional stance concerning knowledge is inherent in any analyses based on an understanding of the epistemology or racism.

The Homepage

The McDonald's homepage's rhetoric exhibits binary features that work to (re)produce common sense concerning the AAPI body, interpellate identity, and even articulate citizenship status. One can see this initially in the images of the AAPIs represented on the homepage, but only vaguely. While seemingly just a welcome to the Web site, the homepage's text (previously quoted) uses expressions of group identity that construct common sense in Vichean *verum-factum* manner (i.e. facts manufactured through various social and rational structures, then stated as absolutes). These common senses of "diverse cultures" and "green tea" are linked to notions of American-ness, so that what we get is AAPI identity interpellated as a hybrid. David Palumbo-Liu explains that the notion of hybridity historically for Asian/Americans has been a part of "becoming American" (81). In fact, he discusses it primarily not as rhetorical but physical, through reconstructive eye and nose surgeries from the 1950s onward.⁷⁵

The key clauses in the McDonald's homepage that interpellate identity and articulate "American" citizen status are structured as binaries. As Figure 5 shows below, the clauses link AAPIs' common *habitus*, through notions of "heritage," "traditions," and "culture" (one side of

the binary), and to commonsensical American cultural values (the other side of the binary), each of the latter associated implicitly with citizen status or American-ness. Thus AAPIs are owners of an extra Asian and Pacific “culture,” not traditionally American, but unique to the AAPI identity. The discourse defines AAPI as the exotic Other who possesses essentialized Eastern heritage and ways, foreign to “regular” Americans, which other parts of the Web site reinforce. This common sense of foreignness, seen in the key images invoked in the language on the left side of Figure 5, is associated with the cycling images, the AAPI faces, and mitigated by the pairing of American-ness to the Asian, thus the AAPI “becomes American” through a hybrid interpellation.

Asian and Pacific Islander Americans	are	“living on the rim”
our diverse cultures	become	everyday American lifestyle
We’re hang on to our great traditions	while	we move to the beat of the times
We honor our heritage	but	We love being American
we’re weaving the threads of our culture	into	the fabric of everyday American life
we’re sipping green tea	or	enjoying a Big Mac® sandwich
we’re helping make the magic mix called America	become	even richer

Figure 5. Textual binaries that construct the AAPI identity on the “i am asian” homepage.

This hybrid interpellation is not, however, a new one. It is a bricolage of elements that historically come with the *hexis* of the AAPI, which become a part of our national common sense around Asians. Angelo N. Ancheta explains that the idea of Asians as “foreigners” is not only a racial designation based on appearance, but one continually reinforced through U.S. immigration laws and restrictions (21-22, 67, 84-9), and court cases involving naturalization and citizenship

status (67-9). He writes that “Asian American = Foreigner,” and that “[t]his equation reflects a pervasive theme in the formation of Asian American identities and experiences, and encompasses many of the stereotypes, prejudicial attitudes, and public policies that subordinated Asian Americans” (64). Ian F. Haney López, in *White by Law*, provides an appendix of “racial prerequisite cases” (state and federal supreme court cases) that span from 1878 to 1944, a total of 52 in all (203-08). Each case systematically defines various Asian racial categories as “not White,” which equates to not American, or not eligible for citizenship. In effect, these cases demonstrate, through basically two rationales (from appeals to “common knowledge” and “scientific evidence” about race and Asians assimilability (López 5)), that the Asian is a perpetual foreigner in the U.S. This common sense, working with the *hexis* of Asians in the pictures, structure the limits of our responses to the site, as well as reinforce the AAPI *habitus* of all agents around the site (white, Asian, black, etc.). When students can see the common sense and *hexis* represented on the Web site as consubstantial with the *habitus* we each carry with us, they may also begin to see how an economic and capitalist institution, like McDonald’s, interpellates whites as well as AAPIs in determined, structured ways.

Table 1 lists the order of appearance of each binary, created by the verb “to be” or by a conjunction (“but” and “or”). The lone exception to this is the third binary in which the sentence pairs two clauses with a subordinator (“which”) that creates an ending adverb clause. By grammatically structuring the entire paragraph with binaries, the page constructs AAPI cultural attributes, even if vague and undetermined (which actually overdetermines the set of meanings by pushing the reader to work from stereotypical common sense around Asians’ and “their culture”), against “American” ones, and in the process sets AAPIs in opposition to a typical “American lifestyle,” yet links them to an understanding of who the AAPI citizen is as a hybrid.

I'll use three examples from the homepage's language. In the second binary, "diverse cultures" as a *habitus* is set in opposition to an "everyday American lifestyle," another kind of *habitus* that blends to common sense about who Americans are and what they do. While AAPI cultures do "become" American, they don't start that way, and it's this origin that is defined as the AAPI attribute, not an American lifestyle. In this sense foreignness is the origin, and one never fully escaped by the AAPI. There is always the residual Asian-ness, a foreignness that keeps the AAPI from complete assimilation. With the possible exception of the first and last binaries, each works in similar fashion as this one, some more blatant than the others.

The fourth binary, in which "our heritage" and "being American" are direct opposites, is an interesting one, and worth noting. It's clearly attempting a positive spin, yet based on the conjunction "but," "heritage" (an essentialized *habitus* that works with stereotypes invoked through common sense in the discourse on the Web page) is constructed as not "being American." It constructs a commonsensical binary: "culture" and "being American." The first is an attribute of the AAPI identity, while the second reveals his/her dichotomous citizen status. The complete sentence interpellates the AAPI as a hybrid, but articulates it in a contradictory way, using the conjunction "but." When we read this in a larger context, one that takes into account a fuller view of the epistemology of racism, we can see the traces of other historical and power structures in this fourth binary. Why does Asian "heritage" and "being American" form a "natural" binary? We can begin with the East-West dichotomy solidified in the U.S. ideology of westward expansion, and set up in orientalist discourse that Edward Said discusses as *Orientalism*. Throughout Said's discussion, the underlying theme is the Occident's need to reinforce a power relationship with the Orient. This same power relationship is mediated through

the McDonald's Web site, a capitalist institution that is in this sense also a culturally colonial institution.

In *Immigrant Acts*, Lisa Lowe discusses the characterization of Asian American culture and cultural practices as exhibiting three key characteristics, heterogeneity, hybridity, and multiplicity. The three terms together highlight the effect of power relationships on cultural practices. She explains (my emphasis below):

By “*heterogeneity*,” I mean to indicate the existence of differences and difference relationships within a bounded category – that is, among Asian Americans, there are differences of Asian national origin, of generational relation to immigrant exclusion laws, of class backgrounds in Asia and economic conditions within the United States, and gender. By “*hybridity*,” I refer to the formation of cultural objects and practices that are produced by the histories of uneven and unsynthetic power relations . . . [hybridity] does not suggest . . . assimilation . . . but instead marks the history of survival within relationships of unequal power and domination . . . “*multiplicity*” . . . designat[es] the ways in which subjects located within social relations are determined by several different axes of power, are multiply determined by the contradictions of capitalism, patriarchy, and race relations, with, as Hall explains, particular contradictions surfacing in relation to the material conditions of a specific historical moment. (67)

For Lowe, hybridity is a cultural survival “tactic” that points to unequal power relationships, just as her third term, multiplicity, points to the contradictions that exist because of various formal institutions and social structures of power, like those I've placed inside the term *habitus*, as well as institutions (formal and otherwise). All three terms are products of unequal power

relationships seen through cultural practices, but they also act on and determine personhood. A hybrid interpellation is not just a contemporary chic way to articulate the AAPI citizen,⁷⁶ but it is an overdetermined and necessary survival tactic that allows the AAPI to be acceptable. Personal biases and individual declarations of subjectivity don't have much to do with this articulation of AAPI citizenship, even though agency is seemingly given to AAPIs in the McDonald's Web site's rhetoric. Social, discursive, and material practices, histories of subordination, the articulation of laws and judgments (as well as these acts done and established), and institutions that minister all these structures produce the *habitus* and common sense that we can read around this Web site. Because we can read them as structures, we can also read them as structuring.

The fifth binary ("threads of our culture" weaved into "the fabric of everyday American life") alters gently a popular American mythology, the common sense of the "melting pot" metaphor in the U.S.: "we're weaving the threads of our culture into the fabric of everyday American life." Weaving fabric could be a mixing of distinct elements (the stew pot), a calling forth of hybridity in both the ways that Palumbo-Liu and Lowe discuss, or it could be read here as a blending into something new (the melting pot). Is the "fabric" of America a new culture or a bricolage of various cultures still somewhat distinct? How the metaphor functions isn't exact clear here, but its agreement to the rest of the paragraph's binary framework is. The statement attempts to be positive and celebratory (much like all the others), but it polarizes an essential and homogeneous AAPI "culture" (a *habitus* ingrained in a white common sense about Asians opposing the heterogeneity that Lowe discusses) with "American life" (a *habitus* different from "the threads of our culture"). A power relationship is established, one that works from the structures built into and from the epistemology of racism. Whiteness is the dominant lens, unnamed here, and a familiar SR (akin to Said's Orientalism) structures the claims to

subjectivity. Weaving a fabric is a docile and non-violent activity, but as the history of Asians in the U.S. has continually shown, “cultural weaving” of this kind has been very difficult and violent.⁷⁷ This creates an interpellation of the AAPI agent that attempts to elide the historical tensions that still limit her agency and identity. This kind of critique would be difficult without seeing how the common sense within the McDonald’s discourse functions structurally.

This fifth binary sets up a kind of “separate but equal” status to each element grammatically and conceptually. The common sense of “weaving” culture ignores the tension between the two operative categories at work in this binary: Asian culture and American culture. The historical perception of the inability for Asians to fully assimilate into American society is avoided. Whiteness is never named, but continually at work. The images on the page give much away. The unseen and unspoken whiteness assumed in “American” and in who isn’t present as an image constructs authenticity for the Web site’s content and images. All of the people on the site look stereotypically Asian, which is meant to authenticate the bodies and thus the site’s celebration of AAPIs. But why these *hexes*? What *hexes* are assumed not to be AAPI? The site may also offer us a way to explore how AAPI heritage defines and (re)produces a *habitus* of whiteness, but calls it an “American lifestyle.” And yet another layer to this site’s AAPI representations is its over-simplification and reductive AAPI *habitus*/common sense. Are there not multi-ethnic AAPIs? Could there not be an AAPI who does not share much of the *hexes* or *habitus* represented on the site as common sense? Of course there can and is, but it’s difficult to see this without thinking structurally.

The epistemology of racism offers deeper analysis still. Common sense, *habitus*, and the ministering institutions are partially consubstantial. We aren’t just talking about common sense “out there,” divorced or easily separable from students’ *habiti* in the classroom – as if commonly

identifiable elements working in society would not automatically be a part of everyone's *habitus*, even if we consciously and outwardly resist it. Using the epistemology of racism assumes we are networked to the entire system, including SR and racist discourse, and it assumes a vantage point in which we make our observations. To identify common sense means also to identify common dispositions, even if each is iterated in slightly different ways within individuals. So to talk about the common sense of AAPIs currently weaving Asian cultures into the fabric of American life is to work from the dispositions that make logical (make common the sense of) Jim Crow logic (i.e. separate but equal), and Asians as hybrids and unassimilable, separate, and even clannish – all characteristics used historically in the U.S. to dominate, disempower, incarcerate, and discriminate against Asians and Asian labor, and restrict our citizenship. And so, the common sense working around McDonald's statement of affirmation of Asian cultures is also connected to a racist history and ideology, structures of power that determine much of the play in the system.

Because these statements, taken at face value and unreflected upon, seem purely celebratory and empowering, they could be read to manufacture their own support and warranting logic by the *verum-factum* principle. And I argue that this is exactly what gives statements like these so much power in our society today. By iterating the same binary relationship throughout the paragraph (and Web site), this cultural text produces its own "facts" by the act of proclamation. The support is assumed in the common sense that grounds each statement. And much like historical precedent, with each iteration of the binary, the common sense in the network of ideas around AAPIs becomes *verum-factum*, and thus unquestionable and unseen – just like whiteness. Furthermore the exigency of a celebratory month, May, for Asian American heritage, acts in *verum-certum* fashion to produce the common sense around Asians as

having something culturally separate (from white Americans) to celebrate. By not questioning the binaries that these “facts” are built from, we accept the “fact” that AAPI is Other. Additionally, we leave out the organizing principle constructing these binaries and the idea of “America”: whiteness. But of course, these made facts about AAPIs are not just isolated and insular cases of *verum-factum* and *verum-certum*, glitches seen only on the McDonald’s Web site. They also share in a train of historical *verum-certum* common sense. We’ve been celebrating AAPI Heritage month since the late 70s; we’ve talked about AAPIs as possessing separate and identifiable “cultures” (both in negative and positive ways); AAPI bodies on this Web site (and in other historical locations in the network) look different from the *hexis* we associate with the typical (white) American body, thus these digital statements – these made facts – mediated by McDonald’s, must be true because they are reinforced structurally, institutionally, and historically. The site then affirms what we’ve already decided and acted upon, thus what it shows us must be true.

While common sense blends with *habitus* on this Web page, and McDonald’s mediates the mixing, it also shows the difficulty in institutionalizing celebrations, like AAPI Heritage month and McDonald’s honoring of it. The practices around celebrating AAPI Heritage month, and the institutions that mediate those practices, make common sense the foreignness, differentness, and separateness of AAPIs as *verum-factum* and *verum-certum*. The decision made to celebrate in this way makes certain the fact of what we celebrate, and by implication, how we celebrate is also made certain. It works this way: AAPIs are different, with different cultures, ones that need to be explicitly “weaved” into the common American culture, yet *they* remain distinct from the typical American (or remain an un-mixable element of it – they aren’t the weave itself but a separable thread in it), and so through the practices that reinforce this (like

McDonald's rendition of how to honor AAPI heritage on a Web site and ad campaign), AAPI Otherness and exoticness becomes certain, that is, *verum-certum*. We might say that AAPIs are different from "normal Americans" because we have a month in which we celebrate our separateness. And in this way, *habitus* becomes reified through *verum-certum*, even for AAPIs. This is the shared area of the two spheres of *habitus* and common sense, which only becomes possible when McDonald's corporation mediates the two. As agents in the network, we aren't just observing this mix. We live it from various vantage points. Things are only certain or factual from specific nodes in the system, but the system structurally determines fact and certainty. These binaries, and their consequences to agency, identity, and citizenship, should be seen as parts of a consubstantial network of common sense, *habitus*, and institutions.

And of course, this means that there are lots of ways to see this Web site as a positive site for AAPIs. There are good elements to AAPI Heritage month and celebrations of it. There is also good in McDonald's *not* ignoring the celebration, participating in it, and offering a Web site. So this discussion, especially in classes with mostly white students, isn't meant to suggest we get rid of cultural acknowledgements and honoring people of color, instead it's meant to complicate how we all understand and act within networks of domination and racism, and it reveals how we inevitably are complicit with SR because the epistemology of racism always structures outcomes. It shows us that there is no clearly "objective" way to see this site, only subjective nodes in the network from which to make observations, which begs us to ask not only who benefits from the site most and why, but how does it interpellate identity to agents?

Clearly, using the epistemology of racism is meant to avoid blame and guilt, but not complicity. It's meant to show the structuring structures, the *habitus* and common sense in our discourse and around our personhood and bodies. Class discussions and analysis are not a matter

of accepting or rejecting practices, deciding whiteness is good or bad, approving or disapproving of actions or people, but instead they are a search for ways of seeing the structures, acknowledging complicity, and navigating through the network in order to find positional solutions, not universal ones.

The “Great to Be A Part of McDonald’s” Page

As we’ve seen so far, McDonald’s as an institution mediates value and provides an occasion to proclaim “I am Asian.” But the site also pushes interpellation of identity and articulation of citizenship in more overt ways. While part of the site offers four biographies of McDonald’s executives and one owner/operator who are all AAPI, with pictures of each, and claims that “37 percent of all McDonald’s owner/operators in the U.S. are women and minorities,” it doesn’t tell how many of those individuals identify themselves as AAPI. Are some of the “women” white, African American, or Latina? What do they mean by “minority” exactly? All of the claims on this page are couched in larger conceptual terms, like “minority franchisees” and “women and minorities.” They are not specific to AAPI communities, yet they attempt in *verum-certum* fashion, and through generalized *verum-factum* appeals, to make their argument. The only AAPI-specific claim offered is that McDonald’s “is an awesome place for Asian and Pacific Islander Americans to work, own franchises and move into top management,” but in fact, this is what the page is meant to prove. Does it expect us to believe that just the five individuals out of thousands of employees, executives, and franchisees is enough to support or warrant such grand claims about McDonald’s as an employer for AAPIs? From a purely “logical” and analytical standpoint, we must answer no to this question, but from a rhetorical one, it’s clearly yes. The inductive common sense working in the structure of the page, despite the fact that it

offers insufficient evidence for its claims, pushes us to believe based only on the limited “facts” offered, not on larger conditions or more comprehensive evidence (both of which are ignored).

The inductive common sense works only if readers/consumers do not question the validity of the page’s textual claims, or the sufficiency of their support. This kind of logic has a long and venerable tradition in western culture and science. In fact, Aristotle called induction “the foundation of reasoning” (*Rhetoric* 133) and explained that it should precede enthymemes, which were more suited for public oratory (*Rhetoric* 135). In effect, he saw it as the basis for all truth-claims, premises (common sense), which is not that different from modern scientific methodology, as I discussed in the previous chapters (mainly the Introduction). On this page of the Web site, we get five examples of successful AAPIs who have found McDonald’s “as awesome place” to work (see Figure 5). From this limited sampling, arranged on the page with

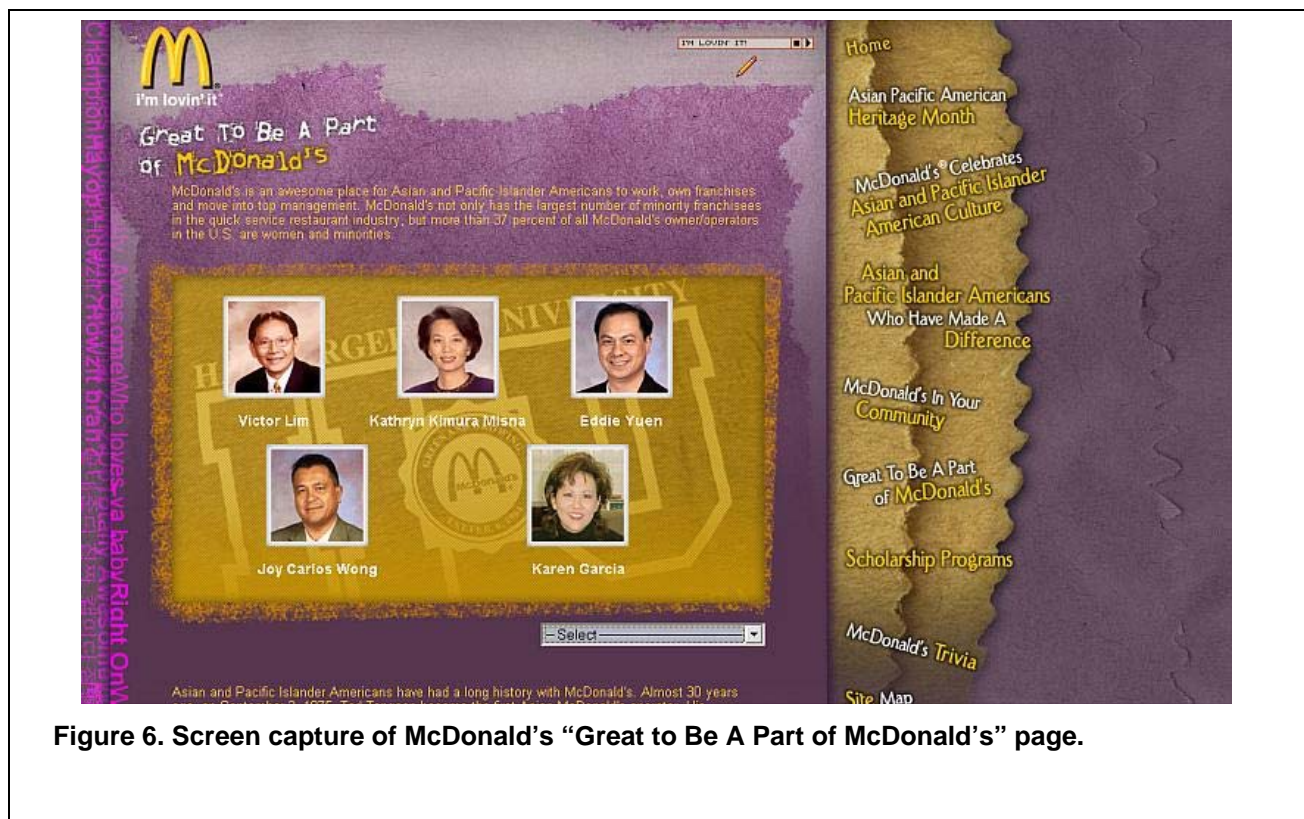


Figure 6. Screen capture of McDonald’s “Great to Be A Part of McDonald’s” page.

an image of each smiling individual, the inductive logic is constructed. Readers piece together implicitly the argument for the list of claims around how great it is to be a part of McDonald's in the accompanying text. These claims are allegedly supported by the images and their linked biographies (each picture is a link to a biography, and there's also a drop-down menu with the same links). Common sense about "seeing is believing" is a work here, and it's classic induction. Readers not only see names and biographies, we also see faces – real AAPIs who prove that McDonald's is a great place to work. It is *verum-factum*. Common sense tells us McDonald's isn't lying to us, but what it avoids is what McDonald's chooses *not* to tell us. What are the actual numbers of AAPI employees? What positions do they hold? What are their average salaries? Where are these folks working geographically, internationally? How long have they worked for the company? What about the vast majority of employees who will not be executives or store owners – is McDonald's great for them?

Interestingly, this page's language is stylistically different from the homepage. It doesn't use "I" or "we" in any of the biographies, instead it uses the third-person and a reportage style, quoting each individual and referring to him or her by name or in the third-person. Kathryn Kimura Mlsna's biography quotes her as saying: "My parents always taught me, as a third generation Japanese American, that a job worth doing was worth doing very well." It then concludes:

While at McDonald's, she has received many "Bright Idea" and Team Awards, and has served as chair/president of the national 700-member Promotion Marketing Association and was the first lawyer, and second woman to hold this position. She is the Chair of the Northwestern University Council of One Hundred, a group of 100 alumnae the university selects to mentor women students

and young alumnae in their transition from academic life to their careers; a member of the Girl Scouts of DuPage County Board; the Japanese American Service Committee Board, and the DePaul University School of Law Intellectual Property Board. She was named 1 of 4 finalists for the Chicago Women's Advertising Club "Woman of the Year Award," quite an honor for a lawyer; and served on the Board of the Neiman-Marcus InCircle Club.

She also is the mother of three children aged 14 to 21. The family enjoys international travel. Because McDonald's provides employees three months of paid leave after every 10 years of service, the family was able to take an 8-week trip around the world, where she practiced her hobby of photography and also was able to collect antique Japanese kimonos which she displays decoratively throughout her home.

Explicit cues to Mlsna's Japanese-ness are apparent throughout, and all work from common sense about Asian *habitus*. Her biography employs many details that seem like Japanese American details, a true common sense with a white presumption on its side. The presumption of her story comes from two places: (1) the authority of Mlsna's own voice, mediated through McDonald's third-person discourse, and (2) its authenticity built by its agreement with historically reoccurring common sense about the *habitus* of Japanese in the U.S. She identifies herself with the traditional hard work ethic of Japanese (i.e. "a job worth doing was worth doing very well,"). This ethic doesn't demand a white audience confront any ideological or ethical difference since it agrees with the "American" common sense engrained in the Protestant work ethic, as well as the safe and non-accommodating and reassuring bootstrap myth too. Additionally, the biography ties this work ethic, in Mlsna's own language, to her identity as a

“third generation Japanese American.” Mlsna’s biographical details also reinforce the myth of the model minority who is not a threat to white society because of proper assimilation, Protestant ethics, and positive, publicly-proclaimed contribution to her community.

From the dominant white position, like the one McDonald’s uses in Mlsna’s biography, Mlsna’s assimilation is a product of her hybrid interpellation and the multiplicity, or her multiple positions within various “axes of power,” as Lowe points out. As we’ve seen before, hybridity is a staple for the AAPI interpellation. To see multiplicity, we must see the various roles she embodies in the discourse. She is not only a leader in her community, illustrated through her numerous civic and community awards and recognitions, but a patriarchally submissive mother, international traveler, and lawyer – all roles that locate her in different social relationships of power and economies. While these kinds of details certainly celebrate her work and accomplishments, given the context and the mediating institution presenting her to us, they primarily characterize her as the model minority, thus they are not without the taint of whiteness and its gaze. In fact, the epistemology of whiteness works here as a key structuring force in the discourse, showing us how this biography also shares in SR and its history.⁷⁸ Mlsna is categorized as Japanese (even third-generation Japanese American). There is a functioning teleology that orients her identity as one that stems from an Asian past and toward an inevitable American-ness. The details of her biography build an argument for her to empirically demonstrate by the logical collection of American attributes that she is a Japanese-American. And while a rational mind and rationality are not as explicitly linked to Mlsna, or the interpellation of her identity, it is invoked by the other three elements in the epistemology of whiteness (as usual). We could, however, make the argument that her occupation as a corporate lawyer suggests that she herself embodies a rational mind working in corporate America.

Above all, Mlsna's virtues and the proof of her good citizen status *needs* proving because she is also interpellated as Japanese. While we could say that any marketing material like this would give similar accolades of different individuals, even white men, when we place this in the historical context of Japanese, their internment during WWII, and their need to prove citizenship by volunteering for military service (many directly out of the internment camps), the extreme attention to these details seems highly suspicious. This could be another way to justify citizenship, and thus show a hybridity and double-consciousness inherent in AAPI identity and citizenship.

Not surprisingly, the stereotype of the Japanese tourist with camera in hand, snapping pictures, is also employed in a passing reference to her hobbies, but it fits very conveniently into the stereotype of Japanese visiting the U.S. Why focus on this seemingly inconsequential and unimportant detail? Are there no other details of her life, hobbies, and interests to choose from? The operative word here is "choice" – these details are chosen as significant ones, and dispositions (both in Mlsna and her corporate biographer, whomever he, she, or they may be) have a hand in the choosing. This international traveling, camera-toting tourist disposition makes Mlsna's *habitus* complete. It reifies common sense.

Maybe most telling here is the concluding image of her house filled with "antique Japanese kimonos" "display[ed] decoratively." Clearly she is AAPI, who else keeps kimonos in her house? When placed next to the tradition of Asian representation in U.S. media and advertisement, this biography, as well-intentioned as it is, giving Mlsna an actual face and even some voice, still reproduces many commonsense notions about Japanese that work from a white gaze on the Asian body, limiting and containing it. She is American, yet hybrid, exotic – authentically and clearly AAPI. The product of this is to reproduce the old, static stereotypes of

Asians in America, and in the process narrow the limits of identity and reproduce the same articulations of citizenship that keep AAPIs second-class citizens.

The biography also reproduces the way in which authenticity of AAPI identity is understood. In order to be AAPI, one must be interpellated in the ways Mlsna's biography illustrates. If you're Japanese American, you're going to be "hard working" and collect Japanese things, like kimonos – it's only common sense, goes the logic. Not only is the essentializing of AAPI identity fixed on a nostalgic Asian past and set of attributes, activated by orientalia⁷⁹ that signify to the white gaze an Asian-ness clearly discernable from American-ness, but this binary, called forth from the homepage, is reinforced and by common sense made factual and certain. The orientalia both constructs authenticity and works from common sense about itself that says AAPIs are who they are because they have clearly discernable, "cultural," and "ethical" signs. These signs build *hexis*, and thus signal internal Asian *habitus* that can be mixed with American traits to form an acceptable, even attractive, hybrid.

Pushing For Personal and Social Implication

The tough part in this kind of critique is figuring out how students are going to take it. I tend to find my students along similar lines as Bonilla-Silva's findings (discussed in Chapter 1), resistant. They are so accustomed to the god-trick, the centrality and invisibility of the epistemology of whiteness, that they simply can't see many of the connections that the larger epistemology of racism offers – that is, structural connections to personhood. They might see how common sense can be interrogated as consubstantial to *habitus*, but do not usually accept the consequences of that revelation as it pertains to one's complicity with racism, inequality, and injustice. Psychologically they seem to feel that too much will be lost, thus a faith in the validity of the common sense within the epistemology of whiteness can't be questioned. When recently

discussing (in a friendly fashion) issues of equal opportunity to education with a white friend of mine who also recently graduated from college after starting a family, she simply could not disentangle her own white privilege and personal sense of entitlement to opportunities granted and available to her. She felt even Blacks living in urban New York and LA for instance, had equal opportunities to go to college. She argued that her family “gave up a lot” for her to attend a private Catholic high school, that this fact alone suggested her family’s willingness to work hard and sacrifice in order to attain a portion of the “American Dream.” What she couldn’t see is how central whiteness and its privileges are to her perspective. She couldn’t consider the idea that the cost of her achievements were paid in part by the denial of opportunities to vast populations in the U.S. Hard work and the proper priorities, in abstract liberal fashion, seemed to be the key for her, like many of my students. The epistemology of whiteness structured her way of understanding opportunity and even privilege. Additionally, she, like my students, had a hard time accepting the idea that for a capitalist society like ours to work, for the protestant work ethic to pay off, many must fail (even when they work hard). Social and economic inequality must be maintained in order for some to have enormous benefits. Everyone can’t win, nor can everyone get a degree – in fact, most cannot if the system is to keep its integrity. For my white friend, Mlsna’s biography would be common sense, expected, and would reinforce all that she already believes to be “facts” about people of color in the U.S., opportunity, merit, and the payoff for hard work and sacrifice. Therefore, the key to using the epistemology of racism effectively would appear to be how it can identify and interrogate the epistemology of whiteness as a primary structuring discourse.

Certainly we can see how this site celebrates AAPIs working for McDonald’s, but the epistemology of racism isn’t meant to find motive, nor even necessarily purpose for cultural

sites. Instead, it looks for hegemonic structuring structures around cultural sites like the McDonald's ad campaign. In other words, it helps us see how dispositions, *hexis/habitus*, institutions, and common sense (re)produced and determined structurally SR as well as other hegemonic ideology. This is why the dispositions we aim to find about AAPIs from MIsna's biography are not simply personal biases that can be easily shrugged off by students claiming to be outside this system, "well, McDonald's is clearly racist," for instance, "and I'm not." Common sense and institutions are consubstantial with *habitus*, so, as I discussed in Chapter 1, the epistemology of racism illustrates the complicity between dispositions and larger societal ideological currents, particularly in our network of common senses (logics, myths, rhetoric, and accepted images and ideas), and the *habiti* (often stereotypes and images) projected on others and ourselves. Thus we see our complicity and connection with all of these nodes, how we, in fact, help construct the meanings around them, and how they (re)produce hegemonic ideology from and within us.

The common sense notions of Asians and the dispositions that agree with those notions make the Web site authentic, which in turn keeps our eyes away from the weak inductive logic that frames the biography page and binaries of the homepage. It also keeps us from seeing clearly the overarching promotion of McDonald's. We are left with an impression that there are very successful AAPIs working at McDonald's, who travel internationally, that the corporation is celebrating AAPI heritage in a transparently honest way, thus by association we *assume* McDonald's is a great place to work and, most importantly (since most will not work for them), spend money.

From another institutional vantage point, it is McDonald's who mediates the proclamation "I am Asia." We know the ultimate purpose (to celebrate AAPI Heritage Month

and advertise McDonald's products as a kind of lifestyle), but do these ends construct the means as well as the message? Do they affect how we are meant to "celebrate" AAPI heritage? Can this be a site (cultural, institutional, and public/Web) that just celebrates AAPI Heritage Month if McDonald's is the institution promoting it, giving it authenticity and occasion – even providing the very slogan to rally around? What potential incongruities exist between a profit-making institution and an occasion for honoring and celebrating AAPI heritage? Additionally, does the slogan "i am asian" mean something different at different nodes around the site, that is, when associated with McDonald's as an institution honoring AAPI heritage (an institutionally originating interpellation), an individual interpellating her identity through the reading of the site (a self-interpellation that occurs through identification with, say MIsna), or the representations interpellated by the site's contents (an ambiguous interpellation)? Is McDonald's an appropriate cultural space to do this interpellation? Since the slogan "i am asian" is trademarked by the McDonald's corporation, would this interpellation not also be linked to economies of capitalism and consumerism, as well as culture – thus linking the AAPI identity primarily with an identity of consumption? These are questions that the epistemology of racism begs us to ask because they center around material, ideological, and discursive structures.

The benefit I have as a teacher in these discussions is, of course, my AAPI status. But in classes, I preface my remarks with the caveat that I'm not making generalizations about all AAPIs reactions to the site, instead I'm attempting to discover how this cultural text constructs and is constructed by structures that the epistemology of racism conceptualizes for us. So representative status and voice in discussions about how SR is (re)produced in culture is not as important as having the ability to use effectively the epistemology of racism as a heuristic for discussions around cultural texts. Claiming a marginal voice does not make one critical in the

sense that I've been discussing up to this point, nor does it necessarily provide more than an orthodox, white perspective on matters of racism – we are all implicated in the epistemology of whiteness. This is why I emphasize the initial neglect of personal reactions to cultural texts and issues of racism. The epistemology of racism works most effectively when used to explore cultural spaces from a macro, or social, level. Personal biases and *habitus* can (and should) be connected after the social structures are identified and discussed. Classroom discussions are no longer ones that begin with claims of “I'm not racist,” or “I don't see that Web site as racist,” but ones that assume we are all implicated in SR, that it is a part of the epistemology that constructs our world, and therefore overdetermines personhood in racist ways.

My discussion in this chapter uses the epistemology of racism as a heuristic that allows students to talk about cultural sites and the production of personhood, as well as see the epistemology of whiteness operating in ours and McDonald's discourses. While I offer a few ways to see how to read the elements that construct personhood around the Web site, in the classroom I try to avoid discussions that constantly appeal to claims of “opinion” and “personal readings” or biases – mere relativity. This isn't saying that the positions we make about the site aren't “relative” as nodes in the network, but by using the epistemology of racism we can see *structures*, not biases (although down the line, at the individual and personal level, they *feel* like personal opinion and bias). We can examine the construction of common sense and *habitus*. We can understand why we see *hexes* the way we do. And we can begin to see how our views of things fit within larger historical and societal patterns – that is, our part in hegemony.

Chapter 3: Critical Sophistic Pedagogy

Up to this point, my discussion has only applied the epistemology of racism to the composition classroom and sites of cultural production. I have not discussed explicitly about how the writing course and its discourse might be structured pedagogically, which is important. Because of the epistemology of racism's implications to personhood, students shouldn't feel that their teachers are proselytizing, or that it's a class about how everything is racist in some way. They should see that SR exists, affects us all, and that in a very general sense, all regimes of truth work in similar epistemological ways.⁸⁰ Students should understand that the teaching of rhetoric has always been linked closely with agency, identity, citizenship and power, and so the teaching of writing should be structured so the personhood and the power relationships around it are easier to see and critique.

It could easily be forgotten that one point of the epistemology of racism is to help students become better, more critical *writers* by becoming more critical *citizens*. In this chapter, I lay part of the foundation for a writing pedagogy with such an aim, and base it on Greek sophistic traditions that find rhetoric and citizenship intermeshed. I explain the heuristics and rhetorical issues the Greek sophists of the fifth and fourth centuries were engaged in, methods still applicable to contemporary writing classrooms, since we are still in the business of (re)producing citizens. In short, students should mimic sophistic rhetorical practices in order to generate dissonance in their own initial positions and view points so as to construct new stances in their discourse – that is, dissonance can get them to construct more critical stances from which to see regimes of truth and SR. These critical stances will be ones that take into account the overdetermined and structural aspects around our rhetorical practices and enactments of

personhood, ones that the epistemology of racism as a master dynamic reveals, and ones that the epistemology of whiteness (as a specific regime of truth) uses to (re)produce SR.⁸¹

While I discuss in this chapter sophisticated heuristics and their accompanying philosophical and rhetorical theories as profitable pedagogy, it should be clear that this is only one way to translate sophistic methods. My goal is to lay the classical rhetorical groundwork for what informs and shapes my notions of a writing class's purpose and effects, and what implications the teaching of writing has on students and our society, namely

Topics	Heuristics
<p><i>Nomos-physis</i> debate</p> <p>Probable vs. ideal knowledge</p> <p>Can <i>arête</i> be taught?</p> <p>Rhetoric's nature and purpose (<i>techne</i> or <i>kolakeia</i>)</p> <p>Minor topics:</p> <p><i>Kairos</i></p> <p>Eristic, heuristic, and protreptic purposes of rhetoric</p> <p><i>Doxa, pistis, and episteme</i></p>	<p>Antilogic</p> <p>Dialectic</p>

Figure 7. Sophistic Pedagogical Elements

the (re)production and critique of citizenship and SR. I explore the sophistic topics listed in Figure 7 that were debated during the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. and two sophistic heuristics for inventing arguments (also listed in Figure 7). Understanding these ancient heuristics and their philosophical underpinnings can deepen class discussions and students' appreciation of the epistemology of racism, the epistemological issues in language, the act of writing (and revising) as a purpose-full and meaning-full act done in community, and their own assessment practices (which I'll discuss in chapter 4). All of these acts are key to a critical stance as a citizen and student writer. In fact, as I'll show, sophistic pedagogy, when married to the epistemology of racism, can be a critical pedagogy for the contemporary classroom.

Nomos-Physis, Antilogic, and Dialectic

All the sophists known today at some point in their careers went to Athens to teach and practice oratory (Kerferd 15). As I sketched in the introduction, there were primarily two reasons for this: (1) “social and political conditions which created a need for the sophists” in Athens at the time, and (2) “the direct influence” of Pericles and Periclean democracy (Kerferd 15-16). G. B. Kerferd offers the main philosophic problems that the sophists formulated at the time, which allow me to infer the primary rhetorical/discursive issues for the contemporary writing classroom (and illustrating the sophists’ influence on contemporary composition theory):

First, philosophic problems in the theory of knowledge and of perception – the degree to which sense-perceptions are to be regarded as infallible and incorrigible, and the problems that result if such is the case. The nature of truth and above all the relation between what appears and what is real or true. The relation between language, thought and reality. Then, the sociology of knowledge, which cries out for investigation because so much of what we suppose that we know appears to be socially, indeed ethnically, conditioned . . . Throughout all, two dominant themes – the need to accept relativism in values and elsewhere without reducing it to subjectivism, and the belief that there is no area of human life or of the world as a whole which should be immune from understanding achieved throughout reasoned argument. (2)

The main issues in Kerferd’s list, which offer the basic theoretical questions that seem most important for writing students today to consider, are three. The first two come directly from the sophistic debates and the third is a consequence of the first two, which I’ll cover in the following two chapters (not this chapter). The three issues are: first, the relation between language and

knowledge (i.e. “truth,” “facts,” and opinion), epitomized in the ancient Greek *nomos-physis* debate; second, the nature of appearance and “reality” and their relationship with human senses, illustrated in Protagoras’ man-measure doctrine – in other words, the epistemological exploration of what is “reality,” illusion, and everything in between; and third, the importance, maybe even primacy, of assessment practices, however invisible or implicit they may be, in language use and hermeneutical acts of understanding and knowledge construction (this is the area in which the sociological, psychological, and discursive blend). To understand the first of these three important issues, the relation between language and knowledge, students might look to the debates around *nomos-physis* in ancient Athens. Several key individuals, Protagoras, Gorgias, Isocrates, and Plato, help flesh out this first issue.

Protagoras is one of the earliest and most influential sophists (circa 490-410 B.C.E.), epitomizing many, if not most, of the controversies that many of the Greeks (and certainly Plato) had with the sophists at the time. The teachings of Protagoras have been described as a response to earlier prevailing notions of *nomos* (custom, law, or social conventions) (Farrar 46), particularly to the Eleatic Parmenides and Pindar’s famous dictum that “*nomos* is king” (Farrar 47). This stems from a long-standing debate about the nature of knowledge and the world, social customs and innate virtue. The two terms that conceptualize the main ideological positions in this debate are *nomos* and *physis*. G. B. Kerferd describes *physis* as “nature” or “characteristics appropriate to a thing as such, that it possesses in its own right, or of its own accord” (111). W. K. C. Guthrie, puts the right spin on the *nomos-physis* antithesis, I think, emphasizing what was at stake for the Athenian polis and its political economies. He says there are two uses of the term *nomos*: “(i) [an earlier] usage or custom based on traditional or conventional beliefs as to what is right or true; [and] (ii) [a later usage referring to] laws formally drawn up and passed, which

codify ‘right usage’ and elevate it into an obligatory norm backed by the authority of the state” (56-7). It would thus make sense in Athens for many to side with a kind of *nomos*-centered government that could substantiate the Athenian empire building of the time (e.g. justify the Delian League, the Peloponnesian War, etc.). Rhetoric that could construct changing customs and laws for particular exigencies in ways that persuaded the polis was attractive and useful for obvious political, personal, and economic reasons.

Gutherie’s definition of *nomos* helps us also see the *nomos-physis* debate as one not solely about the nature of knowledge, or whether laws and ideals of truth were “natural” or derived from social customs. Using the epistemology of racism as a lens to see this debate, structural reasons and implications of power surface.⁸² The *nomos-physis* debate is less about absolute or relative knowledge and more about where power comes from and how it’s assigned. If the teaching of rhetoric was a key to reproducing productive citizens, ones who would participate in the polis by making laws and societal decisions, then understanding knowledge and laws as beliefs derived in community through decisions and debate (rhetoric), backed by the authority of the state (a set of institutions that minister the authenticity and value of the rhetoric of the polis), meant that other laws not on the books could be equally valid – other bodies could make political decisions, maybe better ones. The implications to this conclusion are grand: there would be other ways to define a citizen; one’s “right” to power is unstable; and other laws could be deemed “just.” At the epistemological level, accepting *nomos* means a society’s common sense about things is structured by those in power, those making decisions. Laws and political decisions are no longer about finding justice and truth, but about maintaining, consolidating, and restricting power. A *nomos*-centered rhetoric would mean that the power residing in the body of the Greek citizen is not inherent, nor is his virtue to know what is just a natural quality. A citizen

is structured politically as powerful and virtuous. In fact, power and virtue would be, to use Vico's commonsensical notions, *verum-factum* (established through rhetoric and laws) and *verum-certum* (solidified through decisions and acts done and celebrated).

Protagoras had one of the earliest most coherent sophistic philosophies of *nomos* over *physis*, or structured power relationships over inherent power relationships. This affected the debate over the teachability of *arête* (discussed later in this chapter). The *nomos-physis* controversy and Protagoras' position in it is seen in his man-measure doctrine,⁸³ but it can also be seen in his philosophies on the teaching of rhetoric. Guthrie explains Protagorean teachings, saying they were practical and based "largely on the art of persuasive speaking, training his pupils to argue both sides of a case." This practice of "taking either side in an argument . . . was founded on theories of knowledge and being which constituted an extreme reaction from the Eleatic antithesis of knowledge and opinion [*episteme* and *doxa*], the one true the other false" (Guthrie 267). The practice of antilogic ("taking either side in an argument") was a heuristic that Protagoras perfected and taught his pupils because it helped them find success in various contexts and with a variety of audiences. Rhetorical success, thus, wasn't about finding truth but finding successful and persuasive arguments. While Protagoras advocates a protreptic function for rhetoric,⁸⁴ he's less certain that one could know any kind of absolute truth or justice (for the polis), instead he's more confident in the articulation of persuasive *doxa* (opinion), supported by observable *nomos*; thus, antilogic emphasizes the best that language can offer us in the way of socially sanctioned knowledge. It's an agnostic view towards truth, but not a hopeless one, or one that leads to inaction. It is, in a way, a reaction to the need many politicians and statesmen had in Athens at the time. One could haggle philosophically with others indefinitely about what's true or right, but for a state to run effectively and efficiently, decisions need to be made quickly

and actions taken from them. In a *nomos*-centered world, the appeals that justified “the right” decisions needed more backing since rhetoric is more about power relationships and not the articulation of absolute and divine “truth,” which could not be questioned. In short, a sophist like Protagoras would be dangerous to the Greek state and the power relationships it nurtured.

In similar fashion, Gorgias, inheriting ideas from his teacher Empedocles, “placed trust not with the gods, but with human senses” (Enos 41), which links him to Protagoras’ man-measure philosophy. He also practiced the method of contraries, or thesis and antithesis, which is strikingly similar to Protagoras’ antilogic. And this was Plato’s biggest problem with him. Richard Leo Enos makes this point, showing the key differences between the two: “One of Plato’s major criticisms of Gorgias was of his concern for probability rather than ‘truth’ . . . Gorgias’ system of antithetical reasoning emphasized probability and opinion so predominantly that the truth or falsehood of a principle seemed to be an altogether arbitrary concern” (43). This is somewhat unfair to Gorgias since he worked from the belief that “‘knowledge’ was revealed by understanding the dichotomies inherent in the diverse nature of individual concepts” (Enos 44). So Gorgias didn’t claim that truth was arbitrary, just that in the world it could be shown that it is contradictory and probable. This isn’t that far from Protagoras. Gorgias might say that to make good decisions (which might be the same as ethical persuasion) would mean we must present contrary theses in order to sift through the variegated perspectives in the world of flux. It did offer probable knowledge, but then, as Protagoras claimed, that’s all we can know anyway. Most importantly, Gorgias’ position also questions the natural authority of the polis to know what is just (and true), a common sense seen in the *hexis* of the Greek citizen, and Gorgias’ position, like Protagoras’, could erode the power of a citizen.

Isocrates also understood absolute truth as inaccessible to human perception; however, he understood rhetoric's function also as one that reaffirmed the Greek *paideia*.⁸⁵ Terry Perkins in her comparison of Plato and Isocrates says that the fundamental philosophical issue between Platonic idealism and Isocratean relativism was “the relation between reality and appearance” (59). She continues, “[f]or Isocrates (a student of Gorgias), even if there were a permanent and immutable reality behind sense perception, it would be of little practical value for the conduct of daily affairs” (59). And for Isocrates, much like Plato, the daily affairs of a citizen-rhetor was the “moral reformation of the Greek polis” (Perkins 59), which accounts for his emphasis on natural ability, practical experience, and formal training as key constituents for an Athenian student of rhetoric who looks to become a fully realized citizen (Isocrates 173). Isocrates wasn't as concerned with a search for universal truth either, but, as Jaeger puts it, a “cultural ideal,” or a Greek *paideia* worth cultivating. Werner Jaeger explains that while Plato saw Greek reformation occurring “within each man's soul,” Isocrates understood it happening at the level of “nation” (that is, reformation must happen by uplifting “the idea of Greece”)(92). Isocrates was a pan-Hellenist, “a Greek who believed in the unity and expansion of Greece, and in the general superiority of Greek culture” (Herrick 43). Isocrates seemed to strike a balance in the *nomos-physis* debate. It was *paideia* that regulated *nomos* and the decisions and laws of the polis. And in this sense, Isocrates was promoting a nationalist rhetoric that almost justified *physis* by assuming a telos centering around idealized notions of the Greek *paideia*. This telos meant that Isocratean rhetoric acknowledged where power resides and who should get it.

Isocrates and Plato were not, however, promoting the same philosophy for the rhetoric of civic life. Terry Perkins explains that Plato understood social standards “derived from a source external to the polis and imposed upon it through the ministrations of a select few. The behavior

of the individual was subordinate to the needs of the polis” (64). Isocrates, on the other hand, felt that “social standards emerged out of the needs and requirements of individuals living together The polis was subservient to the needs of mankind. Human needs and beliefs were the measure against which social action should be judged” (Perkins 64). Isocratean rhetoric started from the social and material conditions of Athens, then induced answers from them. Plato, however, wanted political and other decisions to be deduced from a single, universal point, an origin of truth and knowledge.⁸⁶ And it’s this distinction that brings us back to Isocratean relativism. For the sophists, we can only deal with and make decisions based on our senses and the material world, so *kairos* (a fitness for an occasion)⁸⁷ and *doxa* were vital to making decisions, persuading, and improving the polis. A platonic, universal, externally imposed ideal (*episteme*) that only a few had access to made little sense in a democratic Athenian state for sophistic thinkers.

Since the sophists too claimed to help citizens be more effective for the state, they often needed to distance themselves from the hack sophists, or those who simply sold rhetorical tricks for money. In his “Against the Sophists,” Isocrates, to separate himself from those teachers who “pretend to search for truth” (Isocrates 163), offers a picture of the ideal teacher (presumably himself):

And the teacher, for his part, must so expound the principles of the art with the utmost possible exactness as to leave nothing that can be taught, and, for the rest, he must in himself set such an example of oratory that the students who have taken from under his instruction and are able to pattern after him will, from the outset, show in their speaking a degree of grace and charm which is not found in others. (175)

The morally upright and knowledgeable teacher has inborn virtue (*arête*), which, as he says later in the same treatise, cannot be taught to students, but can be encouraged in those who already possess a degree of it. This *arête* is a function of the rhetor's judgments about what is right for the betterment of the polis, given current circumstances and exigencies. So the polis is safe from a purely willy-nilly kind of relativism, and like most sophists, Isocrates prescribed to the notion that all humanity shares in *arête*, or various forms of it (as seen in Protagoras' great speech in Plato's *Protagoras*, 320c-328d). For Isocrates, *arête* just needs cultivating through education and training, which he could offer. Furthermore, antilogic would be safe in the hands of a proper sophist or rhetor. *Arête* and its training would lead the rhetor's judgments, thus Isocrates' brand of sophistry wasn't arbitrary, but focused on a pragmatic usefulness to the polis – and the teacher of rhetoric played an important guiding role. Taken together with his relativism, Isocrates takes a bit from Protagoras, Gorgias, and even Plato, while adding an overall purpose for education: the betterment of the Greek state and its culture. In a perverted way, this is the purpose many assume for education in general, particularly those who advocate canons and appeal to “traditions” in the academy. For these folks, education is the perpetuation of the ideal “American cultural,” articulated as “values” or “universal truths,” which can be imparted by those in the know (e.g. E. D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*). This was not, however, the sophistic view. Hirsch's education assumes a Neo-Platonic rhetoric, altered by hiding the hegemonic power relations inherent in nationalist ideologies. The cover for this hegemony is, of course, the common sense of universal values and transcendently “good” literature and ideas. Again, when seen through the lens of the epistemology of racism, even Isocratean rhetoric can't help but reveal the structures of power, ideologically and institutionally.

Because of these differences, Plato obviously rejected sophistic rhetoric. In the *Gorgias*, he called it a mere knack, like cookery (as opposed to real medicine) and makeup (as opposed to actual health). These practices lack virtue. They're tricks picked up to enhance appearances but leave the flawed essence underneath. Furthermore, Plato saw sophistic rhetoric, one that didn't work from an essential truth, as deceptive and destructive to the soul and the polis. Rhetoric doesn't offer truth, only persuades. It flatters by appealing to the *doxa* (opinion) and *pistis* (mere belief) of the polis and ignores *episteme* (true knowledge). Lasting justice and real virtue can't be found through rhetoric, thus the polis will only suffer from teachers like the sophists. And Plato sees half of the benefit to sophistic rhetoric, except he casts it as a bad thing. Once we stop assuming an abstract, teleological truth about things, we can begin to see how those things are constructed. In the classroom, this means a sophistic rhetoric would call attention to the structuring of the abstract truths we hold on to, or rather the regimes of truth we do not question. For Plato, this would have meant questioning how the polis is constructed as a regime of truth and site of power, as well as how the citizen is constructed as a site of power.

Plato's need for *episteme* stems from two places: first, his own philosophical idealism which locates *episteme* outside of human affairs and the world itself in a static realm ready to be rediscovered by the lover of wisdom, which is exemplified in his theory of the divided line, the cave allegory (*Republic* Books 6 and 7), and his description of the soul as a charioteer and two horses (*Phaedrus* 246a-249c); and second, his belief in the power of dialectic over rhetoric for the discovery of *episteme*. Plato provides a definition for his dialectic through Socrates' response to Callicles' question of whether Socrates can't just discourse on the topic at hand alone (with no more leading questions). Socrates says,

I think we ought all to vie with each other in attempting a knowledge of what is true and what false in the matter of our argument; for it is a benefit to all alike that it be revealed. Now I am going to pursue the argument as my view of it may suggest; but if any of you think the admissions I am making to myself are not the truth, you must seize upon them and refute me. For I assure you I myself do not say what I say as knowing it, but as joining in the search with you . . . (Plato *Gorgias* 99)

Plato's dialectic emphasizes a searching for truth through a heuristic of vying that results in a benefit for all (and not the rhetor alone). All have stake and a part to play in the truth-seeking process. Anyone should object when his judgment tells him to.

Plato's Socratic heuristic for *episteme* is a communal search for truth that inherently benefits everyone, whereas sophistic antilogic can be practiced by a single rhetor for others to hear (and maybe only for the rhetor's primary benefit). In fact, Plato didn't see antilogic as a heuristic at all, not like dialect was. Because it was tainted with eristic and protreptic purposes, the use of antilogic was not a search for truth, only a method to win arguments by flattery (or *kolakeia*). Dialectic, on the other hand, is not simply a tactic or strategy to mimic in order to achieve some oratorical end (like persuasion, flattery, or honor), as many sophists were accused of offering (even Isocrates joined this criticism).⁸⁸ C. Jan Swearingen claims that Plato's dialectic "emphasizes the human context." It's not just a practice of questioning, "logical consistency, or of testing propositions as an end in itself"; it was for Plato a process of knowledge discovery "in which one person understands another" (327). What's important to see is that Platonic dialectic actually has similar ends as sophistic rhetoric. Just as Plato wanted to find truth and wisdom for the soul's benefit (even if that truth was teleological and

predetermined), Protagoras wanted to find the best and most probable answers for rhetorical occasions (since truth and wisdom could not be confirmed), Gorgias wished to understand life's dichotomies in order to make better decisions (the display of contrary *doxa* and *nomoi* for right actions and beliefs), and Isocrates looked to build and uplift the state (*nomos* through *kairotic physis*) by working with existing social conditions, which is all one can know for sure (see Appendix H for a synopsis-chart of each figure discussed here).

Terry Perkins explains that Plato's "ethic was eudaemonistic, i.e., concerning the highest attainment of the highest good for mankind," and "God, not man, must be the measure of all things" (52). This might explain his emphasis on dialectic's communal benefits and nature. Plato's assumptions about a constant, universal truth, divinely ordained, leads him to see truth primarily in terms of *physis*, acquired through reason and dialectic, not rhetoric. The *logoi* of rhetoric are ambiguous and deceptive, shifting with opinion and belief (*doxa* and *pistis*), while true knowledge (*episteme*) is natural, constant, external, and found only through the communal critical questioning dialectic offers. The truth is literally out there (in heaven, in the abstract). And because of this, Plato situates himself opposite of the *nomos*-centered sophists. Therefore, Plato would not be able to see how antilogic would be useful (particularly since it can't be trusted). True lovers of wisdom will recognize the naked truth without the need for rhetorical dressing or persuasion. However, the polis could use rhetoric if placed in the right hands, namely a Philosopher-King, one where "political power and philosophy ['a genuine desire for wisdom'] meet together" (Plato, *Republic* 179). We can see why later generations of scholars, clergy, aristocracy, scientists, and the like – particularly in the Enlightenment era – would find Plato's teleological philosophy (and his predecessor's, Aristotle's, for that matter) more appealing than the sophistic focus on a *kairotic* and probable knowledge, one that questioned the power inherent

in the polis and the body of the citizen. Seen in this light, a Neoplatonic rhetoric works to maintain status quo power relationships by assuming a telos that is universal and abstract. It justifies the current power relationships by appealing to *a priori* truth (e.g. heaven, universal truth, God, etc.) that maintains the voice, power, and privilege of those who already possess these things. It's also a great way to justify colonial and imperial practices.

We should keep in mind that the sophists didn't create the *nomos-physis* dilemma, nor the dilemma around antilogic. Offering opposing arguments wasn't new to Protagoras' time. Jacqueline De Romilly asserts that this practice can be found outside of and before Protagoras in Euripides, Thucydides, Sophocles, and early comedies (76).⁸⁹ Protagoras' contribution is to rhetorical education, making antilogic into "a method of argument in itself."⁹⁰ Additionally, she notes that the anonymous *Dissoi Logoi*, clearly influenced by Protagorean teaching, exemplifies and teaches the method of "double arguments," hinting that it was a popular sophistic strategy. But this strategy, by the fifth century, had two ways of being employed, and they affect the way we might view sophistic antilogic as a heuristic in the contemporary classroom. The first kind of tactic was to turn the opposing argument against itself in order to refute it, similar to contemporary strategies of anticipating a counterargument. This might be done by what earlier teachers called "second-degree likelihood" that "override[s] immediate appearances through the consideration of various perspectives on a case (De Romilly 77). For instance, we might say that it's bad for a drunkard to buy wine and continue in his ways, but it's good for the wine merchant to sell wine to him. Using an understanding of *kairos*, this argument takes the strength of the opposing argument (selling wine is good for the merchant) and turns it against the original (buying wine is bad for the drunkard). So instead of saying that buying and drinking too much wine is bad, one could say that buying a lot of wine is good for the merchant selling it. This

tactic can also be seen in Antiphon's *Tetralogies*. The second tactic, typically attributed to Protagoras, makes "the weaker of two arguments the stronger" (De Romilly 78), a sophistic claim made against Socrates.⁹¹ De Romilly explains that this was a "technique of reversing arguments so that damning circumstances are converted into a justification, while favourable ones are turned into criticism" (78-9). For instance, if someone once gave offerings to the temple but now doesn't, yet defends his own virtue by pointing to his long history of giving offerings, an antilogical retort to this might be to say that the man is doubly bad since he knew the right thing to do, did it for a long time, but now does not, and knows better. The man's very past virtue (his strength) is turned against him. In fact, Protagoras was famous for using this kind of antilogic (Farrar 63), but not just for the sake of winning an argument. Farrar explains that Protagoras looked to question all claims so that "no one disputant could trump the others by appealing to some privileged access to things as they really are." The point was, according to Farrar, "to discover the best argument" assessable by "persuasiveness and plausibility" (64). So Protagoras' practice of antilogic directly contradicted Plato's dialectic in its favoring of belief (*pistis*) over truth (*episteme*), unstable, changing *nomos* over a static, constant *physis*. It also contradicted dialectic by its goal or purpose (the discovery of a plausible, persuasive argument, not necessarily *the* truth). For a contemporary classroom, we can see both as heuristics that attempted to critically question a case and not accept initial ideas of it. However, in our contemporary versions of antilogic, we can assume multiple viewpoints, not simply dichotomous ones, as Greek scholars tend to talk about antilogic.

For Plato an eristic approach to rhetorical practice that offered merely those claims that can win the day (and not necessarily articulations of truth) was problematic. To consider *kairotic* elements in one's rhetorical situation amounts to flattery and so was deceptive. But the sophists

saw this as necessary since *kairos* determined the range of evidence admissible and arguments possible. This wasn't good enough for Plato and his aims for *paideia*. If truth and justice were external, static, and eternal, then there was no need to consider *kairos* in one's orations. A decision or act, an idea or concept, was either right or wrong, good or bad, virtuous or not, regardless of the situation and people involved. One needed simply to find the truth from which the issue at hand hinged, then determine which side (good or bad) things resided. The exigencies around the Peloponnesian War (i.e. the influx of outside cultural elements, trade, and the growth of empire building) and the changes in government due to Periclean democracy (i.e. the constitutional reforms toward governing by "the many" instead of "the few" elite) suggest why Plato, an aristocratic Athenian citizen, would feel a need to promote a *paideia* that reinforces a "natural" and eternal culture of Athens. Athenian commercial and cultural power, as well as the power relationships inherent in the body of the Athenian citizen, was slipping away. Universal and abstract notions of an ideal Greek *paideia* needed to be fixed if Athens (and its citizens) was to justify its (and their) cultural and economic dominance. Much like our contemporary and recurring debates over literacy and education, Plato saw the Athenian way of life slipping away or degrading (as discussed in books 8-9 of *Republic*), what Kerferd identifies as the "theory of decline" (125). Thus we see a possible personal reason for Plato to criticize sophistic ideas that came from foreigners like the sophists, who articulated a rhetoric of potential and "theories of progress" (Kerferd 125).⁹² Assuming truth and justice to be governed by *nomos*, and shifting with *kairos*, could be interpreted as a cultural defeat of Athens. Not only was Athens losing its military hold in Asia Minor at the hands of Sparta and her allies, but there may have been significant fears that its great *paideia* was being corrupted by foreigners – and so Athens as its citizens knew it was vanishing. Again, we can hear very familiar sounding anxieties in Ancient

Athens, ones that sound like modern U.S. anxieties over education and immigration, national security and border protection. All anxieties that revolve around personhood and the power relationships structured in it.

Whether we see Plato's problems with antilogic on philosophical or personal grounds, his stake in the sophists' presence in Athens was a matter of life and death – the death of justice and the polis, the death of his family's previous way of life, the death of Socrates, and the death of the soul's search for wisdom. From this perspective, one might read *Gorgias*, *Protagoras*, and *Phaedrus* as more comprehensive articulations of *Apology*, explaining in detail Socrates' real teachings and their important philosophical differences from the sophists – differences that may appear to be similar to sophistic teaching, but were quite different. In effect, these dialogues make the argument that Socrates didn't corrupt the youth of Athens. It was the foreigners, the sophists, who taught deception, flattery, and cookery. They were killing Athens and its culture. To Plato, the sophists not only threatened the search for truth, but stifled the polis' search for justice, and eroded the hegemony that granted privilege and power to citizens like Plato, and sustained his culture. Education and the "transmission" of culture has always been an issue of literacy structured into our institutions, ways of life, and our very dispositions (*hexes* that we carry around on/in our bodies). The common sense of protecting "national borders" is an educational and rhetorical issue because it involves integrally nationalist assumptions that play out in our discourses on immigration and national security, both of which help articulate U.S. citizenship and infiltrate our writing classrooms.

Yet the difference between antilogic and dialectic goes deeper still. As illustrated in *Protagoras* (328d-334c), Plato could argue against antilogic on logical grounds: How could there be two (or more) justices? How could a man be both innocent of a crime and guilty? How can

something be both good and bad, virtuous and immoral? Protagoras' method for answering these kinds of questions conflicted with Plato's notions of how real knowledge is derived and understood. Antilogic not only assumed *nomos* to be the realm where one might find probable knowledge and justice, but it allowed two (or more) ideas to occupy the same place, a common sophistic idea also seen in Gorgias' *On the Nonexistent* (e.g. "nothing exists"). It was also contrary to popular Athenian common sense if we take Solon's famous building ordinance as one example. Solon, among his many governmental reforms that began in 594 B.C.E., "prescribed a clear space of a foot alongside each wall, two feet alongside each house" (Ong 280). The logic is clearly one of material space, geography. A building cannot occupy another building's space literally. Walter Ong points out that Peter Ramus used this geographic logic to divide the study of rhetoric from dialectic in the sixteenth century French educational system (you can't study two subjects at once). Plato too uses Solon's logic. In fact, Plato's Socrates attempts to extract these inconsistencies when questioning Protagoras on wisdom, self-control, courage, justice, and piety (*Protagoras* 328d-334c). For Plato, dialectic, in practice, seems to amount to this: the uncovering of inconsistent definitions, ideas that occupy more than one factual or value position. And in a very real and immediate sense, for the foreign sophistic rhetoric to occupy a space in Athenian *paedeia* could be seen as Sparta within the walls of Athens: two cultures occupying the same geographic space – and two bodies (Athenian and foreigner) structured with power in the polis. For Plato, a deeper problem with the sophists was apparently that rhetoric could not offer both probable and definite truth, virtue and sham, practical information for decisions and probable knowledge, but equally important in considering Plato's criticisms of the sophists is understanding Plato's status as a citizen and what he may not have been willing to share: political power as a citizen and the power of cultural production. All of Plato's arguments for

abstract truth can be traced back to an anxiety over where Athenian citizen comes from, where political and economic power resides, and who should get these powers.

Interestingly, the fears of revolution from rapidly falling wheat prices and the resultant voluntary slavery of Athenian citizens and farmers, which allowed for Solon to be granted sole power over Athens in the sixth century as a way to stop impending disaster, might also be another link between Solon's logic and Plato's criticisms of the sophists (Hooker). Plato clearly saw Protagoras' emphasis on antilogical arguments, *nomos*, probable truth, and *kairos* as detrimental to the polis, destroying it by a kind of anarchy of ideas, a relativistic chaos in which anything goes and appearance (flattery) makes injustice seem like justice; however, this destruction of the polis and eroding of Greek *paideia* stemmed from a patriotic rhetoric, akin to contemporary nationalist ones. It was a rhetoric that reinforced status quo power relationships in Athens. Political change as chaos surely must have been felt and remembered from the Archaic Period of the seventh and sixth centuries by many aristocratic Athenians during Socrates' and Plato's time – that is, those who formed Athens' "democracy."⁹³ It might have been a common fear for many, particularly those who wish to maintain their own and their families' economic and political status.

To illustrate how these sophistic themes come together in an antilogical rhetoric, we can look at the *Anonymus Iamblichi*. Probably written by a follower of Democritus around the late fifth or early fourth century, this fragment discusses justice and law, appealing to *nomos* and *physis* in typical sophistic fashion, and suggesting that there may have been popular sophistic topics (*topoi*).⁹⁴ In a section that mimics closely Protagoras' myth of the origin of humanity's virtues (*Protagoras* 320c-328d), the *Anonymus* argues that obeying laws is just. Illustrating a tension between *nomos* and *physis*, it states that because people must live together in association

and obey laws in order to secure safety, “Law and Justice are kings among men, and that they could in no way change, for by nature they have been firmly fixed” (Diels-Kranz 275). The writer offers a reiteration of Pindar’s dictum with a sophistic twist. Law and Justice are fixed, static, and eternal, by the natural order of things. In other words, *nomos* is king by *physis*. From this sophistic vantage point, justice within the polis is natural because what doesn’t change is our predilection to custom-izing it in order to fit our particular association and circumstances. *Nomos* is bound to the kairotic and the contextual. The writer continues the argument, describing a scenario of an “invincible” and “extraordinary” man who could live outside of society and therefore would only need to consider his own benefit and not others’ (embodied in laws and customs). This superman would have no need for laws or customs; instead he could pursue his own interests and benefit. But he would eventually be subdued by others “because of their own observance of law and their numbers.” The passage concludes, “power itself, the real power, is preserved by law and justice” (Diels-Kranz 275). In this brief passage of recycled sophistic *topoi*, we move from a sophistic doctrine around *nomos-physis* that argues for the necessity of laws and custom to an opposing argument (an example of antilogic) of second-degree likelihood, which makes a conclusion about where the real power of the polis originates – real power comes not just from people but the *logoi* of the polis, its rhetoric (in the form of laws, customs, opinions, and beliefs), its social contract. This opposing argument demonstrates how generative (and dangerous in the eyes of Plato) sophistic rhetoric could be. It could make a superman fatally flawed, and *nomos* a kind of *physis* (i.e. ideas, geography, and people occupying numerous spaces – a contradiction). It could lead to apparent judicious decisions that later also seem to embody injustice. From a patriotic or nationalist perspective, this would be heresy.

Sophistic antilogic and a slightly altered version of dialectic, as heuristics, can be quite beneficial to the writing classroom. Originally, these methods were meant for education, and for the sophists, a way to invent arguments, not in an Aristotelian sense (i.e. to discover the available means of persuasion), but in an explorative sense. It's this second sense I hold up as more profitable contemporary classrooms. As a set of heuristics, sophistic pedagogy, particularly antilogic and dialectic method, asks students to play with ideas and language in order to come closest to acceptable truth for a given context, purpose, audience, and their currently understood ethical limits. The practice of antilogic when married to a dialectical forum (as a community of rhetors who vie for understanding) can also provide for ways in which students can see past the god-trick in their own dispositions and the common sense. However, for it to work as a critical pedagogy, the epistemology of racism should be incorporated in order for students to see dispositions as a part of *habitus* and common sense in discourse as rhetorical and social structures that structure their very ways of seeing and believing. Additionally, it can move away from discussions of relativism that many students will resist, discussions that seem purely opinion-based that antilogic might seem to encourage. Instead dialectic and antilogic can help students position themselves at other locations in a network of ideas and subjectivities, and thus see how consent and SR are structured into our lives, daily activities, and discourse, even when good intentions suggest otherwise. To openly explore opposing positions pushes us to reconsider our own vantage points in the network, and thus they can work to help students better use the epistemology of racism as a framework to see structurally. Antilogic and dialectic also highlight a crucial aspect of the writing class: that it's not only about grammar, linguistic precision, correctness, or rules to learn, it's also about learning to be citizens, about the limits and horizons to our knowledge and ways of coming to that knowledge, about revising our initial perspectives

and allowing for potential adjustments to them later on, and about finding a critical space in which to make good decisions that work for the present and future. In short, as I'll discuss in chapter 4, the writing class is about assessing our positions and ideas, as well as those of others, in critical ways that look for structuring structures and address power relationships.

Man-Measure and the Teachability of *Arête*

A writing pedagogy that uses both antilogic and dialectic as heuristics would also have to incorporate what I've only hedged on to this point, Protagoras' man-measure doctrine and the question of the teachability of virtue (*arête*). This is the second important issue that contemporary writing students need to be able to address since it historically and contemporaneously attached to notions of citizenship as well as educational access. And again, the sophists offer ample ways to think about virtue, citizenship, and education. In fact, questions in the writing classroom around language and literacy can deepen discussions around the social structuring of knowledge and the purpose and nature of literacy as a citizen-building endeavor that is critical. Important to these kinds of discussions is a full understanding of the man-measure doctrine since it informs social constructionist pedagogy and composition theory. Man-measure is not a doctrine of simple relativism, nor *carte blanche* to make any claim in which one can offer support, then call it true (for that lone perspective), effective, or persuasive. It is, at its base, a doctrine about community *judgment* as a collective, or more precisely, it reveals a society's structured hermeneutical practices (our ways of judging) when we put language to our views, ideas, decisions, positions, and visions of the world.

Protagoras' man-measure dictum can be stated: "man is the measure of all things; of things that are not, that they are not; of things that are, that they are" (Herrick 42).⁹⁵ The man-measure doctrine encapsulates a philosophy of language that is experiential, social, and civic. It's

not simply a relative notion of knowledge (as John Lennon sang: “whatever gets you through the night . . . s’alright, s’alright”). Instead, Protagoras’ man-measure is a way of articulating a paradox in language and knowledge: we can only know what we can sense, measure, and make judgments on, conversely, we cannot know what we cannot measure. It’s not a denial of Platonic *episteme*, only a denial that *we* can know *episteme* for certain and act on that knowledge as if it were *the* truth – thus, Protagoras privileges antilogic as a means to probable and persuasive arguments that use appeals to *kairos* and *nomos*. The “we” in man-measure is the structured ways in which a community articulates judgments and truths – in other words, the community invoked in the doctrine of man-measure in turn invokes *kairos* and *nomos*. Vico’s common sense discussed as *verum-factum* and *verum-certum* help illustrate how a community might establish and verify ways of measuring, and *kairotically*. So in a way, Vico’s common sense, is a later way to articulate how society structures what it can measure as “facts” in order to make decisions and live productive lives.

Inserting common sense (as a structuring element) helps us see a structural dynamic of man-measure. Since there can be no appeal to a higher divine truth in man-measure, a rhetor’s only recourse is to what he *can* know in community, namely his contradictory and opposing experience in society and the *verum-factum* and *verum-certain* that his society displays. In this sense, man-measure isn’t about flattery or relativist arguments designed solely to win debate. The doctrine is about seeing the common sense structured in community for what it is: a shared measuring of the world, which today we can say may be suspect.

Farrar offers a nuance to the doctrine that coincides with my reading of it as a social judging practice. She says man-measure highlights the fact that we can only know “the *way* things are”:

Of the things that are *f*, he measures *that* they are *f*. ‘Things’ are not limited to objects in the world but also include what happens or is the case. Relatedly, measuring is not limited to perceiving an object or feature of the world but includes the rendering of judgments . . . man the measurer is both what we would call a ‘sensing’ and ‘judging’ being, and his standard is his own . . . Man’s interaction with the world defines the only reality we can know, and this interaction is broadly stable as well as locally variable. (her emphasis 49)

Farrar emphasizes the singular “man” measuring in Protagoras’ doctrine, the fact that one not only *senses* one’s world but *judges* those senses in order to make determinations, that accessible human knowledge is a function of what the agent experiences *and* judges from those experiences. I, on the other hand, read Protagorean man-measuring socially, which can be seen in Farrar’s ending statements. The reality “we can know” is “broadly stable as well as locally variable.” The “we” is the community, while the stability (and localized variability) comes from the *habitus*, common sense, and institutions that structure what a community can know – that is, the epistemology of racism when looked for in man-measure, highlights the doctrine’s key point: that how we measure things is structured by the ways in which we can measure them; and these ways are also structured through discourse, institutions, and practices in communities.

Man-measure is the best articulated general sophistic philosophy that is extant. It encapsulates the sophists’ notions of the sources for probable truth and ambiguity, and hints at the primary heuristic used for invention, antilogic. The man-measure doctrine doesn’t immediately suggest, however, that *arête* is teachable if we use Plato’s definition of the term, neither does it follow from what we’ve just said and Protagoras’ protreptic purposes.⁹⁶ However, it really depends on the perspective. If one is the measure of all things, and all share in *arête* (be

it a single source as Plato claims or multiple sources as Plato's Protagoras illustrates in his famous speech in *Protagoras*), then a sophist can encourage *arête* already in his students through heuristics and training. The teacher has virtue and thus can see it and encourage it in his students. In this sense, sophistic teaching is more encouragement and coaching, not the transfer of truths. Plato would, of course, disagree, saying that while virtue may have been known by each man at some early stage in his soul's development, people forget, and have natures and predispositions which will keep them from seeing, seeking, or acknowledging virtue/truth.⁹⁷

Gutherie points out that the teaching of virtue "was the basis of the Sophists' claim to a livelihood" (255). Pulling from our previous discussion on Protagorean philosophy and antilogic, we might be able to understand why Protagoras still could claim to teach truth. If antilogic brings one closest to the most just decision, the truest knowledge (given what one can measure), then sophistic *arête*, springing from multiple places, can be taught because it is based on what is most persuasive, probable, and prudent, given the time, circumstances, and people involved. Plato's Protagoras states at the outset of discussing this question that his student will learn "prudence in affairs private as well as public . . . to order his house in the best manner, and . . . to speak and act most powerfully in the affairs of state" (*Protagoras* 16). Just as we've seen in Isocrates' proclamations on his teaching, Protagoras claims that "[s]uccessful teaching . . . requires that the pupil contribute both natural ability and assiduity in practice" (Gutherie 256). Similarly, the writer of the *Dissoi Logoi* claims that many men have a "natural bent" to master certain things, like mathematics or rhetoric, thus they have a kind of embryonic *arête* that can be nurtured by a teacher, or that allow someone to be a teacher (Diels-Kranz 290). This is similar to what Plato's Protagoras says at the end of his famous speech (Gutherie 66). Reiterating his point that we all in society teach one another virtue in our own small ways (a man's virtue is fostered by changing,

social experiences), he concludes that teachers like himself do in fact teach virtue “and that this is the opinion of the Athenians” (Plato, *Protagoras* 27). The backing for Protagoras’ support is measurable social practice, observed *nomos* (the *doxa* of Athenians). Plato’s *arête* was not taught so much as it was discovered by the soul ready to see it. Therefore, unlike Platonic virtue that rests in an elite philosophic few, gleaned by the enlightened soul from an ethereal place far removed from the world, Protagoras saw virtue (in varying degrees and kinds) residing in everyone – it was, in a sense, socially constructed – and this is supported by the social practices which can be measured by all.⁹⁸ Plato was coming at the question from a philosophical and ontological point of view, while Protagoras’s view was pragmatic and epistemological.

And these two theories of virtue and truth have great bearing on the classroom. If we buy Plato’s version, the teacher is the seat of knowledge, and he will impart it to his students. They will receive it, and if they’re inclined to accept the truth, then they’ll be the better for it. It is Freire’s banking model of education. The pitfalls to this pedagogical paradigm have been rehearsed numerous times in the past two decades. I won’t belabor the argument. But there is another criticism and lesson to Plato’s theory of virtue (and truth). As can be seen in his own dialogues through Socrates’ leading questions, the exchange that dialectic offers, which constitutes the searching for “truth,” is too defined by the power that the teacher holds. The problem isn’t that the teacher isn’t more informed than her students about rhetoric and writing, nor that she wouldn’t be able to lead her students to better ways of understanding. The problem is that assuming this power relationship (i.e. the teacher over the students) without incorporating it into the discourse of the classroom – without critiquing it as a structuring structure in the classroom – leaves this important dynamic unexamined. If we are asking students to be critical of how other power relations are structured in their worlds, then it seems hypocritical to not

incorporate this same level of criticality to the classroom. Platonic classrooms and philosophical assumptions about virtue and truth may be explicit about the structures of power and knowledge that built knowledge in community, but they typically do not allow their own epistemologies to be critiqued easily.

On the other hand, a sophistic theory of virtue that is coupled with the epistemology of racism, can allow classroom work to reveal the structuring of power relationships, SR, and regimes of truth, as well as promote a self-reflexive pedagogy. While we are in the process of measuring knowledge in our writing, this new vision of sophistic pedagogy can allow students to explore ideas and judgments of things as socially and structurally developed (i.e. developed from common sense ministered by institutions). The classroom becomes less about being right, or finding the right answer or analysis on a topic, but about seeing why we come to the judgments we do, and how these measurements are structured in society and discourse. Each student is now a nexus of socially meaning and “truth.” Man-measure acknowledges, in this way, the consubstantial nature of the epistemology of racism.

The *Dissoi Logoi* illustrates one more sophistic pedagogical insight for us. It connects explicitly the practice of antilogic to the man-measure doctrine as it applies to the issue of the teachability of *arête*. While Guthrie claims that this text “has no literary or philosophical merit” and was most likely either a student’s notes or “something written by a teacher for his pupils,” the text does offer us a kind of “popular cultural” source that might plausibly represent sophistic commonplaces of the time. It would thus suggest just how influential sophistic ideas, and Protagoras, Isocrates, and Gorgias were at the time. After outlining a typical Protagorean argument for why virtue is teachable, the writer concludes with an example of swapping a Greek child and Persian child, raising each in the other’s former society, and observing that each will

speak the language of the society he is raised in. The text finishes: “We learn our words in this fashion, and we don’t know who our teachers are. Thus my argument is complete . . . And I don’t say that wisdom and virtue are teachable, but that these proofs do not satisfy me” (Diels-Kranz 290). One could read this as a playful jab at Platonic arguments for an universal *arête* (instead of various kinds of *arête*, as the sophists suggested), or just an exercise in antilogic. But the conclusion suggests future arguments and possibilities on the subject of virtue, which, as I’ve said earlier, is a main feature of sophistic rhetoric and its heuristics. The text leaves the matter open for rhetorical debate, instead of closing it with philosophical pronouncements. Additionally, it illustrates and emphasizes the process of the learning of words, *logoi*,⁹⁹ offering us an interesting statement about *nomos* over *physis*, and reinforcing the sophistic ambiguity within accessible human knowledge. In effect, the writer of *Dissoi Logoi* claims only what can be claimed here: that the five proofs that open the section (289-90) can each be seen in two different and equally persuasive ways; and therefore, one must acknowledge this fact and leave the question open, which amounts to an agnostic view on whether virtue is teachable, whether *the* truth is knowable – very Protagorean. Yet it does lean toward virtue through *nomos*, acknowledging that we learn in community, but that this may not be the end to the matter.

But maybe most telling in *Dissoi Logoi* is its attention to the way in which society structures knowledge and virtue particularly through social interaction, cultural practices, and language. In this way, the conclusion of this text is not so ambiguous. In fact, maybe its main argument is not that we “learn our words in this fashion,” but that learning is communally structured and contingent on a number of social, cultural, and discursive practices that also determine virtue. We don’t know our teachers, not because they are absent, but because there are too many to count. In this sophistic text, antilogic illustrates rhetorically how knowledge and

virtue are structured by society, and brings the epistemology of racism closer to sophistic pedagogy.

In *Dissoi Logoi*, we see a sophistic worldview encapsulated. From an antilogical arrangement, it draws an ambiguous/probable conclusion on the teachability of *arête* that blends the essential ideas of the man-measure doctrine with an emphasis on *nomos* in the polis. However, it's most powerful lesson may be that truth and virtue as structuring structures within society and discourse, which is a better way to talk about *kairos* in the contemporary classroom. In a way, this text is what the sophists say rhetoric can offer, both in education and as a political practice – which says a lot. Additionally, *Dissoi Logoi* suggests how important and powerful the writing classroom can be if we use that space as a way to examine our *nomos* and the things and ideas we consider virtuous and true as structured and structuring elements in our society and discourses. This new kind of sophistic pedagogy, one linking antilogic, dialectic, and the epistemology of racism, might ask us as language users to see other positions as equally overdetermined and structured as our own, and use all of them to build a critique of the socially acceptable ways to measure and make judgments on the topics the classroom explores. This is a critical sophistic pedagogy.

What's most important in a critical sophistic pedagogy is how it works to critique the structures of power and knowledge within pedagogy itself. Plato thought education should teach the truth, and so could teach, or rather help discover, virtue for those who had the most promise (c.f. *Republic* 441c-445b). Dialectic, then, was his base for allowing souls in community to discover truth, known by the true lover of wisdom (the teacher). It was a heuristic that he felt offered the right students (desirers of wisdom) an opportunity to find truth together, and so lead lives filled with virtue, which would provide the polis with justice and longevity. A good polis

(as is still the case today in our notions of a good nation) started, for Plato, with good citizens. In theory, it means the best people get opportunities to help make the polis all that it should be by doing what they do best, discovering and proclaiming *episteme*. In practice, it is the “good old boy” system of privilege and collegiate family legacies, but then Plato was never one for practicality or real material conditions. In contemporary education, pedagogies that structure the classroom around platonic dialectic are found in programs that encourage meritocracy, standards and universal testing, as well as banking models for learning.

Protagoras, like the other sophists (who were mainly excluded from the Athenian political system), saw the power in education as one that offers useful methods for dealing with what we have in the world: change, flux, ambiguity, and contradiction. The Athenian state might be good, but it’s really only good for Athenian citizens (a minority). Additionally, it’s not always run by good citizens, yet despite these contradictions, good decisions can still be made, and justice still achieved. Antilogic, then, can be used to both teach social mores and provide a practical rhetorical technique that can construct possible answers and usable knowledge. It is a heuristic that demonstrates how to find the *kairotic* and persuasive in *nomos* to make things happen. Ironically, a post-platonic dialectic, one without its Plato’s telos, can be seen as inventing the same thing. Sophistic antilogic, however, can reveal hegemonic structures and common sense by emphasizing the *kairotic* as a way to address the ways a society measures ideas and values, and *nomos* as a set of structuring structures that build “fitness” for “occasions” of discourse. When we bring together the usable parts of platonic dialectic, sophistic antilogic, and man-measure, we have a potent contemporary pedagogy that offers critical stances to students.

Critical Sophistic Pedagogy As A Pedagogy of Assessment

The third theoretical issue that is important for the contemporary writing classroom that a critical sophistic pedagogy helps us address is the primacy of assessment practices as ones not only done *in* community but done *through* community. This is to say, a community's ways of assessment, as my discussion of man-measure points out, is structured in distinct ways. The assessment and evaluation of student papers, just like our readings of "authored" texts, are not products of individualized minds, purely subjective and filled with "personal biases." Because of this, it may be more educative to work from what the epistemology of racism and the man-measure doctrine show us: that our assessment practices are in fact ways of measuring ideas and discourse that are linked closely to social structures and logics, common sense, *habitus*, and institutions that minister authority to individuals as well as regimes of truth (e.g. whiteness, scientific method, etc.).

The implications that a sophistic understanding of education might have on a contemporary writing class is significant. It focuses the rhetoric of the classroom on the structures within and around discourse, the power relationships that those structures (re)produce, the ways in which these structures construct personhood. This critical sophistic pedagogy pushes students to see the consubstantial aspects of the rhetorical elements that epistemologically make up our assessment practices. It values *how* meaning is constructed, not just on *what* the various meanings may be. In composition pedagogy, we can see this shift from current-traditional approaches that taught the modes or a five-paragraph theme, to process and transactional approaches which offer writing instruction as generative spaces for understanding how meaning is made through texts. The difference between a critical sophistic pedagogy and process and transactional ones is the attention it gives to assessment as a part of the overdetermined, social

aspects of writing and knowledge construction. The classroom becomes a critical self-reflexive space where we can examine our ideas, logics, and rhetorics not as *our* ideas but as social ones, structural ones, ones that share in common sense of communities, the *habitus*, and are ministered and authenticated by various institutions.

If there's one thing that the sophists attempted to tell their contemporaries in Athens, it was that what we know is generated in some place (*nomos*), that it's constructed by society in a contextual manner (*kairos*). And we can now add, calling on the epistemology of racism, that our sensing and judging are consubstantial aspects of our society's regimes of truth, such racism, implicating everyone in SR and social inequality. *Habitus*, common sense, formal and informal institutions all play roles in forming our dispositions and thus our ways of valuing and measuring the world around us regardless of our personal intentions and motives. Writing classrooms must address assessing and the proclamation of knowledge (writing) as a means for the hegemonic reproduction of power

relationships.

Our *hexes* also play an important role in our discourses and



measuring activities. Additionally, as the competing perspectives in the Dilbert cartoon to the right illustrate, we confront competing *logoi* each day outside the class, logics and people that must be negotiated – and this affects our exchanges in the class, and must be addressed and incorporated into assessment and critical writing strategies. So we must live and make decisions understanding this paradox – but there is potential everywhere, as sophistic rhetoric teaches us.

This paradox is also one of the classroom and one the contemporary student should face in her education. She will face it in her world since many of our contemporary rhetorics (I'm thinking primarily of news media, political debates, and advertisement) tend to flatten out issues into artificial binaries, so that folks can either say yes or no in order to buy, vote, or believe. In this process, we often take things, say the scientific method or which cell phone to buy, as common sense, personal choice, or *physis* (in the sense that Plato would have promoted). Our messages are given to us through god-tricks. Without seeing individual decisions (as voters, citizens, and consumers) as structured choices, as *habitus* consubstantial with common sense and the societal institutions. This keeps us from critically examining assumptions, epistemologies, hegemony, and the ways in which we willingly consent to things that are often good, bad, and inconsequential for us. Education should offer what the sophists, and even Plato (to a limited degree), promoted: a way to critically examine our material conditions and make successful decisions about them that offer potential for a better world (the way things could or might be), but not from an outside position of assumed objectivity, but from a subjective position of measurement. This critical sophistic pedagogy blends the best elements of both sides to the ancient Greek debate over education: on one side, Plato's attention to dispositions within the soul, which we can recast, not as a telos or a set of abstract ideals, but in Bourdieu's terms (mainly *habitus* and institutional ministry), that allow us to see certain ideas and things in determined ways; and Plato's focus on dialectic as a heuristic of vying in community; and on the other side of the debate, the sophists' attention to measurements as socially sanctioned judgments (*nomos*), which in Vico's terms is *verum-factum* and *verum-certum* common sense; the sophistic notion of *kairos*, or the constructed mechanisms that allow us to sense and judge our experience in certain ways; and finally the sophists' overarching epistemological focus that allows us today

to identify social power relationships in language and socially sanctioned ideals and truths, for example the ideal citizen.

Finally, this pedagogy not only demonstrates how the sophists understood rhetoric's relative and constructive nature, and how rhetoric, then and now, helps us invent knowledge and meaning within contexts and communities, including how inventive practices can help us see powerful hegemonic structures influencing our decisions and views on things, but this sophistic pedagogy also pushes us to acknowledge and articulate more clearly a theory of assessment that better fits the kind of classroom I've described in this chapter. If there is one element to this new critical sophistic pedagogy that is most important, foundational, it is a set of community-based assessment practices – practices of sensing and judging that measure for real purposes and offers rich evaluation for student writing. Finally, critical sophistic pedagogy offers assessment that is self-conscious of the discursive and ideological structures we draw from in order to make judgments and assign value. In the next chapter, I'll discuss an initial way I've attempted to bring assessment more fully into the writing classroom, which I call a community-based assessment pedagogy.

Chapter 4: Community-Based Assessment

In order to consider a sophistic pedagogy, one that offers students a chance to practice antilogic, dialectic, and the “measuring” of ideas for critical purposes, the assessment of student writing must be an integral part of the activities students do. I’m not talking about rethinking “peer response,” although I believe that is a product of what I offer in this chapter. Instead I’m asking us to consider what it means to be a rhetor/writer/thinker/citizen in the truest sophistic fashion. How do we get students to be conscious of the *habitus* that structures their measuring of things? How do we get them to see their articulations in papers for classes as bundles of possible judgments, not certain “facts” or “logical conclusions” that are beyond skepticism or doubt? How do we get them to see regimes of truth and SR? How do we get antilogical heuristics to work in a classroom without these practices feeling like “exercises” and not real writing for real purposes and audiences? How might we structure assessment into the writing practices of our students? How, in the writing class, do we engage in a knowledge-seeking dialectic around student papers and ideas that honors all voices, yet acknowledges the differences in power, persuasiveness, and authority among the various bodies in the classroom? How can we structure a critical sophistic pedagogy into a course so that students are urged toward reading, writing, revising, and assessment practices that critique their own agency and hegemony (e.g. SR and whiteness)? I will address these questions in this chapter and suggest tangible ways we might begin to answer them.

This chapter reconsiders what we and our students actually do, or try to do, in our writing classes: that is, learn how to be “critical” as citizens and agents in a structured and overdetermined world of language and economies of power. Here I offer my first attempts at

making assessment practices central in the teaching of writing, structuring them into a writing course.¹⁰⁰

Like a sliver under the skin, my grading and assessment of student writing has always bothered me. Often I'd leave a student conference or the grading of a paper feeling unsatisfied with my strategies, knowing that the student will not hear the good in my comments, only see the disappointing grade. And that grade will determine not only how that student understands her writing in my class, but our relationship and her ability to grow as a writer. The pedagogical advice I got early on in grad school (i.e. to "just get them to write and write a lot") doesn't work in the ways I want my students to think and theorize today. It doesn't structure into their practices a critical stance. Part of the problem lies in the fact that my past students weren't a part of the assessment process at all. They didn't help create assessment rubrics, engage in assessment processes, nor help in figuring their grades. These were things I did because I apparently knew best. But there *was a time* when I didn't know best, yet I was allowed to do these things as a first-year graduate teaching assistant. In a few years, I began to learn what "good writing" could mean in various contexts, how to see this in writing, and talk about it to others. In short, I learned what good writing was by assessing writing myself and talking to others about it. In the most general terms, this is what community-based assessment is all about.

In a 2002 *College English* article, Brian Huot urges us to "create a new, shared discourse for understanding assessment as a positive force for the teaching of writing" (165). In the same year in *(Re)Articulating Writing Assessment for Teaching and Learning*, he says that not only do we need to "talk about assessment in new ways" and "recognize how ubiquitous it is within the process of reading and writing" (4) but that

We need to articulate a much more conscious, theoretical and practical link between the way we think about assessment and the way we think about teaching, research and theorizing of writing, recognizing that assessment is a vital component in the act of writing, in teaching writing, and in the ways we define our students, courses and programs. (11)

Effective writing pedagogy should seriously consider two important elements often unattended in composition pedagogy: (1) a more conscious theorizing of how student writing is assessed that affects directly classroom practice¹⁰¹; and (2) a consideration of how students should be involved in the assessment of their writing. In fact, Huot says that we must “teach students how to assess” themselves, otherwise “we fail to provide them with the authority inherent in assessment, continuing the disjuncture between the competing roles of student and writer” (“Toward a New Discourse”169). This chapter is an initial working out of Huot’s call by offering a set of classroom practices that I term community-based assessment practices, that integrates assessment with the teaching of writing so that students not only learn to assess themselves, taking active learning stances in the classroom, but they begin to articulate how assessment and writing work in their own practices – theorize – that is, they begin to be more self-conscious, reflective writers.

First, I discuss briefly how institutional pressure from grades and traditional teacher evaluations on student writing negatively affect classroom practices that I want to encourage. Second, I describe the three key components to my course: a class-constructed assessment rubric, the assessment practices that revolve around it, and frequent reflection activities that ask students to theorize explicitly about assessment and writing. This framework pushes students to see that learning to write well¹⁰² is often about *how* rhetorical effectiveness (often common sense

knowledge) is produced (and codified) within texts, how what we write can be judged in various ways; that our world is produced through complex systems of what *we* sense and make judgments on, and these things are always partially tacit and contested. Third, I argue that when students assess and reflect on rubrics and their assessment practices in public spaces, it helps them become more critical and self-conscious writers. In the Gramscian sense, this structure allows students to theorize existing practice in order to be more critical of their practices and possibly change them for the future – that is, form praxis.¹⁰³

Community-based assessment practices ask students to take control of all the writing and assessment practices of the class, including, as Ed White, Brian Huot, and others have already suggested, the creation of assessment criteria, rubrics, and writing assignments. Condon and Butler support this kind of pedagogy in their textbook, *Writing the Information Superhighway*. In the chapter on “Assessing Writing,” they state to their student readers: “If you leave this course dependent on the teacher to tell you what your writing needs, then this course has failed in its mission” (Condon and Butler 91). My mission is similar, but I add that in order to do this my students must leave my course with the beginnings of a theorizing of their own writing and assessment practices. They can’t learn how to figure out what their writing needs if I assess their writing for them. In fact, Ed White urges us to get students to develop criteria, share those criteria, and use those criteria to assess and evaluate their own practices (White 18-19). Brian Huot emphasizes that we shouldn’t divide “assessment and teaching into separate entities” (163) because it “misrepresents the process of writing,” excluding the “reflection and recursion” inherent in the process (168). Writing and assessment should be a part of the same process taught in classes. Both White and Huot rightly see student involvement and ownership of rubrics, assessment practices, and reflection on those practices as vital to student growth and sound

pedagogy. Huot, however, points out that the processes of assessment and evaluation can't be extricated from those of writing in general; they are a part of the entire process. Effective and productive assessment, like writing to communicate, is done in community by community members. Rubrics and their assessment practices should, therefore, be sites for reflection as well, so that the rubrics can spur richer ways to evolve as writer, assessors, and theorizers of language. As the term praxis illustrates, the practical is always linked to the theoretical, even if our practices are not usually explicitly theorized. And for the writing class, they should be.¹⁰⁴

Institutional Pressure for Grades

Traditional teacher-centered evaluation and assessment, even grading, play very little part in my classroom.¹⁰⁵ I do not assess, evaluate, or grade my students writing, yet they still receive course grades, as well as assessments on everything they write. It's not a contract system, nor a default grade system; however, I have experimented with contracts (and find them compatible with community-based assessment practices). At the end of the semester, each student and I discuss and come to some agreements about her portfolio grade in private conferences that she manages. The figure in Appendix A, adapted from Stephen Tchudi's (Tchudi xiii), illustrates a point that many have made already: Institutional pressures lead us to evaluate and grade student writing, in our comments, and in our relationships with our students. It is "our job" to do these things. Chairs, deans, students, tax payers, and colleagues expect us to grade. This is how students learn how to write and know when they are wrong, goes the logic. It's the way we've always done writing, the way the institution can monitor how well we're teaching, or how tough our "standards" are, they say. And it's the way other instructors (past, present, and future) will continue to teach writing to students in other classes. So why does my pedagogy not allow me to assess, evaluate, or grade my students' writing? Because it's inconsistent with what I'm asking

them to do. They assess each other and revise based on those assessments. And so if they are expected to help build assessment rubrics, respond to each others' work, revise that work, which ultimately must be evaluated in some way, then their own assessment practices must be central in their writing processes.

At another level, for me to evaluate or grade my students' writing would reduce their writing and assessment practices to mere busywork, meaningless activities with little educative value and no real communicative function. Their own rubrics and assessments – what they come to understand about writing and then apply to others' work – would mean even less in this kind of environment. More importantly, they wouldn't be empowered to critique through self-reflection, those very rubrics and values as structured structures, classroom common sense. The weight of the teacher's feedback always trumps a student's, even an entire class of students. Our class would fall into a familiar paradigm: teacher assigns writing, students write, teacher evaluates writing. The teacher still ranks everyone, still gives the grades.¹⁰⁶ Sarah, a recent student of mine (and quite typical), reflects on the communicative function of her writing in our class, saying that because her ideas for our rubric and about her peers's writing count in our class, she can “write to get [her] message out [to the class] . . . where as in other English classes, [she] would be entirely trying to please the teacher.” While pleasing the teacher may very well lead to insights the student may not have come to otherwise, say to see our discourses as sharing in SR, I question whether these kinds of insights are educative for the student, or whether the student has actually developed any critical practice from the parroting of them? Regurgitating ideas for grades given by another with more institutional power hardly seems like an education, which explains the confusion many students have between “what the teacher wants” and what the subject of inquiry in the class demands of them. Ultimately, allowing students assess places

each in the role of teacher, which forces students to have to think through the demands of their writing as socially determined, structured ways, encapsulated in our rubrics.

Robert E. Probst's early discussion captures what others like Ed White, Brian Huot, and William Condon have said in other places since, but focuses our attention on the student-teacher relationship and its power dynamics:

Ultimately, students must become their own evaluators. In essence, we are asking teachers to help wean students from a simple view of the world. We want students to see teachers not as right authority figures to be deferred to, nor as wrong authority figures to be rejected, but as individuals, representing a culture and a discipline, with whom to talk. (Anson 77)

In practice, Probst's notion of dialoguing with students about their own writing and assessments of their writing is what I've strived for in community-based assessment, but there is a danger in a paradigm like Probst's, and both are connected to the epistemology of racism's implications to writing pedagogy. The first danger concerns what our classrooms give our students in evaluations. What alternatives to "a simple view of the world" are we offering them? Are we offering simply another neoplatonic worldview that replaces an old paradigm with a new but equally uncritical one? Do we offer our students ways to address the structured power dynamics in our discourse and terms that critique the regimes of truth many live by (like the epistemology of whiteness)? Shouldn't these more complex worldviews provide students an articulation of hegemony that helps form praxis for them? The second danger I see here concerns individuality. Our classroom discourses and assessment practices need to be addressed issues of individuality. Just like my students, I am not simply "an individual . . . with whom to talk." My *habitus*, around which I form hermeneutical practices, is consubstantial to many parts of the discourse

communities I engage with, thus my hermeneutical practices may be more determined by social forces than formed by me. This means that it's very difficult to separate out "individuals" from communities. Without a clear articulation of this consubstantiality, one I've already discussed as the shared nature of *habitus* and common sense, students may get confused about how to understand what others say about their writing and what they themselves think. Additionally, *habitus* and common sense in the classroom affect how my relationships are transacted. On the one hand, the epistemology of racism asks us in assessment to see ourselves as "representative," as Probst says. On the other hand, being able to see personhood in structured and determined ways also provides for the possibility of more agency (in the critical sense), thus the ability to see deception and the ways in which power is used over people.

In the end, should I assess and give grades, students will figure out what's really going on: They're writing and I'm evaluating. It's the same old thing. The bottom line is: they have little need to form active learning stances and few opportunities to develop into self-conscious, reflective writers. And more importantly, they haven't been pushed to become agents in their own education: how will my writing course help them in their future writing? Have they addressed how their self-assessments might diverge from their teacher's or their peers'? Have they explored how they might find reliability in a network of varying and vying voices making evaluative claims about their texts? Have they found strategies for critical personhood and assessment? In short, have they struggled with an understanding of assessment as a structured, epistemological practice? These are the core questions my pedagogy attempts to urge students to explore through a framework of repeated assignments, and class-constructed rubrics.

The Course's Basic Framework

All three iterations of my community-based assessment practices (over three semesters) have been for a course called Writing and Rhetorical Conventions (a 300-level English course) at Washington State University. Most of my students have been in their early 20s, non-English majors, and in their third year. Women typically make up about 40-45% of each class. Because of the institution's general ethnographic makeup, I've only had five African American students (two men, three women), five Asian American Pacific Islander students (four women, one man), one Native American male student, and one international Asian student (a man).

To understand the rubric and assessment practices, it's important to see their context – that is, my course framework of reoccurring assignments. During a 15-week semester, each student will write and post on our Internet discussion board (e.g. WebBoard or WebCT¹⁰⁷) two paragraphs (150 words each), two position papers (1-2 pages each or about 350-400 words), and two essays (6-8 pages each or about 2,100 words) (see Appendix B). Each piece is assessed, then revised, and saved for possible inclusion in the course portfolio. Each also may be used to begin the next piece, so position paper one might help develop essay one (the next paper due). To give us time to look at everyone's position paper in class, students sign up for specific due dates to post their work. Before each designated class session, everyone prints, reads, and writes assessments for the two or three position papers due that day. Appendix B shows this cycle of activities, which we go through twice in a semester, and it leaves us about one week in the middle and two weeks at the end for conferences and finishing up. On our second time through the cycle, however, we skip the paragraph activities and need considerably less time revising the rubric for the new position paper. Most of our time is spent on the position papers and their assessments.

At the end of each week's activities, over the weekend, I assign a reflection prompt (posted on our Internet discussion board) that typically asks students to reflect on their activities that week. I read them (without commenting or "replying" on the board), and bring a few to class for the writers to read, and the class to discuss or simply appreciate. This is the primary place I attempt to get them thinking about assessment, their writing, the rubric, and its process of creation. It's also a place where they can voice resistance, ask questions, or suggest things to the class.

Before we can write the position papers, however, we spend about a week and half discussing at length what we want out of them, what we each want to write about, and what we expect to read and assess. We also create their first assessment rubric. It has to be something that everyone can buy into, use as writers and assessors, then easily revise as we move from position paper to essay, to new position paper. I set up each paper assignment as something that is constantly revisable by them. Anyone can initiate a revision or question about our assignment or the rubric at any time. To test and revise the rubric, we write two separate paragraphs, each receiving three peer-assessments that use our in-process rubric. The paragraphs are written quickly, both finished over a two week period. Everyone's paragraphs, because they are short and relatively easy to produce, are due on the same day. We talk very little about them in class as writing, but they are assessed formally, just as the position papers will be in the near future. We then use what we've learned from the paragraph assessments to revise our rubric. This rubric then becomes the starting point for our first position paper's rubric, which can be ready for use in one or two class sessions.

The cornerstone assignment in this repeated sequence is the position paper since the paragraphs just get us warmed up and used to the process and sequence of tasks. Over about a

month's time, each student will write a position paper, receive responses and assessments from the entire class (both on paper and through class discussions), post a revision of the position paper based on those discussions and input, get a more formal peer-assessment of the revision by a few colleagues, write an essay (often based on the position paper), and finally receive a formal peer-evaluation of the essay. Once we've done the essay evaluation, we start over again with position paper two. This repeated framework (done twice in a semester) allows the student to continually revisit, resee, and revise her writing practices – not just drafts – in four ways: (1) as a co-developer of the standards by which all writing will be judged (i.e. our rubrics), (2) as a writer who interrogates and makes decisions based on a wide variety of assessments of her writing, (3) as an assessor of her colleagues' writing, and (4) as a colleague who compares her assessment and writing efforts to others' in regular public reflections. So the recursive part is in the various angles students must approach writing and assessing over time. This framework requires that students not only created and revise our class rubrics and their own assessment practices, but continually reflect on what makes good writing and how they know it.

The biggest criticism I have with this course framework is that it ignores too much the epistemology of racism's and critical sophistic pedagogy's biggest lessons for students, namely an attention to how personhood is structured in all discourse and how our hermeneutical acts (our acts of "measuring" and judging) are equally structured. I could have offered readings that forced students to engage with SR, identity, or relationships and economies of power, all of which effect the ways in which we communicate to each other. I could have mandated writing assignments that prompted students to look carefully at how cultural texts use whiteness and other epistemologies and regimes of truth to appeal to audiences, and construct identity, citizenship, and notions of what is "good," "right," "bad," or preferable. We could have talked about cultural

texts, like movies, as sites that culturally (re)produce power relationships, and as consubstantial with shared aspects of our “American” *habitus*.

In my attempts to give students more power in the classroom, through assignment and prompt generation, I realize I may have hindered their ability to engage critically with the potential ideas in their writing by not providing enough guidance, not calling enough attention to the structuring structures in their discourses, assessments, and rubrics. Had I set a few more guidelines for their rubrics, and offered more of my own assessments of their writing, I could have pushed discussions on the epistemology of racism and how it highlights personhood through rhetoric. From a critical sophistic vantage point, I could have been a bigger part of the dialectic and antilogical discussions around their texts. While I would have surely been a more “authoritative” voice exchanges, power differentials can never be escaped, no matter how one structures a course. My voice would not have to discount their colleagues’ assessments (the one thing I was afraid of), if my voice was one that identified how they are doing what they do when they assess – that is, provide an articulation for the structures in their assessments and discourse. Finally, guiding more of their rubric generation (as a commonsensical list of rhetorical values) so that they understand it not as “the best writing criteria” the class can agree upon but as a set of values that are derived from determined discursive structures, would reinforce a *kairotic* and *nomos*-centered classroom that a critical sophistic pedagogy encourages. Despite its shortcomings, community-based assessment practices offer many benefits to students.

The Rubric and Its Process

During the second week, we create our first paragraph assessment rubric (it takes the entire week). To get us started, I typically ask each student to find a “paragraph of good writing” that best fits the kind of writing she understands our paragraph assignment is asking for, and one

she'd want to read if written by her colleagues. From this paragraph, each student prepares some observations she'll use in class discussions with her peers. I ask them to think about how the paragraphs they've chosen support their claims, what kind of evidence each uses, how the writer provides insight or analyzes details, and what elements make each paragraph meaningful.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, I ask them to consider and identify the discipline and intended audiences for the paragraphs they choose. How do those discourse communities' assumptions match up with our purposes in the class? Since my class is geared around argumentation, rhetoric, and writing conventions, these questions, I know, we will continually explore, so I want them to consider them in this first rubric.

During this week, we create usually two to three rubric iterations, each one getting closer to a class agreement. By this I do not mean "consensus" in a traditional sense. The class is never in complete and full agreement. The agreements we make about our rubrics are *hard agreements*, and contain some elements of dissensus and conflict (I'll discuss this more fully in chapter 5). This is important because often I urge students to question their rubric criteria, which usually spurs lots of discussion and competing claims about writing, and highlights problems with any proposed "universal" criterion for writing. Some find this chaotic and unproductive, but the point is to have the discussion and begin to cultivate a culture of dialectical vying that examines the consubstantial parts of what makes commonsensical writing (our rubrics) and what dispositions shape our hermeneutical acts (our assessments and "biases"). How do we measure something as "good writing" and how has that measuring been structured by cultural ideas and discursive conventions? What might this tell us about discourse and knowledge?

Additionally, I want our rubric process to open a space for deconstructing students' rhetorical practices and conventions. I also want it to problematize their notions of some static,

essential, “correct” assessment or grade that goes with each piece of writing. Is it really possible to have a universal standard for good writing? What can we assume about the value of any given text across contexts? I don’t want us to blindly reproduce rhetorical conventions without interrogating why they are used, by whom, and how effectiveness and value are constructed within networks of meaning and agency. The practical side to this is that we can then make better decisions about *why* each element of the rubric should be there for our purposes. For instance, how does “offering support” (as a rubric criterion) serve our purposes for the assignment we’ve given ourselves, for learning in our class, for informing, exploring, or persuading (or whatever we set our mutual purpose to be)? What kind of support are we actually talking about and why that kind? We don’t have to come to a consensus; instead I suggest that we raise important questions, discuss them, make some tentative decisions, then log the questions and come back to them continually during the semester. The important thing is that the students do the constructing and revising, so that they have ownership of the language and contents of whatever rubric we end up with.

In a recent course we began the rubric creation process in our second week of class. My students got into groups, shared their notes and paragraphs, discussed, and produced rubrics to offer the class for discussion. I gave them a simple structure to use when writing these rubrics, a statement followed by a list of verb phrases. I reiterated to them that we are not interested in a rubric that will identify an “A” paragraph or an “exemplary,” or “outstanding” one – this isn’t a set of grading criteria – instead our rubrics should help us to identify proficient paragraphs, ones that do the job we ask of each other in the assignment handout. It’s a list of proficiency markers only. If a paragraph does what these verb phrases identify, then the paragraph has done its job adequately.¹⁰⁹ While we would continually talk about making things work better in papers (i.e.

exceeding class expectations of the rubric), all we cared about at this point was the sweet-spot of “proficiency.” After about 20 minutes, we talked as a class about each rubric, pointed out features, then reconvened in groups, and revised our rubrics quickly. I collected them and posted on our Web site a class version based on what seemed to be an agreement among the groups’ rubrics I collected. I tried hard to use the language produced from the class. Here’s what they came up:

A proficient and adequate paragraph will . . .

- Contain a consistent claim
- Support claims with appropriate evidence (when needed)
- Elicit thought on the part of the audience
- Adapt to or consider its audience
- Use clear and concise language
- Use appropriate language and grammar
- Contain three or more sentences

Since none of the groups’ renditions paid much attention to an order of importance, I ordered this list in bullet fashion and put the most repeated criteria at the top of the list. At this stage, what was most important for me was to establish students’ voices as primary, assure them that they were in control of the rubric creation process.

For the following class session, I asked everyone to bring this first official version with revisions and suggestions marked on their copies, correcting me where I made a mistake or misinterpreted our discussion. And again, I structured their rethinking, pointing them toward specific features of the rubric to reconsider, things we didn’t get a chance to talk about: specific language choices, hierarchy of elements, elements that said the same thing or that can be combined easily, and conceptual groupings of the elements present (headings), etc. In our following class discussion, I tried not to make evaluative statements about their rubric, but instead asked them to explain and explore what each criterion means: why it was needed, what

does it look like in a paragraph, and how would one locate it when reading paragraphs? I let them answer without much commentary on my part beyond occasionally summarizing points, or asking clarifying questions. I let them talk it out, and asked a student to “take notes” for us, which I used to revise their rubric after class.¹¹⁰ I had to accept whatever they came up with, and I told them this. In dialectical vying fashion, I told them it was their job to provide adequate justification for criteria and be able to agree as a class on the rubric eventually, so disagree when needed but keep in mind that we’re all after the same thing, even if parts of that thing will not be completely agreeable to everyone. From this more detailed and nuanced class discussion, we formed a more finalized rubric, which I posted:

A proficient and adequate paragraph will . . .

I. Clarity of Thought

- Contain a consistent claim
- Support claim with appropriate evidence (when needed)

II. Proper etiquette

- Contain three or more sentences
- Use appropriate language and grammar
- Use clear and concise language

III. Writing to the Reader

- Be complex enough to elicit thinking beyond basic observations
- Challenge and/or engage its audience
- Adapt to and consider its audience

Here, most in the class liked the idea of grouping the criteria under headings, so as to have a better understanding of what they were asking of themselves and what they were going to look for when assessing. They also altered some language and added one element in the “Writing to the Reader” section. Most felt that “complexity” was a good component to focus on when thinking about what would “elicit thinking beyond basic observations.” And this seemed to match well with the new criterion to “challenge and/or engage” the audience, and the final one in that section. The class felt the first two were talking mainly about content, whereas the third

element in that section was dealing with style and rhetorical approach. Everyone, however, still unanimously thought that placing the rubric in hierarchical fashion was not a good idea. All elements were in effect of equal weight. Their thinking was quite logical. These elements simply need to be there. If they are all there, the paragraph is complete and proficient. Order of importance, or weight of any individual criterion, has no bearing on this kind of judgment.

While this rubric is somewhat simple, it's important to realize that we generated it through a week or so of discussions, reflections, and group and individual activities. There was lots of give and take. Each element had been discussed, thought about, and revisited several times, so a criterion like "support claim with appropriate evidence (when needed)" meant very specific things to our class, things we'd change in a few weeks. This is also a perfect opportunity to discuss how rhetoric, represented in a class-created rubric, structures what we *can say* to each other, not just how we say it, and in this way, it structures the knowledge permissible in the course. This kind of discussion can acknowledge how we are complicit in hegemonic structures, like the epistemology of racism. Overall, I wanted this process to be recursive, critical, self-conscious, and reflective – things that are a big part of our assessment practices and the structure of the course.

Once we had a rubric, students used it to write and post a paragraph (over the weekend). At the following class session, we talked about how to use the rubric for assessing, what assessing meant in our class (I discuss this below), and some ways we might use our rubric to judge paragraphs. By the end of the week, students had posted their assessments to their colleagues' paragraphs (three paragraphs I randomly assigned to each student), and we looked at a few in class. Mainly, we were interesting in testing the effectiveness of the rubric. From these

discussions, we again revised our rubric in preparation for the second paragraph (done by the following week). After this discussion, their paragraph two rubric looked like this:

A proficient and adequate paragraph will . . .

I. Clarity of Thought

- Contain a consistent thoughtful claim (e.g. one that is insightful)
- Support claim with appropriate and sufficient evidence
- Weigh in on the issue at hand (i.e. take a position within the debate)

II. Writing to the Reader

- Be complex enough to elicit thinking beyond basic observations
- Challenge and/or engage its audience
- Adapt to and consider its audience

III. Proper Etiquette

- Contain three or more sentences
- Use appropriate language and grammar
- Use clear and concise language

At this crucial stage, the rubric became more complex and explicit. After seeing and assessing three paragraphs and looking at some in class, they saw a need for the paragraphs to focus on a “thoughtful” or “insightful” claim, not just a claim that offered simple factual information or a summary of an article or essay (the writer should “weigh in on the issue at hand”). They also found a need to dramatically revise their ideas about support. It was now *necessary* for a proficient paragraph that attempted a “thoughtful” claim, to contain “appropriate and sufficient evidence.” Of particular note in this final version was hierarchy. One male student explained convincingly to the class that the criterion of three sentences isn’t as important as something like adequate support or a focused and thoughtful claim. While most still wanted paragraphs with at least three sentences, they did agree that some rubric elements were more important than others when considering a writer’s purpose and a readers’ perception of meaning in a paragraph (what is she communicating to me?). And the rubric should reflect the class’s priorities accurately. Interestingly, it was the continued discussion of headings and groupings that allowed the student

to argued his point. In effect, he said that “writing to the reader” was more important than “proper etiquette” in writing. Most of the class, through one round of assessments, began to see the difference between writing from a checklist of items to include in one’s assignment, to a more nuanced understanding of the relationships among writing priorities and the difficult judging that must be conceptualized when assessing to help writers write better. While this rubric was just a start and there was lots of disagreement, I took the changes and issues raised around the rubric to be positive signs that our class was beginning to form active learning stances in which they were learning through assessment, understanding how rhetorical conventions work, are used, and are contested in texts. And with a little prompting, a class that’s had these kinds of discussions is more prepared to begin to see writing as an enactment of personhood that is consubstantial with the structural elements in culture, discourse, and social institutions.

After almost a month of more discussion and revision, our position paper one rubric ended up this way:

A proficient and adequate position paper will . . .

I. Clarity of Thought, Support, and Details

- Focus on a single claim that is arguable, consistent, thoughtful, and takes an unique position on the issue (i.e. different from others’ stances, positions, and/or analyses)
- Sufficiently support claims with strong, specific, verifiable, and appropriate evidence
- Provide only details that are necessary, relevant, and appropriate

II. Invoking Audience, Intellectual Engagement, and Significance

- Offer significance of the writer’s position to the audience (should answer: “so what?”)
- Be complex enough to elicit thinking beyond basic observations
- Challenge inquisitively and engage intellectually its audience

III. Organization, Transitions, and Style

- Employ a logical structure logical structure logical structure logical structure or order that is appropriate for the discussion at hand
- Provide (when needed) transitions between ideas and paragraphs
- Have a strong control over appropriate language, punctuation, and grammar decisions

- Use proper MLA formatting conventions, particularly with quotations and other outside information used

This rubric was produced from one full week of assessing and discussing the first eight position papers. While some elements were added, some of the language became more specific and reflected our class discussions. Maybe the most striking feature is the change in headings, or rather the class's developing sense of the three main conceptual areas they thought were most important in a position paper written to the class. While initially most disliked the idea of long, verbose rubrics that seemed hard to use, most now found it important to be as explicit and careful in wording as possible, which often meant a rubric that was meatier. Because the class was deeply engaged in the rubric at all levels, reflecting on it, dialoguing about it, they knew it well, had nuanced notions of what each criterion meant (and didn't mean), and so did not see this more complicated and longer rubric as verbose or hard to use (as I know my own rubrics had seemed to my past students).

Finally, several students in class during these first few position papers felt the "so what" factor was crucial to good papers. The titles of some of the position papers that week illustrate why this became an issue: "Modern Justice," "Foundations of Citizenship," "Women in Afghanistan," and "Children of the State." Initially, these papers only identified or narrated events and political goings-on in the world. Students simply had a tough time seeing significance – caring – in these positions posed to the class for discussion. While most were considered to have revolved around "thoughtful" and "arguable" claims, these positions still seemed distant to most in the class. This sentiment quickly became the most important rubric element in the "Invoking Audience, Intellectual Engagement, and Significance" section, and in fact, pushed us to change some of our assignment instructions in the second position paper in order for writers to

attempt more critical positions, ones that located structures of influence and how knowledge and facts are constructed. These changes were not so that students didn't write on these worthy topics, but so that when they did they might have clear ways of thinking about why they are writing about them to the class. We began to ask each other about significance and purpose more tangibly, for instance, why is it important to discuss women's status in Afghanistan today? Why should we reconsider the notion of "justice" in the context of our contemporary "war on terrorism"? These questions of purpose and significance can lead to critical engagement if set up as opportunities to do so in class. This critical engagement takes special care and finessing.

This is the rubric and its basic process of creation and revision, which is structured into the writing and assessment practices of the course, and added to these activities are our weekly reflections, which offer us ways to think about what we are doing. The rubric is central because it forms our discussions of writing as a set of conventions, is used to assess the writing of the class, and is a touchstone for many reflections. It also provides an opportunity to see how writing conventions are constructed, and may change as our class's purposes, understanding, and rhetorical needs change. We can talk in concrete ways, not in fuzzy ways, and ways that are connected to commonly known examples produced by the students themselves. So they aren't just "responding" to their colleagues, but developing assessment criteria and formulating an understanding of what writing means in the abstract, while also evolving practical assessment criteria. And as is probably clear already, the rubric means little, and cannot do all these things, unless *they* use it to assess.

To encourage their engagement in assessment, I try to provide the structures for my students to create a rubric, rethink it, write from it, use it to assess each other, and, of course, reflect continually upon all these practices. I distribute guidelines, provide due dates, post weekly

reflection prompts, and pose additional questions in class that facilitate assessment discussions on student writing. In short, I try to coach them toward sound assessment practices and active learning stances by making them do the hard work of assessment. I encourage them to voice disagreements, show agreement, and elaborate and qualify ideas. I act as a facilitator, questioner, and listener when we talk about each other's writing. I try to keep us focused on our rubric in our assessment discussions, yet not be a guard to ivory towers. When asked about what "I think" of a piece of writing or about our rubric, I try to redirect the question to the class in an honest way, sometimes rephrasing it, explaining that I can't answer that question for them. Our class writing isn't about me telling them how to judge things, but about them using structures self-consciously to judge on their own, to think about the connections between discourse and culture, and how common sense and *habitus* are consubstantial and construct personhood.

The course is also about what the students can agree *they* want and can justify in some way so that agreements can be made. In this sense, our rubric is a formal set of *hard agreements* that we must make in a variety of ways, and our assessment practices are our attempts to judge one another's writing from these hard agreements, learning along the way (as all teachers/assessors do), even if individually we disagree with a point here or there. In this atmosphere, their writing isn't about my measurements of things, it's about *theirs* – something many aren't used to. They can't be passive, can't simply accept criteria or assignments, nor can they write the way they've usually written in the past. My students must debate and decide on all the important decisions regarding their writing in the course from start to finish. The class is about *them learning* not me teaching. My role as "teacher" changes because their roles as learners become more central in the course.

Feminist pedagogy agrees with this kind of classroom, in which difference and the centrality of the male professorial voice is reframed. Carolyn G. Heilbrun, in “The Politics of the Mind: Women, Tradition, and the University,” asks if we can “conceive [of] difference without opposition” and thus “challenge the ancient male-female binarism as an intellectual imperative” within the academy (Gabriel and Smithson 31). Essentially, Heilbrun attempts to show how Trilling’s famous notion of the “life of the mind” has come to characterize academic endeavors in general. It’s a kind of god-trick, to invoke Haraway. And I include the classroom in these endeavors. This god-trick of a “wholly male-centered culture and university,” of binarism (Gabriel and Smithson 28), of a professorial primacy and locus of assessment in the classroom is, in effect, false and does not offer very rich or fertile ground for students to learn how to write and assess critically. Furthermore, Heilbrun asks: “what is lost to this “life of the mind” – to mind itself, to colleges and universities, to that proud contemplation of texts and culture to which Lionel Trilling devoted his life – when women are excluded from taking their full part?” (29). If we rephrased Heilbrun’s question to fit the writing classroom, the answer, to me, seems obvious. What is lost when we exclude most of the stakeholders in the classroom from fully participating in their own assessment and the grading processes – in their own praxis? Can a full, rich democratic community of fellow-writers, fully engaged in all aspects of their writing as active learners, critically reflective, bound together in mutual endeavors, be fostered without their own participation in the assessment and grading of their writing?

Community-Based Assessment Practices

Community-based assessment practices resist in theory and denies in practice the traditional way evaluation, assessment, and grading happen in the classroom. In the conventional paradigm, the teacher is *the* evaluator or assessor in the classroom who comes down from the

mountain to bless the unclean ones, the students who are incapable of assessing themselves, or at least when it really counts. If assessment is a part of writing processes, and if we want our students to be able to assess their performances adequately, then it seems we typically give them little opportunity to practice, and thus constrain their ability to learn to write better. Fourth generation evaluation theory offers a way out of this harmful paradigm. According to Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln, fourth generation evaluation is based on a “hermeneutic dialectic,” which accounts for more (if not all) of the stakeholders involved or affected by the evaluation process (40-1). This hermeneutic dialectic circle allows each stakeholder to offer input into an evaluation, in a kind of round-robin style, thus creating a circular process of recursive negotiation and consensus making (Guba and Lincoln 151-52). Informing heavily this dialectical process is a constructivist methodology (as opposed to a “scientific model” or positivist model) (Guba and Lincoln 44-5). So stakeholders always have a say in effective and productive evaluation criteria, what those criteria mean, and their associated processes of evaluation. This agrees with how rhetorical conventions exist and function in real life. Good writing isn’t static or apart from contexts, purposes, audiences, assessments, and writing practices, as well as their modes of production and distribution. If “facts” require a “value framework” in order for them to be valid or understood, as Guba and Lincoln state (44), then why not offer a classroom context that explicitly acknowledges this, addresses it, and constructs stake in assessment as well as writing? Having stake in these processes means students can critically engage their writing as meaningful practices situated within community for particular purposes. Most importantly, what fourth generation evaluation theory demonstrates to us is that to have effective and productive assessment, assessment that teaches, all stakeholders involved in assessments must be a part of the entire process in a kind of critical sophistic dialectic in which the end is not “truth” but

agreement constructed by the measurements of a classroom of measurers. Students can't simply be recipients of assessments. According to fourth generation evaluation theory, they must be central to these practices in the classroom.

Students must assess each other – this is fundamental to my pedagogy. But “assessing” isn't simply “responding” to writing. These activities are different, as Tchudi's diagram shows (see Appendix A). The assessment practices in my course do not work as well when students are allowed to “respond” to writing in unstructured ways. While open-ended responses may encourage revision, ask explorative questions about a text, and assume writing is a process of learning and meaning making, as Tchudi explains (xiv), its purposes are less explicit and can be too random and generative to help writers focus on revision and adequately formulate practices that will help them in future writing endeavors. Response also doesn't allow us to reflect well on our rubric since it doesn't assume it as a set of priorities from which to make judgments. “Assessment,” on the other hand, says Tchudi, is a process in which the reader/writer primarily reads and revises for ideas and refinement that is guided by criteria or values (often explicit). It's a process that looks to discover how the writing can be the fullest, which areas need growth, and which trimming – what's good in the writing and what's not. It addresses context and evolving criteria, makes judgments about what's on the page, stops exploring every avenue of interest, and pursues only those that make sense, seem most profitable and appropriate (Tchudi xiv). This is what I want my students to do. Their assessments use our rubric as a reading grid, pointing to potential and revision along its dimensions. We try to put on our rubric as a pair of glasses, sort of speak, when reading to assess. Assessing, then, is a self-conscious, structured way of reading and responding that's filtered to catch only our class's expressed priorities.

For my students, responding tends to be easiest since it doesn't assume a rubric, and most have done it more than anything else when "critiquing" writing in school, so I push most for assessing, knowing that they may slide into responding (i.e. move away from our rubric, or not link comments to it, when discussing a colleague's work). In all their assessments, I ask them to ignore "errors," and certainly not mark them or call attention to them. We assume they'll be revised out later on since assessment happens in the middle stages (or even the front end) of their drafts' evolutions. Instead, I ask them to focus on *potential* in the writing in the areas our rubric identifies. The student judges the paper according to the rubric, makes a brief, specific comment for each criterion (a sentence or two) that shows the writer where the potential seems to be, and includes a short general assessment of the paper that points to the place the writer should revise first, or some overarching questions from which the writer might begin. It's about a page long. That's an assessment, and it's, in effect, what they'll do for each major writing assignment in the class.

Ryan's first formal assessment of Brad's paragraph two (see Appendix E) is fairly typical in length and approach (see Appendix C). Like about half of the class, Ryan uses the larger conceptual headings of the rubric to organize his assessment by paragraphs (i.e. "clarity of thought," "writing to the reader," and "proper etiquette"). While he talks explicitly about three of the rubric criteria, he could be more explicit about some of the criteria the class felt were particularly important, like "be complex enough to elicit thinking beyond basic observations" and "weigh in on the issue at hand." But his assessment is doing a few things right. It supports its claims about the text's main claim and pushes Brad to see potential in engaging the audience. While it could still be more specific, discuss all of the rubric criteria, and offer a general overall assessment of the paragraph, Ryan does center his assessment on the rubric's priorities. Brad has

a place to begin revising in order to meet our rubric's demands and can now compare Ryan's suggestions to his other peers' assessments, which should discuss the same rubric dimensions. In fact, Brad's other two assessments focus most of their attention on the same area of the rubric that Ryan did. Ian, who commented on each rubric element, offers this assessment for the second element in the "Writing the Reader" section: "I feel your paragraph was some what engaging but I feel you didn't really challenge the reader. You might want to try to incorporate the reader into your writing. You may do this by asking the reader a question or telling the reader something to engage him in your writing." Again the language is suggestive and formative, not summative (the full text of Ian's assessment is in Appendix F). Ian essentially agrees with Ryan, focusing on audience engagement. While Ryan suggests engaging the class with content (i.e. "the importance of Aristotle's definition and its importance for our society"), Ian offers a strategy of questioning that pulls readers in. Each says something different, but can easily be synthesized. Tyler, the third assessor for Brad's paragraph, also saw this same area as the key place of potential. His assessment combines Ryan's and Ian's (Tyler's assessment is in Appendix G). He says, "I felt that you were able to engage the audience but didn't really challenge [us]. If you decide to write more on this paragraph you could try further explaining the last part about the double standard. What can we do about this double standard? That would be a good way to challenge the reader . . ." All saw the same rubric element, under the heading of "writing to the reader," as the issue for Brad's revision, Ryan and Ian assessed in terms of "engagement," while Tyler assessed it in terms of "challenging" the audience. All three assessments offer convenient ways to synthesize varying voices on the text, but the presence of three provide Brad with the opportunity to make some critical decisions as a writer, not blindly taking one assessment as the truth, or reject one because the assessor "didn't like his topic."

Writers must become more responsible for their revisions in this scenario. They are pushed to read critically for patterns across assessments, indicators of their colleagues' *habiti* that are consubstantial and conflicting with the rubric. More of the rubric tends to be assessed, but more importantly, if the writer is reading her assessments carefully, revisions suggest themselves, decisions about revision begin to be more concrete. So while each assessment by itself might be considered somewhat inadequate, the three together offer a fuller and richer assessment for Brad to consider. Of course, this is only the second opportunity to assess. So when we discuss assessments like these three as a class – which we do – we do so in order to find new strategies for articulating assessments and ways writers can read their often contradictory assessments in profitable ways. We also discuss the missing rubric dimensions not discussed.

This means that in all class discussions concerning our rubrics and assessments, I push for students to grow as assessors. We look for assessments that help writers do the job we've given them, and then try to explain why they work well. In this way, their assessments and our discussions about them are primarily formative. I ask my students to explain to each other what seems most helpful, and why. How were the assessments constructed? They summarize, elaborate, and revise practice in the classroom with their peers – that is, theorize. I want them thinking of assessment in specific ways, not in the ways they may be used to when “critiquing” colleagues' writing – but I do not tell them how to do things “right,” instead we derive this from what's posted. But assessments do have purposes and they affect the assessments themselves. Thus we reflect on what assessment and revision are, what they mean for us in this class, what the purposes are for these activities, and most importantly, how to frame judgments for their colleagues in profitable ways.

And assessments always generally improve. Again, Ryan's improvement is typical. In his formal assessment for Brett's position paper one (about one month later), Ryan assesses along more of our rubric's dimensions, and is more detailed (see Appendix D). Partly this is due to assessing a slightly longer piece, but much of it is due to the activities that surround assessment and more practice. Ryan's assessments are more specific and suggest more for Brett. He engages in a dialogue with Brett as a fellow writer in the class. He offers friendly suggestions, states his ideas and reactions, remains fairly detailed, and keeps most of these comments pointed at Brett's text. His final overall assessment, which he didn't have in his earlier assessment, reinforces the primary concern he has already identified in the first area of the rubric (i.e. "connect your points about Bush and Pericles use of patriotism as being deceptive"), which is where Brett should begin revision. This closer attention to our rubric dimensions, discussion-based assessment strategy, and inclusion of an overall assessment are all areas Ryan's first assessments could improve on – and he did. Ryan and I had no conferences, nor did I speak to him specifically about his assessments. He was able to do this, like most other students, all by himself. This probably couldn't have happened so easily if we weren't continually discussing and reflecting on assessment as a class, looking at weekly reflections together, talking about individual assessments, and writing daily informal assessments to first drafts of every position paper. The repeated structure provides for this kind of development.

The next step, as I see it, in Ryan's development could be to think about how his own measuring of Brett's writing has been structured for him. This could lead to discussions about the epistemology of racism, about the regimes of truth, like the epistemology of whiteness, that pervades the class and our rubric. Getting Ryan to find the dispositions that allow him to measure in certain ways Brett's text would allow Ryan begin to see critically his own writing and

assessing practices. The epistemology of racism would show itself as a key dynamic of assessment.

But as I've just suggested, development doesn't happen by just practicing assessment. The key to making assessment work pedagogically is periodic reflection on the assessment activities, asking students to think about their practices structurally, or at least pragmatically (as what's "best practice"). We reflect once a week, done over each weekend. I give them general, open-ended prompts to point them in the areas I want them to reflect on. For a prompt during week eleven that asked the class to consider how their assessment practices had gone so far (I asked them to compare an early reflection on what "assessing" meant and their own assessments of the first position paper), Brad says,¹¹¹

I think that I [am] actually looking deeper into the papers of my classmates.

Before I would just look at a paper and say "wow, this is really good" and leave it at that. But now it seems as though I [am] going underneath the story and figuring out why I was so compelled by this story and what made it good. I guess I [am] starting to realize what the key components of a good story are.

Not only is Brad theorizing about assessment (i.e. he looks "underneath the story" and asks "why"), seeing the good and growth in his assessment practices, but he's allowing others to profit from his experience. These reflections are all public, posted on our Internet discussion board. I highlight a few in class (six or so at the start of each week), asking the writers to read portions of them to the class. We then talk about them, or sometimes, we just let them stand.

Oftentimes, these reflections can help students identify problems they're having.

Catarina, in the same week's reflection, says,

In assessing others, I'll be honest, I tend to rush through and conclude with minimal suggestions. I recognize this through reading my last assessment and know that making real suggestions is the only way to benefit the writer. I know the feeling of frustration when someone says "good job," or "good start." So, instead of making comments like that I hope to really pin-point the problem areas by being specific and making comments like, "Paragraph 2, Line 3 is awkward or unclear," and then giving a suggestion on how to fix the problem.

Here Catarina not only honestly identifies her area for growth in her assessment practice, but she links it to her responsibility to her colleagues in the class. Additionally, she thinks up a good strategy for better assessments in the future. Again, praxis is formed by reflecting about practice. So while she has not assessed satisfactorily in the past, maybe even cheated a few of her classmates, her public reflection (this was one we discussed that week in class) offers the class an opportunity to benefit from her mistake and reflective insights – a mistake arguably worth making in the context of the entire class. Reflections like this one, which are typical, give the class a chance to see that growth is more important than ignoring failings and better assessment can come out of reflecting on our past practices. Maybe most importantly, by looking at Catarina's reflection, the class was able to theorize about assessment practices and responsibility.

Often, however, my classes offer both me and my students opportunities to articulate larger assessment issues, ones that can reach far beyond our classroom, even if only in personal terms. In a reflection after our essay evaluation exercise,¹¹² Elizabeth illustrates a fairly typical problem between the acts of evaluation/assessment and grading that many teachers feel every term. Elizabeth, who continually found it hard to cope with the rubric and assessments by her peers, explains that her evaluation and grading process was hard despite knowing clearly the

criteria we'd established. In fact, this was the problem. Illustrating an Elbovian compassionate reading of her peer's paper, she says, "[i]t's hard when you set criteria . . . then you get to a paper, Christina's, and her strengths weren't what I felt was important – then what, change my rubric to accommodate? . . . that's unethical . . . it's difficult to grade a great paper that just didn't fit our criteria." In effect, she moves through a process of understanding "the mystery of liking" another's writing – that is, "to be able to see potential goodness underneath badness" (Elbow 192). And more importantly, she frames the "badness" of the paper not in such essentialized terms, nor even in terms of "badness," but as strengths that just don't "fit our criteria." Despite her unease, Elizabeth shows how "good" and "bad" writing are tough contextual judgments, mediated through a set of values (our rubric), made in community. In effect, she is being sophistic by highlighting the *nomos* and *kairos* in our course assessment activities and rubrics. She couldn't have understood so well this insight if I had told it to her or explained it in an endnote on her papers. Yet Elizabeth clearly sees this problem in Christina's paper. Moving from assessment to evaluation and grading helps most of my students find these kinds of insights and ways of reading, despite some healthy discomfort.

However, publicly assessable insights like Elizabeth's, allow me to see further importance to community-based assessment practice. This kind of reflection can provide a space for more critical examinations of writing and assessment. It's most valuable and educative insight for Elizabeth's peers might be how it begins to turn the assessor's attention toward *kairos* and *nomos*, toward thinking about assessment as a set of contextual and socially-derived practices. Her reflection also has potential to offer the class a way to talk about how our rubric, as an institution of sorts (a formal structure), is designed to structure value and minister authenticity in our writing, and does so in a manner that can be read as unfair.

But community-based assessment practice also offers ways to build a pragmatic sense of community that is active and purposeful.¹¹³ I'm not talking about a fuzzy, cum-by-ya community, but a tangible set of practices that make students rhetorically and ethically face each other, listen, and act on each others' words. And again, it starts from our rubric and assessment activities. They are the sites where we know each other and interact and so bind us through common practices and purposes. In the tenth week of a recent course, Kelly reflects on what she's come to learn after an essay evaluation and grading activity we've done. She explains that "[i]t is important to recognize that the only barometer of the effectiveness of your writing is through feedback from the reader and their interpretation of your text. It is often said that actions speak louder than words, but in writing it is the reader's interpretation that speaks louder than your words." This socially constructivist notion about knowledge and value could only be meaningful in a community of writers and assessors that Kelly comes to trust. She explains in her final reflection:

My biggest challenge this semester was my preconceived notion that I was walking into this class with a "green thumb" and that I already knew how to write effectively . . . This made me immediately defensive and unreceptive to the suggestions and criticism of my peers when they evaluated my work.

What I had to come to realize was that I was writing for them, and that their engagement into my papers determined my effectiveness. So I had to swallow my pride and digest some criticism and I am not ashamed to admit that I am a better writer because of my peers!

Kelly's assessments of her work helped her to gain some new insights into writing and audience. It was uncomfortable for her. She had to swallow some pride, but she's "a better writer" because

she “came to realize” that her peers had “criticism” she should “digest.” Much like Elizabeth, Kelly shows some awareness of *kairos* and *nomos* as integral and structuring aspects to her writing. Sarah, another student in the same class, approaches the value of community assessments from a different but equally productive angle:

[W]hen there is a group evaluation, it helps make the critique more valid, because it isn't just one person's feeling, but a group . . .

I like the group evaluations in the class. On my last position paper, having the class all agree on an idea to help expand my paper, made me think, and by giving me the idea, it also helped me understand what they were talking about.

While Kelly takes a pragmatic approach (she’s writing to her colleagues in class, so she’d better take their assessments of her work seriously), Sarah uses an analytical approach (her colleagues assessments agree in certain ways, so those judgments on her writing must be more valid through their apparent reliability). Both approaches center on trust in a tangible community that has an immediate, practical function. The voices acting on writers and their texts are active in helping each other write better papers because they assess according to community-defined criteria and in a context in which everyone is both assessing and receiving assessments. They are *mutual* assessments, a giving and getting. When I also consider where each student started and left the class, I see two writers who became empowered by their assessment practices and reflections, and allowed others to do the same around them. This is could be read as a critical sophistic product of community-based assessments practices. Students various claims about each others’ texts allow for them to reflect on assessment (and writing) as contextually-bound and structured in determined ways. *Nomos*, in a sense, becomes the monarch in the classroom. And so community should be seen in a positive and a questionable light. While both Kelly and Sarah

consider community as liberating and helpful, I think it's equally profitable to examine these kinds of student insights about community and assessment as revealing how these rhetorical aspects are also dominating and contradictory, as Elizabeth's and Catarina's (to a lesser extent) reflections show.

The sharing of writing and assessing also allows some to find help on the job, in their other courses, in their thinking about issues others write about, in their educational journeys, and with friendships and citizenship status. In a late-semester weekly reflection, Krystal offered the class this:

Throughout the semester, I have become less stressed out with the class and more excited to go to class and hear what people had to say or argue. I realize that I am not one who always speaks up in class or states my opinion, but I do have an opinion . . . I enjoyed the fact that I could just sit back and take in what others had to say and not be graded on this participation, or lack there of.

I feel, though, that I have taken a lot from this class. I have realized that how and what you write about really can affect people, both positive and negative. Sometimes what someone would write would inspire me to do more in the world, or to love myself more for who I am rather than wishing I had a better body [two position papers from the class]. Those subjects impacted me very much. I also feel that I have become more of a developed writer, that I look harder at what I am writing as well as reading, and take in other's perspectives with more willingness. All in all, I feel that this was a good course for me, that it helped me develop not only as a writer and reader, but also as a person, a friend, and a student.

Krystal finds personal value and meaning in her colleagues' writing, in the class discussions (mostly without me), in the course structures that gave her opportunities to speak her mind, remain silent, and engage in assessments. Notice I am absent in this picture of our class. She is central, and her peers are integral to her learning. Krystal highlights what most do at some point in our discussions, conferences, reflections, or course evaluations: that when the class is successful, it is so because the students not only become active learners in their writing and assessment processes, but they begin to see how educative writing and thinking has more to do with their own assessment practices than mine. Learning has more to do with their acts of communication, not mine.

What the student assessments and reflections in this section illustrate is that allowing our students to assess themselves *for real* is pedagogically sound. If our purpose for assessing and evaluating student writing is to help students learn – if assessment is inherently a learning practice (which I think it is) – then the teacher shouldn't control all of the process. Assessing *for* our students only hampers their progress by making pronouncements on their writing, halting reflection and self-assessment – it keeps them from doing the very things we want them to be able to do: assess and understand language, write and understand writing, conceptualize and theorize their judging and measuring (hermeneutical) acts. A rubric that continually evolves pushes students to rethink assumptions about rhetorical conventions; it shows how writing and assessment are *kairotic* practices structured through the *nomos* in communities – that notions of “good writing” are structured socially through consubstantial common sense, *habitus*, and institutions. And our assessment practices are equally structured (overdetermined) and self-structuring, making them difficult to step outside of. In other words, the rhetoric that we measure as “factual” and “good” reinforces the structures by which we continue to measure what is

factual and good. Assessment practices, then, that are reflective and publicly discussed can make reflective, more self-conscious writers, as well as an active, pragmatic, responsive community. Fourth generation evaluation allows students to not only be an integral part of the construction of rhetorical values in the class, but it potentially provides spaces for critique of these values and their use in the class. Fourth generation evaluation transforms the class into a kind of critical sophistic polis.

When asked on the last day of class what element of the course I should keep for future courses, the anonymously written responses each time are similar in nature and content, things like “peer evaluation,” “position papers,” “community,” “open discussions,” “atmosphere of the class,” “process of the position papers – assessment – essay,” and “peer review and evaluations of papers.”¹¹⁴ One anonymous student identified, as most do, the “ability to evaluate my own writing.” Michael, from a more recent semester, ends the course with this reflection in which he mixes his revision, self-assessment, and colleague assessment processes together: “Even though it was difficult at times, I learned and practiced self analysis, and the feedback I got from others was invaluable to reshaping my writing on these individual papers. The evaluation of papers and the going back over the same work time and time again has helped me see my own writing in a different perspective.” That different perspective for Michael comes from the various angles assessment provides, which is a very sophistic perspective (now, Michael just needs to become more “critical”). His new found perspective wasn’t just Michael “going back over” his work, but also listening to his peers. And the “going over” involved assessment, revision, periodic reflection, and discussion on all his activities with his peers. This is a fuller, richer position from which he can learn to write and assess writing, and it tells me things are working in my class.

While most of my end of semester student evaluations and comments on community-based assessment practice have been quite positive and encouraging, there are some mixed results. Some students still leave much the way they came in: overly concerned about grades, dogmatic about what makes “good writing,” confused about why I didn’t assess them (a couple, even a bit upset), and feeling generally dissatisfied with the “quality” of their papers due to only peer feedback on them (no “expert” assessments). Usually, however, even the negative experiences, like the explicitly positive ones, tend to be mixed in sentiment. The tension is often around the final grade. Jennifer is typical:

I think I struggled with this [the absence of a teacher as an evaluator] a lot during the class and it was hard when I got my final grade because I know that I’ve learned a lot even without the documentation of it. A lot of the grade was my fault though, so I’m trying to be content with it; again it’s just hard when you know you’ve learned a lot.

Jennifer sees a discrepancy between what she “got” as a grade in the class and what she knows she’s learned. This may be part of the “false motivation” and “false sense of worth” described by O’Hagan and Kirschenbaum separately – grades are deceptive. But even in this final reflection, Jennifer takes responsibility (maybe for the first time, she was in her first year of college), shows a level of active learning, assesses her own progress, the pressure of grades, and their effects on her attitude toward the class. She acknowledges that “a lot of the grade was my fault” and hints that she continues to look for contentment in what she’s learned (ongoing reflection), and not in the inadequate ways in which our institution forces us to measure her performance. And maybe mostly, she seems to be finding a way both to see what she’s learned and understand the pain and confusion that grades present oftentimes. I hope that that eventually she’ll see how the institution

of grading structures the ways in which she sees her education and its value. My sense is that Jennifer wants her grade to reflect her character, not her portfolio as a situated product whose evaluations were negotiated by her and me. The “documentation” she speaks of was the drafts necessary to show how each portfolio document moved in revision – they weren’t there. And so she simply couldn’t talk much in her reflection letter about rhetorical decisions, revision choices, or peer assessments she pondered. And because many of her included drafts were only slightly different from those she submitted for class discussion and assessments, it’s hard to see what she learned exactly. No doubt she has, but, as she says, she hasn’t documented it for us. This has been the most difficult aspect of this pedagogy for me to bear because I want Jennifer to see the real potential in her education, listen to her peers and judge for herself, become more critical about language and her own hermeneutical acts, see her *habitus* structured by the discourses around her and structuring her assessment practices. I want her to feel good about her learning, and not focus on collecting certain letters for her transcript. However, she will have to come to these conclusions on her own, if she’s willing to.

Many also voice complaints about the intense focus on peer assessments and class-constructed rubrics. They say the teacher should be the center of knowledge about writing, and the creator of rubrics. This is logical, really. Teachers know more about writing – that’s why they’re “teaching” the class. While I do not disagree with this logic, it is the application to a classroom, the learning processes of students, that I question. If I know how to teach writing best, why not trust me? More importantly, as has been show over and over, writing isn’t something directly deliverable as a “skill.” It’s a complex social practice. If sophistic pedagogy teaches anything, it’s that rhetoric and its assessment practices evolve through community decisions, through *nomos*. In the most simplistic sense, the class is the measure of all writing.¹¹⁵

We each have some virtue to share if others are willing to listen. We don't learn how to write successfully by someone else telling us how to do it. We learn by practicing, thinking about our practices, and reformulating practice.

For some, the rubric even seems too context specific, too constructed by our class, and thus won't help many in future writing endeavors. Catarina voices this tension early in a recent semester. After explaining that she liked having the class create the rubric, she wonders: "how do we know this will help us beyond this class? Making personal rubrics may be fine for this semester, but when we go back to the traditional class environment, what will we have gained?" Yes, what will she have gained? A great question. And just asking it suggests a gain already, one concerning an active learning stance and an awareness of shifting and contested rhetorical conventions. But it is the process itself – the finding of answers – that matters most, not a list of universal writing guidelines for all occasions. This process of construction can allow students to see the structuring and structured nature of discourse and value, to see that all rubrics are "personal rubrics," but that what this really means is that rubrics are socially constructed by discourse communities that hegemonically effect agents and various ways.

Our rubric processes can allow students to see questions like Catarina's as important to ask, and ones they should ask of all their educational contexts. At another level, what Catarina and her classmates have gained is quite tangible. They've learned that writing conventions are contextual and communally developed; that they often evolve over time; that individuals' hermeneutical acts (the judging from them) often lead to contradictory results; that judging writing is not a cut-and-dry act, done in a vacuum, but one mediated by many factors (e.g. the purpose of the assessment, the rhetorical context and exigencies, the community from which the writing takes place, the purpose of the writing, etc.).

These resistances and complaints, that always occur in some form, highlight the simple fact that many problems within my class stem from the realities outside of it. Our class, as “democratic” as it is, doesn’t change the fact that my students’ writing outside of class may still seem like a game of chance, regardless of the motives of their teachers or the soundness of their grading practices. Their experiences with grades given to them by teachers with fuzzy grading criteria, or mysterious hermeneutical practices, have trained them to see the problems with teacher-centered assessment, but have not offered them any strategies to cope with these problems. Additionally, they know that they still need to leave my class with something, a grade, some skills as a writer, how to argue better than when they came to me, etc. Because my pedagogy seems so non-traditional, so radical, some can’t see what they’ve learned because it’s not packaged in the form they are used to. It is structured different.

But most do leave with a sense of improvement, and they voice it in many ways. In an end of semester reflection, Kim points out her development, showing a stance of an active learner, and directs her comments to future students:

Instead of grades you will learn how to assess and evaluate your peers’ writing which in the end will give you more satisfaction with your writing skills. You will also be expected to validate your own writing. Asao gives you direction, but it is up to you to answer your own questions. This has been the most effective way in my learning process.

While she doesn’t offer much specificity, Kim does demonstrate a new confidence in her own abilities as a writer. Her portfolio and final conference with me attest to this. She was thorough and reflective. Her portfolio was thick, each draft containing layers of color-coded assessments by her peers and herself. She even annotated the assessments written on her drafts, describing the

patterns she observed, and how she addressed each in the next draft. And Kim is not that atypical. A good one third of my students do similar kinds of heavy annotations and commentary on their written assessments and portfolio contents. These kinds of practices, reflections, and assessments, undirected or prompted by me, show an active engagement with the writing and assessment processes of the course that suggests my framework is doing its job.

But sometimes I wonder if drafts really get better, if writers learn to actually write more critically. While all of the drafts in Kim's portfolio were responsive to her colleagues' assessments, and showed her analyzing and synthesizing them in detail, several of her papers just didn't move very far from first to last draft. In her first position paper, she looked at a reality TV show's objectification of women and the common "selling of sex" trope in their advertisements. Her first draft simply gave a description of a magazine advertisement for the show and made this conclusion: "Why is this show called real[ity] T.V. when each person on the show is put in a surreal situation with seductive chords and heat lamps . . ." (her ellipsis). Kim's final draft's conclusion isn't much different, although it is more coherent: "Ads focus on sex and sexual appeal to portray women objectively in society, even if it has nothing to do with the products that are being sold." While more realized and clearer, her claim, which now articulates ideas and not just images or a narrative question, and her argument hasn't really changed much in depth. She doesn't look at any details in any new or different light. What commonsense elements exist in the ads that objectify women? What "consumer" do these elements construct? How might this affect personhood for various agents in the network of advertisement and popular culture?

While Kim did listen to her peers, and her ideas became more concrete, less narrative-like, she took little from our class discussions, which focused on the underlying issues around the images of women in the ad. *Why* does sex sell? *Why* is a show like "The Bachelor" popular?

How does it construct its consumer audience? A man picking from a throng of eager women, doesn't this seem chauvinistic? Yet most of the women in that class were eager to admit they watched the show religiously, including Kim. Gender stereotypes and unquestioned "American" values that subordinate women abound in the ad, but Kim makes no mention of them. I wonder, has she learned to look deeper into a text like this? Have her peers in class really helped her find these kinds of things in her text, have they helped her read more critically? Would she have done better if I had assessed her writing? Is the depth of the *product* (the paper) more important than the writer's depth of understanding as a learner and assessor? Are these areas exclusive?

Assessment As "Instructive" Praxis

Community-based assessment practice does the work of what Huot calls "instructive evaluation." In his chapter on assessing, grading, testing, and pedagogy, Huot's description of instructive evaluation glosses well the assessment practices I've been describing:

Assessment as a way to teach and learn writing requires more than just feedback on writing in progress from a teacher or a peer group . . . [instructive evaluation] is tied to the act of learning a specific task while participating in a particular literacy event. Instructive evaluation involves the student in the process of evaluation, making her aware of what it is she is trying to create and how well her current draft matches the linguistic and rhetorical targets she has set for herself, targets that have come from her understanding of the context, audience, purpose and other rhetorical features of a specific piece of writing. Instructive evaluation requires that we involve the student in all phases of the assessment of her work . . .

Instructive evaluation demands that students and teachers connect the ability to assess with the necessity to revise, creating a motivation for revision that

is often so difficult for students to obtain . . . A classroom pedagogy that encourages and highlights the evaluative decisions of writers, teachers, and peer review groups can help foster a new, shared role for assessment and the teaching of writing. ((*Re*)*Articulating* 69-70)

In community-based assessment practices, student writers are integrally involved in the assessment processes of their work – in fact, just as Plato’s Socrates suggests about the search for truth through dialectic vying, assessment is integrally *their* activity, not the teacher’s alone. Revision and assessment are married to public reflection, which allow students a formal chance to consider what they are attempting to communicate to each other, how they are doing it, how well they are meeting their rhetorical targets, and how these insights can help the class as a whole. In my pedagogy, these targets, encapsulated in our rubric, are ones derived from class dialogues and dialectic activities that use fourth generation evaluation techniques meant to instigate ongoing student theorizing around writing and assessing. And so, this pedagogy does something that Huot doesn’t list: it pushes students to articulate and theorize their assessment practices, which then informs their own writing and revision. The “new, shared role for assessment and the teaching of writing” that this pedagogy encourages is the role that theorizing plays in writing and assessment – that is, it offers students a new role to play, one that we teachers already play and benefit from, that of theorizers of writing. Just as we do, our students should theorize their practices in order to ask better questions and find better practices, see hegemonic structures and epistemologies, and see social values as consubstantial with individual decisions. In a way, theorizing asks students to find the patterns in culture and discourse that reveal the epistemology of racism as well as the *nomos* and *kairos* in language acts.

Victor Villanueva voices the critical aspects of what I'm encouraging through community-based assessment, using Paulo Freire's account of critical consciousness:

Critical consciousness is the recognition that society contains social, political, and economic conditions which are at odds with the individual will to freedom. When that recognition is given voice, and a decision is made to do something about the contradiction between the individual and society's workings against individual freedom, even if the action is no more than critical reflection, there is *praxis*. The way to arrive at critical consciousness . . . is through *generative themes*.

Generative themes are critical assessments of *limit-situations*, the myths that maintain the status quo. (*Bootstraps* 54)

Critical consciousness explains the tension that most of my students feel at one time or another when I stay away from their texts and they get conflicting assessments from colleagues. They need outlets to express this tension, but they also need ways to think critically about these assessments (something I haven't done enough of in my past iterations of community-based assessment practices). This is where a conscious use of the epistemology of racism can help. As a theory, it can highlight the tension between the "social, political, and economic conditions which are at odds with the individual will to freedom" as a consubstantial matrix of *habitus* and common sense mediated by institutions. In this sense, being critical can be thought of as seeing the elements of the epistemology of racism as hegemonic structures that determined our hermeutical acts, like those of assessment, and our acts of communication and personhood. In short, seeing how our wills to freedom are determined by various economies of power and discourse may allow students to use their assessment practices as forms of critique while acknowledging complicity in hegemonic discursive structures.

According to Villanueva's summation of Freire, "critical assessments" are the key to critical consciousness in the individual. They help form praxis. What makes the "critical" part in this process educative and potent for the writing classroom is a self-reflection made public on inherently reflective practices (that is, assessments). Assessment can be a praxis that allows the individual to confront and question the contradictions in her experience of our classroom writing conditions, of her writing, of what others say about her writing. And through public reflection, this praxis can be displayed for others' benefit. This is how my students "give voice" to their critical awareness and "do something" about what they think and feel. When done in community, praxis can be focused on broader goals, ones that compare practices – not to rank student performance but to enrich and complicate them, to produce a sense of mutual endeavoring and common struggling, to make writing critical. When reflected upon and discussed publicly, writing and meaning making become less about what is good for the individual and more about how "the good" is constructed. Yet these same reflective activities can also preserve individual resistance to discourse conventions set up by the class (our rubrics). They allow spaces for dissonant voices and uncensored questions. In fact, this happens often, and I encourage it because it gives us a chance to talk about why we believe what we believe, about hegemony, about the structuring of knowledge and power through writing and its conventions over us and our ways of knowing. It also reminds us that our "agreement" is not really that, but "hard agreements" that we must deal with continually. Dissonance and questions that go against the course's pedagogy and assignments connects the self-as-writer to the self-as-stakeholder-in-community. However, when we address these concerns we try to pay an attention to the "us" by realizing that the "me" is consubstantial.

To illustrate, Kim articulates how this process of critical awareness has worked for her in our classroom community on a personal level and in context of her educational history with grades and writing. She reflects at the end of our course:

When I began your class I was upset at the fact that we were not getting grades or validations for the work we produced during the semester . . . I did not understand how we could be graded without getting a formal letter grade at the top of our papers with teacher's comments. Now . . . it does not take a grade to validate one's writing because grades are subjective . . . I have the skills to assess and evaluate . . . without revealing to me all the answers, you have stood back to let me figure them out on my own, and for the first time in my life, without people giving me the answers, I have figured things out on my own.

To place Kim's conclusions in context, in her final reflective piece within her course portfolio (the one discussed earlier), she emphasized her understanding of self-assessment and writing for an audience as practices spawned from our daily assessment and response activities. We also had a number of conferences and email exchanges on her work. In all these discussions, I asked her questions, and attempted to coach her carefully toward her own ideas by asking her about patterns and common sense in the texts she was interrogating, but I refused to offer direct suggestions for her writing. What did she feel was important to tell the class (what tells her that this topic is important?), and how did she think she should explore it? What binaries in the images of women are important to examine? Her own self-assessments, and those from her colleagues in class, were key for her because they gave her thinking to reflect upon.

Through her own practice and reflections, Kim was able to find validation for her writing and assessment processes, theorize her role in her education a bit, and find good answers for her

questions. Keeping my hands and words off of her texts was crucial to Kim's growth. David Bleich says that grading has "ideological functions," ones that work to perpetuate "conditions favorable to the few who govern society" (Allison, et. al. 22). This abuse of power seems clear in Kim's case. In effect, past teacher comments have constructed a hegemonic discourse around her writing, which is part of the reason Kim has had a hard time finding value in her writing and self-assessments. Teachers have dominated her texts through their evaluations, which in the end silenced her. In fact, Bleich says that "[g]rading and testing [which are usually administered by teachers] have an *ideological* authority. *Testing and grading have such great inertia in society because they are the pedagogical means by which an unfairly structured society is perpetuated*" (his emphasis, Allison, et. al. 28). Almost ten years later in *Grading in the Post-Process Classroom*, and attempting to deflect the ideological authority grades have on students, William Dolphin proposes to make "the subject of grades . . . the initial topic of inquiry [in the writing classroom], with the goal of arriving at a consensus within the class on a collaboratively written grading policy" (Allison et al. 115-16). Tim Peeples and Bill Hart-Davidson argue for a classroom practice that allows students to debate over their own grades in writing (through "grade arguments" written to the teacher), included in their course portfolios, and engaged in throughout the semester. It's practices like these, when added to Huot's call for "real student involvement" in assessment and the understanding that grading is an activity that does not have to be done unthinkingly, uncritically, or by the teacher alone, that reiterate how necessary students' roles are in classroom assessment. It is important to note that I'm not suggesting all teachers stop grading, only that we rethink what grading is and how it is accomplished in the classroom. I ask us to consider why we choose to pedagogically structure such a questionable and elitist practice in our classrooms, a practice that seems so harmful to our students' learning,

and one that can so easily perpetuate harmful, hegemonic, discursive structures. I don't profess a system that can erase power dynamics set up by the systems of higher education, but I do think we can be more critically self-conscious in our grading practices, and let our students be a significant part of these practices. In fact, this may very well be crucial to future critical pedagogies that proclaim to teach students critical stances and liberation.

Community-based assessment can build more meaningful and productive writing practices, ones that use class-constructed rubrics, assessment, and public reflection to encourage active, self-conscious, critical writers who can begin to theorize their practices. All of this is done by assuming an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialoguing over things, and one that addresses – but does not try to shy away from – the power dynamics that exist in the classroom. Community-based assessment practices assume a critical sophistic pedagogy, one that uses dialectic as a way to encourage antilogical debates and thinking in order to reveal our structuring ways of assessing and language-ing, and show us how the common sense in culture is consubstantial with our *habitus*. Assessment in this context can demonstrate to students how knowledge is constructed through a community's measurements and hard agreements, which may uncover a few god-tricks around us.

Community-based assessment practice boils down to three classroom imperatives: (1) encourage active learning stances by allowing students to assess and evaluate their own and their colleagues' writing practices, and make these assessments count; (2) situate assessment practices within a community of knowledge makers who construct assessment rubrics and define and justify assessment practices – i.e. encourage the class to work for one another as mutual agents working with and for each other's benefit, writing for each other, and negotiating *hard agreements* together; and (3) give lots of opportunities to reflect on assessment that speaks to the

larger class community and asks about structures of influence and epistemology, so that they can theorize about writing, rhetorical conventions, assessment, and the judging of writing from specific criteria – i.e. what we say about what we are doing (or did) can affect how we all do it better in the future. In my versions of this pedagogy, these imperatives rest on a framework of recursive, repeated writing and assessment activities.

Finally, these three imperatives can encourage what bell hooks contemplates in *Teaching to Transgress*: “an education as the practice of freedom” and not “education that merely strives to reinforce domination” (4). She says, “I think that a feeling of community creates a sense that there is shared commitment and a common good that binds us” (40). Her language echoes how I’ve attempted to think about community and the stances students need to take in the classroom. A feeling of community is a sense that we are all in this thing together, “bound” to one another in mutual endeavors, helping each other to learn, create, and understand, even though we may disagree and contradict one another. Invoking Freire, she explains that “education can be liberatory when everyone [in the classroom] claims knowledge as a field in which we all labor,” thus, a liberatory praxis strives for the common good; it’s “action and reflection upon the world in order to change it” (hooks 14). However, I make one caveat to hooks’ statement. The classroom must also address the fact that all claims to knowledge in that space will not be equal, despite our attempts to make them so. Our very bodily *hexis*, as Bourdieu has stated, conjures power relationships when we interact with others. Because of this unequal distribution of power, the “field in which we all labor” and the common good that hooks talks about and that even my classes strive for are overdetermined by forces that minister authority and truth over us. Part of what makes our agreements on things “hard” is the fact that some in the class have more power than others, get more voice, seem to always win the debates. This power is derived from a

variety of sites: discursive acumen, one's place in the academy, gender, sexual orientation, spiritual heritage, age, etc.

Hooks and I articulate a similar educational purpose: liberatory educational practices lead to learning and theorizing about the process and products of education, and I add that when students own knowledge, not merely to possess it, but to interrogate it for the ways it overdetermines personhood, SR, and the current unequal distribution of power and privilege, they become better writers, thinkers, and citizens. Would any writing teacher argue against this, that the process of literacy is the process of becoming an ethical, more critically conscious, and better citizen?

What I offer in this chapter is only a beginning. There are still lots of questions unresolved and issues unaddressed, but I am encouraged by my results, so I continue. My classroom isn't a place where anything goes, but one where, I believe, more is possible. It's a community that gains authority by exercising power at all levels, and takes control of the conventions used to write, assess, and evaluate, then practices these things on itself. This takes some of the best elements of post-process, assessment, critical pedagogy, and portfolio theory to date and provides a crucial link between the writing assessments students must bear in other arenas and those they do on their own in my class. To engage in community-based assessment practices is to teach writing, assessment, and reflection as intertwined public acts, that must be discussed and scrutinized by students over and over, and that are necessary to giving them the most chances at developing as writers and critically aware citizens. And if this pedagogy is done well, students might actually theorize for themselves about their own writing and reading practices, assess themselves critically and purposefully, and come out of the process

fundamentally changing the questions they ask when they write and read, form praxis – and wanting to do all these things because they find them intrinsically worthwhile to do.

Chapter 5: A Rhetoric of Hard Agreements

However, neither in this essay [in “Composition and Cultural Studies”] nor in subsequent work does Berlin get around to explaining the controlling, hegemonic discourse that “race” is. I do not intend this to be a harsh criticism. Berlin was certainly aware of the limitations of both his theorizing and his courses; he remarked so explicitly in the “Into the Classroom” chapter of his final book, *Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* (1996, 115). And this is not to dispute his commitment to liberatory pedagogy; such would be foolish. I merely aim to point out that if a rhetorician as critically sensitive and astute as Berlin, who was obsessed with how cultural codes implicitly operate, failed to crack the “race” code for us, it is strong testimony to how potently invisible, or invisibly potent, that particular code signifies. Furthermore, because rhetoric is inherently ideological, as Berlin himself declared, he compromised his own teaching project by not attending to the issue of “race” more critically. From the subject position of a white teacher, a label he did not reject, how could he teach students to “resist” and “negotiate” the controlling discourse that “whiteness” is? (48)

“Higher Learning: Composition’s Racialized Reflection,” Keith Gilyard

In the previous chapter, I offered my initial conclusions about community-based assessment pedagogy. I attempted to rearticulate assessment, as Brian Huot calls for, so that critical composition pedagogy both integrates and interrogates assessment practices by students. I illustrate how assessing and writing are two parts of the same activity (a claim Brian Huot and

Edward White make), and can be structured into a course's work. My conclusions suggest that in order for students to learn how to write critically, teachers must consider carefully how processes of writing are intertwined with those of assessing, particularly in a community. Additionally, students need to theorize assessment for themselves so that epistemological and hermeneutical issues around discourse and knowledge are interrogated. This extension to Huot's claim (as well as to similar arguments made by White, Yancey, Butler and Condon, Elbow, and others) – that we must teach students how to assess their own writing – can be achieved by allowing students to create and evolve rubrics continually, use those rubrics to assess their colleagues' writing (and their own), and reflect publicly in order to theorize their practices. In fact, it may be easier to assess others' work before we move to assessing our own writing. However, what I have yet to address fully are the significant and crucial questions that arise around the notions of "consensus" and "conflict" within the classroom, nor how whiteness is an integral part of consensus. I use the term "hard agreements," which is really a more coherent rhetoric and needs more theorizing. Additionally, while hermeneutics is addressed scantily by talking about a community's acts of "measuring" in the sophistic sense, I do not incorporate a heuristic into the practices of the classroom that helps students see and interrogate their own dispositions that structure and constitute their hermeneutical practices, forming agreement. While my discussion thus far has addressed hermeneutics, community-based assessment practice alone will not encourage adequately any classroom discussions of personhood or the networks of meaning that construct knowledge and power in our social worlds. For example, it doesn't inherently reveal the epistemology of whiteness that shapes the rhetorics of consensus in all classrooms. In short, I do not include an integration of the epistemology of racism.

In this chapter, I deepen my previous discussions on community-based assessment practices and critical sophistic pedagogy by bringing them closer to the epistemology of racism as a guiding rhetorical theory for praxis. In a way, I respond to Keith Gilyard's criticism of James Berlin's social-epistemic classroom practice. I theorize more concretely the concept of "hard agreements" as a rhetoric of conflict, in the vein of John Trimbur's and Alan France's separate discussions on dissensus. From this theorizing, I show how community-based assessment practices not only thrive on resistance and conflict in the classroom, but they need conflict in order to achieve their goal, namely a critical, purposeful, and educative cacophony of voices that construct rhetorical conventions for assessment purposes and reveal the structures that structure our ways of valuing and seeing value. The epistemology of racism can be used to form a social-epistemic rhetoric that offers epistemological terms and allows students to talk about hegemony and personhood at once through the consubstantial nature of common sense, institutions, and *habitus*. This rhetoric of hard agreements is necessary if we are really "prepar[ing] students for citizenship in a democracy" in order for them to "assum[e] their political responsibilities," as James Berlin concludes in *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985* (189). And I add that part of this preparation for citizenship is to help students critique how personhood is not only structured but structured racially, and how SR reinforces the unequal, social, and economic arrangements we live in and around today. As I suggest in the epigraph to this chapter by quoting Gilyard, part of being a critical citizen, and thus part of a writing classroom's critical pedagogy, should be to crack the "race code" in our society, one written by the epistemology of whiteness. One way to think about this race code can be through the epistemology of racism confronted in the classroom with a rhetoric that encourages conflict and works with existing assessment practices.

When I began dramatically rethinking my pedagogy, I thought that consensus in the classroom could be achieved with careful planning and guidance using fourth generation evaluation techniques (see Guba and Lincoln). I thought that my students could be led to more critical¹¹⁶ and self-conscious stances as writers if they were allowed to collaboratively control, construct, and conduct the assessment practices of the course. There were two primary reasons I originally felt that students should control most of the assessment of their writing: (1) when people take an active part in the construction of ideas and their assessment practices (like rubrics and the construction of grades), they tend to have more stake in them; and (2) the act of assessment demands that the assessor think consciously and critically about *what* she assesses, *how* she judges it, and from *which criteria* she judges. Community-based assessment practices give control to students, build stake and purpose for them, and inherently work from social-epistemic assumptions. I assumed that my students know quite a bit about using language, and that with some direction they can become productive and educative assessors for one other and themselves. But I realize now that my working notions of consensus were problematic: that in our current educational and linguistic “markets,” to construct a classroom space where “free, fair, and democratic” exchanges are promoted as such, and then work from the idea that classroom decisions and actions are from consensus or universal agreement is to ignore conclusions I make from the epistemology of racism, as well as pertinent scholarship on collaboration. Additionally, if we only work from the common sense area of the epistemology of racism, without seeing it as structurally determinate and consubstantial with our dispositions, then consensus in a traditional sense, that is as universal agreement, is possible (assuming, of course, we ignore difference and conflict by allowing hegemonic discourse to devalue the counter-hegemonic). If we attempt to work from all sides of the epistemic (that is, address *habitus*, ministering institutions, and

common sense), then complete and uniform agreement is not possible. Conflict and disagreement can be examined not as individual bias or personal opinion, but as different subject positions structured in different ways, or as seeing discursive structures differently. For instance, students can talk about anti-abortion rhetoric as common sense because this rhetoric is structured to be so by various institutions, and not as arguments that make sense inherently. Discussions around conflict are ones not around who agrees with whom, but how agreement in community is structured by institutions, dispositions patterned from histories, and how common sense is translated. But more to the point, students can see how even their apparent consensus on issues is structured for them in certain ways that they can identify as both social and individual. This connects personhood – that is, the processes of agency, identity, and citizenship status – to the social and rhetorical.

In order to make clear a rhetoric of hard agreements, a few definitions are necessary. Throughout this chapter I'll use "agreement" to identify the on-going, community-based acts of judging and making sense of things, which lead to community-based decisions. I'll use "resolution," or "critical resolution," as a way to identify the products of agreement, that is a community's evolving yet codified and explicit decisions (e.g. class-constructed rubrics). Agreement is a process, while resolution is a product of that process. Agreement, however, isn't unanimous agreement or consensus, just the process that allows for complexity in understanding and decision making. By the same token, resolutions are not decisions everyone agrees are right or good, but tentative ones everyone can live by for a time. Critical resolutions aren't truths drawn in the sand, honored by all, but are revisable and self-critical claims assessed in community. They are the best we can come up with at any given point, yet are highly qualified statements. This means then, that to better theorize "consensus" for community-based

assessment practices, we don't need to assume that universal agreement is necessary. All we really need is a process of *agreement* and understanding that leads to some kind of usable set of *resolutions* that take future iterations into account. This is the "hard agreements" I write about in the previous chapter. In the first few semesters, I used "consensus" to describe our class endeavors, but also encouraged conflict. This confused my students. What I realize now is that my community-based assessment practices must come to "hard agreements" – not consensus – if we are to be critical of hegemony and the regimes of truth that dominate us and our discourses. It's important for students to use conflicting voices and positions as wedges that pry open our epistemologies, assumptions, and individual hermeneutical practices in order to explore, see god-tricks, question authoritative knowledge, and understand how our judgments are structured and determined socially. Without fully realizing it, I wanted a rhetoric of hard agreements, a structural rhetoric, that would give us epistemological sight and hermeneutic reflection. I felt my students could construct critiques of both the subjects they were writing about and the way in which they heard others writing about these same subjects. I also wanted them to explore how they translated our rubric and made specific judgments in their assessments (i.e. talk about the ways they were "measuring" the value of writing). I made room for resistance in discussions but did not help them understand how conflict can work to create a better, more reflexive rubric, or better judgments for writers when weighing assessments in revision. This often led to an "everything is relative" attitude, one that occasionally tended toward dismissing some student assessments, and maybe devaluing self-assessments. My previous heuristics acknowledged hermeneutic activity, even questioned it, but often did not give my students structural ways to understand how assessment is structured for them and by them.

Collaboration and Normative Discourse

My classroom practice has always incorporated collaborative learning activities, mostly group activities, collaborative projects, student-directed discussions and presentations. I've always thought about consensus (complete agreement), but typically in terms of how a classroom might achieve it, taking it as fact that achieving consensus was a possibility. Kenneth Bruffee, an early proponent of collaboration in the classroom, says that students can be “a community of status equals: peers” (401). From this I've typically assumed that my students could do what Bruffee, using Richard Rorty, says happens in “normal discourse”—that is, “socially justify belief” by allowing students to explain their views to one another, then collectively negotiate (405). So in my first few tries at community-based assessment, I used a hermeneutic dialectical collaboration for both rubric creation and discussions of assessment practices on actual student writing, similar to my examples in the previous chapter.

Most collaborative activities on rubrics ideally work this way. Students do some outside or private work and reflection on what a rubric might include, usually building lists of writing conventions, priorities, and explanations. They get into small groups, share their work, then collaboratively create a new group list. These small-group rubrics become the guides for the construction of a class rubric. Normal discourse (i.e. getting students to justify belief) occurs by carefully directing the groups' activities, getting them continually to explain things in social settings and “negotiate” rubric priorities at each step of the way. To focus their attention and keep them on task, I carefully structure the collaboration by:

- **Giving them a plan** for their group discussions – e.g. first, read your work to each other, second, discuss what each writer has said by summarizing his/her points then respond to them in that order, etc.;

- **Asking for a product** from their discussions that will be used by the class – e.g. produce a list of writing priorities that your group can agree upon for the rest of the class; and
- **Providing a real communicative purpose** for their collaborative products – e.g. be prepared to present your list to the rest of the class and use it to construct a more honed class rubric that we’ll use for our paragraph assignment.

This structure lets my students justify their beliefs about what good writing ought to be for our class papers, discuss those beliefs with a small group of colleagues (further justifying things), make some decisions and lists (negotiate), then produce a purposeful document that prioritizes their group’s writing values for the rest of the class (resolutions). The whole class will then use four or five of these lists to find the important criteria for their writing tasks, like the paragraphs or position papers (discussed in chapter 4). We usually focus most of our time on the common criteria articulated, and those that stick out to us as unusual, contradictory, interesting, or significant. We discuss each of them, then attempt to make some resolutions.

In the larger class discussions, we use a modified hermeneutic dialectic cycle, adapted from Egon Guba’s and Yvonna Lincoln’s model in *Fourth Generation Evaluation*.¹¹⁷ Each group presents its list to the class, and I might say, “okay, group one said that each paragraph needs a ‘thesis sentence.’ What do we think this means as assessors or readers? What would it look like? What do you hear this telling you to do as a writer?” We summarize the idea, or explain what we think it means for each of us, then embellish, refine, and revise the original statement. I attempt to collect as many divergent explanations as possible. Throughout these discussions, we repeat our two step process for agreement and resolution: (1) we summarize what has previously been said, paying careful attention to the terms we use and what we think we mean by them, then (2) we continue revising our ideas and raising issues and questions, given what is continually added

to the discussion. I typically manage this process. I ask frequently if we can summarize what we've got so far, or if several students can define a term or idea for us. We collect as many as we can, asking questions after all the explanations have been gathered. And I ask several students to take careful notes for us, explaining that I'll use their notes after class to form what I hear as their rubric.¹¹⁸ Students get used to this somewhat tedious way of structuring discussions, but it allows for a few important things: one, we internalize ideas, listening to what others say before we formulate our own views; two, it makes us articulate what exactly we mean by our more abstract claims about writing and rhetorical conventions, explicating assumptions and making explicit our dispositions; and three, it seems to allow more people a voice than typical teacher-led classroom discussions.

However, I realize that this heuristic doesn't account very well for the often complex and layered power dynamics in the classroom. These dynamics will determine who says what, when, and whose voices seem more authoritative than others? When we understand these power dynamics within the epistemology of racism, discursive fluency, racial *habitus*, and the common sense of whiteness show themselves as structural components that build authenticity in classroom activities and collaboration. One problem I tend to have in these discussions is getting some students, typically female students, to contribute at all. When pushed, these quieter students might say, "well, I agree with him. I think what he said about thesis sentences is exactly right." Leaving the discussion at this point is embracing too quickly a seeming consensus. I now prefer to ask why was the original ideas voiced in the class "exactly right"? In what world can we see them as exactly wrong? What in these justifications do we hear being right and why are we so willing to agree with them? What crazy alternatives might we come up with that could highlight our consent to those justifications? And it's at this point that we can consciously use

the epistemology of racism as a theory to critiquing socially justified belief as structured and determined.

Through community-based assessment practices, Rorty's notion of "abnormal discourse" is supposed to occur – some students would come to the conversation defying the conventions and typical questions asked, and "sniff out stale, unproductive knowledge and challeng[e] its authority" (Bruffee 407). If everyone is contributing, and we keep asking questions about what we are producing, productive conflict and opposing viewpoints will reveal themselves. In one class, a heated thirty minute discussion ensued when a student argued that our rubric should not be specific about how many sources are integrated into papers. He claimed that a writer's own ideas and logics could theoretically be just as powerful and persuasive, just as "explorative," as quoting ideas from published sources on the topic at hand. In fact, he claimed that this would allow the class the freedom to explore more deeply, since they wouldn't be relying on "experts." This challenged the common sense that using "sources" and "experts" to back up claims in essays was necessarily the best rhetorical tactic. One student, on the contrary, said that it didn't matter what *they* thought; it's the published experts' ideas that count most. While this was an interesting and helpful discussion, the debate needed critical language to help us navigate these turbulent and uncertain waters. How and where does authority in texts (any texts) get established? How does the idea of using published sources for essays structure the ways in which we think and the ideas we put forward in our writing? In ways do published sources help "deeply explore" a topic, what tips off a reader? From a wider angle, where and how is authority, linked in this discussion to sources and "deeper meaning," ministered to texts and authors? Part of the goal for the posing of these kinds of questions is to get students to see how their writing (and even their very questioning of discursive conventions) are not the products of independent minds

as much as a part of dialectical social and discursive structures. These structures tell them that finding one's individual voice is "deeper" than quoting others, that using sources only means using them to support claims instead of as sites to critique structural and ideological dispositions. Discussions like these can link the social with the individual. Using a critical rhetoric with a concept like *habitus* can show how deeper meaning and significance in texts is linked to commonsense values that tell Americans we are independent and free to think "outside the box," all of which are ministered in various ways by institutions that grant authority.

In my community-based assessment activities our initial, private pre-work is supposed to encourage conflict and dissensus. It's meant to prompt students to ask and answer questions about their claims and assumptions on their own, then get them to think about their thinking and externalize it for their peers to question later. If they do this, they'll reveal their own assumptions, question some of them, produce some form of abnormal discourse in the process, which in turn will produce more informed thinking, and offer their groups ways to "sniff out stale, unproductive knowledge," as Brufee says. The trouble is that my heuristics's expressed purpose for student work and reflection is to come to some agreement about writing conventions, which can be misunderstood by students as consensus. So if they do the assignment (i.e. attempt to form consensus), they are more inclined to come up with socially justifiable ideas – ideas that are agreeable because declaring socially justifiable ideas was the goal – not ideas that challenge authoritative knowledge or standard rhetorical conventions, not abnormal discourse in the spirit that Rorty is suggesting. The point, of course, is to have debate, entertain conflicting views on writing, discuss them, and see how each can be valid given various structural conditions, then make critical resolutions based on what we see as our writing tasks in our class, yet not let these resolutions be final. Which criteria are most useful for our purposes *right now as we see them?* In

the class discussion mentioned concerning assessing for sources in writing, the class ended up talking in terms of what was right or wrong, what was universally good practice and what wasn't. What do we do for our papers? And this was the goal I gave them inadvertently. What we might have done was ask how the authority of sources and personal voice are ministered in student papers, how socially circulating common sense about finding "deeper meaning" informs our discussions. What institutions, disciplinary conventions, and "American" values support the higher authority of published works, or acknowledge the need for the personal in student writing? How has our previous writing experiences structured the ways in which we can debate about the issues of authority and the use of sources in essays?

While identifying differing viewpoints, and areas of question (and conflict), is supposed to be part of this kind of activity, the product I asked for and the purpose given actually reinforced agreement and silenced opposing ideas to the status quo. The one voice acknowledging the personal was overpowered by everyone else's institutionally sanctioned voices that demanded sources as support. Because we didn't speak in structural terms, have available the epistemology of racism, we could not critique these dominant positions as hegemonic, nor could we critically understand why something like examining published sources has been acknowledged historically as valuable in the academy, which goes back to Aristotle's *ethos*. What was authoritative was identified by its implicit, but unspoken, common sense as "normal." We could not really question the authority of any rhetorical conventions, nor the knowledge associated with them. We could only appeal to conventions, because we had no theoretical language or history to see them structurally, nor did we have a rhetoric that valued conflict over consensus to enable this seeing.

In collaborative classrooms, even when different groups offer conflicting ideas, the status quo usually is maintained by majority rule or a few powerful student voices that tend to dominate discussions. In hindsight, this kind of collaboration favors those more proficient in arguing their ideas with others. Additionally, the guide for judgments on what's agreeable seemed overly constructed by the purpose of the activity (as it usually is) and the kind of product I asked for, which was somewhat out of necessity (i.e. a product used by the class for discussion and rubric creation). In order to find the agreeable ideas and come to resolutions, students discarded most of the disagreeable ones, mostly out of necessity, considering them too weak to support socially or not worth the class's time. Normal discourse trumps any abnormal in this kind of collaborative activity, one that attempts to produce a purposeful product through "democratic" exchanges. Our *means*, to find agreeable ideas and justify them, may have been shaped too strongly by our *end*, to produce a product that will help construct our rubric. In fact, our normal discourse in this activity might more aptly be called unconsciously *normative discourse*. In this sense, our rhetoric is not critical.

Our frequent individual reflection activities often illustrate the normative power of our class discussions. Right after the first rubric activity in a recent course (you'll find this paragraph rubric in the previous chapter), I asked students to reflect on our rubric and discussions, posting responses to me and the class.¹¹⁹ I gave them this prompt, along with a copy of their in-process rubric:

Now, look this over carefully. Decide what needs changing, adding, or rewording. Consider also whether you feel some of these things are more important than some of the others. If so, what order should this list be in? Reorder it for us. Are there groupings of elements that make more sense conceptually? Group them and

give each group a title. Remember, your paragraphs will be judged on these criteria, nothing more, nothing less. The final test of its usefulness here will be: how well will this rubric produce 25 paragraphs you will want to read and respond to? Will it offer you a chance to learn and grow as a writer? As a reader? If it doesn't seem to do these things for you, what changes or additions need to be made? Make them.

If unquestioned agreement is any indicator of normative discourse, then the results of this reflection activity are compelling and overwhelming. Our discussions seemed to create near-consensus. All the students found our rubric fine, and only two saw any issues or potential problems. No one added or offered any revisions. Three students reordered the existing criteria (as asked to), but were still pleased with the rubric and how it was worded. No one suggested any weight to elements (as mentioned in the previous chapter). One student suggested some headings, but no substantive changes to criteria. One of the two students who offered questions, Sarah, gave this response:

The rubric is seemingly okay for me. For the most part everyone can interpret it in their own way, and that is good. One thing that I see as a possible draw back is grammatical aspects having the same amount of weight as the writing aspects (that is what the writer has to say, and how they involve us as readers)... [her ellipsis] I think a missing comma or forgetting to capitalize a name, or misspelling TEH (the) should be really the least of our worries.... If you understand it, and the writing grabs you, that is what matters, you can tell the person where to put in their comma, etc. BUT that should not be a worry for a grade (assessment) on the assignments in my opinion.

Sarah, one of the more vocal and stronger arguers in the class (but not overbearing or dominating in discussions) was atypical in just about every way, but her agreement here to our rubric as “seemingly okay” is telling of the normative power of our class activities. Sarah tended to be questioning and explorative, and seemed to enjoy our class discussions and reflections, so it’s interesting that even she found little to question in our rubric, except her good point about grammar and its apparent equal weight to other criteria. Her agreement, however, isn’t in doubt, she only raises a minor issue of grammar, a “possible draw back.” Additionally, she reads the abstractness and ambiguity of our rubric as positive, allowing for multiple interpretations. She stops short of productive abnormal discourse. The prompt simply doesn’t offer her much chance to reflect on her comments or explain them – a potentially profitable hermeneutic aspect of the rubric that could lead to epistemological observations. Not so ironically, both of these issues, grammar as less important and the ambiguity of our rubric, were later important issues that the class wanted addressed.

Andrew, another vocal and strong voice in the class, was the other exception. He offers this very short response: “This is all cool except I don't like the "3 or more sentences in a paragraph" line. Many times, clear and concise writing needs only one or two sentences in a paragraph. It's cool though. I can roll with this.” Andrew’s agreement isn’t in question, only one fairly inconsequential criterion is at issue. While my prompt offered ways to reconsider our rubric, in fact, it asked them to do this in specific ways, no one did. Even the two exceptions seemed to find it difficult to move beyond the normative discourse the activity constructed. Then again, maybe those most able to offer abnormal discourse, like Sarah and Andrew, were already controlling the conversation – epitomizing the hegemonic discourse in the class. Or maybe most had already done what they could, sniffed out the unproductive knowledge they were able to see,

and made as good of a rubric as they could. In short, I may have got what I asked for: lists of priorities that everyone could agree upon, use, and live by. However, because most discussed and reflected on the rubric as a set of abstract, pragmatic guidelines or rules to use (which was the expressed purpose of the reflection), rather than as a set of critical resolutions that should be continually epistemologically questioned and contested, the rubric could only reify the normative discourse of the class. My prompt might have offered a way to critique our rubric epistemologically, or see how socially constructed and determined its values are. I might even have asked them to construct its hypothetical antitheses, in a critical sophisticated way. Seeing what our rubric was *not* could have generated a list of antilogical common sense that might have provided for the kind of reflections I was looking for.

Stronger writers, conversationalists, and extraverts, can, and often did, push discussions in directions they dictated by the force and institutionally sanctioned persuasiveness of their ideas. In these scenarios, the strongest arguments win, and so “abnormal” discourse gets quickly discarded because it’s structured to sound foolish, naïve, or just wrong. Abnormal discourse appears to have no authority when we uncritically work within the institutions usually assumed in college classrooms. Without a way to see epistemologically, normal discourse can’t be questioned effectively (if at all). The discussion becomes normative through those who know the dominant discourse conventions best, like Sarah, Andrew, and the teacher. The students who sound like past teachers tend to carry the discussions, and force agreement. Who would question having a thesis in an essay, or supporting one’s claims with evidence? Everyone agrees. There are lots of examples. There are lots of reasons and plenty of tradition behind these practices. These are teacherly sounding proclamations. Who can argue with this, or with those smart students who are always saying smart things in class?

And so socially justifying belief, normal discourse, which is actually normative when seen as a collective, works from common sense that students already understand about good writing for school. This common sense activates tacit dispositions that validate agency in prescribed ways. For instance, the use of sources in essays as support for claims validates published “experts” authority usually at the cost of student authority and criticality (if you need sources to support your ideas, how can you question those sources?). I’m not advocating strange, arbitrary, or even unconventional writing practices (although these aren’t out of the question); however, seeing rhetorical conventions as structuring structures allows students to question dominant discursive practices and conventions in order to see the implications that discourse has on their personhood, within controlling systems, and to economies of power. This is why the consubstantial aspects of the epistemology of racism are so important to discuss, and why a critical sophistic pedagogy, with its attention to socially derived assessment and value (*nomos* in the classroom) and antilogical heuristics, is vital to the structure of a course. An attention to how the epistemology of racism was working in our reflections and discussions might have led to a critical understanding of our rubric as a constructed and codified set of conventions – that is, we’re not just trying to figure out how to write better. Discussion could have moved from what should be our writing and assessment practices to what structures these practices as valid and acceptable.

By the third rubric revision, the class agreed with both of Sarah’s comments, and because they were two of the three questions posed at this crucial stage of revision, they seemed the most important issues to tackle, which we did. We discussed Andrew’s comments, but it was too difficult to see how a paragraph anything other than at least three sentences. His concern wasn’t contentious since no one could see it as common sense structuring how we define paragraphs.

Andrew was envisioning – a one or two sentence paragraph was outside common sense. It was absurd. It couldn't possibly do what we ask of it in the rest of the rubric. Andrew's question is arguably more "abnormal" than what Sarah offered, but she reflected more, and offered an example for the class to chew on, typical academic, commonsense ways of cultivating agreement. Hers, however, still led to normative discourse. It lit up common sense for us, but did so uncritically. In *verum certum* fashion, students recognized that paragraphs needed a "consistent claim" and at least "three or more sentences" (a micro-version of the five paragraph theme). Abnormal discourse gave way to normative affirmations by aligning with the *habitus* that most saw as a "good writer."

After producing our final version of the rubric, I asked my students to reflect on it again: "what is (are) the most important aspect(s) of this rubric? Why? Explain what you mean. How do you foresee making judgments on your colleagues' paragraphs concerning this one element? How would a writer do this job or not do it? Please be specific." These are familiar questions, ones we've explored in class discussions, but now I was trying to push for abnormal discourse, for the antilogical and counter-hegemonic, for questions, and assumptions made explicit. I also wanted them to begin seeing the rubric as an assessment tool, not just a guide for writing paragraphs. We talked about this in class that week too. But everyone read my questions as an opportunity to affirm our rubric and explain its virtues – an occasion for normative discourse. In fairness, my questions again led them in this direction, and this is a fault of the prompt. If I'm looking for them to question beliefs and investigate discourse conventions in critical ways, the prompt needed to offer structural ways to be critical, not just ask them to be so. Many responses were like Alicia's:

I've decided that having a consistent claim and evidence to back up that claim are the most important elements to me. How can someone have a position on something and write a paper about it without even having a claim or proof of it. I think papers written like that are pointless to read because it is just opinion, no facts. I think it is something basic that all position papers should contain . . . I think it's pretty simple, either you have a consistent claim with evidence to back it up or you don't. . . . It is just something so basic and essential.

Alicia has valid reasons for why a consistent claim and evidence are necessary in a paper, but her reasons are only valid because of the common sense that allows her and her colleagues to see these things as important, essential, and necessary. This common sense is displayed in many reflections discussed in class. The *habitus* of the “smart” and “articulate” student is reified through students' fluent use of claim-support patterns in their reflections and essays, which were read to the class and discussed. Without seeing common sense as epistemologically structuring, Alicia can only offer the standard common sense for evidence and claims. Her disposition for this common sense about what's “pointless” in papers and what needs “proof” are cultivated by what she has come to understand through institutions of good writing, that is, schools, textbooks, teachers, and comments on her papers. She's written in these ways before; common sense, mediated by school and teachers, has become good student *habitus*. “Opinion” for her is not “fact” – that is, sources are needed, evidence is necessary for claims made in school papers. Students don't produce “facts”; they quote them. While articulate and logical, Alicia isn't critical about these rhetorical conventions, nor does she have the opportunity to see how her ideas might be consubstantial with hegemonic structures, like racism. What the epistemology of racism joined to a rhetoric of hard agreements can do is get Alicia to ask competing questions about the

nature of “evidence” and a “consistent claim,” what relationships they have to her personhood, say her agency in her own writing or her identity as a woman in our culture’s capitalistic rhetoric and sexual commodity fetishism. A rhetoric of hard agreements, because it focuses on conflict and dissonance, can allow Alicia to consider how the common sense she draws on is structured, who it serves, and the possible antilogical conclusions. This, however, is too much to ask of my initial prompt, but it’s still a worthy goal for this kind of activity if we are to theorize down the road about our assessment practices and make conclusions concerning SR and personhood in rhetoric.

As a whole most of the class found that the most important element of the rubric was writing to the reader, or “engaging the audience.” Most reflected on this aspect of our rubric in similar ways as Katie did. She explains:

What I find to be the most important part of a paragraph is what audience you are aiming for. When I would write papers in the past I would write about what I was interested in or what some one like me would enjoy to read. I never really paid attention to the fact that other people would be reading my writing so I guess I have been a selfish writer all along! The next paper I write I will think about who I will be writing to and make that my main focus.

Katie seems to change her mind about how she writes. She uses the common sense established in class to adjust her dispositions, constructing new ones based on a less selfish rhetorical stance. Much like Alicia and her colleagues, Katie justifies the dominant view of the class with no resistance to it. Even though Katie comes to it from a different position, there is no questioning of this new stance. As she sees it, Katie hasn’t thought about audience in the past, and so she self-consciously conforms to this new idea because of simple common sense: she should be

interested in her audience's enjoyment of her writing if she's writing to them, and she shouldn't be a selfish writer.

This isn't to say that these ideas are not good ones for Katie to use. I think they are. The question here is whether community-based assessment practices, when coupled with a rhetoric of hard agreements, offers enough opportunities to reflect on epistemologies and hermeneutical practices as processes that structure writing, assessment practices, and personhood. Even when asked to be antilogical and critical, classroom discourse will tend to be normative since purposes and necessary products (like rubrics) force students in this discursive direction. Even though my course is a "special" space in which students can construct their own rubrics, these rubrics have already been determined (for the most part) by the common sense of the academy, often reified in rubrics, published writing, and comments made on student papers. Reflection must therefore be carefully constructed to allow students to see this structuring, and understand how it affects personhood. A part of what is important in seeing this structuring in academic discourses is seeing how they draw from the epistemology of whiteness, which is why conflict is more important than consensus in classroom rhetoric.

If abnormal discourse, as Rorty and Bruffee promote, is still a goal, which I'm not sure it can be, then it's clearly difficult to achieve in a collaborative classroom. As I said in the last chapter, community-based assessment demands that the teacher ride shotgun, allowing the students to drive the class. The teacher provides the structure, but the students provide the rest. A teacher can't tell students to construct a rubric then second guess them, or reject anything, regardless of the teacher's own position on things. If the teacher questions too much and enters the discussion too often, attempting to enforce abnormal discourse, the class's rhetoric ceases to be abnormal discourse. It forces students to *the teacher's* normal discourse, and becomes a hide-

and-see, answer-based, Socratic pedagogy that affirms the authoritative knowledge of the teacher: “I’m thinking of a better idea for our rubric, try to guess what it is class.” The discussion is not theirs, nor is it critical in the sense that students are questioning the structural aspects of their epistemologies or hermeneutical practices. Students don’t get to interrogate or reflect upon the institutions that authorize the values that they each seem to prefer, or their own dispositions that coincide with social common sense.

Catherine Fox, when arguing to “disarticulate critical thinking from whiteness,” explains a classroom paradigm in which abnormal discourse is forced upon students as nothing more than “reproducing whitely ways of being in the world” (203).¹²⁰ She explains that by guiding students too strongly toward the “‘right’ perspective,” that is the teacher’s critical one, “critical thinking comes to mean seeing from and believing in the feminist or critical instructor’s perspective on the manipulative powers that serve the status quo” (201). In this way, “critical thinking,” or the teacher’s abnormal discourse, is set up in the class as a god-trick, *the* perspective from which to see things. Fox asks that we not force students to think in our critical ways, but instead focus on “an imaginative habit of mind” that “move[s] past moral ought-to’s and stop[s] urging our students to race to truths that we have already discovered” (205). This, for Fox, would allow them to establish their own abnormal discourse. She says: “We might construe critical thinking, then, not as a way to home in on the truth through rational deliberation but as an inclination to look for multiple solutions and question their consequences” (205). While I find most of Fox’s argument compelling, and certainly something we all should examine in our own pedagogies (that is, how the epistemology of whiteness is a part of our *habitus* as academics and teachers, and therefore a part of the common sense in our classrooms, to articulate her discussion in my terms), Fox doesn’t solve the most important problems with Bruffee’s paradigm of

abnormal discourse, nor address the gaps that her pedagogy creates concerning epistemology and agency that seem apparent in any writing pedagogy. Will an “imaginative habit of mind” that inclines towards “multiple solutions” and “questions consequences” be able to escape hegemonic discourse without having the theoretical tools to see structurally those solutions, questions, and consequences? Is it really possible to separate whiteness, or even “whitely ways of being” in our classrooms? Another way to ask this is: has it is possible to sift out whiteness from the *habitus* of students and teachers in the university – or even in our “American” culture in general?

The presence of multiple perspectives, and even a questioning of our own, doesn’t necessarily produce an epistemological understanding of knowledge, nor does it reveal the god-tricks in scientific discourse, which the majority of my students find authoritative. This means students cannot question knowledge structurally, or as consubstantial to their own “imaginative habits of mind.” In Fox’s class examples, students find civic problems, investigate various perspectives on those problems, then write papers offering a solution which incorporates consequences and effects (204-05). Her approach clearly focuses on creating dissensus in an individual’s thinking and writing in order for consequences to be understood more fully, but it does not structure a way to connect this thinking or its consequences to larger social patterns and structures of dominance, or even see student thinking and writing as conditioned by forces outside of an imaginary “individual mind.” In fact, she holds very closely to an abstract individualism, akin to what can be found in the epistemology of whiteness.

Fox’s pedagogy can, as she says, “position [sic] us to question the truths that we forward” (207), but it may also construct difference and conflict as the tools for normative discourse, much like my past courses have. Will students see “truth” as merely relative, just a product of individual bias? Will all positions seem equally valid? Will the warrants for this validity be

questioned in structural ways? Will decisions be made purely on cause and effect logics, or individual preference? Or does Fox's pedagogy offer students ways to see discussions, whether philosophical or pragmatic, as ones that work from epistemological frameworks, and thus see knowledge not just as a matter of what end *one* prefers but also what constructs preference in larger social dynamics? Does she offer a way to see the epistemological in difference and conflict? The answers to these questions are unclear, but all are important to our jobs as composition teachers if our jobs are to help define and form criticality in our students. In the writing classroom, we do not need to help students see past whiteness, to disarticulate it from the critical (this isn't possible in the academy), but we do need to help them understand the "critical" as a "political responsibility" to see whiteness, to engage as citizens with the epistemology of whiteness, and to see our complicity with it. While knowledge may be socially constructed, it does not have to be seen as arbitrary, or dependent on mysterious individual experience, bias, or interest, which is where I Fox inadvertently leads her students to believe. "Disarticulating whiteness" from critical thinking, while important to discuss with students, doesn't explicitly account for the consubstantiality of personhood, institutions, and common sense, and it constructs a false epistemological paradigm where whiteness can be separated from academic discourse and inquiry.

Difference and Conflict as Social-Epistemic

To avoid the pitfalls of normative discourse and unexamined whiteness in the classroom, difference and conflict need to be used critically to help construct a social-epistemic rhetoric (i.e. conflict should be used as a way to identify structural elements in the rhetoric of the class). A critical rhetoric that makes conflict a central component of all exchanges and activities can help all students interrogate whiteness as epistemological. If normative discourse reinforces the status

quo – that is, functions through a white *habitus* and white common sense – then a rhetoric that focuses on conflict can interrogate structurally the epistemology of whiteness and thus reveal racism as structural.

The danger in community-based assessment is that difference of opinion, conflict, and alternative hermeneutical practices might be mistaken for bumps in the road, or chaotic spots of dissensus where things appear not to be working. If agreement (often confused as consensus) is the goal, conflict will be the rocky and jarring places that we must quickly pass over and forget. How else can we agree upon a rubric, or an assessment of a paper, unless we focus on common points of view and less on difference? What a rhetoric of hard agreements resists is this will for consensus, a need to agree, or focus only on patterns of agreement – that is, jump the bumps and never look back. John Trimbur describes this kind of consensus in collaborative learning environments as “an inherently dangerous and potentially totalitarian practice that stifles individual voice and creativity, suppresses differences, and enforces conformity” (439). Using Thomas S. Johnson’s language, he says this can be merely “group think” or “peer indoctrination classes” (Trimbur 440). Part of the problem is that many students (and I include many teachers too) feel that resolution, particularly in a collaborative environment, needs to offer peace, ease, and clearer understanding. But if we understand class resolutions about writing as evolving yet codified social agreements (which are themselves in-process and on-going), and we understand that these resolutions attempt to address their own construction and consubstantial nature with personhood, then these resolutions can not only allow for counter-hegemonic discourse but form critical praxis within the classroom. Part of the problem in many collaborative pedagogies is an assumption that a traditional “solution” must be found for all issues or discussions. I hear this same assumption in Catherine Fox’s pedagogy, despite her good efforts to broaden and deepen

her students' views about whiteness. Students tend to feel they need a solution, an answer, and once they have it, all other perspectives are discarded.

Resolutions that engage both comfort and discomfort aren't unusual in our world. It may be a truism to say that communities are neither built on complete consensus nor consist of only members who have equal power and voice. There is always some element of disagreement and contention. Not everyone has equal authority to speak and be heard. To believe that we can construct this kind of community in the classroom is, of course, to believe in a fantasy. Surely students will see through appeals made by a teacher for his class to be a "safe zone" or a community of equals, or a place where power is not exercised over others but where democratic practices guide discussions, decisions, and so forth (things I've said to my classes before, and hear in Fox's account). In fact, the very idea of a "democratic" process, of equal representation of voices (of equal voices), for collaboration and resolution itself contains inherently uneven ground rules of power, with the common sense of the "democratic" elides. Those who talk less, listen more, are less fluent in academic discourse, agree with others more easily (empathize more), are introverted, etc. will be disadvantaged in collaborative settings. Those who talk more, listen less, are less empathetic, more confrontational, feel comfortable arguing and debating with others, who are extraverted, etc. will be privileged. Men will be privileged over women typically. Heterosexual perspectives will dominate others. Whiteness will prevail just as Other discourses will be subjugated. Thus in any real-world "consensus," there is a mix of comfort, pain, ambiguity, ease, and discomfort. When conflict is highlighted as central to discursive practices, then "agreement" is "hard."

When arguing for students to "participate in [the] evaluation of their work, negotiating with one another and with their instructors in an open exchange, acting as full members of the

classroom and university community” (Bullock 200), Richard Bullock says that “the idea of community is . . . mythical and plural, that it allows for both consensus and conflict” in the classroom (199). In other words, power relationships, even among students, are never equal either. Additionally, Bullock says, the paradigm of coach and judge, which are contradictory (190), “ignores the programmatic, institutional, disciplinary, and cultural communities of which each individual classroom, its students, and its teacher are part.”¹²¹ The coach paradigm fails to take into account a teacher’s “complex web of roles, expectations, and constraints that make [. . . the teacher’s] autonomy in the classroom an illusion,” particularly when assessing (190). When negotiating the classroom, power relationships and the mediating institutions that authentic power need to be addressed. Community is always built and maintained around relations of power, difference, and agreement. And agreement in community functions best when difference and conflict are minimized, erased, or co-opted. This means that consensus is simply another name for explicit consent to hegemony. If left unaddressed or unnoticed, this kind of community agreement not only seems too restrictive and totalitarian, but it takes away critical voice and agency from students. Our rhetorics, first, must critically address the plurality in communities so that we don’t reinforce “mythical” notions of consensus and “truth,” and interrogate the epistemological structure of the various perspectives in (or absent from) classroom discussions. This means that the process of rhetorical agreement contains conflict. Second, language not only reflects certain relations of power but reifies and reproduces them dynamically from various sites, through agents working in concert with common sense (engrained in *habiti*), and mediated through institutions, like writing programs and university settings. Our pedagogies must interrogate our hermeneutical practices as well as the epistemology of racism in order for knowledge to be understood. How each of us reads and values things within networks, how we

enact *habiti*, can show how communities produce value (common sense) in the world, and how ideas like “individualism” and “merit” are ways to hide hegemony by ignoring the agents’ consubstantial nature with social forces of cultural production. The classroom must talk about epistemologies and hermeneutics as linked practices of cultural production. If we see how we use the epistemology of racism in our own rhetorics, we may also see how it functions to reproduce racism in structural ways.

But in community-based assessment, we aren’t looking to formulate typical consensus, but hard agreements. We want conflict. In his discussion of collaboration in the evaluation of writing, using Miles Myers’ observations, Bullock says that it’s not agreement that’s most productive in dialogues about texts. It is “discrepancy” that leads to “fruitful dialogue about our underlying assumptions” (193). Conflict allows for new vistas of meaning to be scanned.

Trimbur, when countering Bruffee’s criticism of “struggle” and dissent in collaborative classrooms, says that not only are we “born into” struggle, but we often experience community as a “polyphony of voices.” Quoting Bruffee himself, Trimbur acknowledges that communities are experienced as “both limiting and liberating,” and uses Bakhtin’s term to explain.

Communities are a “‘heteroglot,’ a mosaic of vernaculars, the multi-accented idiomatic expression of race, class, and gender differences” (Trimbur 447). Providing for conflict in our rhetorics also acknowledges the way real agreement and resolutions work in the world, but what also needs accounting for is power, another aspect of the heteroglot of the classroom. Students have various *habiti* and institutions around them, which each brings to the class. *Habiti* arrange our discourses so that some in the classroom have more authority than others when they speak or write. Institutions, both within the academy and outside it add weight to the words of some, and lighten those of others. So an important part of what defines a rhetoric of hard agreements is its

necessary attention to all aspects of the classroom heteroglot, power relationships included. This makes conflict very difficult to negotiate.

Kenneth Burke provides another way to see disagreement and agreement co-existing in his discussions of image and idea. In “Dramatistic View of Origins,” he posits that language literally shows us what is not there. An idea, like the word “tree,” is literally not a material tree (Wess 232-33). In a Derridian kind of way, ideas point to (or play with) other ideas in the network of signs. Ideas, in this sense, construct themselves through “différance.”¹²² So a community value, like “support your claims with secondary sources,” inherently encapsulates its antilogical arguments, or counter-claims – like personal experience is good (maybe better) support, evidence is not necessary for all claims, appeals to faith may back up ideas better, etc. Thus when we make one claim or a resolution from agreement, we should also realize, if we are attempting to be faithful to a rhetoric of hard agreements, that we also invoke additional antilogical claims in the networks of meaning, even if they may be ultimately discarded. Our collaborative activities should help students explicate this dynamic, that is, explain the epistemic nature of the knowledge they wish to produce and use. And so conflict becomes integral to the design of resolutions, but the general workings of traditional consensus tend to erase difference when social-epistemic issues are not addressed. That is, when we seek consensus and not resolutions based on hard agreements. Working from similar assumptions in his critique of Sterling Leonard’s and Kenneth Bruffee’s notions of consensus and reality, Greg Myers states: “But if conflict is part of the [social and economic] system, and is necessary to change the system, then consensus, within the system as it is, must mean that some interests have been suppressed or excluded.” Myers begins to reveal the key role power relationships play in conflict through suppressed “interests,” which are products of power differentials in groups and

individuals. In the classroom, when we call attention to these differentials, hard agreements can incorporate in the heteroglot the conflict in community as sets of power relations that are linked to ideas and positions (i.e. *habiti* that are consubstantial with commonsense discourse), even though an element of agreement will have to be included. Both areas, agreement and conflict, are necessary, but then they depend on each other, as Trimbur, Myers, and Burke suggest.

Trimbur not only acknowledges the need for conflict in the classroom, he wants to “rehabilitate the notion of consensus by redefining it in relation to a rhetoric of dissensus.” He explains that “collaborative learning” is not just “a process of consensus-making but more important[ly] . . . a process of identifying differences and locating these differences in relation to each other.” So what we get then are “collective explanations of how people differ, where their differences come from, and whether they can live and work together with these differences” (448). Trimbur accounts for differences and the dispositions that help construct them in agents, but as we’ve seen in the structuring of collaborative activities, collaboration must have an expressed purpose and goal that (self)consciously shape its products and process as epistemic endeavors; otherwise even collaboration that emphasizes conflict can end up being never-ending discussions or normative ones. Just collecting everyone’s explanations of things isn’t that different from Bruffee’s notion of normal discourse, where students socially justify ideas and negotiate since this is the point. People don’t offer claims they can’t justify if justifying is the point of the discussion. One thing that the epistemology of racism shows us is how some claims will not seem justifiable in some communities, and by some individuals, yet those are the very claims of knowledge and voices that need to be explored if dominant ideologies are to be questioned and epistemologies interrogated. Thus the acknowledgement of conflict and difference as a structured purpose, say by using the epistemology of racism as a social-epistemic

framework for prompts and activities, is vital to a rhetoric of hard agreements since part of addressing conflict is understanding how our discourse is structured through power relations in the heteroglot of the classroom.

The epistemology of racism then is important to understand and employ by students. If used as a self-conscious lens to see how different positions are constructed, to see conflict as relations of power within networks that produce meaning, then collaborative activities can focus on conflict productively. Students would not be asked just to find resolutions for what good writing should be in the class, but asked also to produce detailed explanations of how knowledge is structured, accepted, authorized, and contested. They might explore the conditions by which agreement can be made, or what conditions agreement would structure. The difference between a rhetoric of hard agreements and Trimbur's rhetoric of dissensus that incorporates collective explanations is that the epistemology of racism provides a structure for students to explore the social-epistemics that make up knowledge and power – like common sense, institutions, and *habitus*. This rhetoric focuses their energies on a tangible goal: resolutions that are difficult and fluid. A rhetoric of hard agreements will strive to listen to all voices, and articulate the social and epistemological structuring of resolutions. This kinds of discussions will offer ways for the class to discuss what is gained and lost in agreement, who has been noticeably silenced and why, and how future decisions should consider these things.

Alan France emphasizes epistemology and power relations in his materialist rhetoric, saying that students must learn to “recognize[e] those occupying subject positions incorporated in texts and their material, as well as discursive, subordination to structures of power” (36). In other words, to write critically, to understand how material conditions and knowledge are constructed and arranged, we must see the various positions as social and political constructions

that make up the alleged “conversation” more fully (or limit it), even those perspectives not explicitly heard in texts, or apparently silent. An attention to the social and political construction of hard agreement and its resolutions is absent in my initial attempts at community-based assessment practices, but it is necessary if hegemonic structures are to be linked to power and the bodies that wield this power. Conflict and tension can be revealed in purposeful, self-conscious social-epistemic activities, making the intellectual products of the classroom resolutions that offer critical insight. This is at the heart of a rhetoric of hard agreements.

Critical Hermeneutics as an Understanding of Relativism

Bullock’s comment that a “complex web of roles, expectations, and constraints” help construct an agent’s hermeneutic practices affirms that any act of assessment, whether done by a teacher or student, is constructed by all agents’ respective *habiti* and the common sense in the classroom around writing and assessment. This means we’ll always read and judge some things differently, even if only slightly, but as members of various of discourse communities and social groups, we each draw on shared common sense. Additionally, institutions that manufacture context and exigency in the classroom, minister authority and agency in uneven ways to students and teachers, structure our discourse and our hermeneutic practices. We articulate rhetorical dispositions through assessments in various ways, even if we make resolutions that are worded self-consciously. Additionally, the institutions of “academic writing,” the university, the particular writing program that the course is situated in, personal affiliations, and the classroom culture itself, among others, unevenly minister value and authority to all claims and observations made about writing and to all agents involved. These institutions structure measuring about our world as “observations” and “facts,” promote certain kinds of sensing and judging, and normalize ideas. A female student, who is a member of a sorority, may be able to make claims of

knowledge about sorority life that others in the classroom can't. Most students would not contest her claims either because of the authority ministered to her through the sorority affiliation she operates within. This means appeals to some objective "reality," to "facts" about a text and its meaning, even rationalizations over aspects of our rubric, need to be revealed as constructions within knowledge networks that are voiced by agents (with varying degrees of power and authority). Abstract ideas outside of networks of meaning or beyond the power relations inherent in the *hexis* of agents is a fiction. This is, of course, more than what Bullock suggests in his "complex web of roles, expectations, and constraints," but he's heading in this direction. Myers, calling on Richard Ohmann, says: "If what we think of as facts are determined by our ideological framework, the facts cannot themselves get us beyond that framework" (423). And this is true for epistemological reasons (which Myers suggests here), and equally true because facts do not exist until they are given life and substance through agent *habitus* and socially constructed common sense, and validated through ministering institutions that provide context and occasion.

Facts are also interpreted by hermeneutical practices. Because we can't manufacture a rubric, discuss it, or use it outside epistemological frameworks – in fact, we need epistemology to help us – it is very difficult for students to view the frameworks that allow them to see *as they use them*. Hermeneutics and epistemology are two conjoined processes. Our individual measurements of the world are not isolated acts of personal preference, but usually the various ways in which hegemony is iterated. This is why critical hermeneutics is important to a classroom that allows for student assessment practices, which can seem like mere relativism. We need ways see the structures in our readings of the world, ways to see past "personal opinion" and toward *habitus* as common and common sense as habitual. More importantly, a rhetoric of hard agreements, because it asks students to engage with conflict at a structural and epistemological

level, should be linked to critical hermeneutical activity so that students can interrogate more fully how their measuring practices and views on things may be implicated in SR, the epistemology of whiteness, regimes of truth, and their own personhood.

It may be important to note here that Myers and Ohmann's previously mentioned "frameworks" is too isolated and outside of agents and their *habiti*, very much like Burke's "terministic screens." These two terms suggest that we can put them on or take them off at will, and that they are distinct from the power relations that institutions mediate and *habitus* invoke. As useful as "frameworks" and "terministic screens" are, they are divorced from agents, which could fool us into believing that we may have some objective vantage point from which to examine ideology, or that ideology can exist outside of agents' practices and bodies – as if common sense isn't partially consubstantial with *habitus*. Thus we must always be careful how we use our terms. I prefer "structures" because it calls forth the dual aspects of each element of the epistemology of racism, particularly *habitus*: that is, "structures" conveniently invokes the idea that *habitus*' is a set of dispositions, a set of constructs, engrained on our bodies and associated with networks of common sense in community; and that these constructs also have "structuring" functions, which is to say, they are durable and transposable, iterating and reproductive.

Our purpose, now, for a rhetoric of hard agreements is also critically hermeneutic as well as epistemological – that is, it pushes us to understand *how* and *why* we use the epistemological practices we do to produce knowledge and to be aware of them as we engage in rhetorical activity. The hermeneutic helps us see how small variation is produced in a system of discourse and cultural production, like "literary texts" or film, that ultimately reproduces dominant discourse. It highlights what I've said about SR and the epistemology of racism. While things

seem anti-racist, the epistemology of racism structures our world, its institutions, and agents' interactions so that racial subordination continues;¹²³ hence racism is structural and the classroom is another site for its reproduction. While my hermeneutical dialectical activities and reflection prompts do not alone help students examine the epistemological frameworks from which they draw up knowledge, they do allow students to explore hermeneutics. However what is still needed to help students theorize more concretely their writing practices is a careful attention to the elements of hermeneutic activity, to see their translations of epistemology as variations of it and not simply as "individual opinion." This is a tougher project to accomplish, as I've found.

During week eight after a full set of position paper assessments, I asked my students to reflect upon our rubric and their hermeneutical practices, and to consider these ideas in relation to class discussions on similar issues. This was to help us theorize and improve our assessment practices by looking at the ways in which we all read our rubric and each other's writing. The prompt read:

In past reflections, most of you identified the second section of our rubric, "Invoking Audience . . .," as the most important to you. It states three elements we're supposed to evaluate and grade:

- Offer significance of the writer's position to the audience (should answer: "so what?")
- Be complex enough to elicit thinking beyond basic observations
- Challenge inquisitively and engage intellectually its audience

From your experience reading and assessing papers in our class so far, how do YOU find "significance" in our writing? How have writers been able to "engage intellectually" with you (or how have some come the closest)?

How is your personal vision of these kinds of “invoking audience” different than the general sentiments of the class (as you hear them in our discussions)?

What constitutes “complex” and “beyond basic observations” for you? Provide an example to help flesh out what you mean.

We discussed and revised our rubric several times by this point, and this rubric was used by everyone to assess a recent paper, so we had lots of discussions about what we thought our rubric was telling us to do and look for. Additionally in the following week, we were going to use it to both assess and evaluate, which also involved ranking (the mock grade). The bolded prompt above asks students to consider how they read specific criteria from our rubric, which they knew well. We discussed briefly in class that I wasn't asking them to explain again what “significance” looks like, or what “engage intellectually” means, even though it would most likely be a part of the reflection – that would be epistemological reflection, not hermeneutical. Instead I asked them to explain *how* they came to see significance in particular papers from their colleagues, that is, I asked them to consider hermeneutics. Based on their experience so far, how did they know something was applicable to this particular rubric dimension? How were they reading their colleagues' writing?

Most reflected in similar ways as Jake, using normative discourse; however many were able to reflect on their hermeneutical practices in personal ways. Jake says:

I think it's easier for someone to get “significance” from writing when it is their own work. People tend to write about things they care about, and these things are most significant to them. A lot of the time when I read other people's work, it might not be “significant” to me. I am not saying it isn't interesting, that's

not the case, it just might not apply to me as much as others. When writers do “engage intellectually” with me, usually they write about something I am not too familiar with, and their writing has a way of intriguing me. My personal vision of this isn’t too different from that of the class. It seems that most people are somewhat similar, and the writing they read is easier to understand when it relates to yourself.

“Complex” and “beyond basic observations” to me is taking what you right above and beyond what is expected. By this, I mean that people should take their research and writing up a level. More sources help, and also considering the opposing side of your argument is a strong thing to do also. It can strengthen your argument and also shows you aren’t ignorant in a way.

Like Jake, most students saw “significance” in originality, personal interest, or applicability of topic selection. Some even talked in terms of “voice” and energy that emanated from the writer’s work. Jake is hesitant to say, as most were, that there are universally significant ideas or topics we could point to, enduring questions or rhetorical strategies that allow for significance, instead he relies on a mystical personal appeal. Jake’s reflection may offer hints at how he assesses papers in broad terms, but it doesn’t address why he has chosen the epistemology he articulates here, nor does he explain how his personal interest or applicability can be thought of or intellectualized. What constitutes “interesting” for Jake? And where do these things come from? An example from a past assessment may have helped him answer these unaddressed aspects of the prompt. Clearly it’s difficult for him to talk about hermeneutics, even when asked explicitly. In fact, most in the class had this same difficulty. Many emphasized personal integrity, care, and intellectual curiosity to describe their hermeneutic activities. While this kind of

theorizing is a good start to seeing hermeneutics through our rubric's epistemology, it's mostly given in vague or broad terms, as Jake's is. Their reflections, in general, said very little about audience (which is the focus of this rubric element, "Invoking Audience"). Additionally, over half the class made statements similar to the one Jake makes near the end of the first paragraph, one that confirms his agreement with the rest of the class on these issues. We could read this statement as one that explains why he sees things in this way – that is, because the class has agreed to understand the rubric in this way, the rubric functions as normative cues for our discourse and assessments. But it may more accurately show us how powerfully normative our discussions were.

Most in the class also invoked traditional criteria to explain things, as Jake does in his comments on complexity and going "beyond basic observations" in our writing. Basically, Jake says if he judges that a writer has used "more sources" and "considered the opposing side," then a position paper will be "complex." This seems like typical English teacher common sense. Again, Jake offers a basic epistemology, a framework that allows him to use this rubric dimension in assessing – a great start – but something we've discussed in class a lot. He doesn't provide any substantive reflection on why or how secondary sources help complexity, or why or how considering opposing arguments might demonstrate a writer going beyond basic observations. And he doesn't consider where these values come from, or what socially feeds them. He does start to though, saying that these things "strengthen your argument and also show[s] you aren't ignorant." But then this idea is a parting comment not fully explained. And this kind of hermeneutic reflection was the point of the activity.

As my previous prompt shows, part of this activity's failure is mine. My prompt, while basically good, doesn't incorporate any theoretical concepts that allow Jake to move past

discussions of basic epistemology already covered and toward hermeneutical reflection. The prompt needs to offer a structuring theory, focus points or concepts, for Jake to use in his critical hermeneutical reflection. This would help connect his epistemological observations with his own translation of them into rhetoric and assessments. While Jake does explain some of his hermeneutical practices, as most of his colleagues did, he shows us how he reads our rubric and what things mean to him, but it's less clear how these things actually look in papers, where they come from, how he understands them as structured into our discourse and course assignments, and how he is translating them when assessing others' writing. Again, I contribute much of this to my prompt's language. Providing theory would allow Jake to engage in critical hermeneutics, a practice that calls attention to its own structure and ways of structuring.

Mike, on the other hand, offers a somewhat atypical response that comes much closer to my critical-hermeneutic intentions for this reflection, but still falls short by missing the connection to larger structures that construct his reading of things. Part of Mike's reflection reads:

To find 'significance' in writing I simply ask myself the "so what?" question. Did I learn anything of value from what I just read? Does it make sense? Did the author think his/her idea through, to make sure it was sound?

For example, if I read a paper that claims the sky is blue, I don't really care, it is not beyond a basic observation. That is not significant to me; I know it's blue cause I can see that too. If I read a paper that explains why the sky looks blue, be it because of the elements and gases that make up the atmosphere or for some other reason, this will have significance. It will be explaining something to

me that I don't already know or understand; it is offering some sort of insight not just a general observation.

Mike explains that significance can be a number of things, illustrated in his questions. He says that he translates the "so what" in "significance" as writing that promotes learning something "of value," and arguments that "make sense" and are "sound." But what's different in Mike's reflection is the example, despite it being hypothetical. It allows his more abstract epistemological explanation before it to be understood in specific ways that relate to Mike's vision of our rubric. This is Mike's way of understanding how the "so what" question is translated in assessment. Significance, not so ironically, is epistemological. It's not *that* the sky is blue, but *how* or *why* the sky appears blue provided in discourse.

Mike's reflection, while similar to Jake's in that it addresses hermeneutics without any attention to structure, balances his explanation of how he understands our rubric's dimension of "significance" with what he might assess in an actual paper from the class. It's a bit more nuanced and detailed than Jake's because of the example he provides. The example attempts to apply the rubric and explain how Mike assesses a rubric dimension in actual writing. This is a solid second step, a step that starts with epistemology and approaches hermeneutics, but it's not critical. The third step in theorizing practice would be to think about this example as one that doesn't just explain how Mike assesses, but parses out the consubstantial elements of that act of assessment. What in community tells Mike that discussions about how blue is created in the sky is more "significant" than a declaration of the fact that the sky is blue? How has Mike himself accepted this common sense about the nature of rhetorical insights for college writing? Critical hermeneutic reflection would talk specifically about the plurality in Protagoras' man-measure doctrine – that is, the way in which communities judge language/ideas through the lens of

common sense structured in community, and how individuals, who share in *habitus*, draw on this common sense to identify and validate discourse as significant.

Through the concepts that the epistemology of racism offers, Mike might have even been able to question why he places a high premium on new or unfamiliar information, which could help the class untangle where, socially and historically, values like “originality” and “new-ness” come from. We could reveal structures in our discourse that point to institutionally sanctioned agents and ideas, common sense and its links to agents *habitus*, and finally show how all these things structure our various ways of reading the world (i.e. see how man-measure is plurally singular). This would be critically hermeneutic reflection.

The immediate benefit to students, however, is that critical hermeneutical reflection can demystify the act of assessment for students, explaining why three colleagues in the same class can assess the same paper with the same rubric and come up with three very different, even conflicting, judgments. It identifies how each may draw from various common sense, which may be contradictory. In those brief moments when my classes were able to think in meta-hermeneutic ways, assessment and evaluation, even grading, became clearer for them, and more bearable. We do not have to rely solely on tacit values or unexamined hermeneutic practice. Assessment is no longer *just* “someone’s opinion” or bias. That bias is consciously traced by the writer, understood in context and from various subject positions, which will allow the writer to make better decisions about revision.

When linked to the epistemology of racism, critical hermeneutic reflection uses “*habitus*” (dispositions and *hexis*), “commonsense,” and “institutions” as focus points, theory to see structure and hegemony. Critical hermeneutic reflection will also illustrate how difficult it is to find completely “independent” intellectual activity, how *habitus* and its discursive products (e.g.

student essays or assessments) are consubstantial with common sense. This means when you let students assess one another – when *anyone* makes judgments on others’ writing – racism will be involved and potentially damaging hegemonic discourse will assert its dominance and power over us. This is why our rhetoric in the classroom and all assessment practices must be critical, so that we not simply complicit with SR, but can be conscious of where to see it and maybe how to work against it.

Of course, critical hermeneutics isn’t about finding the “truth” or the “right way” to assess a piece of writing, nor is it about making students see their judgments of writing in predefined ways. It’s about the mechanics of why and how we inevitably do assess knowledge and discourse in reality, how our individual practices are connected to larger structures in society, and how those structures structure our ways of being. The goal of a rhetoric of hard agreements is to produce epistemological and hermeneutical accounts of knowledge construction. Therefore when we theorize and practice assessment in classrooms, first, we should be thinking in terms of hermeneutics as well as social-epistemology; and second, we should theorize hermeneutics as a critical human activity separable for discussion and analysis but not separated from epistemology in practice. We can’t fully take off our glasses without going blind. The rubric is needed to see our hermeneutics in epistemology, or our epistemology in our hermeneutics. Bourdieu’s theory of bodily *hexus* shows us that our dispositions are a part of our very bodies (the material and ideological are inseparable). His theory around institutions shows us that formal (and informal) structures in social settings, such as the classroom, can be use to create a context where it’s possible to discuss hegemony and its effects on personhood, to move hermeneutical discussions closer to ones that implicate us in larger structures of dominance and power relations. This approach rejects relativism as a mystical phenomenon in our world.

Assessments aren't just biased accounts of things. An attention to critical hermeneutics offers accounts that link agents to the epistemology of racism in a process of evolving and contextual activity. Therefore, while reflection in community-based assessment practices asks students to question how they translate our rubrics into writing and assessment practices, these activities also need to provide explicit ways to accomplish these very difficult critical hermeneutic acts, and be ready for varying degrees of success.

One drawback to making any kind of reflection public is its normative effect, and this can be particularly dangerous with reflections around hermeneutics. Vico's *verum factum* principle explains how it works in any community. Like any repeated rhetoric in a classroom, regularly discussed reflections can make hermeneutic practices seem like fact for students, like *the authorized way* of assessing or conceptualizing the rubric. For instance, his hermeneutic reflection allows Mike to see "significance" in personal and specific ways, ways that tangibly help him and his colleagues in assessments, and in the process this can make his ideas fact for the class and himself if they seem accepted by the teacher and others. And as we've already seen, institutionally sanctioned ideas voiced by students can force the class toward unquestioned adherence to possibly harmful, dominant ideology. A focus on resolutions, evolving agreement, may help. While we may form a resolution about Mike's ideas, but our discussion of what this critical hermeneutic reflection means to our practices should remain an open text for future analysis.

And so while critical hermeneutic discussions can help (re)construct writing priorities, discursive conventions, and contentious hermeneutical practices more explicitly, building common sense for the class, they can also serve to solidify the status quo if only the dominant voices are dwelt on in discussions. Highlighting reflections that the teacher feels best articulates

things, or says what she feels is most accurate, or says most clearly what others in the class also say, can erase productive conflict. At times, I may have done this in my zeal to show students that they are seeing things in “critical” and good ways, that is, *my* critical and good ways. While much of my class time with my students’ reflections are spent discussing common patterns and issues I find, it seems more important to use public reflections written by students as texts that the class can use to mine for common sense and see how various structures of power are at work in our rhetoric and assessment practices.

In short, critical hermeneutic reflections aren’t about coming to consensus, or even agreement. Critical hermeneutics is about revealing the varied ways we each have to do what we’ve all agreed we’d do, assess one another’s writing according to our rubric. It uses the class as a ministering institution self-consciously to reveal the ways our *habiti* are structured and structuring, as well as pushes students to reflect on how they are complicit in larger structures of power.

Critical Agreement and Resolution

Up to this point, I’ve discussed why encouraging conflict is important to constructing agreement which leads to “resolutions.” A critical, social-epistemic discourse, which incorporates an epistemological theory like the epistemology of racism, is therefore useful because it attempts to account for difference and traditionally silenced voices while calling attention to the relations of power inherent in the classroom. I called this a rhetoric of hard agreements. I’ve also shown that for a rhetoric of hard agreements to work, critical hermeneutic reflection must be present and linked to discussions of epistemology. This kind of public reflection moves students toward understanding others’ assessments as contextualized judgments, pregnant with *habitus* and the common sense of the classroom. There will never be a

direct and objective correlation between what a rubric asks for and what an assessor actually sees and judges, then articulates to the writer, yet, things don't have to be thought of as random and relative. Foundational to this revision of community-based assessment practice is students' critical understanding of agreement, resolution, and traditional notions of academic "conversation."

The difficulty in facilitating collaboration and assessment within a community is to help everyone see what agreement and resolution are, how they are constructed, and for what ends in the class. The process is a critical process not just one that socially constructs rubrics and assessments of student writing. Hermeneutic dialectical activities do not inherently create a critical attitude toward rhetorical conventions, particularly ones that are already *verum factum* or *verum certum* to students, that is, tacitly validated. Many of my students suggest, if not say outright, in their final reflections of our courses that they "now know what good writing is" or "now know how to assess others' writing." What's typically implied is that our course and its activities have made certain the facts about good writing and assessing – our rubric becomes *verum factum* through *verum certum*. This still works from an uncritical (although in many cases more nuanced) understanding of writing and assessment as an objective set of "truths" that just need to be "found" in some neo-platonic way, and hermeneutical acts as the relative and quirky way each of us translate things.

Therefore, focusing on assessment practices as one site of conflict that critical hermeneutic activity can use as a "text" to reveal *habitus* and common sense is important. This may allow for students to begin to see more clearly *how* writing is constructed in networks as "good," or *how* to understand assessment as contextual judgments for certain purposes and uses that are determined in structural ways. It may show them that agreement and resolution ought to

be critically based – that is, based on epistemological and hermeneutic dialectics that critically construct knowledge, not blindly form “truths” from assumptions. What these goals acknowledge is the epistemological endeavors that help folks see through the god-tricks, frameworks, and feigned “objectivity” of the world. In part, this vision is due to acknowledging power relations in our assessment and writing practices. Agreement and resolution, then, become critical since we acknowledge that some have more power and others may be quite powerless.

Michael Oakeshott’s famous “conversation” metaphor (from his 1959 article “The Conversation of Mankind”), used by Bruffee and criticized by France, Myers, and Trimbur, is problematic then for the classroom. It’s simply unrealistic and more importantly uncritical. According to Oakeshott, among “civilized human beings” an unending conversation takes place “within us as well as among us” (Bruffee 397). It began “in the primeval forests and extended and made more articulate in the course of centuries.” In a democratic fashion and as equals, we learn socially to “recognize the voices, to distinguish the proper occasions of utterance . . . and . . . we acquire the intellectual and moral habits appropriate to conversation” (Oakeshott qtd. in Bruffee 397). But using this explanation as a paradigm for collaboration in the classroom is naïve and dangerous, as Trimbur and France explain. In social-epistemic rhetoric, students allegedly can democratically contribute to the conversation without *habitus* or institutions affecting greatly that conversation, goes Oakeshott’s logic. Agents can function in a void, sort of speak, where institutions’ ministrations over the authority of their bodies and words are ignored, and the common sense that construct logics and warrant claims is unexamined. The point becomes the never-ending conversation, says Trimbur (445). Since there are no universals to hold on to, and all truths are socially constructed, then all we can do is “keep on talking to each other (Trimbur 445). Purpose is either absent or assumed to be some abstract “academic inquiry” that tends to

mean little to most students because it sounds like busywork or too “philosophical” (i.e. “useless”), and it certainly doesn’t appear to offer tangible or productive knowledge for their current writing practices.

Agreement achieved around the conversation metaphor, then, becomes normative, oppressive, or useless, even if it’s not consensus. It isn’t critical because agreements are made without examining epistemologies or hermeneutics, without taking into account the structures that produce power relations and knowledge. Agreement works, in a traditional “conversation,” to find a quick, unreflexive, purely practical solution at the cost of substantive critique. Agreement through the conversation metaphor tends to exclude conflict and “disguises the unequal distribution of literacy,” obscuring “the fundamental hierarchy of social class and educational opportunity” (France 102), all in the name of finding consensus. Power relations and structuring structures in society and discourse are ignored. Additionally, a social-epistemic rhetoric that ignores relations of power and unequal distribution of cultural capital “disguises not only who may speak but also what may be spoken” (France 102) in the class. France summarizes well the kernel problems with relying on the conversation metaphor in classrooms:

The conversation metaphor suggests that knowledge and power are equally diffused – like linguistic competence – throughout society, and that all members enjoy standing invitations . . . The contention over the established distribution of power in any society is far more subtle than collaborative rhetorics would have it: “knowledgeable peers” themselves are instrumental in advancing and consolidating the established apportionment of power by directing attention away from real or potential conflict. They consolidate dominant discourses by

withholding from dissent the sanction of “knowledge” and, of course, by ignoring the interests of those excluded from the conversation. (32)

France’s highlighting of the fact that “knowledge and power are unequally diffused” in the classroom (and in society) has other consequences. One is that those “quiet students,” as well as our more vocal ones, may be so more for reasons of power and access to cultural capital (displayed and used in classroom discourse). In this view, some students are always silent not because of natural inner propensities or personal choice, but because past and current classroom contexts have structured their voices out of the conversation. The conversation’s rules for engagement do not allow them to participate much, if at all. These rules are common sense to all, like answering teachers’ questions directly instead of saying what may be on one’s mind; however, according to the epistemology of racism, they are consubstantial to *habitus*, such as the quite, introverted female student in the back of the room. The problem with this kind of silence is that it’s often perceived as agreement.

To add to this critique, as my discussions on SR show, we often do exclude ourselves – in fact, if Gramsci, San Juan, and others are correct: the system’s dominance over certain groups demands that those groups go along with their subjugation, consent to it, and even help construct their own unequal statuses. If we are not careful, rhetorics of hard agreement, or any collaborative rhetoric, can do this too by blindly reproducing discourse conventions, allowing for agreement at the cost of profitable conflict. Thus even the presence of difference, which can be an element of conversation, isn’t enough. Conversation becomes a hegemonic device for consent to the status quo. Dissonant and conflicting voices are politely ignored because they seem to have no authority or offer no “reasonable” and commonsensical explanations of things. They come out of “left field,” and do not fit within our unquestioned hermeneutical frameworks. The

conversation metaphor doesn't construct a necessary space for conflict that helps resolutions evolve. It doesn't vest legitimacy and value to the illegitimate and devalued antilogical claims usually excluded from discussions. By focusing purely on pragmatic ends without considering what makes up the "pragmatic," who it benefits, and who gets a say in all these things, we reproduce in our class the same kind of harmful hegemonies we rail against in our society.

Legitimizing conflict means that all ideas in the classroom must be reasonable from some subject position in the network. Their epistemological grounds must be interrogated, but not measured against dominant ones. A rhetoric of hard agreements might offer resolutions that explain why the class must legitimize some ideas at the cost of others, where those values for legitimacy come from, and who they serve in the class (and at what costs). Collaboration in a rhetoric of hard agreements must be a process that structures in conflict so that students can reflexively find important patterns of similarity and difference. It should allow them to arrange these patterns in ways that help reveal the ways meaning and authenticity of ideas are structured and determined within networks of agency. And a rhetoric of hard agreements should enable students to see not just the purpose for their products (e.g. to assess peers' writing), but also consider how those purposes are constructed and measured socially, and what these insights may teach. Collaboration then is based on conflict and should encourage hard agreements that are conscious of their contexts, purposes, uses, agents involved, and educative significance in the classroom. Resolutions can be epistemologically driven and be informed by critical hermeneutics. Therefore, they are not pragmatic in the sense that our methods can be directly translated for effective use in other arenas of life, but they will show us how those other arenas work in order for us to negotiate them better in the future. A rhetoric of hard agreements should

make it difficult to blindly reproduce dominant ideology, despite reproducing much of it nonetheless.

The “Hard” in A Rhetoric of Hard Agreements

I must admit in this conclusion that what I suggest is very difficult to achieve. Every semester, I see clearly how hard it is for my students (and me) to stick to our rubrics, to use them faithfully and consistently, to engage in critical dialogue about them – in fact, I see mostly how “faithfully” and “consistent” practices are questionable goals to measure. The hard agreements in a rhetoric of hard agreements are “hard” at many levels. They are hard to reach when all voices not only must be heard but seriously considered and kept on the table for future consideration. They are hard to keep because we can’t help but constantly break them when new wrinkles in writing show up, or when we forget them. They are hard to use as assessors because our *habiti* vary and are in flux, thus our hermeneutical practices seem different and shifting. Our agreements are hard because we often can’t see clearly our *habitus*, or even common sense as sites of critical interrogation. Our agreements are often even hard to use as explanations in assessments since we aren’t used to working in this explicit way. They are hard to theorize if they appear to be continually evolving, which also makes them hard to grasp as “rules” or “guides” for writing and assessing. They are hard to see as constructed by agents within the networks of knowledge present in the classroom because they are themselves regimes of truth that dominate us, and thus they are hard eventually to problematize – they seem so right after a while, unquestionable.

Finally, a rhetoric of hard agreements is hard because our resolutions often don’t seem like agreements in a traditional sense. How can we work from an assumption about support that ultimately may get changed when we add new views on writing down the road, when we read the

next batch of assessments and look for better practices, even better rubric criteria? How can I disagree about something, yet still find hard agreement without any grudges? How can I agree to one set of values now, then alter that judgment down the road? How can I revise my writing when the rubric keeps changing? How can we honor each other's views yet not simply have willy-nilly relativistic discussions that seem to go nowhere, value everything, or offer assessments so contingent on the assessors' dispositions, they seem broadly useless? How can hard agreement produce resolutions if everyone's excuse for their hermeneutical practices seem valid?

The answers to many of these questions is to see structure in our assessment practices, to critically analyze them just as carefully as we do the other writing in the course, and to use the epistemology of racism as a set of conceptual focus points for student reflection on hermeneutics. The epistemology of racism, when used as a lens to see hermeneutical activity, shows literally how writing conventions are constructed *verum factum* and practiced *verum certum* in ways that predetermine not only the "available means of persuasion" (in Aristotle's words) but the available conception of knowledge – truth itself. The epistemology of racism provides a way to talk about our talking about writing and assessing, a critical framework for discussion about our discussions.

As many have already argued, our job as writing teachers is also to help students understand (and maybe critique) the workings of "authoritative language" (France 100), to "interrogate the conversation" of the dominant power relations that construct knowledge (Trimbur 451), to see that "reality can be seen as a social construct" that can be criticized (Myers 429). Writing classes should be inherently epistemological dialogues helping students see why they do what they have to do in language and practice, and maybe provide spaces for doing

things they haven't been allowed to do before. Our classroom rhetorics should move students to see that learning to read and write is nothing less than the powerful practice of citizen creation. And so without a careful attention to these kinds of ends, writing courses might simply reframe the god-trick so that *the class* plays god but never really interrogates this position. Questioning practices, assumptions, and rubrics – important parts of my pedagogy from its inception – can push in the right directions, but more course scaffolding is needed in order for students to ask the right kinds of questions.

A rhetoric of hard agreements emphasizes two crucial tasks needed in any community-based assessment practices: one, to encourage class discussions that form agreements about writing which are explicitly structured so that conflict helps interrogate epistemologies and the regimes of truth we live by, thus opening a critical, social-epistemic space for future evolution of class resolutions on writing and assessment; and two, to foster on-going critical hermeneutic discussions that allow students to understand assessment as connected to socialized measuring, not relative personal biases, and structuring structures and institutions. This is different from the other theorists I've quoted in this chapter. Trimbur's "collective explanations" are a good way to think about a rhetoric of dissensus that embraces a polyphony of views and asks us to listen to one another, just as constructive conflict (as discussed by France and Myers separately) helps us see a Burkean coexistent nature of agreement and disagreement within ideas. But each rhetoric's weakness centers on how easily a class can fall into a relativism that ultimately says everyone's take is good, equal, and worth keeping – thus "everything is subjective" – or a paradigm where the teacher's notions of critical thinking is so saturate with her "whiteness," as Fox explains, that the class becomes an indoctrination into the teacher's ideology, thus normative and not critical.

These weaknesses, if unaddressed, won't help students negotiate future writing and rhetorical situations, nor make hard agreements or critical resolutions in community. The opposite of course, that of a rhetoric of consensus, is even more destructive. By ignoring conflict and difference, and pushing too heavily and quickly for agreement, we get uncritical consensus, blind consent to dominant ideology, that leaves the concerns of some unheard and plays the god-trick on us all. Power relations and their affects on personhood and knowledge construction are ignored. Communal resolutions become products of Rortian "discussions" that not only leave out many, but do not acknowledge or address epistemological structures, *habitus*, common sense, and institutions that minister value in networks of meaning. In the end, dominant ideology pretends to be informed consensus by staging the conversation so that consensus is its only product. What a rhetoric of hard agreements advocates is both hard agreements through conflict *and* an attention to educative purpose, epistemological awareness, and critical hermeneutic reflection. This is the critical citizenship Berlin wants in his social-epistemic rhetoric, but it's also one that is ripe for insights about SR and racial subordination that structure our society and global economies. The difference I offer in a rhetoric of hard agreements is the difference between asking someone to be "critical," and providing a structure to be "critical."

Chapter 6: The Danger of Uncritical Whiteness in The Classroom

The idea that socialization will of itself create a level-playing field is inherited from liberalism, and like liberalism itself, it has become a casualty of the post-civil-rights-era backlash . . . we need to recognize that our [composition studies'] rhetoric is one which continually inscribes our students as foreigners. We might observe, for example that Asian-American students don't exist in composition studies – they are either ESL students or unnamed (white). The discrimination that Asian-Americans face (in some cases through their positioning as “model minority”) is culturally unintelligible within composition's discursive space. Meanwhile our white students are not portrayed as “having race” at all. The present challenge for compositionists is to develop theorizations of race that do not reinscribe people of color as either foreign or invisible, nor leave whiteness uninvestigated; only through such work can composition begin to counteract the denial of racism that is part of the classroom, the courts, and a shared colonial inheritance. (51)

“Race: The Absent Presence in Composition Studies,” Catherine Prendergast

In the last chapter, I theorized a rhetoric of hard agreements as one that structures conflict and difference into the classroom so that students can interrogate epistemologies that construct knowledge and negotiate hard agreements that reflect the evolving conflict about writing and

assessing that occurs in the classroom. In order to do this, critical hermeneutic discussions must help students be conscious of the epistemology of racism and how it structures what they write and how they assess and revise from any rubric or explicit set of values. The epistemology of racism also can highlight the linkage between epistemology and hermeneutics, as well as the consubstantial nature of *habitus* and common sense circulating in and outside the classroom. A critical rhetoric that situates itself within networks of personhood, like a rhetoric of hard agreements that uses the epistemology of racism, aids in constructing a pedagogy for critical citizenship.

In this chapter, I'll add nuance to the last chapter's discussion by critiquing Barbra Couture's *Toward A Phenomenological Rhetoric: Writing, Profession, and Altruism*. While I find much to debate in her rhetoric and book, my task here is to use Couture's discussion as a way to strengthen a rhetoric of hard agreements by analyzing the roles of relativism (perceived often in rhetorics that explicitly attempt to honor all subject positions) and whiteness. I'll look primarily at the first two chapters that attack philosophical relativism and rhetorics of resistance, and her third chapter that promotes intersubjective truth through a "continuous intentional" personal reflection (a translation of Husserl's "intentionality"). Each of these discussions of Couture's attempts to refute the basic principles of a rhetoric of hard agreements that supports community-based assessment practices. We can state a rhetoric of hard agreements principles as follows: (1) agents co-produce knowledge epistemologically, historically, and socially for particular purposes and around particular institutions, thus the teaching of writing (and so, the study of rhetoric) is more about how knowledge is structured in society (how the social is consubstantial to the individual), the power relations inherent in this structuring, and what effects discourse may have on personhood, and not about the search for "truth," per se; (2) conflict and

difference are integral to any community and its critical rhetoric (as I define it in the last chapter), so embracing conflict can help classroom rhetorics be more conscious of deterministic practices and the differences in power and access to cultural capital that affect the production of knowledge; and (3) guided, critical hermeneutic reflection, made public, is necessary in order to reveal the first two principles in student practices, and thus help construct more critical writing praxis. Couture attacks each of these positions in some form. I'll her arguments around each of these issues.

This chapter is not meant to be a full critique of Couture's rhetoric. Instead, my hope is that through a selective critique of the premises and assumptions that support Couture's phenomenological rhetoric, roughly defined in opposition to the three above premises, I can more completely theorize a rhetoric of hard agreements.

In *Toward A Phenomenological Rhetoric: Writing, Profession, and Altruism*, Couture argues against social-epistemic rhetoric and critical pedagogies. She says they exclude a universal truth by embracing "philosophical relativism as the basis of all truth claims, a stance that validates conflict and persuasion as a foundation for rhetoric" and an "acceptance of personal resistance as *the* method of securing a true and valued self-identity" (2-3 her emphasis). Her aim, then, in proposing a phenomenological rhetoric for the composition classroom is to offer "writing as a practice that develops truth and value in human experience" (3). The two main elements of her rhetoric is "profession" and "altruism." Profession is done, she says, in community and makes for "truthful writers" (i.e. "the activity of interpreting the world through conscious reflection and offering that interpretation to others"). Its purpose is not "contention" but to "acknowledge plurality" (110) through receptivity of others' views that's grounded in a language-based "rationality" (117-18), and to push for "assimilation and resolution" (5). This

profession must finally be guided by altruism, that is, the “concern with the interests of others” (5), “the practice of selflessly seeking truth as a shared good through verbal interaction” (135).

To understand how Couture derives this rhetoric, and see how she addresses the three pedagogical and philosophical areas noted above, we must look closer at her foundations. They are: (1) her representation of philosophical relativism in general, (2) her claims for a universal truth found in human experience, (3) her rejection of social determinism and resistance as bases for a rhetoric of critical engagement and change, and (4) her method of “intentionality” (a kind of focused, truth-seeking reflection) as a way to produce truth through personal interaction.

Philosophical Relativism

In her opening chapter, Couture critiques philosophical relativism, a paradigm that may sound a lot like a rhetoric of hard agreements, minus the critical aspects (i.e. an attention to political arrangements, power relationships, and structuring structures). She primarily discusses the concept of philosophical relativism by drawing on Jasper Neel and Barbara Herrnstein Smith. Couture explains:

The argument that validates rhetorical relativism goes something like this: There is no truth that binds us all; therefore, the objective to find such truth through speaking or writing is moot. Given that the truth cannot be found, the best we can do is to believe the most credible or strongest argument *as if it were true* and dismiss our search for the truth. (8 her emphasis)

She continues, “[r]hetorical relativism presumes no reliable standard for judging the value of an action or determining whether it is based on true principles” (8). Because we cannot find “a common truth” in writing, rhetorical relativism “divests both written argument and literature of their ability to achieve an ethical stance, one that supports a common good” (Couture 8-9). She

concludes that relativism “prevent[s] us from describing truth as a function of development, change, and growth and, as a result, prevents us from assessing truth as an essentially human phenomenon” (10). Basically, she says, “[w]e are trying to use language as if it can be truthful while believing that it cannot be” (Couture 8).

Couture’s general position against philosophical relativism can be examined on four counts. The first three suggest that she’s simply wrong about relativism’s lack of an “ethical stance” and a “common good,” which I prefer to think of as a “structured purpose.” The fourth identifies an important flaw in Couture’s argument around validity and reliability, particularly around writing values and the assessment of discourse, neither of which she addresses adequately. To begin, in social-epistemic rhetorics, ones that emphasize “collaboration” and social relativism as a heuristic, “no truth” means conflicting *habiti* and a number of competing institutions that minister value to various claims and ideas (e.g. claims of authority warranted by civic values as opposed to ones warranted by religious values). The strongest argument wins, as Couture suggests. This kind of classroom sounds Protagorean, very *nomos*-centered. As Couture sees it, classroom conflict in this paradigm would reveal why we each see our various claims of truth, calling them all valid, and resulting in relative ethical and ontological standards. There could be no agreement and no claims to “truth” that help the community at large. However, in a rhetoric of hard agreements, conflict isn’t about finding “truth,” but understanding how existing truth claims are structured in networks of power, how they’re consubstantial to commonsense values and logics, and ministered by institutions, which simultaneously get attached to *habitus*. Honoring conflict and resisting traditional notions of “rationality” means seeing how the “ethical” and the “true” get constructed, as well as how the “development, change, and growth” of ideas (Couture’s way of talking about a phenomenological rhetoric’s products) are really

claims of truth structured to be accepted and “assimilated” as “progress,” but by their nature are essentially rearticulated hegemony.

Understanding structure reveals a relative slant to positions, but acknowledging power relationships allows us to produce more critical and educative resolutions. Hard agreements are developed through critical human activity, not by forcing consensus or pretending that everyone’s voice is equal, then demanding that we find the “progressive truth.” A rhetoric of hard agreements doesn’t simply honor all positions in a straight everyone-is-equal, relativist way (as Couture suggests of philosophical relativism), instead it acknowledges the power relations in and outside the classroom, something that Couture complete ignores. This makes the relativism of a rhetoric of hard agreements highly “ethical” because it reveals unequal power arrangements around claims of truth and provides critical understanding about the nature of knowledge constructs and their effects on personhood.

My second criticism of Couture’s account of philosophical relativism and its application to classroom rhetorics of conflict is based on her assumptions about what relativism means in relation to knowledge production. Just because a classroom discourse acknowledges that neo-platonic truth is not out there to be found and that it’s not profitable classroom activity, doesn’t mean that we must fall back on a purely pragmatic approach to knowledge and rhetoric – that is, teach a purely service-oriented writing course, embrace a counter-productive relativism that allows for anything arguable, or promote only the strongest arguments for knowledge. This would blindly reinforce dominant networks of meaning and hegemonic discourses, keep traditionally silenced and devalued ideas and voices out of the conflict, and leave students unprepared for their future writing endeavors. It would affirm only that audience appeal (i.e. appealing to the status quo) is the main rhetorical goal, and ignore why certain appeals can or

should be made (an attention to the structures of common sense and institutions). Instead, a rhetoric of hard agreements gives us a way to make critical resolutions based on tough discussions that show our complicity in the very systems and hegemony we are critiquing. Critical resolutions explains how claims of truth as “essentially human phenomena” (as Couture says) are structured to be truthful. The search is not for truth, but for how the “truths” around us are constructed in networks of power and cultural (and political) economies. These critical resolutions, then, are quite ethical because they address structures, agents’ motives, and material conditions. They explain claims of truth and their consequences. The goal for rhetoric, especially in the college classroom, then is epistemological and critically hermeneutic, not ontological (as Couture suggests). Seeing rhetoric relatively isn’t tossing out “truth” or simply going with the strongest argument as if it were true, instead it’s seeing how claims of truth in our discourses are determined by political structures, and how these power arrangements affect agents. Seeing “truth” in community is about seeing who has the power to proclaim it, how that power is structured, and what effects this arrangement has on various agents.

My third criticism of Couture’s representation of philosophical relativism concerns her lack of considering critical rhetorics or stances. Assuming no final ontology, no truth to seek, should mean that in a writing course we look for how truth is structured (critical epistemology), how individuals end up translating and applying this knowledge within networks of power and privilege, and how those within these networks are always in some ways complicit in hegemony, which the consubstantial aspects of *habitus* and common sense ministered through various institutions, illustrates. This allows students more easily define what is “critical practice,” as I discuss it in the last chapter, which is inherently an ethically rhetorical stance. Most importantly, critical resolutions are not couched in terms of “rationality,” as Couture wishes, instead they

question traditional notions of rationality as linked historically to the epistemology of whiteness (as I argue in the Introduction).

Couture's simple definition for philosophical relativism points out an important aspect of a rhetoric of hard agreements. It's incorrect to call an emphasis on conflict and relativism (emphasis on a positionality of discourse) one that doesn't allow for a "reliable standard for judging" value. Identifying common sense and *habitus* around and through agents through conflicting positions provides for critical, nuanced ways of understanding value, and so judging knowledge and discourse. This makes assessment practices more ethical, and maybe more reliable, since values for judging are derived from an understanding of how institutions, social structures, and power dynamics construct the values used. For instance, in community-based assessment, students are asked to interrogate the reliability of assessments of their writing by critically examining how rubrics and their colleagues' use of them are structured readings, understanding also that the rubrics themselves are structured and structuring classroom mechanisms. This is critical hermeneutics. What my students often confront is how *unreliable* the assessment of writing seems to be if absolute agreement in assessments is necessary; therefore, we talk in terms of what reliability experts, like Lee J. Cronbach, call "generalizability theory" (Shale 87; Cronbach 154). Replacing old notions of reliability with generalizability means, in the context of community-based assessment, that students must confront in real ways the variability inherent in the assessment of writing, and so they can begin to see critically the relative nature of knowledge as a set constructs, derived in determined ways, and then used to judge writing unevenly.

These activities highlight an important distinction that a rhetoric of hard agreements brings to community-based assessment: critical hermeneutic practice and reflection. Our rubric

doesn't offer a *way* to judge or assess. Students know how to do this – it's what we all do on a daily basis. Community-based assessment provides explicit epistemological elements and public hermeneutic practices. Assessing and writing, then, aren't practices that embrace relativism just for the sake of honoring all voices. It's a dramatic playing out of conflicts that may usually go unnoticed, or subverted by hegemonic structures.

This distinction points to my fourth criticism of Couture's general position against philosophical relativism. Reliability in standards for judgment, whether we are talking about writing or knowledge (although these are consubstantial at many points), is much more complicated than Couture suggests. For her reliability in the assessment of "truth" and knowledge is a matter of understanding knowledge as intersubjectively derived from a common set of standards backed by a community, so the search for "truth" can be one that is "intentional" or one that is based on "rational" decision-making for the good of all. This neo-platonic goal, as a rhetorical method, dismisses variability, or sees it as obstacles to overcome. Reliability, it seems, is forced onto students, or ignored by uplifting unquestioned values. Intersubjectivity may be a good way to describe my activities around the rubric and assessments, even our classroom discussions ("intentionality" has its own set of problems, which I'll discuss later in this chapter), but Couture avoids any critical discussion of how what is "good" for all, her "altruism" in individual discourses, is structured. Ignoring a community's intersubjective values as structuring structures will prevent most classroom rhetorics from addressing any discourse as self-perpetuating. Dialogue and intersubjective discourse become mechanisms for the reaffirmation of the status quo, or the dominant ideology.

And since Couture's goals are for "assimilation," intersubjective, truth-seeking discussions play out in her classroom drastically different from those in one arranged around a

rhetoric of hard agreements. This stems from the fact that standards and assessment practices are conjoined areas that need special treatment, something community-based assessment addresses head on with the aid of a rhetoric of hard agreements. What Couture more likely means is that philosophical relativism *presumes no universal standard for judging*, no true set of standards by which to judge various claims across contexts, hinting that universal reliability is at stake, and she's right if we assume hermeneutics can be stable, which generalizability theory tells us it can't.

The absence of a set of universal standards for judging doesn't mean judging can't be reliable, however. In fact, it means quite the opposite. Reliability doesn't come from a static and universal set of values that are then reaffirmed in community, as Couture thinks. Based on assessment and testing theory, "reliability indicates only how consistent an assessment is" (Hout, *(Re)Articulating* 87). It "refers to how consistently a test measures whatever it measures" (Hout quoting Cherry and Meyer, *(Re)Articulating* 87). Thus context and use for assessments are vital to their reliability. When contexts and uses change, so do assessments' standards and their reliability in use. An "IQ test" may offer a score that suggests intelligence, but it's not going to be a reliable measure of either how well someone will do in school, nor how successful they'll be in their intellectual endeavors. These aren't the uses for an IQ test (unless it's been altered to explain these things), nor is the product (a number) adequately designed to offer such conclusions. Couture apparently assumes that through "honest" dialogue universal, commonly experienced, and therefore, valid standards for understanding truth will be revealed. And this will produce reliable ways to judge writing and knowledge, and be ethical. In this paradigm, context and intended use aren't considered as factors in reliability. Knowledge is assumed to be neo-platonic, static, and external to agents, so reliability in judgments is demanded. The consequence

of this kind of reliability of values in writing is that contradiction, inherent in discourses, is ironed out as deviation. Structure is ignored because students aren't looking for it, instead, they're looking for common sense as "truth."

In neo-platonic rhetorics like Couture's, even with an agreed upon knowledge base (i.e. a consensus of values, agreed upon common sense), reliability in assessments of writing will not exist unless, of course, the teacher does all of the assessing. But even in this traditional scenario, the teacher's hermeneutical practices aren't accounted for, nor asked to be made explicit for students to see reliability in her judgments based on values the class comes to see as "true." Writing and the discourse of the classroom becomes a reifying of the teacher's values, her status quo. Reliability isn't just consistency; it incorporates context and use. In fact, generalizability may even suggest that we can find structure in our inconsistent judgments of writing by considering what makes them "inconsistent." For instance, what criteria are we using to see inconsistency in various assessments of the same essay? How are they structuring our discourses and hermeneutical practices? Part of what makes Protagoras' man-measure doctrine still useful for writing classrooms is how it calls attention to socially derived norms and values, which create the grounds for seeing consistency or inconsistency. In a rhetoric of hard agreements, reliability is explicitly accounted for through principles taken from generalizability theory, which reinforce the critical resolutions of the classroom by accounting for inconsistency.

So to push for classroom standards (of writing, let's say) that are derived from an intersubjective dialogue that progresses toward a truth that is good for all without ways to interrogate how the "good" that the classroom is assuming has been determined, is dangerous and uncritical. Classroom discourses, if they are to be critical, must take into account how the criteria for writing assessment, the standards held up as "truth" (even if only for a time), were

formed and who and what they promote and devalue. This will help inconsistent assessments, done by colleagues, not be read as unreliable assessments, but as part of the universe of assessments.

If Couture suggests that once you have agreed upon standards then reliable judgments are also present, then she conflates reliability of judgments with the validity of standards. This would agree with her emphasis on finding a phenomenological truth found in community and not the epistemologies and hermeneutical practices by which difference is produced. In effect, she's arguing that explicit standards produces valid judgments because they provide consistent ways to judge knowledge. Yet our judgments are not always consistent. Relativism, for her, means no truth, thus no agreed upon standards, and so no validity or reliability. And while both issues need addressing in a writing course, particularly ones like mine, validity of standards is different from reliable assessment practices – no matter who performs them. Samuel Messick, an assessment and validity expert, explains: "Validity is an integrated evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the *adequacy* and *appropriateness* of *inferences* and *actions* based on test scores or other modes of assessment" (13 Messick's emphasis). What Messick shows us is that validity isn't established by articulating explicit values alone. Validity is a comprehensive *judgment* based on empirical evidence and theoretical explanations – that is, the validity of assessments (and values), in a classroom say, is based on a construction that arranges discourse. Seeing a set of judgments on writing as valid for revision purposes is a process of measuring discourse by imposing structures on that writing, or as in a community-based assessment model, understanding validity is seeing epistemological structures and how they construct certain judgments as valid impositions on the writing at hand. Validity isn't either there or not, rather it's *made* by agents measuring discourse in determined ways. It's

contextual and driven by purpose, agents' decisions, and epistemologies. Validity, then, as theory, can help students critically construct and use standards for writing. Agents' construction of knowledge cannot be separated from their processes of and criteria for its validation, just as personhood cannot be separated from the production of discourse.

In order for us to have a "reliable standard for judging the value of an action," we must incorporate data about how this knowledge will be used with a theoretical framework (I've chosen a critical one, the epistemology of racism), and consider the appropriateness of the inferences we then make. What my discussion thus far reveals is that we need a rhetoric of hard agreements linked to community-based assessment practice because this kind of classroom actually confronts the validity and reliability of our knowledge and the assessments on writing, which is arguably the most important aspect of a writing course. Students do not simply find out what goes for academic standards of argumentation and writing, but they interrogate how communities construct validity and why reliability is often missing.

My criticisms of Couture's representation of philosophical relativism suggest an important aspect of a rhetoric of hard agreements (and community-based assessment practice) that needs emphasis: rhetoric and writing courses shouldn't be about finding "truth," regardless of how that truth is defined (e.g. it's true until we determine that there is a better way to articulate or see it). Writing courses shouldn't be the equivalent to "How to Write Better for Dummies." Instead, writing courses may have a number of goals, but should incorporate critical rhetorics and assessment practices that interrogate the ways in which knowledge is constructed for certain purposes, producing certain effects, and explore how validity and reliability in assessment practices are also processes by which structures are imposed on our discourses. Learning to write isn't about affirming the "right kind of knowledge," nor about finding the right

knowledge to believe in, it's about finding out *how* knowledge is made within networks of meaning, *how* conflicting perspectives are always a part of that knowledge, *how* communities continually negotiate resolutions about knowledge that's structured as valid through complex processes inherent in the processes of knowledge construction, and *how* and *why* communities attempt reliable hermeneutical practices.

Relativism's Rejection of Truth in Human Experience

One of Couture's biggest problems with rhetorical relativism is its "rejection of truth in human experience." She claims that philosophical relativism rejects a universal truth found "within us" (interpreted phenomenologically) (Couture 29) and promotes "contingent truth." Couture says, "Herrnstein Smith demonstrates that value is radically contingent on criteria that are supported socially, and she argues as well that so must be truth. She claims that since I am different from you and always will be, what you value must be different from what I value and always will – 'value is radically contingent'" (12). From this, Herrnstein Smith "illustrates how our diverse claims about what we value in art, writing, politics, or religion ultimately become truths that can never be enfolded by one truth" (13). To support this reading, Couture offers a quote from *Contingencies of Value* that apparently shows the kind of knowledge that relativism leaves us with: "our own personal standard of truth," or a relative truth (13-14). Part of her quotation from Herrnstein Smith is as follows:

[Because there is no "single dimension or global parameter" in which to judge things], [t]here is thus also no way for individual or collective choices, practices, activities, or acts, 'economic' or otherwise, to be ultimately summed-up, compared, and evaluated . . . There is no way to give a reckoning that is simultaneously total and final. There is no Judgment Day. There is no *bottom*

bottom line anywhere, for anyone or for “man.” (Herrnstein Smith 149 qtd. in Couture 13)

From one angle, Herrnstein Smith acknowledges exactly what I’ve explained in a rhetoric of hard agreements: “There is no way to give a reckoning that is simultaneously total and final.” But from another angle, this is only a part of the picture. One thing that Protagorean man-measure offers is a way to see rhetoric and knowledge as derivatives of community-based practices. The doctrine tells us that there are structuring structures that produce common sense and societal norms. The “man” measuring is a social collection of agents, and thus a structure itself. In this sense, “truth” or knowledge is socially contingent, not individually contingent. This is not the same as Couture’s phenomenological truth, one found within the individual who works in and for a community’s best interests, thus a truth that evolves as better ways of understanding come to light. Instead, the relativism in a rhetoric of hard agreements focuses on the social more intensely, and its consubstantial aspects with the personal. In fact, it becomes less important to even use this binary: the social and the individual. Truth is not shared from within, but found socially, in the structures of community, and it dialectically plays with *habiti*, becoming a part of what we think of as the individual. In this kind of rhetoric, discussions around “knowledge” are ones that focus on how it’s constructed, and what effects on personhood it may have.

The concept of “resolutions” (or “critical resolutions”) produced from a rhetoric of hard agreements, acknowledges the socially contingent nature of knowledge, and most of all its structuring structures that constitute it. This means seeing the universe of possibilities of knowledge in a classroom, embracing conflict, is vital since fuller, more textured conceptions of our resolutions involve knowing what has been ruled out, discarded, or set aside for a time. Couture’s rhetoric, on the other hand, ignores conflict by only searching for acceptance and

commonality, and assumes that apparent commonality is also true commonality. In a rhetoric of hard agreements, conflict is conceived as a way to show students the constituents of any network where knowledge is produced, allowing us to better understand the judgments used to construct knowledge. Exploring difference and conflict is important to critical knowledge. Additionally, critical hermeneutic reflection helps us see how judgments co-construct the available data through difference as well as agreement. Just as a thermometer can only measure temperature, and thus constructs the very idea and limits of what temperature is to us as a quantifiable measurement (that there is even a temperature measurable in degrees, numerically), so too our assessment practices (epistemological and hermeneutical) construct what we sense when assessing knowledge, writing, and material phenomena. To call knowledge “truth” would imply an epistemology that frames things so that truth can exist, just as Couture’s does, but it’s a truth that is nevertheless constructed through judgments that need interrogation, which she says will happen intersubjectively but finally can’t if consensus and acceptance are the goals of all interactions, and most importantly, if the class isn’t given any conceptual tools to interrogate judgments.

The epistemology of racism isn’t a relativist paradigm for truth, saying simply that knowledge is socially and historical constructed, that “truth” is contingent and relative; instead, this master epistemology shows how hegemony is structured in our social/private worlds, how claims of truth appear so, and agents’ implication in the network. Without the kinds of critical tools that the epistemology of racism provides agents can’t see hegemony, nor their complicity with it. Critical insight, one that sees the structuring in our world, would be hard to “found” intersubjectively, as Couture suggests. The *verum factum* and *verum certum* in our lives provide logics from which we judge things as “factual,” “right,” or true, and so dialoguing about

knowledge in unstructured ways will typically reproduce hegemonic discourse. This is what Couture ends up with: a complete rejection of relativism means ultimately an inability to critically engage with hegemony and problems with dominant discourses.

Interestingly, the “truth” that Couture seeks is one that can sound a lot like a sophistic rhetorical truth. She emphasizes interaction among agents, the acknowledgement of various perspectives, and the promotion of a truth that can be understood through, and is contingent on, human sensing and reflection. But when we look closer, it doesn’t mix well with her methods for consensus or her assumptions about truth. She says,

We can make of truth something that is essential to our subjectivity, that lives in the dynamic of human interaction, and that is attainable through our own efforts.

To do so, we must reconstruct our notion of truth as separate from the present life we experience, and thus hope to find it not in the ideal, but rather in the personal; not restricted and objectified, but rather open and dynamic; not outside of our knowledge and control, but rather integral with our purpose and within our reachable grasp. The consequence of reconstruing truth in this way is . . . to practice philosophy, that is, the seeking of truth, as rhetoric. (23)

Couture essentially wants to take Protagoras’ man-measure doctrine one step farther. If we only know our world through our own subjectivity, then we can find “truth” intersubjectively and in experience. We compare experiences, find patterns of commonality, and call them true. It’s Enlightenment telos by another name: “our purpose,” in Couture’s own words.

Her teleology and logic reveal her basic faith in a truth that’s outside of human experience and universal (even if only for the moment). Who decides “our purpose” or when “truth” can be declared? What criteria do “we” use? And does this criteria change or evolve as

well? Is it all just a feeling everyone will get in the pit of their stomachs? The intersubjective aspects of a phenomenological rhetoric is meant to answer these questions in context; however, while it does leave room for truth to evolve (toward *the* ultimate truth), the grounds for its evolution is already structured. Since a phenomenological rhetoric doesn't attempt to see knowledge epistemologically, understand it critically, then the "truths" it constructs will be structured by the common sense in the classroom – in other words, it will reproduce dominant and harmfully racist ideology without ever knowing it. This problem in Couture's rhetoric is one we can see in her exclusionary method, one that's tailored to ignore difference and conflict by embracing only those ideas most in the class can agree upon. Not only does this leave little room for healthy and necessary conflict, even conflict forced upon the class, but it ignores completely the absent voices and bodies in the classroom. Let's admit it. Most college classrooms are white and middleclass, privileged. A rhetoric that doesn't incorporate conflict as a central ingredient gives little, if any, ground for perspectives that do not already work from dominant ideology. How are the absent and unconventional perspectives on "truth" taken into account otherwise?

But there are other unanswered questions I have about the above passage. How can a "common truth," something Couture mentions often, not be restricted but open and dynamic? Isn't "common" restricted to the only reoccurring social patterns and wouldn't this make it a closed system? How can we have "the personal" that's "open and dynamic" and "integral to our purpose," yet not have conflict present, or not address it as a part of the knowledge-making process? Again, Couture and I simply assume different things. I see competing claims of knowledge situated in networks, and so each is partially constructed by those around it. To claim truth as "personal," yet "separate from the present life" is to set it as the "ideal" that springs from the individual. It's neo-platonic. This simply doesn't acknowledge the social, the contextual, the

historical, or the material. Conflict is suppressed by tacit dominant discourses and ideology. Couture attempts to counter the need for conflict by saying that it creates a relativism that distrusts “our memory of past experience as a contingency that taints our perspective on the world” (24). This is only true if we believe there is an archetypal experience, a common one, one to be trusted. Contingency isn’t “tainting” if there’s no “pure” experience or memory to stain. Couture wishes to ignore the structured and structuring nature of epistemology, of social elements like common sense and institutions. As time passes we see things from different positions in various networks, and so knowledge changes just as values and identities do. There is a reason “hindsight is 20/20” – the agent is located at a different node in the network, so things seem clearer, but they aren’t. And so relativism can be thought of not as “distrusting” the past, but understanding it as a positioned perspective that constructs things in certain ways because of the agent with sight.

Couture ultimately says that truth can be found when we “abandon a philosophy that invests the will with the power to resist and robs it of the power to embrace the ideas of others” (29). A knowledge that comes from this kind of interaction will be hegemonic, yet will most likely not acknowledge the relations of power that determine available choices and actions because it doesn’t recognize epistemology. This kind of knowledge isn’t dynamic; it’s restrictive since it ignores structure and embraces uncritically common sense. This kind of truth will certainly bind some in mutual belief that reaffirms their privilege in the network, shows them the best ways to live by showing them the virtue of their lives; however, it will also restrict others with less power and legitimacy by keeping them silent, erasing resistance, or ignoring their existence completely. In practice, as Bruffee’s brand of collaborative rhetoric also illustrates, Couture’s phenomenological rhetoric appears to assume everyone has the same access to the

“conversation,” that we all will get equal say in determining “our” universal “truth,” yet in the end it’s normative discourse. And as we’ve seen historically, “truth” that’s proclaimed as “best for all” is a fantasy, not because the world is full of racists and elitists, looking to steal more power and privilege from others, but because those in power – those controlling the conversation and its rules – act as if those rules do not already structure truth, that the rules can be universal and infallible, beyond knowledge, which is in effect what Couture suggests. But then things are going well for those controlling the conversation. The system’s status quo works for those in the conversation, and this limits the conversation itself. Maybe more convincingly, the epistemology of racism illustrates that typical liberal, academic conversations, the kind Couture promotes, are structured in overdetermined ways, ways that reproduce the current social, economic, and ideological arrangements.

Operating in our classrooms by a phenomenological rhetoric means we will not see epistemologically, nor will we see how conflicting and profitable ideas are also legitimate, construct what is “critical” in the course; therefore, we cannot interrogate the dynamics of knowledge construction, nor can we find solutions that do anything other than rearticulate dominant ideology. Difference becomes “resistance,” which are roadblocks to consensus. Conflict, then, taints the common sense (truth) of the class. Couture’s is a rhetoric of assimilation.

However, looking closer at Couture’s use of Herrnstein Smith illustrates how important it is to understand a fuller account of how we “measure” and judge value and construct knowledge (which Herrnstein Smith misses). Couture only wants to critique a relativism that is “contingent on prior knowledge” restricted to the past and purely “deterministic” (Couture 14). She does not want to see how knowledge and human will (or as I’ve discussed it, “personhood”) are functions

of consubstantial and dialectical elements in social networks, how it's impossible to separate what is structured as individual from what is structured as social. She wants a relativism that holds up "personal standards of truth" – and thus forms chaos with no way for communion, resolution, and community. She denies "human growth" in rhetorics of relativism because all is contingent on the past, a philosophical idea she calls "ideological historicism" (Couture15). If this is true, if there's no growth or change, then personal standards of truth will cyclically reoccur in the fashion that Vico suggests through his "law of heroic gentes" (in *New Science*),¹²⁴ which means there would be clear, identifiable standards that might be claimed as universal, much like Vico did. However, Vico admits a faith in "Providence" that moves and keeps things consistent, while Couture relies on a faith in humanity's altruistic impulses – something that's hard to substantiate if not easy to refute, but clearly similar to Vico's teleological Providence. For Couture, what ideological historicism leads to is the erasure of "human will" (Couture16). In effect, we are controlled by social forces in our past. What the epistemology of racism promotes is not the erasure of human will, but an attention to how its structured and determined.

Right before the conclusion that Couture quotes, Herrnstein Smith explains that accounts of our world (knowledge that is connected to agency) are characterized by humanity's "irreducible *scrappiness*" (148 Herrnstein Smith's emphasis). What she means by "scrappiness" is

that elements that interact to constitute our motives and behavior are incomplete and heterogeneous, like scraps of things, but also ("scrap" being a slang for fight) that they are mutually conflicting or at least always potentially at odds. That is, the relations among what we call our "actions," "knowledge," "beliefs," "goals," and "interests" consist of continuous interactions among various structures,

mechanisms, traces, impulses, and tendencies that are not necessarily (“naturally” or otherwise) consistent, coordinated, or synchronized and are therefore always *more or less* inconsistent, out-of-phase, discordant, and conflictual. (148

Herrnstein Smith’s emphasis)

Thus from this scrappiness, we construct “local resolutions and provisional stabilities,” as well as exhibit agency. Not only do our dispositions (i.e. “our ‘actions,’ ‘knowledge,’ ‘beliefs,’ ‘goals,’ and ‘interests’”) interact with the network, that is, other agents, institutions, and common senses (i.e. “various structures, mechanisms, traces, impulses, and tendencies”), but all elements do not coordinate. They are often in conflict, as well as partially in agreement. These elements form, alter, define, and separate us and our perspectives. The individual’s measuring of the world – her “truth,” as it were – is, according to Herrnstein Smith’s account, conflictual because, in the larger network of agents, it is heterogeneous and independent (i.e. it comes from within the individual). Yet even in this fuller account of Herrnstein Smith’s relativism, the consubstantiality of the social and the individual are unaccounted for. Herrnstein Smith locates “the elements that interact to constitute our motives and behavior” (agency) within the individual, thus her relativism does fall prey to some of the criticisms that Couture voices. “Scrappiness” is a good way to describe the conflict within networks of agency, but isn’t a good way to account for agency itself. Seeing our rhetorics’ scrappiness reveals the god-trick in dominant discourses and knowledges, but not how these god-tricks are composed, iterated, or reproduced tacitly.

Finally, Herrnstein Smith’s word choice (from the first passage quoted by Couture in this section; Herrnstein Smith 149; Couture 13) may be instructive in accounting for another way of reading her conclusion. It centers on the verb “to reckon,” the operative verb for Herrnstein Smith in describing agency, or the acts that agents are able to do around knowledge and truth.

The OED offers nine definitions for “reckoning,” all of which boil down to “enumeration, calculation, [or] computation.” Many instances of this word are of agents counting or calculating things, like a calculation of the value of an estate or of one’s property, a tabulation of a bill at a tavern, the figuring of a “period of pregnancy,” the calculation of a “ship’s position,” or an account of one’s moral conduct. All of these examples illustrate a few important sophisticated features of the act of reckoning. In order to do all these things, one must make calculations and judgments on the worldly phenomena at hand, which will be sensed and filtered through our dispositions (which incorporate epistemologies and hermeneutical practices) and mediated by a variety of institutions and contexts. In other words, to reckon is to engage in a web of hermeneutical practices constructed by agents, epistemologies, specific contexts, the agent’s purpose, and the intended use of the judgments. Reckoning is a structured and structuring activity. It is a contextual series of selective judgments, epistemologically determined, made by an agent for certain purposes, often ordained or ministered by institutions, and used in certain ways in community. Intention and motive within agents cannot be separated out – that is, why we reckon what we do and for what purposes always constructs the validity of the rhetorical evaluations in question, and intention, and motive are also structured socially. Contrary to what Couture seems to suggest about a relativist position like Herrnstein Smith’s, to reckon is very much an act that can be done with *accuracy* through *shared values*, but it can’t assume a “total and final” account of our world as if it were a divinely ordained “bottom line.” Accuracy doesn’t mean total agreement, or lack of conflict. This is partly why knowledge and “personal standards of truth” seem to vary, yet can be seen as valid and conflicting. A rhetoric of hard agreements’ emphasis on conflict that produces critical resolutions acknowledges a socially-derived scrappiness in rhetoric.

A rhetoric of hard agreements' relativism is not a willy-nilly relativism, as Couture describes it, nor the splitting of hairs. In fact, it's a relativism that provides students with a critical look at the "truthful" and "commonsensical." Institutions, like capitalism, authorize certain kinds of exchanges and choices, for instance. They tell our students that monetary compensation is mandatory for certain goods and services, and a teacher will exchange knowledge, a fixed commodity, for tuition money. This common sense makes a classroom like mine, one that uses community-based assessment practices, a rhetoric of hard agreements, and the epistemology of racism, very difficult to understand and accept. Everything runs counter to common sense. My *habitus* as a teacher is equally confusing because I critique my own position in the classroom and re-arrange some of the power dynamics.

This classroom example can also be viewed as practical symbolic action, as Kenneth Burke delineates it in his discussion of terministic screens, and provides another gloss on how our will to faith works with epistemologies. Burke's terministic screens takes into account our ways of "directing the attention" of a reader/audience through the use of certain language, or "nomenclature" (*Symbolic Action* 45).¹²⁵ Terministic screens work this way, according to Burke, because our language "by its very nature" is a "reflection of reality," and so it must also be "a selection of reality" (we choose certain words, ideas, observations, etc. to use or point out to our audiences), and therefore our rhetoric must also be a "deflection of reality" (if we choose certain things, we thus also do *not* choose, or pass over, other things) (*Symbolic Action* 45).¹²⁶ While Burke naturally doesn't focus on the hermeneutical acts of audiences or interlocutors, nor the dialectical relationship language has with *habitus* (its social aspects), he does highlight the slippage possible in the kinds of discourse rhetors choose, the common senses invoked (explained as "nomenclature" or sets of conventions), which also determines what is possible to

observe and/or communicate.¹²⁷ Terministic screens structure discourse for agents, but they do so from various vantage points, and agents often draw from various terministic screens. This is why *habitus* is a more encompassing concept. It calls forth the shared aspects of common sense in community and the layering of dispositions that inform our hermeneutical practices. It explains why common sense is commonsensical to most agents in a community, and keeps our epistemology and hermeneutical practices attached to communities of agents (i.e. not abstract like “terministic screens” suggests). While a less useful term, Burke’s “terministic screens” does show us how important it is to focus our attention on epistemological frameworks that structure discourse and logic, construct validity, and produce “facts,” “values,” and knowledge.

Burke helps us see the faith terministic screens are based on. He offers a theological common sense¹²⁸ that he says can have “secular purposes”:

“Believe, that you may understand (*crede, ut intelligas*).” In its theological application, this formula served to define the relation between faith and reason. That is, if one begins with “faith,” which must be taken on authority, one can work out a rationale based on this faith. But the faith must “precede” the rationale . . .

. . . “Believe, that you may understand,” has a fundamental application to the purely secular problem of “terministic screens.”

The “logological,” or “terministic” counterpart of “Believe” in the formula would be: *Pick some particular nomenclature, some one terministic screen*. And for “That you may understand,” the counterpart would be: *“That you may proceed to track down the kinds of observation implicit in the terminology you have*

chosen, whether your choice of terms was deliberate or spontaneous.” (Symbolic Action 47, his emphasis).

In effect, Burke says, our terministic screens affect what we can see, think, and say, and thus the range of possible knowledge. It’s a way to parse the act of measuring, but it also shows the psychological aspects we tend to ignore about the “truths” we proclaim. We don’t just choose, in freewill fashion, a terministic screen to find and articulate knowledge. We have a faith in it, an irrational reasoning, which means we typically don’t question its validity for every purpose, use, or situation. This is what faith is: an unquestioned or uncritical adherence to something, and in this case, it is epistemological dispositions and common sense concretized in discourse. But students should inquire about of their “faiths.” We might call this a “critical faith” that acknowledges its sources, however unwarrantable or mysterious they may be. If we don’t question our faith, knowledge becomes universal truth, and often oppressive. “Truths” begin to control people, not the other way around.

I realize what I’m suggesting about faith might be controversial. Couture clearly wants us to be guided by truths tempered by reasoning and dialogue, and thus her faith in a teleological and phenomenologically derived “truth” is one that attempts to constrain choices for good reasons – that is, it guides students to better actions, living, and ultimately a more compassionate and loving world. But how is the “better” determined? How does Couture’s rhetoric move students past normative discourse and dominant ideology? How is knowledge critically examined in the classroom when a telos, like the ones found in the epistemology of whiteness, is assumed as an integral part of the knowledge making process? In this neo-platonic paradigm, unquestioned faith can be productive; however, Couture’s faith in a universal truth found in personal accounts that agree blinds her to the possibility that conflict, which is inevitable when

collecting personal accounts of things, may offer more ways to see how knowledge is structured, how personhood is overdetermined by social elements that are consubstantial to the *habiti* in the classroom. While it's not within the scope of this dissertation to discuss faith more fully (although worthy of further exploration), I hope it's sufficient to say that we must acknowledge our faiths, especially in the epistemologies our faiths support, and question their sources.

Finally, embracing relativism doesn't mean, as Couture states, that there is no "reliable standard for judging" and thus no "ethical stance" possible. We do not have to say that dismissing one's "search for [a] truth" means ignoring a searching for connections to a broader community (say among agents in community), or that not being able work from a *certain* "common truth" means divesting rhetoric of "ethical stances" toward knowledge, epistemologies, and people. Instead, knowledge in a rhetoric of hard agreements might be thought of as a vector, a line of discussion with a direction and a magnitude (i.e. length, breadth, thickness, force, and time). The vector may change direction, discussion may slow, halt, or speed up, broaden in applicability, but it always has, over a semester's time, both an epistemological direction and critical, hermeneutic magnitude, which can guide principles for the class. Thus critical resolutions can be ethically rooted, yet not pretend to be abstract principles, truths, or ultimate ideas, divorced from the community and context. Couture would have us hide our pedagogical eggs throughout the course, then have students scramble to find them. While it's much easier in a writing class to do what Couture is hinting at here, it presumes too much and exercises unnecessary and harmful power over students, but mostly it keeps them from critical activity and praxis: that is, the assessing of writing, positions, ideas, ideology, and epistemology. Students remain uncritical of knowledge and their own positions. Honoring conflict and difference, using relativism as a way to see various structures in community and discourse,

provides fuller context and richer meaning for students who are learning to write and assess. It acknowledges the contextual nature of knowledge and rhetoric, its constructed-ness, and the material, psychological, and civic consequences of discourse.

Faith in a White-Washed Truth

An unquestioned faith in a teleological “truth,” like Couture’s, leads to an unquestioned common truth, or common sense, which becomes perceived as universal and outside contexts and agents. Couture acknowledges this. Addressing epistemology and hermeneutics can play little part in the construction of valid knowledge, truths are often established by blindly appealing to dominant ideology and epistemological frameworks. And they are attractive because they make (common)sense with little conflict and pain to students. Faith in common sense is nothing more than a personal history of abiding by it. Faith, in this sense, is acquired *verum certum* and simultaneously solidified in *habitus*, which reifies it viscerally for agents (our students). Faith in institutions’ rightful dominance, for example, is what Richard Whately codified in his nineteenth century rhetorical textbook. He says that institutions (114) and traditions (117) don’t have the “burden of proof,” it’s those who wish to criticize or change them that do. Couture’s rhetoric clearly wouldn’t give institutional or structural change much change. Without seeing the structures that determine how we measure ideas and discourse, knowledge in the classroom will work from the epistemology of whiteness. Couture’s claims for a universal truth through human experience, which is based on a white rationality and telos (two components of the epistemology of whiteness), falls into this category.

Couture suggests that as teachers of writing and rhetoric, we can “facilitate dialectic as a phenomenological enterprise,” or as James L. Kastely explains, teach by questioning, that is, “practice philosophy as rhetoric” (Couture 23). This will allow us to tap into our individual

histories and experience, search communally for truth. But relativism works against this, says Couture. It “sets up a condition for distrusting our memory of past experience as a contingency that taints our perspective on a world that is construed to be something more” (24). In fact, Couture claims that instead of “get[ting] past” it, memory can “free us to act individually while celebrating a common heritage” (24). Furthermore, “[w]riting is a means by which we get in touch with our personal history, the substantial experience that grounds our belief. That contact can be expressed publicly, but it must be experienced privately; it is what we experience deep within us that connects us to others in public.” Thus personal memory plays a large part in understanding, and discovering, public truth through “engage[ing] with others in shared understanding” (25).

While writing and considering one’s personal history publicly can seem to do what Couture says, and intersubjectivity is a big part of consensus, appeals to truth from a common heritage ultimately lead to reaffirming the status quo because they rely on a reservoir of “truth” that pretends to be outside of experience but is actually constructed by the status quo itself. This kind of classroom rhetoric neglects the fact that whiteness is structured into the status quo of the academy, not just in our discourses and epistemologies, but in our *hexes*, the very bodies in the classroom. To celebrate a “common heritage” misleads students into thinking that their heritage, a primarily white one, is enough to provide them with “truth” and the good for society. In effect, the logic is often unconsciously circular: this is true because it’s always been this way for “us.” But it’s the “us” that’s part of the problem. It’s a very selective “us.” We can call this “us” a white *habitus*. Additionally, *verum-certum* is at work in these discussions but is denied as the operating principle behind the construction of knowledge – it’s not identified as a structuring

component. Whiteness is allowed dominance and determines the validity of facts and ideas, while privilege in the economies of power at work in the classroom is ignored.

Couture's rhetoric simply cannot account for race, class, or gender differences, and as a result inadvertently *white-washes* the discourse of the classroom. She says, "[i]t is through disclosing the private in language, then, that we come to understand our personal history, our memory, as having a larger meaning shared by others" (25). Who is the "our" that the memory of the classroom can realistically refer to? Whose personal history (singular), whose memory (singular), can Couture's phenomenological rhetoric account for? It can only be the primary classroom constituents: white, middle-class, and primarily heterosexual (if not tacitly anti-homosexual) students. And this problem isn't solved by placing a few students of color in the classroom. Everyone shares in the epistemology of whiteness, no matter what their location is in the network of identity. And so it's crucial that our classroom rhetoric disrupt dominant readings of experience, the notion of "common meanings," "common heritages," and universal truths, so that whiteness can be examined as a structuring element of these things historically.

An unexamined whiteness can be detected in Couture's explication of Mario Vargas Llosa's discussion of direction in human activity, primarily in literature. Llosa claims that "human creativity nevertheless designs a direction," and this can be seen in "a great novel" (27) (my emphasis below):

A great novel, he tells us, provides us with

rigorous and *intelligent order*, where nothing is gratuitous or incomprehensible, where life flows in a *logical* and inevitable channel, seduces *us* because it calms *us*[,] . . . *rationalizes and orders our* surroundings, giving *us* back that confidence which

human beings only with great difficulty resign themselves to renouncing: that of knowing what *we* are, where *we* are, and—above all—where *we* are going. (Llosa 1024)

This consciousness of a necessary order that makes sense of the contact of one with an other is denied by Neel and Herrnstein Smith. For they are unable to acknowledge the overriding order of a discourse that is a dynamic engagement in purposeful truth seeking. (Couture 27)

While I appreciate Couture's sentiment, that a rhetoric should "make sense of the contact of one with another," it ignores its use of the epistemology of whiteness by ignoring what Llosa terms a "rigorous and intelligent order" that "rationalizes and orders our surroundings." Just like her use of the extended quote by Ann Berthoff concerning the ongoing process of meaning making in community (28), it seems obvious in both Llosa's explanation of a "great novel" and Couture's gloss above, that both assume a universal "us" that is embedded in the epistemology of whiteness. This kind of rhetoric attempts to "give us back" reason and order through social interaction (either with each other or through a novel), but only those traditionally in the conversation get a voice, only their order makes sense. Remember: conflict for Couture keeps us from embracing truth, and thus can be understood as disorder. "We" are clearly different from the "others" that "we" use to help "us" find logic, order, and truth. Not only is the god-trick unnoticed, but the intelligent order (implying a telos) of Llosa's "great novel" is unquestioned, even as it is acknowledged as a structuring mechanism.

Of course, it makes sense that we might universalize meaning from individual experience if those engaged in rhetorical exchanges could expect many places of commonality, and assume similar or compatible logics from which order, reason, and common sense stem. But doesn't the

presence of conflict in the network, by intelligent, well-meaning people, show us that these assumptions are too idealistic from which to work? What if the purpose I seek in our exchange is not compatible with the purpose you seek? What if I wish to displace *your* power and privilege because it takes these things away from me? What if there is an element of chaos in intellectualizing order? What if gratuity, say in the vein of Kenneth Burke's work, constructs nuanced and comprehensive order, not incomprehension? Can logic not be fragmented? Can it not flow over or jump across channels? Can logic not also jar us, repel us, or make us uncomfortable and tense? Can logic not be associative, resist clean, delineated, linear order and taxonomies, thus provide disorder to our surroundings in profitable ways? Couldn't some logics seem "illogical" if viewed from an orthodox perspective, yet "logical" if seen from subaltern positions?¹²⁹ Can't there be a variety of viable faiths from which to base knowledge? Couldn't a "great novel" take our confidence away as human beings living in our world? Couldn't it also question and show that *we* may not know who *we* are, where *we* are, and where *we* are going? Might it even question who exactly the "we" in/ex/occludes? By focusing solely on a community's ontological nature, the "what" and "where" we are for Llosa, students miss the ways in which these ontologies are structured by the epistemology of whiteness. The subject of the writing class, for example, is about "finding truth," not interrogating how "intelligent order" "rationalizes" for us the claims of true we encounter in discourse.

Couture tries not to leave all of these questions unanswered. She uses Susan Miller's discussion of *Phaedrus* in *Rescuing the Subject* to make her point about universalized truth from individuals' experience and dialogue. In summary, Couture says, "[i]nteractive discourse between men who seek the truth moves 'toward divine insight.' In the process of speaking, the 'lover improves the soul of the beloved' (Miller 116) and both move closer to truth." This

interactive discourse is “grounded in human experience” (27), and thus doesn’t simply talk about other-worldly, abstract things. A “common truth” comes from this kind of “intimacy” that “frees” its participants like the dialogue between the lover and the beloved in *Phaedrus* (28). Approaching the search for truth in this way is supposed to escape the dominating nature of this “human enterprise.” Order and logic would come intersubjectively.

It’s an attractive paradigm, attractive because it uses platonic notions of Socratic dialogue and vying for “the truth.” It is a dialectic that the academy still favors in many ways, a method that ignores the means by which it constructs knowledge. An intersubjective, “common truth” is an empirically-based truth that comes from a rational mind, categorizing and ordering experience and details through an unexpressed teleology, which can be called hegemony or whiteness. This kind of phenomenological truth exhibits all of the elements in the epistemology of whiteness, which has proven so harmful to many. As teachers, we might all agree to an altruistic motivation for our teaching and classroom practices; however, what Couture fails to note is that it’s this kind of reading of *Phaedrus*, one divorced from discussions of gender and class, one that can say little about race, ones that ignore the homosexual aspects of a dialogue that has led western culture to lift up “truths” about white, Christian, heterosexual males as universals – and they continue to construct our knowledge of things today. Is it not significant that both the beloved and the lover are male citizens of Greece, and if we use this dialogue as an archetype for today, shouldn’t we interrogate this to see how it may structure what is said in the dialogue? Is it not important to see that in order for these two privileged men to search for enlightenment through an intimate exchange, they must control the labor of countless others, slaves, servants, wives, and that this paradigm still makes (common)sense to many in contemporary society? Isn’t it important to question what makes *us* so special that *we* get the privilege to do what the beloved and lover do,

converse about truth and knowledge – that is, go to college – while millions do not? To be intimate, as Couture suggests, means that not everyone can join the conversation. It's limited. In fact, we might say that the idea of "conversation" itself necessitates this limiting. In our classes, we should be asking why *we* get the opportunity to free our souls, and others do not, and how the dialectics and knowledge examined in the academy and in culture are framed in the ways they are. Who is excluded from our conversations, why, and to what effects? Couture's phenomenological rhetoric does not allow us to question whiteness. A rhetoric of hard agreements attempts to see the structuring of whiteness by revealing it as epistemology, just like racism.

Additionally, it is from this stance that white Europeans rationalized most people of color as non- or sub-human, enslaved them, took their lands, destroyed their cities, eradicated their languages, stole their wealth. All of these things were done in the name of "God," the "white man's burden," "liberation," truths that seemed so universal at the time, at least to white men. Placed in a larger context of Plato's writing, like *Republic*, we might also read in *Phaedrus* a propensity to enslave others, to maintain the status quo in a tautological cycle. To free one's soul is to enslave and stunt others'. Remember, it was Plato who saw more value in a philosopher-king, one who knows what is best for the state (or rather, *he* thinks he knows what's best), and less value in a democracy (the rule of the many). This is really the effect of Couture's phenomenological rhetoric. If there is a truth we are searching for, and we engage in a dialectic to find it, someone has to play Plato's Socrates, and that someone, if uncritical about epistemology and racism, will push the telos of the discussion toward the epistemology of whiteness.

Couture wants to find the best parts of Plato's *Phaedrus*, an intimate searching for truth by two souls who rely on their experiences and an altruistic impulse. However, for this to work, the dialectic relies on shared common sense (typically voiced in the dialogue as "what is best") by two men from similar class positions and with similar *habitus*. Altruism isn't difficult in this scenario. Socratic dialectic demands that truth be found through establishing universal agreements, premises that form conclusions. It demands that participants share common sense by acknowledging truth claims as "natural" and inherent, and thus those in the discussion have similar *habitus* (shared dispositions) and common social goals. This means these "men" have similar stake in the production of the "truths" they derive from their discussion. To help the beloved in some altruistic fashion is really, in this scenario, to help oneself narcissistically. But when stakes and consequences are different for each participant in the discussion, typically "truths" are more contested because altruism typically means giving up something, or at least not gaining something.

In the real world, even in our writing classes, we do not always come to discussions with equal power, the same *habitus*, or similar goals. Yet even in the best of worlds, ones in which things occur as Couture wants them to, Plato's Socrates may free Phaedrus's soul, lead him to truth, but it's only because he loves Phaedrus, finds beauty and youth in him, and wants a fuller relationship with him. This is what initially impels the lover to the beloved. It's narcissistic, selfish, and sexual (i.e. materially based in the yearning for bodies). Socrates wants to regain youth and vigor by acquiring a young lover, much like Llosa wants to regain order and acquire reason by uplifting canonical texts to appreciate as grand narratives. These are things each have lost or yearn for. But what if, in our contemporary world, we do not find likeness or love for, say, a few of our students, or others around us? What if what is good for some is not good for others?

What if “good” means something different when your position in the network is different, as Sophistic antilogic illustrates? Can we really count on an uncritical altruism to lead us toward “truth” if that altruism is structured by whiteness? More importantly, can we count on people knowing enough of the plight of others who are not like them for altruism to be transformative? As Bonilla-Silva’s work has shown us, many, particularly white students, do not usually have the perceptive tools to really know, or “make sense” of, the Other in ways that do anything else but reaffirm their own white privilege, which *Phaedrus* shows us as well. Dominant common sense pushes all of us to deny racism, and its material effects. The structure of whiteness in our academic common sense, discourses, institutions, and *habitus* remains hidden when uncritical altruism is used as the sole motive for rhetoric.

Couture ends this first chapter by claiming that “we must be engaged without apology in the act of trusting the human enterprise. This means give up the notion that writing is primarily a site for struggle” (28-9). This conclusion highlights where Couture and I disagree about a profitable rhetoric for the classroom. In our current educational climate, those who will be searching for truth, engaging in “the human enterprise,” will be primarily white, heterosexual, and using a masculine subjectivity (e.g. “rationality” and “empiricism”). Giving up writing as a site of struggle would mean giving up critical opposition to these dominant hegemonic structures. Our writing classes would be mechanisms for affirming the status quo, a status quo unfriendly, and often downright oppressive, to people of color, gays, and women. Couture asks us to “abandon a philosophy that invests the will with the power of resistance and robs it of the power to embrace the ideas of others” (29). Who exactly are these others? They certainly aren’t the Other. In the academy, this would extinguish any discussions of race, gender, power, or class – eliminate most discussions of epistemology – and replace them with white-washed discussions

of middle class values and ideas, whose epistemologies would not get questioned but naturalized. A part of revealing how we see things in our worlds, a part of doing the questioning that is critical, is a healthy resistance, a struggle with ideas, views, perspectives, logics, and common senses.

Rejecting Social Determinism and Resistance by Affirming White Agency

A big part of her faith in a universal truth is Couture's rejection of rhetorics of conflict and resistance, such as a rhetoric of hard agreements, because she believes they keep agency from us and don't allow for acceptance of commonality. In her second chapter, Couture says that current "critical and rhetorical theory . . . valorize[s] resistance against truth seeking," that it "develops and achieves agency through . . . *resisting* its worldly environment" (33 her emphasis). In this kind of rhetorical world, if we can't resist, we have no agency. Couture then claims that resistance produces an attitude of self-reliance that "limits our freedom rather than secures it" (36). This attitude produces a narcissism, or "the individual's resistance to an alien other," and fetishism, "the individual's obsessive attachment to an object representing an idealized self" (43). This means that we seek "the ideal of complete autonomy" that aims at "becoming a better, more perfect individual" at the cost of alienating ourselves from "collective interests" (36). Her solution is to accept experience as truth, to allow the self to be truthful:

[T]he only way to resolve the dilemma of achieving selfhood while pursuing truth that goes beyond it is to redefine individual consciousness as something that does not come to life by resisting external influence, but rather thrives by integrating the external world as part of its developing identity. (60)

According to Couture's critique, resistance, which leads to a selfish, narcissistic, and fetishistic individualism, keeps us from searching for, seeing, and promoting truth, that is, truth a community shares.

The heart of her argument against resistance is a criticism of social determinism in Volosinov's *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. She claims that social determinism erases human agency and replaces it with social-linguistic control – that is, individuals in Volosinov's view either exercise no autonomy, or they can only do so by resisting communal ideas, and therefore truths we all share. And so agency can only occur when we resist, and therefore common truths are looked at suspiciously as corrupted and controlling social ideology, not truths to be acknowledged and accepted. She explains that Volosinov's social determinism “dismantles the very idea of individual autonomy.” And thus only a “resistance to external forces – ultimately, resistance to some social values as opposed to others – as *the* force that defines personal expression and enables identity to emerge within the realm of competing social constructions” will provide agency (37 her emphasis). She criticizes Volosinov's account, saying that there is no “skeptical individual acting consciously to change or shape a collective interest,” only narcissistic and self interests looking to promote individual agents' identities. But there's a paradox in this view, she says. Independent agents do not use language as a “tool” for truth, instead according to Couture, language “is the fabrication of an all-embracing culture” (37). Language uses us. She states:

In its spontaneous use by individuals, language appears to assert their independence; however, linguistic signs merely maintain an illusion of agency and personal identity in order to perpetuate and generate social ideology:
“Wherever a sign is present, ideology is present, too. *Everything ideological*

possesses semiotic value” (Volosinov 10). Language is one specific means through which individual consciousness is controlled by ideology. (37)

Therefore, our experiences, or at least our accounts of them and their meanings, are “marked by social conditioning,” and out of our control (37). Agents are “a product of competing societal forces” (38).

I do not disagree with how Couture, in general, has characterized Volosinov’s philosophy of language. Much of Couture’s account is accurate; however, there are more nuanced ways to read Volosinov that account for agency while emphasizing the how powerfully hegemonic discourse is in shaping behavior, attitudes, ideas, and linguistic practices. Agency can still exist in Volosinov’s system if the epistemology of racism is incorporated. Just because we are marked by social conditioning doesn’t mean we don’t have some level of agency, or that “agency” and “freewill” must mean complete freedom to act or think in *any way* we choose. The limits of freedom and choice are always constrained by the networks around us, as Volosinov hints. There’s no such thing as full or individual choice. Our social and historical networks construct the universe of options, even the idea of “options,” for agents. These options provide the limits of agency via the acceptable and viewable range of conceivable choices. In one sense, we can read Volosinov asking us to redefine agency to incorporate the ways in which agents consent to the domination of discursive practices, which in turn provides the limits of agency. And this coincides with my view of agency as an ongoing process of validation by institutions and societal structures, one of them being discourse. This is not another way of articulating Althusser’s theory of the interpellation of agents through ideology. The validation of agency points to the structures that validate agents in networks, like the structure of a set of community-based assessment practices for students in a writing course. The structure of assignments that

asks students to assess language validates student agency by providing occasion and authority to have a voice in assessment. Agency is activated by structures (e.g. institutions of education, governments, particular common sense, etc.) that provide authenticity and value to practices, as well as occasion.

Couture wants an agency that can know all options – that there is such a thing as “all options,” or rather more options than what’s apparent to us. Her view of agency, one that can move away from social control and limits, means our choices are not constrained to the networks we work in, thus they can exist outside the system (outside ideology, or outside epistemological networks), outside context, history, institutions, and agents – as if these are not the very constituents that make up agency. Clearly I disagree here. Couture’s notions of freewill and agency do not take into account fully the social, but then this makes sense given her attraction for Enlightenment ideas of pure sensation, reflection, and inner truth (which becomes outer truth), which also seem to exist outside agents despite her continual claims that they come from personal experience of the world and personal reflection on it.

Agency in Volosinov’s account of language can be understood from another angle. Volosinov says that our psyche and ideology interplay dialectically (Volosinov 39 qtd. in Couture 38), so if social ideology is the sole force stripping our agency, then we would need to have some level of social resistance in order to have agency. The question is, how do we define this resistance? Couture says that resistance is selfish activity and not the seeking of altruistically-based, communal truths (45-6). But if we assume that individual resistance can lead to profitable static in the social channels of ideology, like discourse – it keeps us from being automatons, provides gaps for criticality – then “community good” is produced by revealing the structuring of the status quo, as well as how it places limits on our agency (i.e. validates it in

determined ways). This kind of resistance is a better kind of “skepticism” than the humanistic kind Couture promotes through traditional liberal skepticism and Husserl’s “intentionality” (discussed in the next section of this chapter). A resistance that opens gaps in discourse that reveals a white god-trick is hardly selfish, narcissistic, or fetishistic, although like altruism it can be. On the contrary, a community like the one Couture seems to promote, one that looks to its own allegedly common values, affirms them, and codifies them in language, idea, practice, and ritual, would seem to be the epitome of selfishness, narcissism, and fetishism.

Additionally, language may very well be socially fabricated, work in dialectical interplay with our psyches, yet still provide – even need – human agency to operate in the way I promote in a rhetoric of hard agreements. However, “psyche” is too individualistic, and puts the wrong spin on the dialectic since the social and the individual are at many points consubstantial. Instead, a skeptical agency in education, one Couture’s rhetoric doesn’t allow for, is better thought of as a critical perspective. Once we see how hegemony works structurally in our discourses, then hegemony is easier to understand and address (but never escape), and agents can produce counter-hegemonic discourse that disrupts the validation of agency in profitable ways. Counter-hegemonic discourse in the classroom, then, would allow us ask questions about what is or should be our “common purpose” since the discourse doesn’t achieve its ends by “finding” this knowledge but by revealing structures that structure the common sense of altruism and the proclaimed educational goals of the classroom. Students become conscious of their complicity in the hegemonic apparatuses that give them choice and agency. We can accept or resist communal patterns of knowledge (as my community-based assessment practices illustrate), yet still work from a social determinism that allows for critique of epistemology and awareness of

hermeneutical practices. What we can't do is think that our resolutions are static truths or consensus because they appear to be universal.

Couture continues her criticism by claiming that social determinism also only promotes a linguistic agency, one that either denies or ignores our material practices and experiences. She uses Volosinov's discussions of social ideology and individual psyche (how language helps construct the inner personality) to show that his notion of language not only validates resistance but disqualifies human experience and material realities affecting agents and their rhetorical practices – that is, the emphasis on language as a interpellated ideology erases real human agency and devalues material reality and experiences. She says that Volosinov promotes a purely linguistic agency, one that is activated, “delineated,” and “constrained” by language (39). She quotes Volosinov:

Language lights up the inner personality and its consciousness; language creates and endows them with intricacy and profundity – it does not work the other way . . . Consequently, *a word is not an expression of inner personality; rather, inner personality is an expressed or inwardly impelled word.* (Couture 39; Volosinov 153)

In one sense, Couture's reading of Volosinov is accurate. Couture says that a language-based agency “constrains consciousness” (39), which is true if we understand discourse as a kind of metonym for social common sense and *habitus*. This means that discourse is not only a material practice, linked to bodily *hexis* and ministering institutions that provide occasion and authenticity for speech acts, but it also means that discourse limits personhood by invoking the various elements of the epistemology of racism. Discourse is the sign of personhood (one aspect of it being agency). However, just because our agency, say, is “constrained” by the epistemological

elements around discourse doesn't mean we have no agency. Criticality offers agency by revealing limits (the structuring structures of agency), and their sources, but not pretending to idealistically free agents to do *whatever* they choose. Couture works from an Enlightenment-styled notion of pure sensation that is beyond words, a consciousness divorced from language. She feels that "personality," or "consciousness," is something beyond discourse, and so not constrained by it. She resists the idea that "the individual comes to life as a speaking subject by virtue of having been given the words to speak" (39). This begs us to ask in a sophistic way what we can actually know about "agency" or "freewill," either as experience (material choices) or articulated memory (rhetoric that describes choices). If agency is a self-conscious understanding of the limits of one's acts and practices that are structured by formal and informal social institutions, and the idea of agency is known discursively while also tied to material practices, then "*inner personality* [as we commonly think of it] *is an expressed or inwardly impelled word.*" We need language to signify (and personalize), reflect on, even make meaningful, our experiences and practices.

An inwardly impelled word, which might be correlated to Althusser's interpellated ideology, makes, as Burke has shown, something like "consciousness" a concept that attempts to point to an idea that is actually not *real* (or in reality). It's virtual and exists only by language, which in essence is Althusser's "hail" in interpellation. Our language constructs our understanding, sensing, and judging of the concept of "agency," which is simultaneously impelled inward, sort of speak. This process, according to the epistemology of racism, is less a matter of a word (or hail) reflecting reality, and more of a word and its associated epistemological aspects activating or validating material and discursive options (i.e. agency). This is an integral aspect of the epistemology of racism since it shows how one part of

personhood functions through language. Common sense and *habitus* are consubstantial at many points in the network of agents and their discourses, and so always help activate agency. Institutions, like “academic discourse conventions” in the writing classroom, minister value to claims and validate agency to students and teachers. So in a limited sense, Couture is right, a linguistically-based agency constrains consciousness, but there are always limits to our actions, decisions, and “inner personality”; however, we usually don’t talk in these terms, instead in terms of “possibility and choice,” which is simply another way of viewing the limits of agency. Seeing institutions as structures that validate agency allows us to deal more accurately with the relations of power in the classroom, but Couture uses agency as something outside of the limits of discursive practices, outside of institutions, and thus outside of discourse – as if our talking about anything does not affect that thing’s meaning and significance to us materially. At another level, “agency” as a concept has no significance outside of discursive practices, even though it can be *described* as pertaining to non-rhetorical activities and as something outside of rhetoric. The discursive illusion here is that we can talk about things that seem outside of discourse, like material conditions, visceral feelings, or emotional states of mind, but by ceasing to talk about them they lose their conceptual properties. “Agency,” for instance, becomes simply random or patterned sets of acts. The abstraction of “agency” is gone. To “really know” is an illusion set up by a discursive tradition of Enlightenment god-tricks that Couture does not allow her students to examine. A rhetoric of hard agreements, when used with the epistemology of racism, provides for agency to be interrogated in ways that do not take away agency, but reveal its limits and structure.

What’s most disturbing, however, about Couture’s criticism is that she wants to deny hegemony, and thus ignore power arrangements and institutions that constrain agency. The

classroom becomes a “safe zone” of equals, which is impossible since even the classroom cannot escape relations of power and ministering institutions that provide the grounds for all discourse. Additionally, Couture thinks we can assume positions outside of language, context, society, and epistemology, by having a faith in the idea that truths can come from personal, reflected experience (phenomenologically) as long as we search altruistically. Working from an inside-outside dichotomy, Couture promotes a paradigm where truth comes from accepting inwardly what appears outside of us. For her, our environments (along with other historical factors) do not have to constrain our universe of choices; instead they offer truth that we need not resist. However, without an attention to structures in our discourse and classrooms, students will have a difficult time finding anything but hegemonic knowledge since the structuring of agency and the altruism are not critically examined.

Consider the rest of Volosinov’s passage, my reading of Volosinov and agency makes more sense. He connects language to a dialectical relationship with material experiences (the base in the Marxian base-superstructure dialectic), and suggests how agency works by problematizing the inside-outside dichotomy. Volosinov also offers a way to counter claims that criticize his notion of linguistic agency (i.e. that it doesn’t “articulate a place for individual consciousness”). Continuing the passage Couture quotes, Volosinov says:

And the word is an expression of social intercourse, of the social interaction of material personalities of producers. The conditions of that thoroughly material intercourse are what determine and condition the kind of thematic and structural shape that the inner personality will receive at any given time and in any given environment . . . The generation of language, meanwhile, is a factor in the generative process of social communication, a factor inseparable from that

communication and its material base. The material base determines differentiation in a society, its sociopolitical order; it organizes society hierarchically and deploys persons interacting within it. (Volosinov 153)

In this fuller account of Volosinov, language helps the individual make sense of his social interaction and material existence, shaping his “inner personality” (as Couture points out). While the generation of language is an abstraction divorced from agents in the above account, it is also an “inseparable” factor” of “communication and its material base.” That is, as he points out elsewhere in the same work: (1) “Ideology may not be divorced from the material reality of sign”; (2) “The sign may not be divorced from the concrete forms of social intercourse”; and (3) “Communication and the forms of communication may not be divorced from the material base” (21). Individual consciousness is not simply a product of language because language is a part of agents’ material conditions and interactions, the material base. Consciousness, it seems, evolves through material and linguistic interaction over time, thus agents (re)produce, introduce, possess initially, and generate agency during social interaction. In some sense, the epistemology of racism offers similar insights into agency, except it also makes room for more refined elements of personhood, interpellation of identity, and articulations of citizenship status. Both Volosinov’s and my accounts of agency show language and material practices as inseparable. For the epistemology of racism, discursive practices are a subset of all material practices, since they come from agents embodying *habitus*, living among institutions, and sharing common sense (which can be linguistic, dispositions, sets of judgments or acts done, facts proclaimed, assumptions, etc.). Our discourse is very material.

Volosinov’s discussion around language (part of both base and superstructure) as a creator of inner personality and consciousness provides insight in how our material experiences

(the base) construct our personhood (i.e. all three elements, not just agency). If agency as fluid, changing over time and transforming in various contexts and discourse is a part of the material practices that affect agency, then language is important to the conception of “choices,” and therefore produces agency and conceptions of freewill. Rhetoric is found in all parts of the network; therefore, the remnants of personhood can also be found. One’s personhood does not reside in a pre-linguistic, abstraction called the “mind.” As Volosinov helps us see, personhood is seen in language, which means it should be a part of the writing classroom in order to help construct conflict and counter-hegemonic struggle.

However, according to Couture, social determinism doesn’t allow for positive change and dialectical struggle. Because his account of rhetoric is mostly concerned with the “property rights of words” and “matters of authenticity” (Volosinov quoted by Couture 39), Couture concludes that it will “serve to mummify an ideology, rather than subject it to dialectical struggle” (39). Again, more nuance disproves this criticism. In the section of the same work quoted by Couture, Volosinov attempts to find out the “center of linguistic reality” (63), by first explicating Saussure’s theory of *langue* (a body of ideal normative forms) and *parole* (individual utterances or speech acts), and then exploring how that theory might be mapped onto the base of a community of individual lives. By focusing on *parole* as a “ceaseless flow of becoming” and identifying that “there is no real moment in time when a synchronic system of language [*langue*] could be constructed,” he builds an argument for exactly the opposite of Couture’s conclusion. Rhetoric, far from mummifying ideology, epitomizes dialectical struggle, which could be counter-hegemonic struggle. Volosinov says: “if we were to look at language in a truly objective way . . . we would discover no inert system of self-identical norms. Instead, we would find ourselves witnessing the ceaseless generation of language norms” (66). The critique that

Volosinov offers around *parole* is important to a rhetoric of hard agreements, and reveals one alteration I make. Volosinov's *parole* shows how important conflict in the classroom is if our job is to encourage counter-hegemonic struggle. The ceaseless generation of language norms, while never "self-identical," is highly iterative and broadly stable and reproductive. This is what the epistemology of racism reveals, and why a focus on epistemological structures as a way to be critical in the classroom is important for struggle. The epistemology of racism shows the overdetermined direction of Volosinov's "ceaseless flow of becoming" in language acts. By Volosinov's account, it could almost seem random, but it's not. Hegemonic discourse is ceaselessly becoming itself, reproducing itself in various forms despite agents' resistance. Inserting the critical, then, means that we can stop ideology from being mummified in language, and assert agency through conflict and critical resolutions. To operate critically in a *parole* driven language paradigm is to leave open rhetoric, see conflict as generative, and save small spaces for resistance, and dialectical struggle and change.

And so, Volosinov's account of language allows us to see how agency is validated in material acts of discourse by characterizing language as a *parole*-driven practice that is continually evolving, yet broadly stable. Thus a critical framework is important for students, even when using rhetorics that encourage conflict. Being more aware of how these social elements are consubstantial structuring structures allows for the possibility of more disruptions, thus more agency, and finally more opportunities to see, understand, and resist how and why we consent to socialized ideology in discourse.

Couture falls for the god-trick in her own experience. She wants us to include "other" interpretations and social values, like mine, but ignores difference and positionality. Her skepticism and agency is really an embracing of the status quo by affirming its dominance in

community as its own support for its truthfulness. There is no “critical” aspect to it since there is no questioning of key terms that structure her rhetoric and its aims, like “altruism” and “common truth.” The point of skepticism in the classroom, then, is to find hegemonic truth in neo-platonic dialogue with students, which keeps the fundamental relations of power intact and affirms the historically white status quo of the academy. If anything, this kind of rhetoric embraces its own whiteness, yet doesn’t see it. Assuming communal truths is a dangerous activity, one we’ve rehearsed throughout history with very damaging effects. It favors dominant discourses that keep critical agency away from those it defines as Other, and promotes a white agency through an altruism that really serves only to reaffirm the current positions of privilege. This white agency assumes an outside position in the system, and embraces an abstract, autochthonous agency, divorced from social and material interactions, even when it is induced from the material (as Couture’s is). It says agency can be independently understood from discourse. It believes in Enlightenment notions of ideal, pure thought – Descartes’ *cogito; ergo, sum* and all that it implies. But this is nothing more than a whiteness unexamined because it does not acknowledge or interrogate the discourse that constructs a primarily white agency, the social contexts agents move in, the common sense that establishes premises and ideas, and how all these things interact to reproduce consistently certain power arrangements, facts, and personhoods. Universal truths become available because there is a universal, god-tricked, white eyeball viewing things, which can be gestured to as abstract and position-less, as Couture does (it is neither inside or outside). The bottom line is that understanding agency without social determinism as the matrix by which it’s built is a faith in whiteness.

Other interpretations, ones like cultural studies approaches, rhetorics of conflict, and critical pedagogy, are clearly not viable when whiteness remains unexamined, as history and

literary canons have shown, because the epistemology of whiteness sets the ground rules for legitimacy and authenticity that exclude conflict and difference, at least counter-hegemonic conflict. In fact, conflict, for Couture, is the basis for illegitimacy. Couture's analysis shows that her rhetoric really only helps find truth for white liberals who ignore the historical trends of oppression and structural racism, assuming that they can be overcome by simply pretending to be aloof and above it all through an altruistic, coumbaya attitude in which we all "just get along" and forget about uncomfortable political issues like race, gender, unequal power arrangements, sexual orientation, and class.

Intentionality and The White Liberal Eye

The whiteness within her phenomenological rhetoric doesn't stop at her criticism of resistance, social determinism, or her assumptions about agency. Agency and reflection that leads to truthful seeing are also saturated with whiteness. Maybe the most crucial and flawed aspect of Couture's phenomenological rhetoric is her theorizing of reflection in terms of "psychical consciousness" and "intentionality." This reproduces the typical white gaze that all critical theory and race theory work to dismantle. It starts by placing faith in "truth's" inductive accessibility through human experience by "fully embracing the world outside" (63). This is done through focused reflection, an activity I also promote but through very different methods, and from different assumptions. Couture defines her reflection by using Edmund Husserl's phenomenological terms of "psychical consciousness" and "intentionality." Psychical consciousness is a direct, "unfiltered" perception of the world, untainted by "temporal and physical limitations of empirical observation or by social and psychological influences upon conscious interpretation of data" (73). It, according to Couture, "clears a space for understanding that is pure, and because it is pure, it is shared universally" (73). Comparing it to "psychological

appearances” (which are incomplete pictures of the world “out there,” “reported through empirical observation”), she summarizes Husserl, saying that psychological consciousness “is the route by which we understand objectivity and arrive at an objective understanding of the natural or given world . . . psychological consciousness assumes no difference between appearance and nature” (73). Once we understand this, goes Couture’s logic (taken from Husserl), we can begin to find intentionality in our experiencing and reflecting of the world. She explains that intentionality is “a condition about us that is always active,” giving us “presence and being through a continuous and intentional act of looking out toward what appears to us” (74). Ultimately, intentionality leads to a deeper “inner reflection,” an “intense reflection” which is Husserl’s “phenomenological reduction,” that is “the means by which we reduce ‘a complex problem to its basic elements’” (Couture 67).

The main problem with Husserl’s theory, and Couture’s adaptation of it, is that it simply works from an unquestioned acceptance of our ability to have an unfiltered and pure perception of the world simply by demanding that we do it – that is, by having faith in the revelation of “truth” from the way things appear. It attempts to get beyond hermeneutics, our various ways of measuring things, and the structuring of epistemologies, and avoids generative conflict. If we see whiteness as a constitutive element in most of our discourses of the western world (even the eastern, as Edward Said shows us), Couture’s intense reflection on appearance as a means to truth will ultimately fail to offer anything but a white, hegemonic truth. Volosinov’s account of *parole*-driven language shows that hegemony is iterative yet broadly stable, so simple reflection and belief in the power of intentionality will not be good enough. It will not account for the ways in which our practices are overdetermined.

For Couture, phenomenological rhetoric essentially is based on an unmediated perception of the world and a mystical reliance on our capacities to see the truth in it through an intentionality that makes truth out of appearance. Couture says, “[p]henomenology establishes as essential the individual’s role in determining the meaning of reality; our capacity to understand its truth is linked necessarily to *our intention to know*” (94 my emphasis). In short, we can achieve this psychical consciousness and intentionality because we will ourselves to, we have faith that we can, and thus we find what we are looking for: pure perceptions, the basic elements of any experience, appearance that is truth. This faith-based intentionality is doable if our point is not to interrogate difference, conflict, or appearance, not to question the status quo or see how agents might be complicit in hegemony. However, if we are to offer help students develop critical citizenship, our classroom rhetorics must account not only for our irrational faiths in certain epistemologies, but show how most (maybe all), share in the epistemology of whiteness. A rhetoric of hard agreements, like most social-epistemic rhetorics, acknowledges whiteness as a structuring set of structures, and uses conflict around these structures to form the basis of critical inquiry. Intentionality works with the structures that the epistemology of racism accounts for, producing patterned perceptions of the world. This means that intentionality may too easily embrace hegemonic epistemology, that is, the epistemology of whiteness. To be fair, we are all a bit guilty of this – my account in this dissertation is certainly not free from a faith in certain epistemologies, all of which share in whiteness. However, what Couture’s faith results in is a rhetoric that is blind to its own whiteness and the very epistemological nature of discourse. In fact, hers may very well promote whiteness through students’ discourses, calling it truth.

We can see this faith in how she says we can achieve intentionality. All we must do is adjust the way we understand perception, and of course, forget about epistemology, rhetorics of

resistance, and social constructing factors in our lives. While we all have faith in some method or epistemology, claiming universal truth from personal perceptions and reflections alone pushes for a rhetoric that doesn't question itself, rather accepts on faith default epistemologies that shape perceptions themselves. This is, in fact, the lesson that the consubstantial nature of *habitus* and common sense offers. Couture's phenomenological rhetoric seems to not allow for this critical activity because it actually denies a need to examine its own structuring, namely a faith in autochthonous, individual agency and skeptical inquiry because they are isolated and outside social structures – they are within the “mind,” or an abstract “reason.” This boils down to a rhetoric of liberal whiteness that plays god-tricks.

Beyond the fact that this philosophy sounds a lot like an “it is because I said so” philosophy, I find no grounds for such a deep and monolithic reliance on one's inner reflective abilities that's not informed by a critical stance or by using epistemological frameworks that help us reflect on subjects and those factors that construct them. Her discussion reminds me of how Thoreau lays out his ideas in *Walden*. While I loved this book the first time I read it, now, over a decade and a half later, I find the language still beautiful, the thoughts sincere, but many of the ideas deeply flawed, myopic, and impractical, as his own life experiences bear out.

An example from *Walden* will illustrate my criticism of Couture's phenomenological rhetoric since Thoreau can be read as embracing a kind of intentionality in and phenomenological method. In his chapter “Baker Farm,” in which he meets the Irishman immigrant John Field and his family, Thoreau attempts to convince the family to “live simply,” to give up their “bogging ways” (John Field and his son clear the swamp land of a nearby farmer for ten dollars an acre and its use – hard work indeed). The family is poor and barely making it. Thoreau describes their response: “John heaved a sigh at this, and his wife stared with arms a-

kimbo, and both appeared to be wondering if they had capital enough to begin such a course with, or arithmetic enough to carry it though” (138). Thoreau clearly sees the Fields’ hard life as a choice, one they’ve made, and one they can unmake, as he himself did at Walden pond. He views their skepticism as an inability to look beyond the economics of their alleged needs. He wants them to see the truth in their situation, a truth he’s seen in his experience (through a kind of intentionality). Adjust your needs, suggests Thoreau, and your life will change for the better. You’ll see things clearer and better, and you’ll see the things you truly need.

But we might read underneath the Fields’ reticence a skepticism of the impractical, aloof existence Thoreau suggests this family of three live by. Thoreau is single, and thus can be single-minded, can live in the Spartan fashion that he suggests. John Field is not, and so he must think of his wife and child. He simply has more needs to attend to. Additionally, most likely this family owes a debt they are attempting to pay off for their passage to America from Ireland. Most likely, they are escaping the famine and poverty rampant in their country at that time (1846-50, the exact time Thoreau was writing *Walden*). Adjusting needs and thinking in other terms than economics will obviously be hard for this family, given what they’ve seen and experienced in Ireland. It may even be impossible. Thoreau makes no mention of this, but then you can’t really expect him to, given the method he’s chosen to cull truth from in this experience, a phenomenological method that privileges personal truth and appearance. His intentionality tells him that what he sees is a family who want too much, and need much less.

Thoreau reflects on his experience with the Fields in a fashion that I think Couture asks us to, “bracketing” out elements and factors, and exhibiting “a continuous and intentional act of looking out toward what appears to us” in order to find the truth in experience:

As I was leaving the Irishman's roof after the rain, bending my steps again to the pond, my haste to catch pickerel, wading in retired meadows, in sloughs and bog-holes, in forlorn and savage places, appeared for an instant trivial to me who had been sent to school and college; but as I ran down the hill toward the reddening west, with the rainbow over my shoulder, and some faint tinkling sounds borne to my ear through the cleansed air, from I know not what quarter, my Good Genius seemed to say – Go fish and hunt far and wide day by day, – farther and wider, – rest thee by many brooks and hearth-sides without misgiving. (139)

Again, Thoreau's phenomenological method, one that allows him to seemingly access a psychical consciousness, to come up with "an objective understanding of the natural or given world" based on his own "inner reflection," allows him to discount important factors and exigencies of the Fields' predicament, and summarily dismiss the episode without much moral angst or obligation. In fact, it allows him to reflect primarily on what seems ahead for Thoreau himself, the "reddening west," fishing and hunting, personal pursuits delayed by the stop at the Field house. Even after identifying his own privileged position (a man "who had been sent to school and college"), relative to John's (who seems to have not), Thoreau's intentionality, because it looks outward for a truth that inevitably can only be personal, allows him to conclude from his own "Good Genius" that his words to John are enough. He will go fishing. It seems clear that his intentionality keeps him from truly caring about the Fields, and pushes Thoreau to private and personal reflections about his world. While Thoreau acknowledges in the opening section of his book that he is "confined" to "the narrowness" of his own "experience" (1), he clearly offers universal advice and truths, even if they are often tentative. More importantly, his phenomenological rhetoric illustrates how incompatible and dangerous its "truths" can be.

Thoreau's conclusion about the Field family confirms the direction phenomenological rhetoric takes us, and is troublingly dismissive: "With his horizon all his own, yet he a poor man, born to be poor, with his inherited Irish poverty or poor life, his Adam's grandmother and boggy ways, not to rise in this world, he nor his posterity, till their wading webbed bog-trotting feet get *talaria* to their heels" (140). In effect, John and his "posterity" are doomed to be poor, which they've "inherited." In Thoreau's eyes, they are, in fact, biologically predisposed to their "poor life," "not to rise in this world." He doesn't recognize the possibility that conditions out of their control have placed them in this tenuous situation (these social, economic, and political factors are not apparent to him), that the farmer too is partly culpable for their poverty, that working bog-land for someone else's profit might look a lot better than starvation and death in one's native land, that Thoreau himself has an obligation to help them or justify his own inaction beyond a selfish want to fish, hunt, and "live deliberately" – that maybe helping John Field, on John's terms, is living *more* deliberately. What Thoreau cannot see because of his own intentionality is the way in which economies of power have structured the lives of the Field family. Thoreau's is, as Couture says, a "psychical assessment" that can "abandon all preconceived epistemological frameworks when examining a new phenomenon" (Couture 77), like John Field. But it is an attention to epistemological frameworks, like the epistemology of whiteness, that provides more practical, ethical, and responsible rhetoric. In fact, had Thoreau attempted to reflect on how the Field's predicament, and his own discourse on it, was structured, he might have escaped his Enlightenment intentionality and found counter-hegemonic resistance – or to take from his own words, hegemonic disobedience.

To look for what is *not* apparent, or consider appearance here as deceptive, might offer more productive and empathetic understanding, and maybe even help the Fields. But this would

require a stance of conflict, one that defies common sense. It might also reveal Thoreau's privilege and whiteness as ethical barriers in his own life. To see that Thoreau's choices *not* to labor in order to live deliberately as determined by his own economic, social, and class status can be an epistemological and Marxian way of understanding John better – that is, given John's position in the network of economies, how can he do anything but what he is doing? How could he give up the weak and tenuous grasp he currently has to a living, to any living? To see one's point of view as shaped by one's privilege and class, is to understand better one's world and how one is positioned in it.¹³⁰ What would happen to Thoreau's "experiment" at Walden and the conclusions he draws from it if he were to resist his inclination to assume his privilege, to question what it offers him, and thus why John Field does not have it also? Would this not be a more "skeptical," "deliberate," and ethical stance than a phenomenological one that merely places a faith in what appears to be true as such and in our reflective powers on that appearance to produce truth?

Thoreau's assessment epitomizes what Couture describes as one that looks to how a thing or subject "functions as a meaningful reality within the world we live, breathe, act, and interact within, *without presupposing* something about its ontological substance, that is, about its origins in a real or ideal world" (Couture 77). Thoreau, in the fashion that Couture lays out, takes John Field for what he seems to be, how he functions for Thoreau: "an honest, hardworking, but shiftless man" (Thoreau 137), never to better his position because of intrinsic, even biological qualities that will keep him in his set place, one that functions for Thoreau, as this episode does in his book, to reveal the truth about Thoreau's own life – as long as he makes the right choices, he'll not end up like John Field and can go a-fishing any day he chooses. To assess John Field in this way, in the final analysis, allows Thoreau to lean on the status quo of what Irish are and

what their “natural” lot in life is, because it is so apparent in how Thoreau experiences them. John’s life functions as a cautionary tale of some *Other* (who *not* so ironically is not white), and to lift up Thoreau’s privilege, even his whiteness, as a marker of truth, rightness, and even supremacy. The resistant Other, in this instance, actually is used to reaffirm whiteness and privilege, characterized in a liberal-minded Thoreau.

Phenomenological Rhetoric’s White Foundations

Finally, the ultimate danger in a phenomenological rhetoric is how it does not provide a critical space for questioning its white foundations. Even Couture admits Husserl’s position and assumptions tend in this direction, although she makes light of them. When describing how these kinds of assessments work within community to form an “endless truth-seeking task,” she looks to Husserl’s “Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man,” taken from a lecture in 1935. She says: “Husserl conceives of phenomenology not only as a cognitive method for achieving true meaning, but also as a method for improving humankind, for setting the goals toward which human will should be directed in order to achieve truth and, ultimately, a better society” (86). She concludes, “[t]he major argument of ‘Crisis’ is to establish European rationalism as the intellectual method that will eventually overtake all other methods of obtaining knowledge about the world and become the ultimate pathway toward truth” (86). Clearly, Husserl’s ideas are a product of his time, as much as he would like to say otherwise, by the simple fact that he apparently saw no value (or not much) in other rationalisms and intellectual methods not derived from Europe, or that he could even presume to know enough about non-European intellectual methods to make such a claim. The fact that this “crisis” is a “European” one involving “men” only, tells us possibly more.

So it seems quite mistaken to make conclusions about Husserl's notion of community, as Couture does, that is as broad as "humankind," when in fact, like most of his contemporaries, he was not thinking in these terms. The "society" in crisis he speaks of is a European one, a white one, one that stands to gain much from the oppression of Irish immigrants like John Field and people of color across the globe, which was clearly an anxiety in Europe and the U.S. at the time. These conflicts and differing perspectives needed to be ignored if European hegemony was to flourish – this was the "crisis" Husserl speaks of. An absolute truth about the world, its peoples, etc. would be crucial in justifying the practices that produce white hegemony and European domination. The herrenvolk democracy of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the U.S. – one such "truth" produced – forced Blacks, Asians, and Irish to compete for low-end, low-paying jobs, and then be characterized as filth, scum, vermin, apes, and sub-humans for the conditions they were inevitably in; thus they would not be a part of Husserl's idea of community, especially one striving toward a neo-platonic truth. And they certainly wouldn't be left with much time to do the kind of reflection that Couture and Husserl ask of people. Thoreau had time, privilege, and capital to learn to read and write well, to think and speculate in the ways the dominant academic institutions ask. John Field did not, and it would appear to be so because the networks of white privilege at the time have kept him away from this kind of literacy. This same paradigm is true for many today, particularly for people of color and those without much access to capital.

Husserl's notion of intentionality, if used to find some boarder knowledge about a "community," doesn't account for those bodies not present in the classroom, or those without voice (or with quite voices). Community good and truth are constructed by an intentionality that is, and can only be, steeped in the dominant epistemology of whiteness, the voices that usually

get heard, or heard the loudest. These voices are validated by academic institutions that privilege empiricism (as phenomenological methods do), a *telos* that guides rhetoric (e.g. Couture's "common truth" and "altruism"), methods of categorization (e.g., Husserl's "basic elements" that "phenomenological reduction" provides (Couture 67)), and an agency that is allegedly independent and aloof from power relations in and outside the classroom (which invokes the "independent" and "skeptical" mind of Enlightenment discourses of reason, all of which are white and racist). And so it's only from a white, male, liberal intentionality that anyone can conclude that a universal truth can be found in uncritical personal experience, or that pure thought, knowledge, or truth even exists. But for most in the academy, this criticism may seem trivial. We are more "enlightened" today.¹³¹ Those in the conversation are already alike, have common stake, and so would hear commonality and truth through their common *habitus* and shared common sense. Universal patterns of truth emerge without conflict, and an "intentional" reflection that embraces appearance and leaves unquestioned epistemology and power relationships would make common sense. In this scenario, one can safely feel altruistic toward others without much risk since altruism reaffirms the consubstantial status quo and the dominant white *habitus*.

To her credit, Couture suggests critiques like this one, saying, "[m]y object here is not to address or defend this argument [Husserl's major argument, as she words it] in particular, but rather to focus on Husserl's definition of communal spirituality as the intersubjective scene in which truth is sought and progressively revealed" (86). Yet one must address the context and assumptions Husserl is working from since it reject productive conflict and the identification of epistemology. Intentionality can work because Husserl's community is not in conflict, but our classes are, or should be. Intersubjective rhetorics become more difficult to enact since discourse

is now not about seeing patterns and universal truth but difference and perspective, epistemological structures and consubstantial elements in networks of discourse. Critical resolutions along these lines seem more important given contemporary U.S. race relations, class divides, and the ever-widening gap between the few with capital, resources, and opportunity, and the many with much less. In fact, much of the jobs in the academy today is to find ways to make a more equitable life for all, to see and act humanely within communities that are composed of various agents who come to the table with differing needs, purposes, points of view, and life chances, most of which are historically based, systemically perpetuated, and out of the immediate control of those agents. It's then important to question and engage in conflict with the status quo since our students mostly come from dominant groups, such as the white middleclass.

Searching only for a "truth" that comes out of altruistic and intentional reflection allows Couture to have the critique that she does for Marxian methods and rhetoric. She says:

My objection is to the Marxist presupposition that ideological forces determine our freedom to change perspective. As I have argued in chapter 2, the powerful trope of resistance that dominates theories of social determinism in itself stands in the way of an openness to reflective thinking that is the foundation of Husserl's phenomenology. Husserl's dream of a community moving toward a common understanding must surely fail if we choose to believe that our differences are determined solely by social forces that we struggle to resist. (90)

Couture's counter to rhetorics of conflict, illustrates why it's important to take Husserl's historical and ideological context into account. His "dream of a community moving toward a common understanding" can only happen in a community that offers no resistance, as Couture suggests. In a community that sees most things similarly, has common values and goals,

ideology and knowledge are difficult to criticize and question. The epistemology of whiteness is invisible, tacitly used as a sifting structure for intentionality and altruism. And it's this very dynamic that also structures Couture's ideas of "openness" in "reflective thinking" and our inherent freedom to "choose" to believe in anything. Her objection to Marxian perspectives, like mine, is one that doesn't address the very problems of consent, hegemony, and the limits of agency that she relies on, through assumptions of whiteness, for her alternative rhetoric.

For some, which Couture has a hard time seeing, struggle and resistance is all we have to use to find truth, to allow our worlds to make sense, to keep our lot from being as Thoreau sees John Field's. The "reflective thinking" that Couture wants from us is one that assumes we have full freedom of choice, but choice is always limited, structured by hegemony. In the writing classroom, naming these structures as elements of an epistemology of whiteness that works in the same way that the epistemology of racism does is important. We are then forced to see our lives as systemically controlled, bound by structures shaped in socially determined ways. Husserl's "dream of a community" is certainly that, a dream, since we are hopefully beyond the point in which we can look past whiteness. Whiteness is, in the end, the binding factor in Couture's "common understanding" and Husserl's community.

Couture's word choice is telling, and highlights the main problems I have with her ideas. In a white world like ours, one's "difference" is constantly shoved in one's face, and so it's hard not to "choose to believe" when one is determined by "social forces." When you are white and privileged, you have lots of choices, and you can choose to reflect without considering social forces, economics, race, etc. – in fact, you can act as if structures of subordination do not exist. It is not a choice to believe that as a Mexican immigrant working in the fields of California my "differences" will hold me back, keep me at bay from the white communities that surround me,

and thus it is this system of oppression that I must struggle to resist, or be swallowed up. As an “Asian American,” I don’t have much choice when employers inevitably view me as a safe way to fill a “quota” if needed. There’s not much choice when I’m held up to other “minorities” as a “model” for them: you can assimilate too just like Asao, they say, despite my very conscious efforts *not to assimilate*, or at least not look and sound assimilated. By working and negotiating in society, I am complicit with the white foundations that construct most of the network, that give me privilege and subordinate me in the academy. So my critical difference, my offering of epistemological conflict, is all I have to make the world a better place for more people and keep my agency – or at least, possess an agency worth keeping.

In short, people around me may acknowledge my commonality with them, my assimilation – and they will be right to an extent – but this does not change the system that keeps us apart and dominates, make anyone’s life and chances better, nor give anyone more opportunity. What it does is place more mortar on the foundations of whiteness. A rhetoric of hard agreements attempts to reveal this mortar as the epistemology of whiteness and chip away at it with the hammer of difference and conflict. A rhetoric of hard agreements, as an alternative to rhetorics like Couture’s, reveals that relativism can construct the validity and reliability of knowledge without holding up abstracted, decontextualized truths; that in fact, validity and reliability of knowledge and assessment practices are necessary exploration in a composition classroom because our positional hermeneutical practices demand we reconsider acts of judgment and how they are made; that conflict is needed for the critical examination of epistemology, hermeneutical practices, whiteness, and the reckoning of our rhetoric and material conditions (i.e., an accounting of agents’ “scrappiness” as structured ways in the world); that our will to a faith in something should be acknowledged and incorporated into our worldviews,

especially when that faith is one in whiteness; and that “altruism” and “freedom of choice” in our reflective practices can easily become selfish, narcissistic activity that embraces whiteness and dominant hegemonic discourse, just as appeals to “common community” and consensus often do. Addressing these issues and problems keeps the classroom away from many of the dangers of uncritical whiteness in the classroom.

Chapter 7: Race-ing the Institution of Education

Imagine this:

You are standing in a room. The walls of this room are covered in blood. All around you are corpses of varying vintage. They are bloody and putrid; they stink and their spirits howl. You must pick your way over these corpses as you go about your business in that room, whatever that may be, but there is no way to avoid them, no way to shut them out of your consciousness, no way to stop hearing and seeing and breathing their existence. Now imagine that in this room are other people – like you, but not quite like you – you see, they can't see or smell or hear these dead bodies. You keep telling them to be careful, not to step here or there. You keep asking, "Don't you see anything here? Don't you hear anything?" They smile and say, "Of course not, what's to see or hear?" They begin to think that you are crazy and maybe you begin to think so too. Worse yet, some of these people are willing to admit that you might just be seeing and hearing things that they cannot, or will not, allow themselves to see or hear, but that you should quit calling attention to yourself, that you should shut up, at least until you accrue enough power that people will listen to you – and that the only way for you to get any power is if you pretend that you aren't seeing what you are seeing, hearing what you are hearing. "Act like everyone else," they tell you. "Go along with the rules." (Powell 6).

From "Blood and Scholarship: One Mixed-Blood's Story," Malea Powell

Malea Powell's depiction of the academy is a good one also for the classroom. Our tasks as teachers and scholars are, first, to reveal our classrooms and disciplines as spaces that are filled with transparent structures that need critical inspection if racism, sexism, and the structural aspects of rhetoric are to be critiqued, and, second, to find ways to get our students to do this critical inspection for themselves? These are tough tasks, not because our students aren't smart or able to critically engage with racism, but because the traditions that contemporary discourses rely on – which are embedded in our academic institutions – are structured in ways that reproduce racism through an unexamined whiteness and masculine personhood that plays god-tricks on us all. In short, my discussion in this dissertation offers a way to get students to do these two important tasks.

In this dissertation, primarily (though not exclusively) through the works of Gramsci, Bourdieu, Vico, and the Elder Sophists, I create an epistemology of racism that helps define consciously “the critical” in writing classrooms, revealing them as spaces like the one Powell depicts. At the center of this epistemology is a response to the consensus/dissensus debate through what I term a “rhetoric of hard agreements.” Using this theoretical framework, I create a pedagogy of self-assessment which allows students to become not only conscious, critical writers but conscious, critical citizens able to assess language practices epistemologically. These three interconnected elements – a critical theory, pedagogy, and rhetoric – allow students to form critical praxis by assessing racist structures in discourse. Ultimately, I provide a unified system that gives students the tools to assess their own writing and structural racism in cultural sites.

As I discuss in the Introduction, the epistemology of whiteness is invigorated by various discursive traditions that our writing classrooms and schools use unquestioningly, which I've identified as four in number: (1) categorization and hierarchy of “subjects”; (2) teleologies, for

example, an unquestioned “altruism” or assumed “common good”; (3) a primacy and assumption of a “rational” mind working, that is, a whiteness that hides as rationality through discursive tactics and logics; and (4) a reliance on empirically based logics and rhetorics, such as, Barbara Couture’s reliance on inducing communal truth through an intentional reflection on individual experience or Bonilla-Silva’s observations of students’ story lines (77-87). Each of these aspects of the epistemology of whiteness in our academic discourses invokes the others within the epistemology. Taxonomies often invoke teleologies that provide value, assumptions about an individual mind working in our students invoke a white objectivity and “rational” logics, as well as empirical methods of analysis and categorization of details discussed. Students will have a hard time seeing these elements as ways of structuring racism, or reinforcing gender-based subordination, or reproducing power relations within economic arrangements that are designed to benefit only a select few. These are the structures by which knowledge and value are assessed in the world, so when we criticize them, or suggest they may not be universal or transcendent truths, students and faculty resist. However, we must engage in this critical activity if we wish to live in a more equitable society – that is, reveal the corps-filled room that Powell describes.

The epistemology of racism offers a set of concepts that allow classrooms to engage self-consciously in critical discourses. As I discuss in Chapter 1, the epistemology of racism reveals the consubstantial elements of the personal and the social, of *habitus* and common sense that work around institutions ministering value to agents, practices, contexts, knowledge, and discourses. This master epistemology shows how commonsense knowledge is made rhetorically within contexts (*verum-factum*) over time, how it’s made through decisions, judgments, and community practices (*verum-certum*), and how it functions in processes of personhood. Additionally, this epistemology accounts for agents’ dispositions (both *hexis* and ideological and

hermeneutical dispositions) by explicitly acknowledging the consubstantiality between common sense in social networks and agents' habitual ways of being, their sets dispositions, or *habitus*. In fact, the epistemology of racism reveals in structural ways how discourse is epistemological; therefore, *how* we articulate knowledge is tied into the racist structuring in our culture. The epistemology of racism as a theory reveals the classroom as a space that often validates whiteness as an "academic discourse" that's built on racial categorization and empiricism, both of which draw their authority from racist institutions (formal and informal), and a telos that's informed by a history which defines what the appropriate goals and methods are for academic endeavors. And teachers and academics (as well as our students) often go along with this arrangement without questioning it or calling attention to it. More importantly, the epistemology of racism shows how each of us contributes to racism through the epistemological structures that we articulate, use, and embody in our rhetorics. Therefore racism is a crucial aspect of the writing classroom. In many important ways, it defines "the critical" in our writing pedagogy. Seeing racism as structured and structuring is a way to understand personhood as built around the commonsensical and the habitual, and a way to form critical praxis in students' writing practices.

But a robust epistemological theory isn't enough for critical activity in the writing classroom. The classroom must be set up to accept conflict and socially determined knowledge, something critical sophistic pedagogy, as I've defined it in Chapter 3, can do by using the Protagorean man-measure doctrine (that rhetoric provides conclusions based only on what a community can measure) and the sophists' emphasis on *nomos* in rhetorical knowledge (that values are accepted because they are socially determined, not socially accepted because they are inherently valid) as a basis for antilogical activities (ones that allow students to confront

difference and conflicting views on knowledge, particularly in writing). Critical sophistic pedagogy allows the classroom to be one not just about rhetoric and citizenship, or even engaging with arguments (although it will be a space for these issues), but one where assessment is integral to learning how to write and think critically. Sophistic heuristics show us how agents cannot get around acts of assessment, and so the classroom's discourse around the evaluation of student writing (by seeing the epistemological elements in writing) becomes also an assessment of personhood. Understanding how we measure and where values form in society (and the classroom) connects the act of measuring to the agents who measure and their purposes for measuring.

The assessment of writing as a social practice, then, can become an avenue to critique racism as structurally implicated in processes of personhood. Students can begin to see agency as structured, confined, and contextual; identity as a process of interpellation from common sense and institutional "hails"; and citizenship as a complex articulation of racial structuring that's linked to economies of power and privilege. Critical sophistic pedagogy allows the assessment of student writing to be more than a mechanism to measure student learning in the classroom. It becomes a way to understand rhetoric and writing as processes in communities that construct knowledge through assessment.

Community-based assessment practice takes advantage of critical sophistic pedagogy's redefining of assessment, focusing on community and socially derived claims to knowledge and value. Using the man-measure doctrine and assumptions around *nomos* as its classroom premises, community-based assessment practices self-consciously structure critical spaces for public reflection on how knowledge and discourse are validated and how the assessment of writing obtains reliability through structured ways of reading and reflection. By providing

textured assessment of student writing, community-based assessment allows students to critique traditional ways of teacher-centered writing assessment and rearranges the power relations that traditionally validate writing in the classroom. The critique of and critical engagement with the act of assessment, because it is being done by the students, is possible in both practical and theoretical ways in this model. These practices reveal how contradictory assessments are, and how epistemologically structured our perspectives and hermeneutical practices are. When the epistemology of racism is inserted into community-based assessment practices, say in reflection activities or the assessment practices themselves, the classroom transforms into a critical space where agents with significant power over the assessment of their ideas and writing can form critical praxis around racism and personhood.

Rhetorics, like a rhetoric of hard agreements that I discuss in chapters 5 and 6, that embrace conflict and offer ways beyond normative “collaboration,” so that critical resolutions can be used by students who do not share power equally, can be used for classroom discourse that embraces critical activity and praxis. The epistemology of whiteness and its harmful assumptions is highlighted as structural through conflict in the classroom, and even revealed as the basis for what is normative in everyday rhetorical exchanges. Without the critical resolutions that a rhetoric of hard agreements constructs, the discourse of the class can easily be random, too “relative” for many to find profit in, or normative, reproducing unreflective, dominant discourse. This means that rhetorics that embrace or ignore the epistemology of whiteness, like Barbara Couture’s phenomenological rhetoric, should be critiqued for how they structure their conclusions and discourse, just as the critical resolutions from a rhetoric of hard agreements should be interrogated. Concepts like “altruism” and “common good” need critiquing, and should be situated within the networks that construct them in order to see their structured and

structuring nature. A rhetoric of hard agreements, when situated in a classroom that offers community-based assessment practices and a critical sophisticated pedagogical framework, can begin to acknowledge the relationships of power within the classroom and the other institutions that minister value in students' lives, while also focusing on the social processes of knowledge construction and assessment. This is not an attempt to escape the structures of power and their dynamics within the classroom, instead this kind of classroom is designed to show students how people are situated within systems of domination and control, ones that are structured in racist ways, and ones that can be critiqued, and maybe changed.

A classroom like the one I've just described will make it more difficult to ignore the bodies of those who are absent yet can (and should) be present in discussion and our rhetoric.¹³² When the attention in the writing classroom can turn to how the assessment of writing is consciously structured through decisions made in community, and when the epistemology of racism is used to show how racism and personhood are structured through these decisions, their discourse, and the evaluation processes that follow from them, then a critical agency is possible. This agency acknowledges complicity in larger systems that are harmful to all, but it also offers greater power to take advantage of the gaps that open up in the writing, assessment, and reflection practices of students.

However, there are larger institutional implications to what I've discussed in this dissertation. Even if we do not state them much of the time, we work from tacit notions of hierarchy and categorization that construct value and priorities of knowledge, academic departments, and agents on college campuses (e.g. "faculty," "staff," "administration," "students," "students of color," etc.). These kinds of categories, while necessary within the current arrangement (but maybe not in other arrangements) erase conflict by distributing power

unevenly. As academics, we also inherited a white academic personhood that allows the corpses to remain invisible and odorless to our students and ourselves. Business can go on as usual by rearticulating racist structures through special programs, departments, and categories, or by granting varying levels of legitimacy to “ethnic studies” or “race studies.” But this legitimacy still springs from the institutions that minister authority through the elements of the epistemology of whiteness, so that this dissertation becomes valid as “scholarship on racism” through its adherence to traditional discourses of whiteness, through the use of authoritative texts and “logical” analysis and categorization of ideas, etc. So in a way, to demonstrate literacy in the academy (in a dissertation or a 101 course portfolio) is also to articulate one’s deep implication in racism and the racist institutions that help structure our world and its economies.

Furthermore, English Departments have African American literature, Asian American literature, Latino/a literature, American literature, British literature, courses in “popular culture” (as if all literature does not already play with the “popular”), and the like. These distinctions create literary ghettos that block the access for most of our white students, and artificially segregate those students of color who will gravitate to them. It structurally defines these discourses as “racial” ones, and by default grants them less legitimacy than traditionally white, male literatures. To see how powerful and ubiquitous this racism is, all we need to do is count the number of English department faculty in ten random universities in the U.S. How many teach what? How many faculty do research in these “special literatures”? Just like Jim Crow laws, separate never means equal in our society. This is the implicit lesson our students get, regardless of what “we” tell them about the legitimacy of “Other literatures.” Whiteness is structured too ubiquitously and powerfully in the academy to *think Other-wise*.

In writing programs, textbooks, and writing courses, we also categorize levels of achievement and types of students or writers. We focus on the *individual* writer, *her mind*, and her ability to *rationalize* through *her* ideas. The telos is often to be “more critical” or to become a “better writer,” but these fundamental aspects of the assessment of writing are never developed or interrogated, never structurally examined by programs or students themselves. And sometimes the “critical” (as in “critical thinking”) or notions of “better writers” are never clearly defined, which means they can’t be interrogated programmatically as constructions (as both *verum-factum* and *verum-certum*) that determine the destinies of our students, ranking them, and funneling them into various places in the academy. And if I am correct in the first half of this dissertation, then the epistemology of whiteness will inevitably structure the de facto racism of the students within these programs and courses. Without a critical perspective, students may never have a chance to see the world and its institutions as structurally built around racism and inequality, built to reproduce current power relationships and unjust economies.

In the first-year composition course, we often teach summarizing, writing from sources, entering academic discussions, and engaging with conflicts, but when a teacher keeps most of the authority to assess and evaluate writing, students are coerced into adhering to that particular teacher’s hierarchies of knowledge, her epistemologies, and even her hermeneutical practices – that is, the students do not get a chance to theorize assessment and writing for themselves and from their own practices. They do not get a chance to see epistemologically, to reflect on how and what we say and measure in the world shares in racism through the discursive and hermeneutical structures we habitually use, and that this rhetoric also has implications to our agency, identities, and citizenship. Typically textbooks and programs emphasize practice and skills, but not how those practices validate certain kinds of agents in the classroom, interpellate

(particularly through institutions) white identities or subordinate ones, or how citizenship is (has been) articulated in ways that continue to structure inequality and racial taxonomies.

It is assumed that something called “academic conventions” dictates that we quote our sources “properly,” that we adhere to a set of rhetorical conventions usually laid out in a textbook or by the teacher. But how often does a program or pedagogy demand that we critique carefully the teaching of these rhetorical practices (not necessarily the conventions themselves) as structurally racist practices, as ones that embody whiteness through notions of academic honesty and integrity? And that this pedagogy of whiteness – even a pedagogy that is “liberal” – is often linked to other racist common sense, such as a teleology that places everything else the teacher says as “Truth” on par with quotation and citation mechanics (benign rhetorical conventions, i.e. not racist). How often do we ask our students to engage in conflict with the authoritative knowledge of our textbooks and evaluation rubrics in order to see how our classrooms reproduce epistemological conundrums: like a tendency (even a will to) hierarchy and categorization, which both stem from or call upon teleologies, which themselves are common sense to many. Additionally, how often do we link our epistemologies and pedagogies to racism, sexism, and heterosexism, or to the ideas of “fairness,” “hardwork,” and “meritocracy” (to name a few) – that we proclaim to critique? How often do we critically deconstruct the practice of assessing student writing in order to be critical of *how* our classrooms and assessment practices value what they claim to value, who specifically these arrangements affect and in what ways?

These questions are often difficult to critically address in the classroom because many teachers still like to believe that they can be apolitical, whiteness rarely gets discussed, seen, or conceptualized as a part of academic epistemologies – as a part of the very academic discourses

that allow me to write what I write here, or to have authority in my classrooms to be a teacher of writing. If teaching writing also tacitly teaches race and reinforces structural racism in implicit ways, race, whiteness, and structural racism need to be confronted in the classroom as primary sites of interrogation because personhood draws upon these sites. This can be done without calling students racist, or pointing fingers at individuals, groups, or the like. Rhetorics that point fingers or attempt to alleviate “guilt trips” can be pointed out as epistemologically structuring out explicit discussions of racism – that is, ways to avoid seeing structural racism. These rhetorics of racist avoidance turn discourse toward feeling better individually, proclaiming “colorblindness” and meritocracy. They embrace the ground rules that the epistemology of whiteness provides but do not examine where “guilt” comes from, what colorblind discursive strategies hide, how “merit” is constructed, and what the arguments around the alleviation of personal guilt reproduces or ignores.¹³³ In current discourses, this means race is not discussed, or dismissed as not part of the writing classroom. But as I’ve argued, racism is always a part of our classrooms and discourses, just as political positioning and power dynamics (differentials) are. And so, “critical thinking,” a key component to most writing programs today, is not simply revealing assumptions in rhetoric, problem-solving, or providing various conflicting perspectives on a subject; it’s addressing the structural and epistemologically-driven racism in our rhetorics, revealing the traditions and epistemologies of whiteness. It’s revealing our complicity in the racist hegemony of our society, and going beyond guilt. Therefore, “critical thinking” is a way to reflect upon how the notion of “thinking” itself is implicated in the socially determined structures that provide the very sights/sites we use to interrogate the material and discursive (i.e. “critical thinking” is commonsensical and institutional but doesn’t have to be used blindly).

As theories what the epistemology of racism and community-based assessment practice reveal are important questions that often go unexamined in the academy and writing programs. Each are worthy of future interrogation: How do local teachers and administrators see, work with, and against the structural racism in their writing programs and courses? How can this apparent weakness (a program's structural racism) be used as a strength for student learning? How is racism and whiteness linked to the "critical" in writing programs? How exactly is the "critical" and "critical thinking" defined and examined in individual writing programs? Are these (explicit or implicit) notions of "good writing" linked to historically traceable patterns in discourse and epistemology, and thus historically linked to structural racism? How are definitions and assumptions around what is "critical" and what is "thinking" programmatically structured into courses and assessment practices? How are the processes of assessment and evaluation of student writing continually examined for structural racism? How exactly are the assessment practices of writing programs structured and why are they structured in the ways they are? Are there more educative ways to structuring the assessment of student writing so that its primary goal is not to measure student performance but to help students become more critical in their writing and thinking practices? How can assessment as a student-centered process in writing programs be a practice that is designed to get students to assess racism in discourse and material practices as structural and not individual?

A Story of Race-ing

To conclude, I offer one brief narrative that I hope illustrates the epistemology of racism and the larger issues. This narrative, a part of my educational story, deals with a particular common sense in the U.S., the model minority myth, one that, as San Juan says, is the

contemporary equivalent of the “yellow peril” (102). My hope is that it glosses and makes flesh what I’ve said throughout this dissertation in other ways.

During half of my educational life, I’ve fit the model minority stereotype. I was the boy who worked the hardest, achieved more (relatively speaking), the one who pulled himself up by his own academic bootstraps. I came from under-funded, urban schools in North Las Vegas, where I started learning to read in a remedial reading class, separated from my peers. We would sit around a table with our teacher and read from books with lots of pictures in them. My teacher was young, white, and female, a demographic that I’d later find out was typical for that position. Get a sentence right, and you got a small handful of goldfish crackers. We read for food. Years later, teaching my own English class, I would wonder what bread I offered my students. Did they enjoy them? Were they satisfied? Were they nutritious enough? Was this the purpose of literacy? Should I offer more? Could I show them in some meaningful way the telos of remedial classes like mine: to get back into the “regular” class, to be “normal”? Could I think clear enough about how a separate classroom might classify its students in determined ways and structure not only what we read, but how we did it, and how we felt about it? Could I see how that remedial reading class experience structured my desire to read?

In the second grade, my teacher asked my mother if I “spoke English” because I was quiet in the classroom. I just didn’t speak. I remember thinking, nobody here is worth talking to, not even Mrs. Whitmore, my tall, white, middle-aged teacher. I was shy at the time. Often my mom would give me allergy medicine that would make me drowsy in school. One of my first memories of schooling was waking up in class, disoriented, as the entire class surrounded me, laughing as the teacher shot me with a squirt gun to wake me. What else could I do but be silent?

That same year, I received the school's award for reading the most books in our school-wide reading contest – I worked hard every night at those books. I read even when I didn't want to. The goal for me was to win, not to read. I wanted painfully to get that award. I thought it would be a defiant gesture, not against my teacher whom I felt ambivalent toward, but against the entire class, my classmates whom I didn't know (nor like), the school, reading in a separate room, the constant process of being singled out when I desperately didn't want to be singled out. I recall no specific books, no characters, no story lines, only laying on my bed turning pages, fingering black lines of text, speaking words I cared little about, determined. There was nothing "racial" about my view of things at this point, even though this fact was quite literally everywhere. I lived in North Las Vegas, a city mostly black. Everyone on my block, barring two others, was black. And this fact was pervasively present, even in Mrs. Whitmore's classroom, which was "desegregated" by busing in whites to fill half the seats.

I'm sure that my silence, structured by the school's institutionalized policies for slow readers, structured by the need for me to take sleep-inducing allergy medicine daily, structured by my appearance, indicated in that institutional context a poor reader, a student who was "slower" than his peers. I'm confident that my habitual lethargy in class provided sufficient warrant for an otherwise conscientious and respectful teacher to ridicule a seven-year-old boy with severe allergies (so severe, in fact, that they stunted his growth just a few years earlier and impelled his mom to move to a dryer climate). I'm positive that my bodily *hexis*, a dark-brown skinned boy with black hair and brown eyes, who didn't say much, who seemed to perform linguistically below his peers, constructed me as a slow student, a foreigner, maybe even as a lazy student, one who didn't apply himself for whatever reasons. I'm also sure that this *habitus*, reified in school records, followed me through school, especially elementary and junior high,

where I was not the model of self-control or academic achievement. I looked and acted like any other inner-city hoodlum destined for juvenile hall or jail.

It is true I made bad choices, but I now wonder how those choices were constructed for me, how the universe of my options was structured in the schools I went to, the classes I was a part of, the *habitus* I embodied and that operated around me as the common sense of the classroom. I wonder how my ending up a model student from “humble beginnings” does not reinforce the structural racism inherent in our schools and society. It is not simply that “I was lucky,” or even that “I worked hard.” In fact, I slowly came out of my academic shell by late junior high, despite the majority of acts and attitudes of almost every teacher I can recall before then. Yet by the sixth grade, I was still in remedial reading classes, and almost flunking them, getting “Ds.” My only memory of those classes was drawing pictures as the teacher said things, and the pain of my grades, the sourness in the back of my throat as I left my “normal” class to go to this remedial class. I also remember being completely alone in my classes, thinking who would talk to me, be my friend. From first to sixth grade I had one friend that I did anything with, my twin brother. Not so ironically, my brother’s choices were also identical to mine in school. He too was in remedial reading classes. He too “got into trouble” constantly. The common sense we saw around us told us: it was “us” against “them.” No one, not even teachers, were going to help us do anything. In fact, most teachers were not to be trusted.

Most of the time, my teachers ignored me, except when I fought, which I did a lot. I was angry much of the time, especially when talking to others, and didn’t know why. Everyone seemed to be against me, and so I didn’t hesitate to pick a fight. I now see this time as one in which I was figuring out how I could cope with my educational environment, my peers who all were very different from me, and who later on would be mostly white and middle-class. I realize

also that it was a reaction to the common sense that surrounded my body, my *hexis*, that others saw and responded to. To many, I was a “beaner,” a “foreigner,” or a “dirty Mexican.”

However in the seventh grade, my reading teacher, a kind and muscular white man, extended his arm toward me and spoke to the class:

“Ty has finished another chapter in *White Fang*. We should all try to work as hard as he does.”

This was the first time any teacher had separated me from my peers in order to call me out as exceptional in any way. Mr. Hanks had touched my shoulder in front of the class, called me by my nickname, told everyone that I was the model for them to emulate. I never looked back. Ironically, this public validation of my abilities was the literal beginning of my yearning for whiteness through academic excellence.

In the first semester of the eighth grade, I read all my English literature carefully and found joy in it, *Romeo and Juliet*, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *Lord of the Flies* (yes, all white authors, all white subjects, and precious few bodies of color who mostly were scenery or objects manipulated by plot and white agency). Then I read them again aloud as my twin brother was assigned the same works the next semester (he didn’t want to read them but didn’t mind listening to me). I offered to read them to him in fact. I recall enjoying the stories immensely but never actually identifying with any of the characters. All of them seemed more like other people, like my classmates, like the kids on the block, identities so different from and clearly outside of me. In fact, it would end up being almost twenty years later that I’d find a fictional character of any sort with which I could truly identify. Ironically, this non-identification in fiction would actually help me in my English and literature studies, allow me to talk about characters as fictionalized entities, constructs, and discuss them as devices constructed by authors with words.

By the time I reached high school, I was a straight-A honors student, except in English, where I received my only B+ my Freshman year. My teacher's response was simply: "you were so quiet. You didn't participate much in class." Yes, I was quiet, quiet like Asians typically are, I suppose, or maybe as my foreign *hexis* allowed. Yes, maybe I didn't know my English as well as I should. Certainly, I felt this heaviness in my chest, and a contradiction in my life, an insecurity about language in the classroom. Ironically, in the cafeteria at lunch time, my brother and I were known as the "kings of caps." Those who sat at our table would "play the dozens" ("cap on each other") every day, and no one wanted to go against us. They would say so. Tad and I were too fast, too loud, too articulate, too good at insults, and too willing to rhetorically wrestle. We had it and our friends would respect that, and nothing was off limits: your momma, your daddy, your cousin, your clothes, your ass, how you spoke, what you looked like, your weight, your hair, what you said, how you tried to "capped" on us or imitate us, etc. But then this was a different kind of literacy than expected in my classes, one that acknowledged more forcefully and explicitly bodily *hexis*, context, and the ways we produced (or took away) value in one another. Assessment through rhetoric was the main constituent of capping. And racism was structured in the process. In fact, along with sexism, it was a primary tactic for effective capping.

By the time I got to college, I cultivated an ethic of hard work to relieve my anxieties over trying to prove that I was just like everyone else, that I belonged there in college with all those well-educated white kids – that I could also be white too, maybe more white. I would say that I didn't see races in people, only the *human* race. But I saw race. I just didn't know it at the time. It was whiteness. In fact, I occasionally claimed to be white too, but it was always half-hearted since my non-whiteness always came up. The first question that structures social interaction I always get is: "what nationality are you?" I never thought to ask the same question

to those around me, and they never seemed to ask it of each other either. It's easy to see how naturalizing this kind of habitual, social interaction can be, how it can structure one's conception of oneself, and even determine the kinds of choices one might make, how it can construct relations in classrooms and in dorm rooms.

To prepare for grad school and the GREs, I made reading lists for my summers, spent much of my time reading things I thought I should (*Beowulf*, *Caedmon's Hymn*, Blake, Spencer, Donne, Melville) – more indoctrination into the epistemology of racism and of whiteness that called itself the “best” western civilization had produced in literature. I wanted traditional – that is, white – “academic literacy.” More searching for agency and identity in places that simply could not or would not give it to me unconditionally. More lingering tension and anxiety. I even acquired a subscription to the *New Yorker* (which I kept for several years), thinking this is what academics read, what they spend their free time doing. Many of my professors read it – or so I supposed. After a time, I could spout chic ideas and quotes from novels like so much conspicuous academic consumption, all in the hopes of showing how high I'd pulled my bootstraps, and unknowingly how white I was. I was attempting to restructure my *habitus*, thinking it was solely up to me to do.

On the GRE and English Literature Subject Test, I scored pitifully low, well below average. What went wrong? My average grade in English courses had been an A-. I was not a below-average student. I read *everything* I was asked to. I did everything my educational institutions and teachers told me to do exactly as they told me to do it. I knew I had worked just as hard if not harder than my white peers, all of whom told me how well they'd done on these same tests. Now I wonder: are those tests accurate? What exactly are they testing? How might they be read, not as “unfair,” but epistemologically and structurally racist assessments, as

measuring devices that rely on key values I never had, or had a chance to get, even though I may have wanted to believe in them? What then is “literary aptitude”? Is it fluency in the epistemology of whiteness? Apparently, I was not so assimilated as I thought.

After five years away from grad school that took me through a tech writing job, a community college faculty position, and four more years of grad school, I am finishing a Ph.D. program in another land grant university. I sit in an office in a house in the middle of wheat and lintel fields writing, from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM everyday from May to August, including weekends. I’ve taken two Sundays and a Saturday off. I write this dissertation, mostly aloud. I delete pages of material, stories, of me, of my schooling. I arrange, pick and choose. I reread countless books and articles. I make pages and pages of flowcharts, notes, and diagrams. In my rhetoric, I try to be passionate yet show some level of calm, resolved, academic composure – unwillingly using, yet nevertheless feeding on, invoking a rational mind thinking, an empirical process, a clean theoretical taxonomy.

The process of writing is hard because I am usually loud, passionate, and excited about what I do and how I do it, and this seeps into my words. I know that what I do is also contradictory, an affirmation and denial of who I am and what I represent in the academy. I also realize that the standard academic voice is supposed to sound white, that is, share in the epistemology of whiteness. And I resist this. Sometime during this summer, in the flow of electrons on my computer screen, in my words spoken, and in my brain, I am struck with a painful epiphany, one that comes not all at once, but slowly soaks into my consciousness, like a sponge soaking up Cool Aid on a counter top, coloring it. *I need whiteness if I am to succeed*, get a job, be a professor, write, think, live, feed my kids with the words I write and things I teach. And at some level, I will have to step over the corpses that pile up around me. Their presence is

in part the traditions that allow me to make a living. The structures that make a racist academy, that construct the urgency for hiring faculty of color and having discussions about racism, are needed if I am to get tenure somewhere, or even get a job.

On top of all this, my dissertation, in fact, demonstrates how difficult it is for me, even now, to resist the need to prove every ounce of my value as an academic and scholar, knowledgeable and properly assimilated. With endnotes, works cited lists, and even appendices, which all still seems inadequate, I see how the *habitus* within and the academic common sense of whiteness around me in school constructs how I act, think, and write. I see that my very responses are determined, structured by institutions and notions of what is “logical,” that I am just as much white as I am a person of color. When I walk into a classroom as a teacher, I am just as susceptible to racist thinking. I am likely fall back on the epistemology of whiteness as a ministering institution when I want to “win” a discussion with my students or others.

I am complicit in the making of myself as the model for all minorities, and am uneasily content about it because my career relies on its effective use as a common sense in the academy. How ubiquitous this racist common sense is, so tacit that I thought I cultivated it all by myself, but in fact, it interpellated me through various means as a hardworking Asian American student, a poor boy who, in true Algerian fashion, pulled himself up by his own bootstraps. What a nice image I would make for future students, the poor colored boy from remedial classes turned professor. Forget the dissonances, or the fact that my entire journey seemed more like a string of failures, or near successes than actual success – I was mostly ignored or looked over until very late in my education, college really. And forget that this myth ignores how my choices and my pulling of my bootstraps was more structured into my *habitus* than an individualized free choice on my part, which the Alger myth perpetuates – that is, that my bootstraps may have been pulled

up for me in many ways, or that I was conditioned to pull them up while others are asked to leave theirs on the floor at their feet.

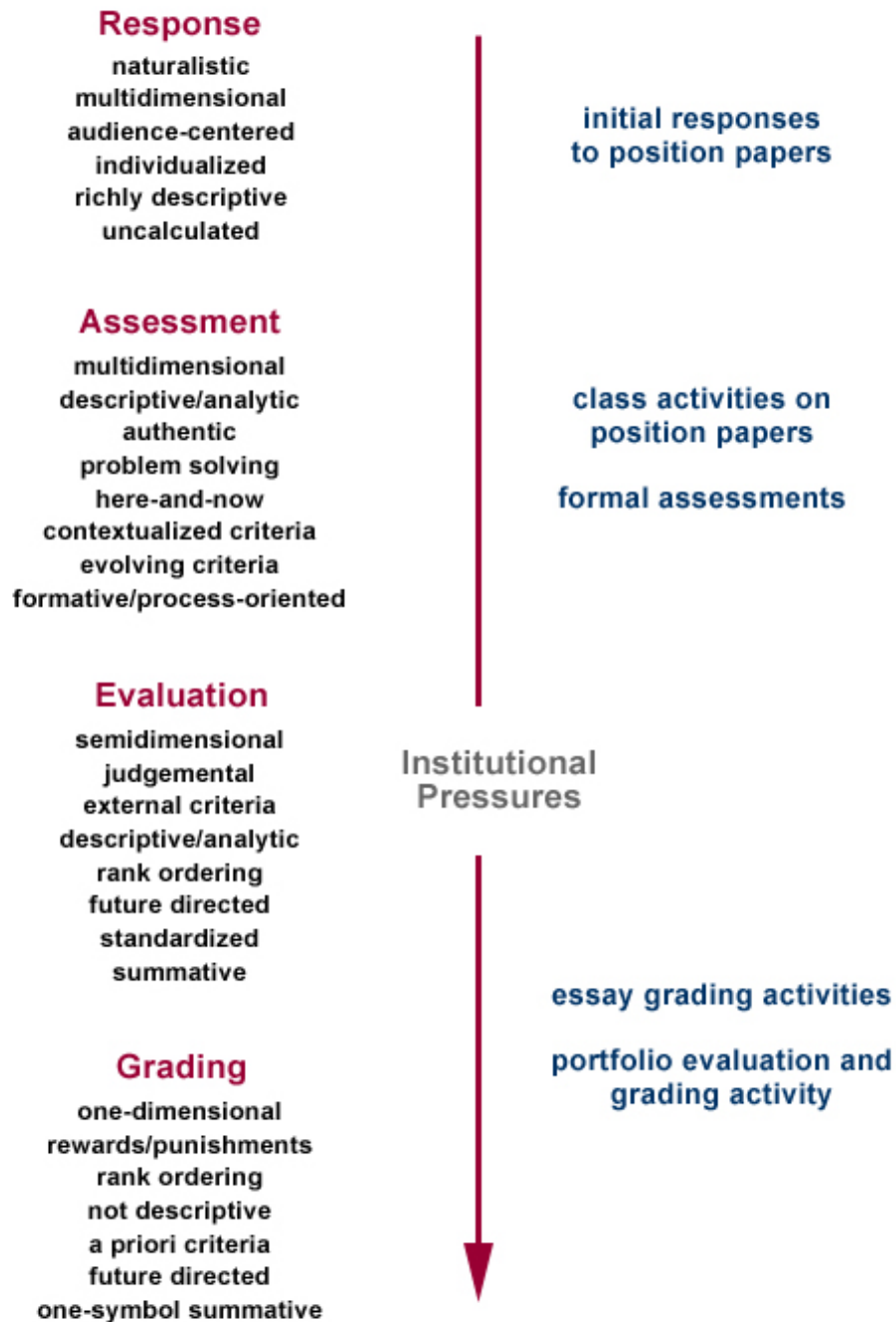
But do I want to help others be like me? No. I wouldn't wish that on anyone. And of course, who could actually take my word on these things? I need white support, right? I'm just Asao Inoue, that brown kid from North Las Vegas who *no one* on the block was allowed to play with, who had to take remedial reading, who couldn't get an "A" in high school English – who actually got a "B-" in his First Year Composition course, because, in the red words marked at the top of each paper, his writing had "too many errors." So I now wonder, being that teacher with the red pen, how can I help others not be like me, or maybe see how their *being* is structured in racist ways by the very classroom they sit in and do something about it.

I know that in my classrooms, despite what I do, I am an articulation of whiteness and the structural racism of the academy, as well as a model who reaffirms to many that "everyone has a chance to make it" in America. But I still want to be a professor. I actually like reading Shakespeare. I enjoy the English language, and at times revel in the power and cultural capital it bestows upon me in social settings. I adhere to most academic conventions in my field (or try to). But I do not do any these things uncritically, and I try to find ways to make "the critical" more opaque and usable for my students so that they can see the structuring of whiteness and racism around them.

So I guess, this narrative that is allegedly about me is really about the structures around me and in my past that construct desire for a literacy that has been granted to me. It not one that places blame on others for what has happened to me, or for who I am, but instead looks to question critically how I have come to be who I am as a thoroughly social being. It is a narrative that reveals questions my students need to ask about the academy, and their presence in the

classroom? It should also prompt them to ask who is absent and why are they absent? Finally, it asks us to see how personhood is structured in order to understand critically why we desire or believe in or want or feel for the ideas and discourses that we do.

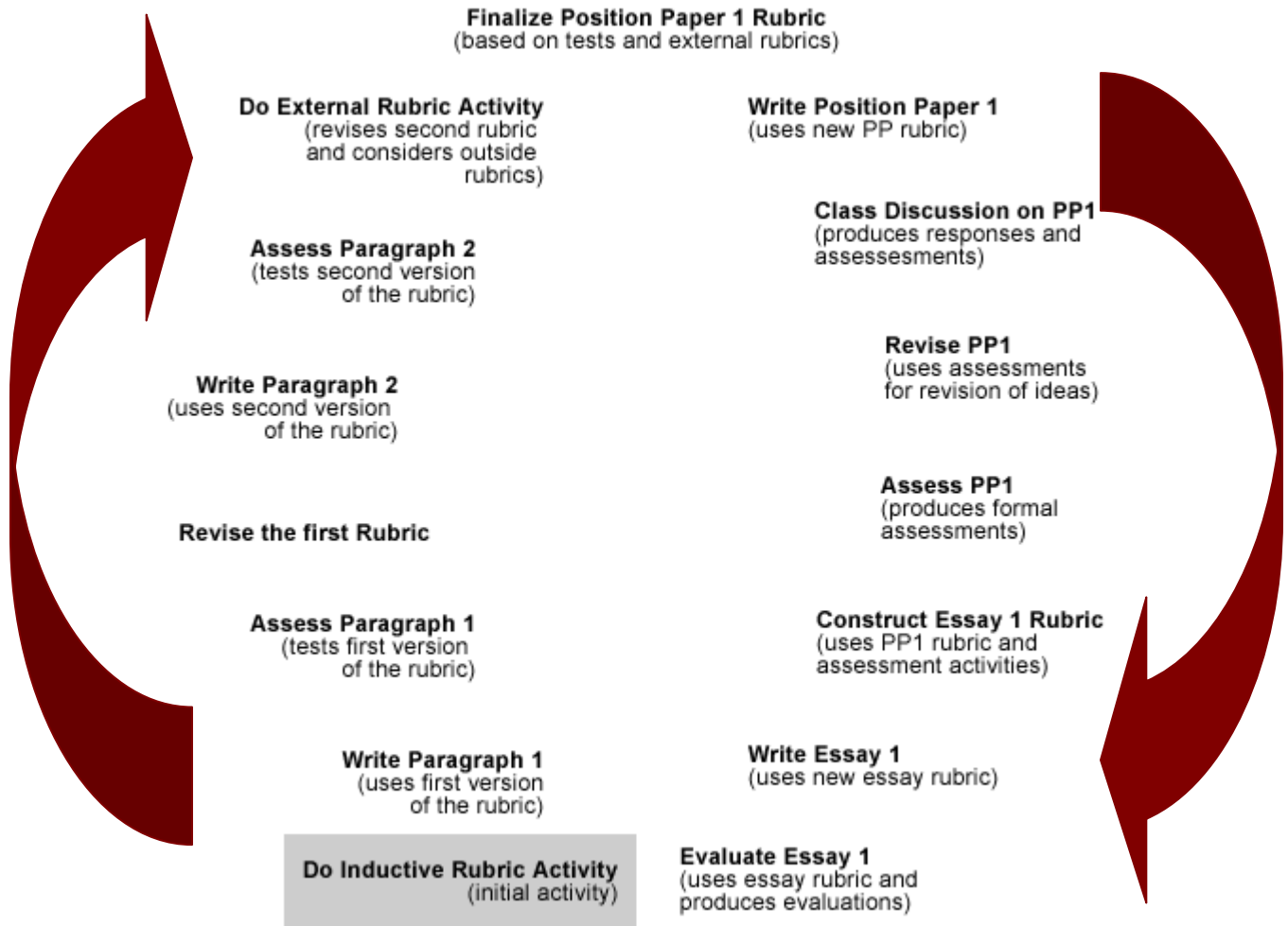
Appendix A



adapted from Stephen Tchudi's model in
Alternatives to Grading Student Writing

Tchudi's distinctions between response, assessment, evaluation, and grading, and some of my course activities' placements on this continuum.

Appendix B



My framework of recursive writing and assessment activities.

Appendix C

Subject: Re: Brad

Message no. 392 [Reply of: no. 349]

Author: Ryan

Date: Wednesday, February 4, 2004 11:00am

You have a consistent claim (Aristotle's definition of citizen conflicts with America's position).

Your engaged the audience well, but your claim is a little straightforward. I see potential for elaboration on the importance of Aristotle's definition and it's importance for our society.

Etiquette was good. To help your paragraph sound a little better, you might want to change the first of the sentence that starts with "which" because the previous sentence started with the same word.

Ryan's second formal assessment for a peer's paragraph two.

Appendix D

Subject: Re: Public Address

Message no. 547 [Reply of: no. 524]

Author: Ryan I

Date: Thursday, February 26, 2004 12:33am

1) Clarity of Thought, Support, and Details.

-I see potential for using further support for your point in your paper. I point I saw was that Bush and Pericles used the same method to deceive their audience. You support this point with their use of patriotism to persuade the audience. However, the term deception in this sense occurs when someone persuades someone to believe something that's not true or wrong. You don't provide evidence to show how it is deceptive but I do think that you could easily provide examples to show how their method of persuasion misleads the audience to believe something that may not be entirely correct.

-All your details seem necessary for your paper.

2) Invoking Audience, Intellectual Engagement, and Significance.

-I think your paper is highly invoking because it concerns a topic that is currently a very important topic. If, indeed, Bush is misleading us, then action should be taken. Personally, I think Bush does use rhetoric that draws the audience away from the reality of the situation. For example, he made it sound like Iraq the biggest threat for the US when in reality other countries such as North Korea are much greater threats.

3) Organization, Transitions, and Style.

-Order and organization were good. I think you could include reasons for why using patriotism can be deceptive in the 2nd and 3rd paragraph.

Anything else in the rubric that I didn't mention was good.

Your paper is very interesting and it is organized well. As I mentioned earlier, I think you need to connect your points about Bush and Pericles use of patriotism as being deceptive. Even if the use of patriotism is manipulative, it cannot be considered deceptive unless it leads the people to believe something that is not true.

Ryan's formal assessment for a peer's position paper one.

Appendix E

Subject: Brad

Message no. 349

Author: Brad

Date: Monday, February 2, 2004 5:46pm

Aristotle has a point that seems to contradict with American philosophy when he states: "He who is a citizen in a democracy will often not be a citizen in an oligarchy". Which goes onto to say that if one were to truly be called a citizen of a certain geographic area, then he/she would first have to be allowed to be free before they were to be called a citizen. Which then leads back to the position of government and how big of an impact it constitutes when speaking of who is and who is not a citizen. There have been instances over the period of American history where we look to establish who is and who is not a bonified citizen of the United States of America. Over the 1800's, many southerners raised the fact that slaves did not have intellect or reasoning to be considered a true citizen, but under the clause of Aristotle, slaves were under an oligarchy that was under a democracy, making them qualified citizens. Though later on, the philosopher states: "Nay, resident aliens in many places do not possess even such rights completely, for they are obliged to have patron, so that they do but imperfectly participate in citizenship, and we call them citizens only in a qualified sense, as we might apply the term to children who are too young to register, or to old men who have been relieved from state duties." Slaves would fit somewhere into this category, since they were treated as though they were on a childlike level. So how does one be a citizen under democracy but at the same time, not be considered a citizen under the notion that they are a resident alien that is foreign to the states? I believe what Aristotle goes on to say, but I believe this to be a perfect example of a double standard.

Brad's paragraph two from a recent course.

Appendix F

Subject: Re: Brad

Message no. 378 [Reply of: no. 349]

Author: Ian

Date: Wednesday, February 4, 2004 12:48am

Brad-

I feel you did a good job on your paragraph, and I feel overall it completed our requirements.

I. Clarity of Thought

- You contained a consistent claim.
- Your claim was supported with some appropriate evidence.

II. Proper Etiquette

- Your paragraph contained three or more sentences.
- You used appropriate language but had a few minor grammar problems. My advice would be to type your paragraph in 'word' and then paste it on to the discussion board. Also try proof reading your writing before turning it in because you also catch mistakes that way too.
- Your language was clear and concise.

III. Writing to the Reader

- I feel your paragraph elicited thought.
- I feel your paragraph was somewhat engaging but I feel you didn't really challenge the reader. You might want to try to incorporate the reader into your writing. You may do this by asking the reader a question or telling the reader something to engage him in your writing. There are other ways of doing this, those are some ideas that may or may not work for you.
- I also feel you considered the audience in your writing, because you brought up past events which makes the reader think and understand your point of view more completely.

Brad-

I feel you did a good job on your paragraph and my commentary to you is to try and capture the reader at the beginning of your writing. Try to think of a way that will make that reader want to read your writing. Also, I feel your basis for your argument is a little hazy for me because you mention Aristotle's contradiction in part of a citizen in a democracy will often not be a citizen in an oligarchy. The only problem for me with this is a democracy and an oligarchy are two separate forms of governments, an oligarchy is not under a democracy. An oligarchy is a form of government which is governed by few (mainly the rich) sometimes for their own benefits. A democracy is a government governed by the people. What Aristotle was saying was not a contradiction, a citizen may be considered a citizen under a democracy but not under an oligarchy. Other than that I felt you did a good job on your paragraph. Keep up the good work!

Ian's formal assessment of Brad's paragraph two.

Appendix G

Subject: Re: Brad

Message no. 382 [Reply of: no. 349]

Author: Tyler

Date: Wednesday, February 4, 2004 10:26am

I. Clarity of Thought

- Your paragraph maintained a consistent claim
- You provided proper evidence

II. Writing to the Reader

- I feel your paragraph went beyond basic observations because you did a good job comparing Aristotle's writing to how that has fit into American history and making it relevant.

-I felt that you were able to engage the audience but didn't really challenge it. If you decide to write more on this paragraph you could try further explaining the last part about the double standard. What can we do about this double standard? That would be a good way to challenge the reader because if are able to do that it makes for a more effective paper.

- You were able to adapt to the audience.

III.

- Contains 3 or more sentences
- There were a few grammar and spelling mistakes that did not detract from the overall reading but would be a good thing to try and look for next time.
- The language was clear and concise.

Tyler's formal assessment of Brad's paragraph two.

Appendix H

Below I offer a brief rundown of each sophistic figure as it pertains to my discussion. I don't claim this table is complete, nor comprehensive.

	Plato	Isocrates	Protagoras	Gorgias
Heuristic promoted	Dialectic	Antilogic	Antilogic	Contraries/Antilogic
Type of knowledge	Absolute – discoverable by the soul	Probable – can't know absolute Truth (has little practical value)	Probable – can't know absolute Truth	Sensory/Probable – can only know our senses
Nomos/Physis	Single Physis	Many nomoi	Many nomoi	Many nomoi
Educational purpose	Find Truth	Encourage arête in students for the state	Encourage arête in students to make the best decisions	Make clever speakers
Arête teachable?	No	No – students must have a portion of it	Yes – all have it, so a teacher will foster it	neutral – never claimed to teach arête
Language emphasis	Heuristic	Protreptic	Protreptic	Eristic
Nature/Meaning of rhetoric	Deceptive – it's cookery	Power to persuade and create society/state	Offers the best persuasive answers	Mystical and powerful
Notable ideas or concepts	Soul as a two-horses and a rider; allegory of the cave	Natural talent, practice, and education makes good citizens (for state)	Man-measure doctrine; use of antilogic as teaching heuristic	"Nothing exists . . ."; attention to language and persuasion
Important works for a rhetoric course	<i>Protagoras; Gorgias; Phaedrus</i>	<i>Antidosis; "Against the Sophists"</i>	Nothing extant	"On the Nonexistent"; "Encomium of Helen"

Endnote

¹ Prince Brown, Jr. demonstrates race as a socially derived concept through U.S. classification laws, like those that determined the legal status of Native Americans and Africans during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that help in part to remove “Black Indian” societies from lands in Massachusetts (323), and Legislative actions, such as the Indian Removal Act of 1830 in which “classification schemes [were] used to subordinate less powerful groups” (324). For a fuller discussion of race as a classification system and how U.S. laws and policies have shaped Asian American communities, see Bill Ong Hing’s *Making and Remaking Asian America Through Immigration Policy, 1850-1990*. In *Laws Harsh as Tigers: Chinese Immigrants and the Shaping of Modern Immigration Law*, Lucy E. Salyer offers another account of immigration laws and judicial decisions that in effect structure the way judges make decisions historically and laws are enacted. I believe we can see patterns of racial classification that would account for these decisions underneath the court decisions, traditions, and doctrines Salyer discusses. Angelo N. Ancheta also offers a different discussion of court decisions that revolve around race and Asian Americans in *Race, Rights, and the Asian American Experience*. Ancheta concludes that it is a lack of complex notion of race, beyond say a Black and White binary, that produces lots of dissonances and injustices for Asian Americans – in effect, our binary-based taxonomies around race produce anomalies and gaps that do not account for many groups and individuals, such as Asian American groups. My contention here is that it is these gaps, produced through a racial classification system, that not only constructs racial hierarchies, but that may very well leave out certain groups, thus constructing the exotic, the perpetual immigrant, or the model minority. For additional broader discussions of legislation and court decisions affecting Asian Americans see Gary Okihiro’s *Margin and Mainstreams: Asian American History and*

Culture, and for a more generalized discussion of nineteenth century race and culture that uses the lenses of “Republicanism,” “Enterprise,” “Technology,” and “Empire,” see Ronald Takaki’s *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19th-Century America*.

² Richard T. Schaefer describes this paradigm in White and Black college students, who talk past one another when discussing racism. Typically, Whites refer to “racism” as prejudice, bigotry, or overt actions against people. Blacks typically describe it as sets of practices, experience, systems, and institutions (463).

³ While I’ll elaborate on the term “critical” throughout this dissertation, for now consider “critical” (as in “critical thinking,” “critical pedagogy,” and “critical engagement”) as describing a way to designate reflective practices that identify and examine *structuring structures* (taken from Bourdieu’s theory of *habitus*, discussed in Chapter 1) that determine power relationships and form consent in agents. It is primarily a social or macro perspective on agency and power that implicates individual agents. So in this context, critical discussions of racism are ones that reveal the racist structures around agents, materially and discursively, structures that in turn structure the ways in which we see and think about race and racism. In this sense, criticality is a specific way of assessing that I’ll draw out in later chapters.

⁴ James Berlin concludes in *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985* that “[w]riting courses prepare students for citizenship in a democracy, for assuming their political responsibilities, whether as leaders or simply as active participants” (189). This is directly from Greek notions of the purpose of rhetorical instruction. I attempt in this dissertation to prove that writing instruction in the twentieth century is also inherently racist because it institutionalizes and canonizes certain epistemologies, “regimes of truth,” to use Paul

Bové's borrowed term from Foucault (qtd. in Bartholomae 16); therefore, writing pedagogy must be critical of the histories and traditions from which it draws.

⁵ In their introduction to their anthology, Joan Ferrante and Prince Brown consider U.S. census data and forms as a way into understanding how contemporary concepts of race and ethnicity have worked and been used historically. They wonder:

Maybe race is not a biological factor, or an inherited trait like eye color or hair color. Perhaps *race* refers to that which is produced through racial classification (Webster 1993). In other words, the fact that everyone seems to fit into a single racial category is the result of the system of racial classification use in the United States. It is not the objective placement of individual human beings in "natural" biological categories. (Ferrante and Brown 3)

They conclude by saying that "race" is not "a term referring to clear biological divisions of humanity," but instead one that classifies groups as "insiders" and "outsiders" in "social, economic, and political realms" (12). Formal classification starts, at least in western philosophical and rhetorical traditions with Aristotle, who gets used in Enlightenment discourses.

In the same anthology, Albert Jacquard attempts to debunk "racist attitudes" that are currently emerging in Western societies, particularly the flawed application and confusion of a social Darwinism with a biological Darwinism. He says, "People refer to the 'recent biological discoveries' or to 'the latest genetic research' as justification for their attempts to classify men in certain categories or 'races' . . . compare these races according to various criteria and to rank them in hierarchies" (327). However, Jacquard points out that "nature really teaches us the exact opposite" of a "hierarchical vision" of humanity, or the strong over the weak (330). In fact, "the genetic inheritance of various specific species shows . . . that this diversity ["polymorphism"] is

maintained.” Nature works to “preserve the sustained coexistence of a wide variety of characteristics” (330). The international group of scientists brought together by Unesco in their “Declaration of Athens” confirms both Ferrante and Brown’s conclusions and Jacquard’s implications: “race” cannot scientifically have any biological definition, nor can biology be used as a way to scientifically construct a hierarchy among individuals or groups. (“The Declaration of Athens” 333). And yet, race endures as a rubric by which to classify people.

⁶I realize that historically the first rhetor to teach rhetoric was probably Corax of Syracuse in Italy at around 467 B.C.E. (Herrick 32; Bizzell and Herzberg 21); however, the stories surrounding Corax and Tisias (possibly a student of Corax, or a logographer for him in Syracuse) still confirm the centrality of rhetorical practice as one associated with the arguing of legal claims of citizenship and property rights.

⁷ I’ll come back to this sophistic debate in more detail in Chapter 2 since it has pedagogical significance.

⁸ As I’ll soon show in this chapter, Aristotle was not attempting a new definition for citizenship, but using an inductive teleology to classify what seemed “natural” in the world. He was simply articulating what already existed, so it’s arguably appropriate to use Aristotle here when discussing Athenian citizenship.

⁹ H. I. Marrou in *A History of Education in Antiquity* offers an enlightening explanation of the significance of paideia in ancient Greece. It originates from a tradition of referring to techniques for the education of boys (in order to become men), and “comes to signify ‘culture’ – not in the sense of something active and preparational like education, but . . . something perfected: a mind fully developed, the mind of a man who has become truly man” (98-9).

¹⁰ Carstarphen explains: “the essence of *race* was initially not in the concept of separateness (although that certainly was an outgrowth), but rather lay in the notion that there existed certain pure and unchanging characteristics, endowed by Nature, that could be recognized as being so fundamental to a man’s character that they were part of his past, present, and future” (25).

¹¹ This is, of course, circular logic. It’s the same as claiming citizenship in the Agora because all citizens have the right to speak in that space, and clearly the one making this argument is speaking in the Agora. Similarly, this self-categorizing, circular logic can be seen in contemporary arguments around citizenship and illegal immigration.

¹² See Rene Descartes’ *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy* for how he works through his epistemology; also there is a good summary of Descartes epistemology in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* by Lex Newman.

¹³ I’m not suggesting that Descartes be thought of as an empiricist in the way Bacon, Hume, and Locke have been. Surely his method does use reason to “find” knowledge. He disregards the body and the material. And he’s thinking only in terms of ideas. Nevertheless, Descartes does exhibit features of Aristotelian epistemology, particularly when we think in rhetorical terms, textual ones, as I’m doing here. This is part of the intellectual tradition he establishes.

¹⁴ In section LXX in Book I of *Novum Organum*, Bacon discusses how “ordinary experimental research” is a “bad kind of demonstration,” or a bad science. He claims that most who do it get side-tracked and neglect the very subject they are studying. In his analysis and corrective to this problem, he links God as the origin of truth in nature in a similar way that Descartes does:

Thus, like Atalanta, they [those who conduct ordinary experimental research] go aside to pick up the golden apple, but meanwhile they interrupt their course, and let the victory escape them. But in the true course of experience, and in carrying it on to the effecting of new works, the divine wisdom and order must be our pattern. Now God on the first day of creation created light only, giving to that work an entire day, in which no material substance was created. So must we likewise from experience of every kind first endeavor to discover true causes and axioms; and seek for experiments of Light, not for experiments of Fruit.

It's not too difficult to see a causal chain starting with God as the origin of "Light," which would be a kind of first cause in nature to experiences that look not for "Fruit" (the material) but Light hidden within nature. God is the Light scientists discover in nature and arrange into axioms for others to reason and understand. Nature, then, is associated tightly to God.

¹⁵ I'm thinking of Protagoras' "man-measure" doctrine, which I'll discuss in detail in Chapter 3.

¹⁶ As one later example, Emmanuel Kant, in a 1776 essay in which he distinguishes four distinct races, illustrates a teleology about "Negros" in a racist inductive argument that's used in an enthymeme:

Father Labat reports that a Negro carpenter, whom he reproached for haughty treatment toward his wives, answered: "You whites are indeed fools, for first you make great concessions to your wives, and afterward you complain when they drive you mad." And it might be that there were something in this which perhaps deserved to be considered; but in short, this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid. (Eze 57)

¹⁷ I define “structural racism” in Chapter 1. For now, I’ll consider the term as traditions of knowledge that work to subordinate the Other in racial terms. So far, these traditions are those of Enlightenment scientific discourse.

¹⁸ Goldberg makes this claim as well, saying: “The rational, hence autonomous and equal subjects of the Enlightenment project turn out, perhaps unsurprisingly, to be exclusively white, male, European, and bourgeois” (28).

¹⁹ Robert G. Lee in *Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* offers a history of how Asians have been characterized in popular culture through the image of the “heathen chinee” and the “coolie,” both images that invoked carnality, a subhuman nature (e.g. characterizations of Asians as rats was common). I’ll discuss this more fully in Chapter 1 and through illustration in Chapter 2.

²⁰ Blair’s catalogue offers entries that work directly from the primary Enlightenment epistemology. Note that each entry below not only implicitly separates, delineates, and arranges the terms but also transmits inherent values through inductively-based examples that vaguely assume a teleology, which also provides essential meanings for the ideas/terms:

Surprised, astonished, amazed, confounded. I am surprised with what is new or unexpected; I am astonished, at what is vast or great; I am amazed, with what is incomprehensible; I am confounded, by what is shocking or terrible. (197)

Enough, Sufficient. Enough, relates to the quality which one wishes to have of any thing. Sufficient, relates to the use that is to be made of it. Hence, Enough, generally imports a greater quantity that Sufficient does. The covetous man never has enough; although he has what is sufficient for nature. (199-200)

²¹ George Campbell's *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* went through twenty-two editions between 1776 and 1911.

²² In *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures*, Berlin defines social-epistemic rhetoric as: "self-reflexive, acknowledging its own rhetoricity, its own discursive constitutions and limitations. This means that it does not deny its inescapable ideological predispositions, its politically situated condition . . . Significantly, it contains within it a utopian moment, a conception of the good democratic society and the good life for all of its members" (81). While Berlin is discussing a more recent tradition of composition theory, this theory merely acknowledges the social-epistemic elements that are a part of all discourse.

²³ Ray McKerrow in "Richard Whately's Theory of Rhetoric" says that Whately, while not a "empiricist like Locke, Hume, or Campbell[,] . . . was nonetheless committed to observation and investigation as means of obtaining data about the 'truth' of events," and this knowledge was found in three sources: (1) nonreferential – mathematical demonstration (triangles and such); (2) referential – from direct experience without the benefit of prior knowledge (empirical); and (3) *a priori* – given other experiences, one can presume what might happen, in other words, one can make an "educated guess" (142).

²⁴ Whately took his B.A. at Oxford in 1808, an M.A. in 1812, a B.D and D.D. in 1825.

²⁵ Even in Descartes discussion of his *cogito* ("I think therefore I am"), he points to the fact that he can only speak of himself "thinking," not others, since the perception of others thinking could be simulations or illusions created in his own mind (Descartes 65).

²⁶ Whately's *Elements* went through seven editions between 1828 and 1846 (the 7th edition), and the 7th edition was reprinted with a new appendix in 1848 (Ehninger xvi-xviii).

²⁷ Berlin actually highlights three schools of rhetoric during the first two decades of the twentieth century, the third being a rhetoric of public discourse (35). The rhetoric of liberal cultural, initially defined against the current-traditional rhetoric, “was advanced at such schools as Yale, Princeton, and Williams” (35). Berlin defines this rhetoric as one that was meant to cultivate a “few geniuses” and provide “the inspiration of literature” (43). In many ways, these two rhetorical camps pitted the philosophies of Blair and belletristic rhetoric against Whately’s (and to a lesser extent Campbell) managerial and scientific rhetoric.

²⁸ For general discussions around politics in the field of composition in the U.S. see James Berlin’s *Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* (1996); for a history of the formation of composition and writing instruction in the U.S. and the approaches that have historically been grounded in whiteness see Berlin’s *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985* (1987); for a more explicit discussion of how to engage whiteness in the classroom see Catherine Fox’s “The Race to Truth: Disarticulating Critical Thinking from Whiteness” in *Pedagogy* 2.2 (2002); for multiple perspectives from teachers of color about race in the college classroom that deal with issues of authority, rewards and punishments, and pedagogical practices see *Race in the College Classroom: Pedagogy and Politics* (2002), edited by Bonnie TuSmith and Maureen T. Reddy; for a discussion of how political correctness, academic freedom, and politics in the classroom intersect see David Trend’s “Pedagogy and Radical Democracy in the Age of ‘Political Correctness’” in *Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship, and the State* (1996); for a discussion of Frierean and Gramscian pedagogies in education and its possibilities see Victor Villanueva, Jr.’s “Considerations for American Freireistas” in *The Politics of Writing Instruction: Postsecondary* (1991); for discussions of class and racial politics see John Trimbur’s “Literacy and the Discourse of Crisis” and Michael

Holzman's "Observations on Literacy: Gender, Race and Class," both in *The Politics of Writing Instruction: Postsecondary* (1991); for a pedagogical application of a materialist rhetoric and class, racial, and gender politics see Alan W. France's *Composition as A Cultural Practice* (1994); for a discussion on critical race theory (as its translated from legal scholarship to composition), and racism in composition studies as well as in composition classrooms see Catherine Prendergast's "Race: The Absent presence in Composition Studies" in *CCC 50.1* (1998); for a discussion on how race is socially and rhetorically constructed – and needs a careful and clear deconstruction – and its impact on writing instruction see Keith Gilyard's "Higher Learning: Composition's Racialized Reflection" in *Race Rhetoric, and Composition* (1999); and for a discussion on Friirian and liberatory pedagogy see bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress* (1994).

²⁹ For this pedagogy, see Gerald Graff's *Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts can Revitalize American Education*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1992.

³⁰ To read more about these perspectives, see Ruth Frankenburg's *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (1993) and Roger Sanjek's "The Enduring Inequalities of Race" in *Race*, edited by Steven Gregory and Roger Sanjek (1994).

³¹ From my own experience at Washington State University teaching First Year Composition and advanced undergraduate writing courses over the last three years (a total of 8 sections, with an average of 25 students each, making a total of about 200 students), I've had a total of 5, maybe 6 African American students, maybe as many Asian American and Pacific Islander, 2 or 3 Latino/a, and 1 Native American students. That's a ratio of about 14 to 187 (7.4%), or 1.8 students of color per class.

³² His data sources are: a 1997 survey and selective interviews at three universities, one in the South, one in the Midwest, and one in the West (a total of 627 college students, of which 451 were white); and a 1998 Detroit Area Study of 400 black and white Detroit metropolitan area residents (323 whites and 67 blacks) (Bonilla-Silva 12-3).

³³ Bonilla-Silva puts these story lines this way: “the past is the past” (77), “I didn’t own any slaves” (79), “if Jews, Italians, and Irish have made it, how come Blacks have not” (82), and “I didn’t get a job (or promotion), or was not admitted to a college, because of a minority” (83).

³⁴ I use the term “subordination” in the way Angelo N. Ancheta does. He defines the terms in *Race, Rights, and the Asian American Experience* in this way:

I also use the term “subordination” to refer to the many forms of racial and ethnic discrimination . . . it encompasses discrimination and better reflects the power relationships that exist in race relations . . . [It] is an expression of power based on race in which a dominant person, group, or institution acts to place another person, group, or institution in a lesser or subordinate position relative to the dominant entity. Power and inequality are thus at the root of racial subordination.

(17)

³⁵ Rajini Srikanth discusses two graduate seminars she taught on the teaching of literature (taught during different semesters) in which the majority of her graduate students “staged a minor revolt,” against the focus of race, or as they termed it, Srikanth’s “preoccupation with questions of race in literature” (140). Karyn D. McKinney, an assistant professor of sociology at Penn State, Altoona, a mostly white institution, discusses comments and essays by her undergraduate students who take her courses on race and ethnicity. Most come denying racism in

order to “protect themselves” (130). She says, “[w]hite students fail to recognize racism as not only individual-level bigotry but also institutional discrimination” (129).

³⁶ In fact, it’s irrational on two counts for people of color: one, it opposes a white rational, logical methodology for theorizing, emphasizing our emotional connection to claims and truths we hold; and two, it works against a rationality of whiteness that denies agency to people of color, so to give the body of color truth and agency is to be, in white world, irrational.

³⁷ I use “problematize” in the sense that Althusser coined it. Victor Villanueva defines it as “the questioning of explicit and implicit messages contained within a theoretical framework, the questioning of deeply rooted assumptions” (“Considerations” 250).

³⁸ In fact, when discussing the individual, personhood and “superpersonhood,” Mills says, “[t]he reality is that one can pretend the body does not matter only because a particular body (the white male body) is being presupposed as the somatic norm” (53), illustrating the tacit reasoning at work in much U.S. discourse, particularly around citizenship.

³⁹ San Juan gets this term from Pierre van den Berghe (*Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective*) and David Roediger. When discussing the shift to industrial managed labor in the first half of the nineteenth century in the U.S., Roediger describes *herrenvolk* democracy as an organizing sentiment that solidified whites’ privilege and rights to wages, jobs, and property: “Rather than leveling, there was a simple pushing down on the vulnerable bottom strata of society, even when there was little to be gained, except psychologically, from the push” (59). Then linking it to republicanism, he concludes that “*Herrenvolk* republicanism had the advantage of reassuring whites in a society in which downward social mobility was a constant fear – one might lose everything but not whiteness” (60).

⁴⁰ To explain how institutional racism can be understood in terms of a U.S. racial polity, San Juan combines Bourdieu's idea of *habitus* (I discuss this concept in detail later in this chapter) with the theory of "everyday life" (primarily from Essed) in order to produce a version of Gramsci's hegemony. San Juan uses the following illustration of how *habitus*, everyday life, and hegemony work, which comes from Richard Wright's lecture "The Psychological Reactions of Oppressed People" in *White Man, Listen!*:

Daily practices of surveillance have been internalized by subjugated natives so that external rules are no longer needed; the colonial subject inhabits Fanon's Manichean milieu where institutions condition the sensibility of subjects while the subjects' psychology matches the structures of civil society and the state. (52-3)

For more on the theory of everyday life see Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Henri Lefebvre's *Everyday Life in the Modern World* and his *Critique of Everyday Life*, and Alf Ludtke's (ed.) anthology *The History of Everyday Life*.

⁴¹ And I add to San Juan and Lipsitz that it is not only white people, but many people of color, who have stake in the possessive investment in whiteness. Just as many Whites do not explicitly sign off on the racial contract yet still are beneficiaries of it, not all people of color wish to see their investments in whiteness depreciate because it provides them certain economic and cultural capital.

⁴² While Lipsitz uses Richard Dyer's discussion, "White," in *Screen* (fall 1998), Ross Chambers offers a similar argument in more detail. He says that whiteness remains unexamined through the "pluralization of the *other* and the homogenization of *others*" (192). Basically, whiteness has been "unexaminable" (or rather, "examinable, yet unexamined") because it is not only the yardstick by which difference is judged and identified (e.g. we could ask why I am

categorized as “different”? Why aren’t *whites* the different ones?), but whiteness is bound to “the category of the individual” first through “atomizing whiteness” by homogenizing others, which allows it to be invisible (192).

⁴³ Influenced by Omi and Winant’s “racial formation” theory, the colonial type of institutional racism emphasizes historical conditions and systems that (re)produce inequality (e.g. slavery, Jim Crow laws, alien land laws, Native American reservations and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, etc.). Racial formation theory says that race is “an element of social structure,” a “dimension of human representation,” “an unstable and ‘decentered’ complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle. *Race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies*” (Omi and Winant 55). So racial formation is “the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhibited, transformed, and destroyed” (Omi and Winant 55). Thus “race is a matter of both social structure and cultural representation” (Omi and Winant 56).

⁴⁴ I realize the problem (which I’m identifying in this chapter) my use of the term AAPI creates. While there are good political reasons to do so, for convenience’s sake, I’ll use this term throughout this dissertation.

⁴⁵ Omi and Winant offer this definition of the ethnicity-based paradigm: “the ethnicity-based paradigm was an insurgent theory which suggested that race was a *social* category. Race was but one of a number of determinants of ethnic group identity or ethnicity.” The main determinants for this paradigm are race, culture, and descent (15).

⁴⁶ In his chapter, “The Masses,” Raymond Williams says that “[m]asses was a new word for mob” (44). While he uses this redefinition to make a Marxian class critique of the argument of democracy as “mass-rule” that becomes seen as “mob-rule” for those in power (45), he

concludes that the masses “are always the others, whom we don’t know, and can’t know,” and so “[t]here are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses” (46). Williams’ discussion of masses can easily be used for our purposes when discussing race and multiculturalism as rhetorical systems that function to construct – to see – people of color as *mass-mobs*. Multiculturalism is then “ways to see” people of color as masses” and not individuals.

⁴⁷ While Haraway uses her discussion of the “god-trick” to reveal the traditional scientific “vision” as one that purports to offer objectified facts about nature and science, but ultimately cannot, it’s clear we can translate this critique to all discourses that presume to offer objective facts about their subjects, especially multicultural ones since they tend to hide behind pseudo-scientific axioms about equality and race. And as I demonstrated in the Introduction, discourses about “subjects” are also ones that help construct *the subject* of discourse, that is, their audiences.

⁴⁸ Lee D. Baker offers a detailed discussion of the 1893 exposition’s Midway Plaisance’s “anthropological displays.” He shows how they were read by many as a graphic and powerful illustration of white supremacy (as the highest evolved culture) by a displaying of human exhibits of natives from Africa, the Philippines, Asia, and South America, etc. (55-60). Vijah Prashad also gives a good account of this exposition as a demonstration of the “oriental menagerie,” demonstrating a white gaze over and its power to control people of color (33-5).

⁴⁹ This last claim turns all educational “success” by people of color into Horatio Alger stories, ones predicated on overcoming extreme obstacles. To accept the presence of obstacles that keep people of color from “succeeding” in college as normal for us (as a part of our archetypal educational story), yet not acknowledge these obstacles’ structural origins, is to refuse

to see institutional racism. In fact, the ethic of “hard work” as a commonplace is, in this instance, racist code that helps to maintain whiteness and white supremacy.

⁵⁰ As mentioned previously in this chapter, Bonilla-Silva’s four frames of racial ideology are: abstract liberalism (30-6), naturalism (36-9), cultural racism (39-43), and minimization of racism (43-7).

⁵¹ Alice Domurat Dreger has a fascinating discussion that traces intersexuality (hermaphroditism) in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*. Historically according to Dreger, the problems with assigning sex to a child or adult arise when physical features (e.g. voice, facial features, bone structure, or genitalia) do not neatly coincide with traditionally assumed markers of sex. In hermaphrodites, there can be ambiguous, missing, or a combination of male and female genitalia. Dreger’s discussion around intersexual bodies, particularly her first three chapters, illustrates how science (in this case the gynecological profession) attempted over and over to explicitly structure the *hexis* that designated a “man” and a “woman.” This discussion shows how *hexis*, a seemingly “natural” quality (an essence), has been constructed in various ways, and how these constructions continually get contested, and evolve over time.

⁵² My intention here is not to lump all people of color into the same group (i.e. erasing important political and social dynamics), but to highlight the larger pattern of my own personal responses and biases in social interactions. Others have often identify me as Latino, and have acted on this identification in racist ways against me, so I prefer “brown” as a racial designation since it gets at some of the shared racial subordination I have with both Asian Americans and Latinos. Morris Young also links Latino and Asian American racial identity a slightly different way, through similar literacy narratives. He says, “[in] my reading of American culture, Latinos

and Asians are more susceptible to overdetermined representations as ‘foriegners’ or ‘aliens’ and not full citizens” (56-7).

⁵³ TuSmith and Reddy also show statistics from a 1999 *Business Week Online* article. They say, “twenty-three of the nation’s top sixty-one schools have zero tenured faculty of color, with most of the remaining thirty-eight having just one or two each” (2-3).

⁵⁴ Jennifer Ho, in the same anthology, calls attention to the importance of hexis to her authority in the classroom as an Asian American graduate student teacher (although, like TuSmith, she does not label it “hexis”): “Teaching as a faculty of color at a predominantly white institution, I have realized that it is not only my scholarship but my very body that students learn from in the classroom: I am marked by my professional credentials and by my race, age, and gender” (63). And of course, her hexis, perceived by her students, leads to an inability to see her as an authority.

⁵⁵ In short, Bourdieu saw both schools of linguistic theory lacking in a critical engagement with institutions and the conditions in which language occurs (*Language* 7). Thus Saussure’s theory of *langue* and *parole* and Chomsky’s theory of competence and performance both in different ways exhibit “the illusion of linguistic communism,” that is, they ignore the “social-historical conditions” of agents using language and they frame language as idealized and autonomous from everyday linguistic exchanges (4-5).

⁵⁶ I realize my use of the term “AAPI students” also essentializes, thus I attempt to use it as a political distinction, not “cultural” one. Yet we see how difficult it is to escape complicity, even in language, with the dominant white discourse and power structures.

⁵⁷ Of course, there are other societal structures that feed into various habitus, like the U.S. census and the U.S. Department of Commerce who help establish and validate racial categories. So an institutional habitus like this one does not work alone. It too is reinforced.

⁵⁸ In Chapter three of his textbook, Whately identifies “presumption” and “burden of proof.” In a categorical list of various presumptions one can make (which means there is no burden of proof necessary to be persuasive), “existing institutions” have it, and the “burden of proof lies with him who proposes an alteration” (114).

⁵⁹ Gramsci, in the same discussion quoted here, says that a philosophy of praxis “must be a criticism of ‘common sense,’” and should “renovat[e] and mak[e] ‘critical’ an already existing activity” (332).

⁶⁰ In the article, and in *Culture and Society*, Williams argues for an anti-elitism in English studies pervasive at the time, that all cultural texts are worthy of academic study, even “common” ones. I’m offering a reason why here.

⁶¹ *Dangerous Minds* (1995) is a traditional Hollywood blockbuster movie that presents a white teacher (Michelle Pfeiffer) who comes into an inner-city, poverty-stricken school to save the African-American and Latino kids from drugs and gang problems. Giroux points out that the movie sets up the black and Latino kids as associated with “criminality and danger” and whiteness (embodied in Pfeiffer’s character) with “hope” and the kids’ only way to salvation (Giroux 299). *Suture* (1993) is an independent film that offers a different racial politics in which “‘whiteness’ . . . becomes the racial marker of identity, power, and privilege” (Giroux 305). In the film, Clay is mistaken for his half-brother, Vincent, who has plotted against him; however, “Clay is half black but is treated throughout the film as if he were white,” like his half-brother (Giroux 305).

⁶² San Juan enriches both a Gramscian notion of “culture” and agrees with Raymond Williams, saying that “culture” is a “differentiated totality and dynamics of social practices in history,” nothing being privileged over other things (San Juan 292). And later when discussing the future of cultural studies (as a discipline), he calls “culture” “the site of power antagonisms and differential lines of force” (308).

⁶³ In effect, one can read Vico’s “law of heroic gentes” as a powerful argument for SR and racist practices since it promotes and justifies a kind of Darwinian survival of the fittest. It also illustrates how discursively racism can get stuck into a cultural feedback loop, one that structures new iterations of the same old racism, only in different contexts.

⁶⁴ Schaeffer explains the passage quoted this way: “Vico is asserting that the true (*verum*) can be known when the human mind makes it (*factum*), the way the mind generates mathematical principles” (81).

⁶⁵ We should acknowledge that Williams, Giroux, Hall, San Juan, and Althusser all work from Gramsci’s discussions of hegemony and common sense.

⁶⁶ Althusser makes three points about ideology and the subject: that “ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (153); that “ideology has a material existence” (155); and that it “always exists in an apparatus, and its practices” (like ideological state apparatuses, ISAs, and their associated practices – e.g. churches, schools, political entities, legal systems, etc.) (156). These three premises allow Althusser to claim that “*the category of the subject is only constitutive of all ideology insofar as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of ‘constituting’ concrete individuals as subjects*” (emphasis in original 160). In other words, “*all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects*, by the functioning of the category of the subject” (emphasis in original 162).

In effect, Althusser identifies ideology and the subject as consubstantial. So if we consider common sense as metonymic fragments of ideology (a part of material practices embedded in apparatuses, or institutions – both structures), and understand common sense as consubstantial with *habitus*, then we can say that common sense interpellates identity. This is why I often replace Althusser’s “ideology” with “identity” in interpellation processes throughout this dissertation.

⁶⁷ I’m reminded of the saying, “the institution of the President” of the U.S. The logic is, of course, that, say, G.W. Bush represents the structures that constitute any president, thus he is a *habitus* embodied in the totality of his personhood and actions.

⁶⁸ I’ll ignore for brevity his discussion on divinity: that we hail to be known as subjects who are subjected to the Subject (God) (Althusser 167).

⁶⁹ Keeping in mind that, as Stuart Hall states, identities do not have fixed origins. Instead, “identity” can be thought of as positional, which incorporates his theory of articulation, as he points out (Chen 393).

⁷⁰ Acts of articulation can also be in media, movies, music, and other forms of popular culture. In these ways, they are a part of the epistemology of racism. My focus in this section is on the agent.

⁷¹ The Web site does not capitalize “I” or “asian” in its slogan, so when I use it I’ll retain McDonald’s slogan’s lowercased spellings.

⁷² While I realize this acronym is awkward and static, I use it in this discussion in order to be explicit and consistent with the references that the McDonald’s Web site uses.

⁷³ Between 1990 and 2000, those who identified themselves as “Asian alone” grew about 48% (or by 3.3 million), while those identifying themselves as “Asian alone or in combination”

account for a 72% growth increase (or about 5.0 million). The total population in the U.S. grew at a rate of 13% (from 248.7 to 281.4 million) (Barnes and Bennett 3).

⁷⁴ My description and discussion of this Web site is based on its version from June of 2004. Any changes or additions to this site since then have not been incorporated into my analysis or descriptions.

⁷⁵ David Palumbo-Liu highlights one particular medical doctor, D. R. Millard, who was an army surgeon in Korea after the war. His job was to “help reconstruct war-damaged bodies”; however, once there, Millard quickly found himself doing plastic surgeries to “deorientalize” Korean natives by “‘correcting’ a ‘defect’ inherent in the Asian face” (100). Palumbo-Liu connects this hybridity to contemporary popular cultural discussions of mixed race and raceless ideals of beauty, usually coined in terms of “symmetry” (103). The key to hybridity is that it’s always partial transformation, never complete. He explains:

Rather, we find in these writings [those of D. R. Millard and the like] on aesthetic plastic surgery a recognition not only of the limits of surgical technique, but also of the historical occasion of hybrid value, which rescues plastic surgery from having to confess its inability to enact absolute transformation. Instead, we witness the instantiation of an “ideal norm” of beauty which goes beyond racially distinct norms. This transition between the specificity of race to a focus on the normativity of the geometrical and the ascension of the hybrid has to be read within the history of U.S. modernity, and specifically that of Asian/American formation, as the concern becomes not the impossible task of sequestering race within nations, but of inventing the terms upon which to negotiate the

hybridization of the modern nation feeling its very interior penetrated by the formerly foreign. (105)

⁷⁶ The use and articulation of multiracial Asian in media and popular culture, both in the U.S. and Asia have become very popular. We need only to look to popular cultural icons, seen as positive, such as Tiger Woods (African-and Taiwanese-American professional golfer), Russell Wong (Chinese-American actor), Tata Young (Taiwanese-American singer, primarily in Thailand), Maggie Q (Vietnamese-American actress in Hong Kong), and Asha Gill (Punjabi-English-French Malaysian veejay), and Keanu Reeves (Chinese-Hawaiian American actor).

⁷⁷ I thank Victor Villanueva for this insight on the “weaving” metaphor.

⁷⁸ In the Introduction, I discuss the four main constituents of the epistemology of whiteness, particularly in discourses of science, politics, and rhetoric: (1) categorization and hierarchy; (2) a teleology that guides knowledge claims and “truth”; (3) a rational mind operating around the discourse, equated to a white, male mind; and (4) an tendency to depend on induction and empiricism as the basis for support of claims and knowledge. This epistemology of whiteness is meant to show what SR is made of concretely in discourse, primarily. In contract, the epistemology of racism illustrates how SR is structured in material and discursive networks, and how it determines the various aspects of personhood.

⁷⁹ I use this term because it highlights a few important things about Asian identity, the commonsense about it, and how it is authenticated in the U.S. The term “orientalia” invokes a false-paradigm that suggests there are inherent, static, even biological characteristics that are “objectively” observable (by the white, masculine gaze) around the bodies of Asians (authenticity). Like the history of sexual “genitalia,” this term demands a questionable either-or decision: male or female, Asian or American. To see how I’ve made this connection more

clearly, Alice Domurat Dreger offers a good account of the history of sexual determination in Europe mainly in *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*. I thank Rory Ong for providing this term to me.

⁸⁰ I take “regime of truth” from Paul Bové’s account in *Intellectuals in Power*. Bové actually gets the term from Foucault’s “Truth and Power” in *Power/Knowledge*. In many ways, the epistemology of racism can be thought of as a very specific “regime of truth.” Bové offers Foucault’s text at length, and it’s worth reprinting:

Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its “general politics” of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (“Truth and Power” 13; quoted in Bové 229)

⁸¹ See endnote #3 in of the Introduction for a fuller definition of “critical” as I’m using it in this chapter.

⁸² I realize that the Greeks didn’t think of “race” in the ways contemporary societies do, and so “racism” as such isn’t applicable to how they would have structured their society or ways of thinking about groups and individuals; however, as a master epistemology that reveals the structural nature of regimes of truth, the epistemology of racism can still be valuable to a discussion of the Greek debate of *nomos-physis*.

⁸³ Protagoras' man-measure doctrine can be stated: man is the measure of all things, of things that are not, that they are not; of things that are, that they are. I'll discuss this doctrine in detail later in this chapter.

⁸⁴ Herrick quotes Richard Enos to offer this definition of protreptic in Homeric writing: "expresses 'the capacity [of words] to "turn" or direct human thought . . .'" (Herrick 31).

⁸⁵ H. I. Marrou in *A History of Education in Antiquity* offers an enlightening explanation of the significance of paideia in ancient Greece. It originates from a tradition of referring to techniques for the education of boys (in order to become men), and "comes to signify 'culture' – not in the sense of something active and preparational like education, but . . . something perfected: a mind fully developed, the mind of a man who has become truly man" (98-9).

⁸⁶ I realize that Aristotle, who comes just after the sophists I discuss here, categorized these systems of logic (induction and deduction). I'm not suggesting that Plato or any sophist would have labeled their methods in these ways.

⁸⁷ Herrick in his glossary provides this definition of *kairos*, which connects it to antilogic: "Rhetoric's search for relative truth rather than absolute certainly. A consideration of opposing points of view, as well as attention to such factors as time and circumstances. An opportune moment or situation" (278).

⁸⁸ In *Against the Sophists*, Isocrates, to separate his teaching from other sophists, makes a similar claim, saying that they "undertake to transmit the science of discourse as simply as they would teach the letters of the alphabet, not having taken trouble to examine into the nature of each kind of knowledge" (169). This places Isocrates in his teaching philosophy closer to Plato than Protagoras' philosophy.

⁸⁹ Richard Leo Enos also acknowledges that the practice of “thesis and antithesis,” or contrary arguments, was common in Pythagoreans, Empedocles, and Zeno. In fact, it was the “epistemological foundation for his [Empedocles’] philosophical inquiry” (41).

⁹⁰ Kerferd makes an important distinction between the sophists’ attention to eristic and antilogic aims in rhetoric (62-3) and platonic dialectic aims for Wisdom (65-7), which highlights some of the problems Plato saw with the sophists’ emphasis on *nomos* (exemplified in his treatment of them in *Phaedrus*, *Gorgias*, and *Protagoras*).

⁹¹ In his defense against the accusations of corrupting the young men of Athens, Plato’s Socrates in *Apology*, says:

Why, what evil does he [Socrates himself] practise or teach? they [his accusers, namely Meletus, Anytus, and Lycon] do not know, and cannot tell; but in order that they may not appear to be at a loss, they repeat the ready-made charges which are used against all philosophers about teaching things up in the clouds and under the earth, and having no gods, and *making the worse appear the better cause*; for they do not like to confess that their pretence of knowledge has been detected.

(my emphasis)

Each charge is false, according to Socrates, and in fact, he claims to have “nothing to do with these studies,” which he associates with the sophists, in particular Gorgias, Prodicus, and Hippias. In *Gorgias*, Plato’s Socrates criticizes rhetoric in similar fashion for being “flattery” and like “cookery.” He says to Gorgias: “the whole of which rhetoric is a part is not an art at all, but the habit of a bold and ready wit, which knows how to manage mankind: this habit I sum up under the word ‘flattery.’”

⁹² John Poulakos identifies sophistic rhetoric in a similar fashion, calling it “the rhetoric of possibility” (23). He makes a useful comparison to Plato’s and Aristotle’s rhetoric: “In so far as sophistic rhetoric favors the possible, it differs markedly from both the Platonic and the Aristotelian versions, which privilege the ideal and the actual respectively” (21).

⁹³ Plato would most likely have anxiety about political chaos derived from democracy and the whim of the masses. He claims in *Republic* that democracy can easily devolve into tyranny, which ironically Solon’s ascendancy to power in Athens illustrates, and the “thirty tyrants,” placed in power by Sparta in 405, would also tragically show (Knox).

⁹⁴ A *topos* was a line of argument that could be used for a variety of rhetorical occasions, a quick argument memorized that a rhetor might have ready if needed.

⁹⁵ Herrick takes this version from Plato’s *Theaetetus* (151a-152a). Sextus gives this version of the doctrine: “of all things the measure is man, of things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not” (Diels 10).

⁹⁶ De Romilly states that this last issue was key to Plato’s criticisms of Protagoras in his dialogue, and it was Plato’s concern that “success mattered more than truth” for the sophists (82), but as I’ve just shown, this is simply not the case when considering man-measure as a way to understand *how* common sense is structured in society, and thus how best to make decisions in the polis.

⁹⁷ Here we might see Plato on similar ground as Bourdieu (discussed in Chapter 1), but he’s actually closer to Protagoras. Bourdieu wishes to reveal sources and question dispositions (bodily *hexis*) as a “natural” part of the human psyche, so his theory of *habitus* agrees more with a sophistic claim to *nomos* as a *kairotic* construction of a society than Platonic *physis*.

⁹⁸ I realize that many read Plato's Socrates as saying that *arête* can be taught, that education was key to all social and political issues, which would make Protagoras and Plato in a limited agreement (Kerferd 138), but even Kerferd acknowledges that the two "differ radically about its [education's] content" (138). It's the difference in content and on Plato's anti-democratic elitism (seen in all his works) that I'm basing my distinctions on here.

⁹⁹ For the ancient Greeks, "*logos*" referred to a range of things: a word; a thought; a meaningful idea; a theory, rule, or law; or a means of thinking or reasoning. To say, "we learn our words in this fashion," could imply that *nomos* is king and *arête* is teachable only through society and thus primarily through rhetoric.

¹⁰⁰ I leave out a detailed discussion of the epistemology of racism because it was not a part of the classes this research is grounded in (my theory wasn't fully articulated at that time). However, I will address this omission in later chapters. I'll also complicate some of my findings and ideas from this chapter since many conflict with issues I raise around the epistemology of racism.

¹⁰¹ While Huot consciously uses "assessment" and "evaluation" interchangeably in both his article and book quote, I'm working from Stephen Tchudi's terms in his introduction to *Alternatives to Grading Student Writing* (xiii). Tchudi separates the two practices. In the most general terms, assessment is more generative, formative, and open-ended in its rhetoric, while evaluation tends to be more closed, static, and descriptive.

¹⁰² I realize this term ("writing well") is problematic, particularly if considering my opening chapters that attempt to explain, in one sense, "the critical" as a structural way of seeing the consubstantial elements of the epistemology of racism. Writing critically is what I'd call writing well; however, I will leave this discussion for future theorizing of this pedagogy.

¹⁰³ Antonio Gramsci's aim for his "philosophy of praxis" was to provide a theory of historical contradictions that could educate the subaltern classes, "who have an interest in knowing all truths, even unpleasant ones, and in avoiding deceptions (impossible) by the ruling class and even more by themselves" (196-97). The philosophy of praxis is not only a "criticism of 'common sense'" (Gramsci's "common sense" is different from the way I use it in this dissertation; his is more like "good sense" or a sense that runs through a community) but a process of "renovating and making 'critical' an already existing activity" (332). By design community-based assessment practice is meant to make critical the assessment of student writing by students by criticizing the common sense around the assessment of student writing in the academy.

¹⁰⁴ While she doesn't come to this conclusion, my notion that theory and practice are linked in writing and assessment is inspired by Louise Wetherbee Phelps's article, "Images of Student Writing: The Deep Structure of Teacher Response." In it she theorizes the "practice to theory to practice arc" (or PTP arc) that explains how traditionally new knowledge (say in composition theory) is formed through "reconstituting the question itself, making familiar answers irrelevant" (39). The PTP arc is a kind of sophistic rethinking over time of the positions from which we see our practice and pedagogy. It is also a way to see our theory as structured by a discipline's discourse. Phelps's PTP arc is, in a theoretical way, what I attempt in my course for my students and their writing and assessment practices.

¹⁰⁵ Many have shown that traditional teacher-centered grading is dubious at best, inhibiting and harmful to students on average. Liesel K. O'Hagan explains that while grading emerged in the U.S. around 1850, "studies as early as 1912 questioned the validity of grading, suggesting that in writing instruction . . . grades were far too subjective (Ellsworth and Willson

188)” (Tchudi 4). More recent scholarship, O’Hagan says, is overwhelmingly against it.

Summarizing much of Howard Kirschenbaum’s 1973 research, O’Hagan identifies the main problems in grading practices: they are scientifically invalid (6), provide “false motivation” (8), give a “false sense of worth” (10), provide “superficial learning” (10), produce a “barrier between students and teachers” (11), and lead to “uncreative teaching” (11).

¹⁰⁶ I have deeper, more significant, problems with grading, bell curves, and ranking that go beyond the scope of this article. Alfie Kohn’s *Punished by Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, As, Praise, and Other Bribes* is particularly insightful and convincing. Kohn uses a social psychological direction, showing how Skinnerian behavioral “pop psychology” is pervasive in our culture, flawed in its reasoning, and damaging to intrinsic motivation in education, on the job, and in child rearing in long-term results.

¹⁰⁷ I’ve also used listservs and listprocs, but I find that discussion boards provide more benefits for everyone. Discussions boards typically archive all work produced and posted by the class, and I can organized posts in a variety of ways (e.g. by week, by assignment, by groups, by drafts of assignments, etc.).

¹⁰⁸ In “Demystifying Grading: Creating Student-Owned Evaluation Instruments,” Kathleen and James Strickland offer other ways to involve students in the evaluation practices of the classroom; of note here is their brief discussion of inductive rubrics, ones generated by inducing traits from what students consider “good writing” (Allison, et al., 1997: 147), which I’ve used in an altered form here.

¹⁰⁹ Of course, we also talk about how an “adequate” and “proficient” job is very different from what might be seen as a “superb” or “excellent” job.

¹¹⁰ In retrospect, I should have asked more than one student to take notes in order to get a fuller account of our discussion. Since this course, I've found this to be a way to get a richer sense of what went goes on in class.

¹¹¹ For clarity, I've made slight typographical changes to all the student quotations that are presented in the text of my discussion.

¹¹² The essay evaluations are essentially longer, more formal assessments that tend toward summative judgments and focus less on potential. In these, I ask them to talk in more summative terms (not formative) in their final general comments or endnote, while sticking to the shorter assessment-style comments when discussing each rubric element. Additionally, I ask them to put a mock grade on the paper. This agrees somewhat with how Tchudi identifies "evaluation." He says that it focuses on audience concerns (maybe exclusively), judges through external criteria, is descriptive and summative, ranks writing products, and directs for the future. It demands judgments of effectiveness from standardized sets of values (xiii). Peter Elbow contrasts grading with evaluation, calling it "ranking," or a "summing up [of] one's judgment . . . into a single, holistic number or score." He concludes that "[r]anking implies a single scale or continuum or dimension along which all performances are hung" (175).

¹¹³ I'm thinking in terms of the shared origin of the words "community" and "communicate," which in Latin is *commūn-is* (common). The OED parses the term: *com* (together) and *mūnis* (bound, under obligation). I'm implying that authority and empowerment in individual writers comes from a group's sense of being bound together in a mutual struggle with and within texts and contexts, meaning and the conventions that constrain and overdetermine meaning.

¹¹⁴ In fact, in one class of 15 students, there was a deep sense of community: 12 responded to this question in this way, one did not respond, and one cracked an inside joke (which I took as another way of saying, “community” or “atmosphere”). This class also decided on their own to hold class on a day I was sick and could not attend. They also planned a party and often brought cookies, cupcakes, and other food to share with everyone.

¹¹⁵ I realize that this translation implies that all students walk into the course with all they need to know about writing, which is not my point. Here I only wish to emphasize the idea that community-based assessment practices allows a community of students to see their assessment practices as the structured measuring of writing that also structures these very practices.

¹¹⁶ What I’ve also realized through reassessing my own pedagogy and classroom rhetoric is “the critical” needs to be explicitly defined in writing classes. The “critical” I mean in this dissertation is something very specific and links assessment to the epistemology of racism. “Critical” (as in “critical thinking” or “critical pedagogy” or “critical understanding”) is a stance that self-consciously acknowledges and takes into account in some way the epistemological, hermeneutical, historical, and material conditions of knowledge construction as structural and consubstantial to individual personhood; it’s a stance that assumes or addresses the political and social responsibility that all agents have in the world. In my view, a “critical position” can be based on faith, deduction, and even phenomenological induction, but only if it incorporates an acknowledgement of these frameworks as structures that construct its observations and conclusions in determined ways.

¹¹⁷ Guba and Lincoln describe the hermeneutic dialectic process as one that is “interpretive in character” and “represents a comparison and contrast of divergent views with a view to achieving a higher-level of synthesis of them all, in the Hegelian sense” (149). So the

reason I call mine a “modified” version of their hermeneutic dialectic process is because I am less interested in a Hegelian synthesis and more interested in “critical resolutions,” as I describe in this chapter.

¹¹⁸ I’ve toyed with the idea of having each group assign a note-taker, then ask each group to construct a rubric based on our class discussions. This would give us four of five separate, student-composed rubrics based on our discussions to then look at – several renditions of the same discussion. Most likely, each rubric would be different and illustrate how differently we experience the class discussions and ideas presented, as well as how group dispositions and common sense affects how rubrics are made.

¹¹⁹ All of the prompts and student quotations in this chapter are from the same course.

¹²⁰ Fox, using Minnie Bruce Pratt and Marilyn Frye (separately), defines “whiteness” as “an attitude of judgmentalism rooted in the notion of white superiority and dominance in the United States. It is analogous to masculinity,” which is to say it “is not essentially attached to color” but to power relationships (199).

¹²¹ The metaphors of the writing teacher as “coach” is also masculine.

¹²² Derrida says in *Of Grammatology* that signs have meaning only by “différance,” an idea taken from Saussure. We understand signs through their relational position to other signs. Thus words don’t have essential meaning, instead, they “play” with their différence with other words. Through this discussion and his coining of the term différence (with the changed “a”), he invokes both “difference,” as in “separate and other,” and “deference,” as in “a holding off” (Derrida xliii-xliv).

¹²³ See note 4 in chapter 1 for a detailed definition of “subordination” in this context.

¹²⁴ See my discussion on Vico in the “Common Sense in the Epistemology of Racism” section of Chapter 1 for more on the law of heroic gentes.

¹²⁵ While Burke focuses on only the writer/rhetor in his discussion on language as symbolic action as it pertains to terministic screens, we could also add to our discussion the terministic screens of audiences and interlocutors. What we choose to read, as I suggest Couture is doing with the passage she quotes from Herrnstein Smith, is in part determined by terministic screens we use to read texts, translate them to meaning, and evaluate them. Kathleen McCormick calls these screens a reader’s “repertoires,” or “socio-cultural formations, with particular *literary* and *general ideologies*” (71).

¹²⁶ One might also hear Burke hinting in the language of this theory of terministic screens the linguistic paradox in language: that language conspicuously diverts our attention away from reality. Our words are literally *not* what they represent. Burke calls this the “principle of the negative” (*Rhetoric of Religion* 18), and it’s very close to Derrida’s notion of *differance*, in which multiple linguistic meanings “play” with each other in the relational geography of signs.

¹²⁷ Of course, Kenneth Burke wrote on terministic screens many years before Bourdieu discusses *habitus*.

¹²⁸ I resist using the term “logic” here because Burke’s discussion of “faith” and terministic screens uses logic as a derivative of these things. It muddies the water unnecessarily in my discussion.

¹²⁹ I place quotes around the adjective form of “logic” because when considering the epistemology of racism, logic is plural, yet what is “logical” is merely what is consistent with the epistemology from which one views the logic in question. In other words, for an argument to be

“logical” simply means it is consistent with the accepted epistemological perspective from which it is being judged. So my sentence is somewhat inaccurate for rhetorical effect.

¹³⁰ At the time the Irish were considered “Irish niggers” (Kenny 46), a different race than Whites, so to view the Irish as stubborn, dull, hopelessly poor, even apish, as John Field seems to appear to Thoreau, would seem “natural” if the epistemological frameworks that construct this subjectivity are left unexamined. It wouldn’t be unusual to view an Irishman like John as hopelessly poor and characterized by his hard labor and relation to dirt and soil. In this sense, Thoreau offers a hegemonic reading of John Field and his position in the social and economic order through this phenomenological rhetoric that ignores the determined structuring of society.

¹³¹ By “enlightened” I mean to invoke Enlightenment notions of the skepticism and discourses of reason, so also mean this statement to be sarcastic, yet correct in the sense that we are still steeped in Enlightenment epistemology.

¹³² The notion of the “absent presence” I borrow from Catherine Prendergast in her article, “Race: The Absent Presence in Composition Studies.” She states: “Discussions of racism in composition are confined to determining how to handle individual, aberrant flare-ups in the classroom without exploring racism as institutionalized, normal and pervasive” (36). Prendergast concludes by saying that “[t]he present challenge for compositionists is to develop theorizations of race that do not reinscribe people of color as either foreign or invisible, nor leave whiteness uninvestigated; only through such work can composition begin to counteract the denial of racism that is a part of the classroom, the courts, and a shared colonial inheritance” (51).

¹³³ Amy Winans in “Local Pedagogies and Race: Interrogating White Safety in the Rural College Classroom” discusses “white safety” in the college classroom, how it’s a driving force for many to either stay silent (260) when discussions turn to racism or adopt a “colorblindness”

that focuses on “the inner person” (261). Winans’ classroom observations echo Bonilla-Silva’s findings in *Racism Without Racists* in striking ways, particularly his racial frames and “testimonies of colorblindness” (87-95). Winans says, “[t]he strategy of colorblindness is one that sidesteps institutional and structural racism, something of which most white students have limited understanding” (262).

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