CLASSROOM, CAMPUS, COMMUNITY: LOWER-CLASS AGENCY IN HIGHER

EDUCATION

by

PAUL KRATWELL-TIERNEY

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Department of English
and the Division of Graduate Studies of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

December 2022

DISSERTATION APPROVAL PAGE

Student: Paul Kratwell-Tierney

Title: Classroom, Campus, Community: Lower-Class Agency in Higher Education

This dissertation has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of English by:

Betsy Wheeler   Chair
John Gage   Core Member
Emily Simnitt   Core Member
Jenifer Presto   Institutional Representative

and

Krista Chronister   Vice Provost for Graduate Studies

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Division of Graduate Studies

Degree awarded December 2022

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Paul Kratwell-Tierney

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

December 2022

Title: Classroom, Campus, Community: Lower-Class Agency in Higher Education

Lower-class language, logics, and ways of being have been excluded from higher education, especially at selective universities. Fewer people from the lower classes enroll, and those who manage to matriculate do so as outsiders. To counter social reproduction perpetuated by educational inequality, this dissertation creates a program to restore agency to lower-class students in selective universities, broaden the social imaginary to normalize lower-class culture and expression, and carry these paradigm-changing attitudes to the public. I describe a study I conducted on student personal narrative in First-Year Composition in which students demonstrate the importance of self-positioning in academia. An awareness of personal agency improves personal success and heightens civil discourse. First-Year Composition, as a required class with a diverse set of students, has the potential to serve as a vehicle for influencing the academic social imaginary that relegates lower-class discourse to the outside. By incorporating personal student narratives into curricula and discussions, students and instructors recognize the rhetoricity of each other's stories. The senses of agency students develop from telling their stories helps them to position themselves in academia. It also allows them to understand how different agents interact, our subjectivities constantly shaping one another. The classroom becomes a place of shared inquiry where argument resembles cooperative dissensus more than competitive point-counterpoint. This ability to consider personal goods along with the goods of

others in complex situations could be characterized as "practical wisdom." In such a dehierarchized space, lower-class students gain a voice while all students, regardless of social class, gain a deeper understanding of civil discourse. And this inclusive approach to civil discourse changes the relationship between the institution and the public. Through equal partnership and genuine listening, campus and community identify mutual problems in a shared ecology. Cooperative attitudes and actions erode the social boundaries between the lower classes and education. A spirit of shared inquiry challenges assumptions that lower-class students and community members need to abandon their language, values, and personalities to experience success. Meaningful action that begins in the composition classroom exposes socioeconomic limit-situations and increases possibility for more fairly educating the public.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For Amber

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: LOWER-CLASS STUDENTS AS CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

In this dissertation, I reimagine the relationships between selective universities and the lower social classes. I will attempt to dehierarchize institutional knowledge and ways of being to bring attention to those who have been overlooked. Economic boundaries around higher education are beginning to be recognized, with public campaigns to forgive student loan debt serving as evidence, but the general public still lacks a nuanced understanding of the complex social, emotional, and material consequences of an education system that benefits those at the top. More importantly, selective institutions that have the power to correct this injustice need a deeper understanding of the people who do not have the financial, material, and social means to succeed in their carefully socialized environments. The field of rhetoric and composition has the tools and positioning within the institution to initiate change, and the teaching of writing will fuel my examinations of social class in the classroom, campus, and community.

For this inquiry, I will use the terms "low-income" and "lower-class" instead of the more general term "working-class." The meaning of "working-class" cannot be nailed down, its connotations spanning economics and culture, in some cases including high-earning manual laborers. The term "low-income" refers specifically to financial situations near or below the poverty line, and "lower-class" refers specifically to the material and cultural realities shaping that subjectivity. My concern will be students who are both low-income and lower-class, and in many cases the terms will be used, more or less, interchangeably. But having separate terminology for the economic situation and the material-cultural situation will allow for a more nuanced understanding when needed.

My decision to focus on the role of socioeconomic status in a university ecology is both pragmatic and personal: pragmatic because selective universities have an underdeveloped sense of how to support students with backgrounds of poverty, and personal because I have been (and still am) one of those students. While community colleges, open-enrollment institutions, and less selective colleges recognize economic status as an aspect of intersectional identity and make scholarship on social class part of the academic structure, selective universities tend to overlook it. The condition of poverty is only one expression of a system of exclusion that spans race, culture, nationality, gender, age, and ability, but socioeconomic status has a specific significance in higher education. As Wolfgang Lehmann states, "Social class remains one of the most reliable and persistent predictors of educational and labor market attainment," and "decades of educational expansion and reform have done little to lessen this relationship between class and educational attainment" (1). While institutions of higher education value diversity, social class is an often-neglected cultural marker, typically not "visible" in obvious ways and "somehow already covered" in the categories of race, sexuality, and gender (Linkon and Russo 5). However, economic status is an aspect of identity that spans all other identities, much as other overlooked markers, such as disability, age, or family status. All of these overlooked identity markers represent scattered communities that could better support each other if they had more of a voice in the university. A focus on lower-class status does not come at the expense of other identities, but rather works as an entry into a larger rhizomatic reality. It is a starting point for reasoning that I am personally qualified to put forward, and an examination of this lower-class status as a *particular* opens space for a larger understanding of interrelated identities.

When it comes to lower-class students in selective institutions, middle- to upper-class habits of thought stand in the way of equal educational opportunities. As pointed out by bell

hooks, "bourgeois values in the classroom create a barrier, blocking the possibility of confrontation and conflict, warding off dissent" (178). And when individual students criticize teachers for misusing power, they are punished for being "negative and disruptive" (184). A lack of social power, compounded by language and personal expression marked as *other*, relegates lower-class students to the outside of academia. In the following chapters, I will argue that dehierarchizing lower-class thought, expression, and ways of being in First -Year Composition restores agency to lower-class students. It also affects the thinking of other students and teachers, making the university a more inclusive place. And those attitude changes on campus carry over to the community, making it easier to see that the campus and community comprise the same ecology. This more holistic vision of the classroom, campus, and community becomes the foundation for political action and policy change that bring lower-class people to higher education.

Henry Giroux expresses an exigency for education in the United States with a statement of emergency and an accusation against the economic elites:

> Education has got to be rescued…from those market fundamentalists who want to strip [it] of any democratic values, while turning it into simply another space dominated by private interests and market relations….The United States is not a generous country either in its system of financing schools or in its tax system, both of which favor the rich (9-10).

Giroux addresses the structural disadvantages that work against lower-class people when facing an education system entrenched in the marketplace and controlled by monied interests. Most lower-class people do not attain higher degrees. Those who do often have different kinds of experiences than their richer peers, who more easily navigate spaces designed for the upper

classes. Higher education's entanglement with the dominant classes positions it, to varying degrees, as a "state apparatus" (Udas and Stagg 69) that reproduces socioeconomic status, and conscientious educators who hope to equalize opportunity for students face a daunting task.

Although entangled with the marketplace, universities do consciously work to be places of equality by including those who have been excluded, and a guideline that determines where to direct efforts is the category of "protected classes," groups of people who share an aspect of identity that makes them vulnerable. These classes have grown over time to include more people, and protected classes currently stand as: race, sex, gender, disability, nationality, citizenship, religion, age, pregnancy, familial status, military veteran status, and genetic information. Economic status is not a protected class even though poverty is a life-threatening aspect of identity that spans all other identities as an intersectional trait. The system of capitalism makes it easy to separate economic status from identity, but the psychological, material realities of social class manifest daily, limiting opportunities, and shortening lifespans.

While frank conversations about social class *as social class* are more common in community colleges and less-selective universities, little scholarship has been done on lower-class students in more-selective universities. During my six-plus years at the University of Oregon, a selective research university, I have been repeatedly discouraged from pursuing social class as my topic of interest by faculty and peers alike. Often the opposition has had less to do with the subject itself and more to do with an assumption that I was unqualified to engage it. Some of the comments I have received over the years are:

- You can't write about poverty, because white people don't experience real poverty.

- A white male such as yourself should focus on poverty in the Appalachian Region.

- Poverty is an effect of colonialism, and discussing it outside that frame would be racist.

The assumption seems to be that poverty exists outside the institution, and "real" poverty will be visually apparent as some sort of obvious aspect of identity. Other criticisms I have received are based less on my perceived personal identity and more on a belief that low social class status is either shameful or easily fixable:

- Financial status is not part of identity.

- The terms "poor" and "poverty" are offensive.

- Social class doesn't affect entrance to college, since there are so many grants available.

- Underprepared students don't belong in this university.

- You'll never get a worthwhile job by writing about such a nonintellectual subject.

Faculty and graduate students care about justice, but the idea of social class as a focus of study (and not just an epiphenomenon of a more "intellectual" pursuit) has been difficult for many of my colleagues to accept. Poverty tends to be seen through a terministic screen,[1] entrenched terminology shaping perception and relegating it to *otherness*. Schools have some policies and programs in place to "deal" with lower-class students, but the support available is the kind of support possible within the limit-situation of university structure and culture. Thinking beyond that limit-situation requires a new social imaginary in the institution, and that begins one relationship at a time.

The resistance I have experienced at my current university is not indicative of attitudes from all institutions, and my hope is that my perseverance in this topic will bring awareness to the program. Before attending UO, I experienced higher education, in some form, in four other institutions across four states, all open admission or less selective. Three of them were urban, and one was semi-rural. While each institution was diverse in a different way, I consistently found

---

[1] See Kenneth Burke's *Language as Symbolic Action*

commonality with those who understood poverty, especially those who made painful sacrifices to afford and attend school. I am from an industrial hometown where I had mostly nonwhite, lower-class friends, and half my family is Chicano (a term they prefer to Chicanx), so identifying with poor people from many walks of life feels natural. I also taught at the postsecondary level for six years at a small-town, four-year teaching university made up of over 50% first-generation students, where I could use my experiences to communicate possibility to others. I observed striking similarities between lower-class urban and lower-class rural students, each group tending to have less access to technology, less support from family, and less knowledge about the workings of academia. The idea of social class has been my starting place for connecting with others throughout life, and it has always led to sincere friendships and professional relationships. However, when I came to the UO for the Ph.D. program, much of my knowledge became obsolete. As a selective research university, UO caters to a more prepared, more affluent group of students, and I found myself in a cohort of graduate students with whom I shared few cultural touchstones, regardless of race, sexuality, or gender. I have observed how the invisible nature of lower-class status prevents it from being valued as anything more than an object of study.

In response to this lack of visibility, Anthony Abraham Jack has also been criticized for studying the effects of economic inequality in an elite university rather than in the neighborhoods in which the material realities of poverty *ostensibly* exist, but he argues,

> studying inequality cannot, and should not, always be about studying poor people in poor places. Doing so assumes that the inequality that stifles the development and undercuts the well-being of the poor only occurs in the places where they live. The reality is that while our neighborhoods may be segregated, our fates are intertwined (12).

15

A recognition of intertwined fate for students already present in elite universities challenges monolithic categorizations, freeing lower-class students from the liminal space to which they have been relegated and recognizing them as part of the already existing makeup of the university ecology. Jack's study is one of the few that locates social class *as social class* within a diverse body of students, faculty, and university employees at an elite institution. He is African American, and the low-income students he interviews are from multiple racial backgrounds. They are also a mix of urban and rural students. The marginalization they feel in college, they almost universally report, is a result of their interactions (and noninteractions) with wealthy students and teachers across race, gender, and nationality. What connects the students in the study are the obstacles economic status and poverty mindset throw in the way of their educations, and a sentiment they all share is a feeling that they are on their own. A broad swath of students could find solidarity in this largely unrecognized common if they were able to locate and identify each other.

Any attempt to remedy the exclusion of lower-class students will be a monumental task that involves structural and cultural change: changes to laws, tax structures, and university policies, as well as changes to attitudes, emotional investments, and beliefs. This dissertation does not paint a utopian picture of the future of education, but it does insist that horizonal goals should be what guide more immediate and concrete goals. A system of education accessible to every individual, free from shame, stigma, and unfair obstacles, should be what we aim for, and I will have that dream in mind throughout. As an entry point for accessing the larger picture, a focus on the relationship between the lower classes and the selective university provides tools for chipping away at the social imaginary surrounding higher education, moving away from categorical thinking that begins with limitation and moving toward relational thinking that begins

16

with possibility. This dissertation will attempt to initiate a change from limitation to possibility as a starting point for reasoning.

Administrators, faculty, and academic staff who have been socialized into academia tend to think in terms of the limit-situation created by the politics and finances that keep the school viable in the eyes of taxpayers. The inner workings of the institution, including things like curricula, learning objectives, and even tenure all react to conservative political forces of the marketplace. There are obvious and good reasons for these reactions, but making room for additional kinds of thinking is also reasonable. A starting point for reasoning that begins with relationships is more dynamic and imaginative. The point of contact between a lower-class student and a teacher, administrator, or even a nonhuman actor such as a policy or dormitory centers lived experience and generates questions that categorical thinking does not. I do not intend to criticize learning objectives or disregard tenure, but to argue that those categories are preceded by relationships, including relationships with people in the lower classes inside and outside the university, not vice-versa.

On More-Than-Humanist Agency

A relational view of the university and community ecology changes the nature of agency. A traditional humanist agency resides in the individual mind. Rational humans make decisions and exercise their wills to act upon the world. But most of the people who appear in this dissertation have had difficulty acting upon the world, and scrutinizing the circumstances that have caused that difficulty requires scrutinizing where our actions come from. Traditional humanism has given us a liberal education system and a wealth of specialized thought, but it has also excluded people who do not fit universal humanist categories. As I explore lower-class

logics and ways of being in higher education, I will also explore ways to restore lost agency. The

limitations of humanism prevent marginalized people from exercising their wills in educational

settings.

Posthumanism does not neglect human needs but expands possibility for individual

human beings. Our current "risk society" prevents us from fully understanding the role of

humanity in a world of globalization, climate change, mass extinction, and technology that is no

longer under our control, and each individual's well-being depends on finding a place to thrive

within the milieu. In a post-Enlightenment, post-industrial twenty-first century, we have emerged

from a humancentric reality to face a new reality: one in which our fate is entangled with

environmental, technological, and social conglomerations of our own making. The universalities

and normative conditions encouraged by traditional humanism no longer account for (and never

really did account for) the uncategorizable and changeable situations that shape human life,

making a more expansive interpretation of humanity more ethical, not less. The term posthuman

sounds to some like a disregard for people, but it could more aptly be interpreted as "more-than-

human." The comparative term "more" does not make this sort of approach to humanity "better"

or "above" traditional humanism; it expresses a multifaceted agency that is not exclusive to a

single human psyche, more immersed in the currents of circumstance and belief. My reimagining

of the university and community ecology depends on this sort of decentering. In the current era

of "posts" that questions what is next for so many of our organized thought structures, a close

look at how particular human beings fit (or don't fit) larger society will make human possibility

clearer. Hierarchical thinking limits possibility for those on the lower rungs of the social ladder,

but the posthuman constellation of thought breaks hierarchies and shows the power within

relationships and enactments. This view does away with the categorical *othering* of the lower

social classes in higher education, instead examining the multiplicity of each student who fills a

niche in the ecology. Our agency emerges from relationships, not from a private, inner psyche.

Our thoughts and feelings do not exist separately from the natural world.

The field of rhetoric has been challenging humanist limitations of the nature-culture split

for decades, and although explicitly posthuman ideas have recently been incorporated into

rhetorical theory by scholars such as Thomas Rickert, Debra Hawhee, and Casey Boyle, the

foundation existed long prior. For example, Kenneth Burke's concept of *substance* posits that

"each single object in the universe is 'defined' (determined, limited, bounded) by the other things

that surround it" (*Grammar* 25). Substance cannot be defined as an intrinsic characteristic, but a

mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic. We identify things by what they are not, making everything

simultaneously itself and *other*. This exploration of substance as simultaneously intrinsic and

extrinsic finds concord with posthumanist theories of rhetoric, such as Casey Boyle's

characterization of rhetoric as a *serial practice* of bodies exercising tendencies to "inform" each

other "until they become saturated and another body resolves" (Boyle 27). The distinction

between the human and the environment begins fade as the qualities that incorporate things rub

off on other things. To use Thomas Rickert's term, rhetoric works as "attunement." Rather than

transmitting a message directly to an audience, rhetoric can be a "responsive way of revealing

the world…through affective, symbolic, and material means" (Rickert 162). In this nonbinary,

hybridized environment, human agency exists both as feelings from within and as environmental

forces from without.

Jenny Edbauer's complexification of the rhetorical situation in favor of a rhetorical

ecology restructures individual agency on a socially and technologically networked planet. It

provides new methods for understanding the individual as part of a whole. While the Bitzer-Vatz

disagreement hinges on the question of whether rhetoric is a reaction to an already present

situation, or whether the situation is created by the rhetor, Edbauer suggests a more dynamic

interplay between agents and environment. Resisting the tendency to categorize elements in a

situation as a static "conglomeration" such as "speaker-audience-message" (8), she describes an

ecology as a "networked interconnection of forces, energies, rhetorics, moods, and experiences"

(10). The concept of *site* is no longer a fixed location, but "the in-between en/action of events

and encounters" (10). A classroom, as "a circulation of encounters and actions" (12), is more

than a contained space for teaching. The experiences, moods, and attitudes of students and

teachers bring in elements of other places, experiences, and feelings. A rhetorical ecology

acknowledges the many simultaneous processes flowing through students and teachers as they

temporarily share a common space and moment. Writing is not a stable relationship between a

writer and an audience, but something that is "enacted and lived" (13). Writing does not come

straight out of our minds but is shaped by converging circumstances, complicating the idea of

individual humanist agency.

Catherine Chaput enlarges the situation further in light of exigencies caused by our

neoliberal condition, claiming the omnipresent filter of economic competition uncouples logic

and emotion, creating the illusion of a "reason-emotion divide" (3). She uses the term *affect* to

describe a more complete reason-emotion continuum. A circulation or "fluidity of everyday

practices, affects, and uncertainties," rejoins logic and emotion as elements of human reason (6).

Situation becomes a *Transsituation*, as "affect acts as an energy moving between human beings

via communicative practices that inspire behavior instinctively" (7-8). This sort of rhetorical

energy, flowing between situations, becoming embedded within the psyches of individuals,

shatters the assumption that the best arguments win. It also prevents the university from being

theorized as a static site that contains students and faculty. The idea of rhetorical energy flowing between people and binding them together in *Transsituational* contexts calls into question the meaning and value of persuasion. It "wear[s] away at the rhetorical linkages between appropriate discursive choices and agentive power" (2-3). The complexity of forces coming together to create a context blurs the lines between agents. Subject and object become difficult to determine. In this more complex configuration, people who have been historically acted upon can see their positions in an ecology and find opportunities for repositioning.

The sort of posthumanist reimagining of the university I envision moves past ego-centered limitations of traditional humanism and answers Carol Taylor's call to "do away with the binaries that have held 'man' and 'human' so securely in place as a means to other everything/everyone else" (20). By challenging human exceptionalism, we can see the silenced, previously *othered* actors in the environment for what they are: humans and nonhumans comprising a network of relationships and agencies that shape each other and are, in turn, shaped *by* each other. Space opens for more starting points for logic, more voices, more potential conclusions. A view of the university that decenters academic discourse and ways of being might at first seem radical, and the application of posthumanist ideas, when dealing with something as thoroughly humanist as education, might at first seem inappropriate. But, as Boyle draws from a wide range of scholarship to make the case that each historical moment constructs its own version of humanism fitting for the time and place (19), so will this dissertation demonstrate that a reimagining of human logic, feeling, and agency is not a radical proposal but a reasonable project for our time. The de- and reconstruction of humanism in the university is not an abandonment of traditional humanistic education, but an expansion of human possibility.

Traditional humanism's perpetuation of the nature-culture split has affected, or even invented, notions of gender, sexuality, race, nationality, ability, and social class. The posthuman constellation of thought benefits all marginalized identities by questioning the hegemonic forces that have caused the marginalization. Rosi Braidotti claims traditional humanism defines the human as rational, western, and masculine, creating a "hierarchical scale of decreasing worth" (143). The resulting "masculinist, racist or racial supremacist ideologies…turn cultural specificity into a fake universal and normality into a normative injunction." Frantz Fanon criticizes traditional humanism, claiming, "Inferiorization is the native correlative to the European's feeling of superiority," the colonized taking on an identity as binary to the colonizer. The power imbalance creates an illusion that the oppressed are "made" by the oppressor without reciprocity (73). Remi Yergeau exposes the humanist limitations that characterize people with autism as having "unempathetic and robotic qualities." Humanism's intrinsic ableism and heteronormativity dehumanize "neurologically queer" ways of being (213). Posthumanism's emphasis on multiplicity and emergence from the environment expands the definition of the human with a rehumanizing effect. By concentrating on lower-class students and community members in a rhetorical ecology, I will make a small contribution to a much larger project that involves all marginalized people.

Classroom, Campus, Community: Chapters II-IV

The following chapters create a program to restore agency to lower-class students in selective universities, broaden the social imaginary to normalize lower-class culture and expression, and carry these paradigm-changing attitudes to the public. In chapter II, I argue that the inclusion of lower-class discourse in First-Year Composition normalizes lower-class

expression in the university and gives students tools to position themselves in the classroom ecology. Economic realities put lower-class students at a disadvantage in all institutions of learning, but selective universities in particular operate under middle- to upper-class assumptions. Both students and teachers normalize wealth and worldliness, compounding lower-class students' economic difficulties with social stigma. While fixing the economic disparities that cause the material, social, and emotional boundaries to equal education seems a monumental task, I claim that concrete change begins in the mind. We have grown accustomed to the story that positions richer, more prepared students as insiders and poorer, less prepared students as outsiders. To change that story and broaden the university's social imaginary, more lower-class stories need to be included in curricula and academic discussions. As a required course with an automatically diverse set of students, First-Year Composition can be a place to normalize lower-class stories as part of academia. To that end, I describe a study I conducted on the rhetoricity of students' personal narratives and how those narratives help students position themselves in the university.

For theoretical grounding, I look to James Gee's concept of *Discourse* (with a capital D) and Karen Barad's concept of *diffraction*. Capital D Discourse bears resemblance to Pierre Bourdieu's habitus, a psychological concept that has been widely adopted by educators, but Discourse presents a more multi-faceted view of the human. While Bourdieu describes humans as embodiments of collected experiences over time, solidifying in a community at an early age (15), Gee views humans more as a "body multiple," or conglomerations of experience, belief, thought, emotion, communication, materiality, and importantly, enactments in the moment (3). More compatible with posthumanist interpretations of agency, Gee's theorization of the self allows a dynamism and performative quality that Bourdieu's does not. The flexibility and

immediacy of self becomes important when I analyze student language and decipher their relationships to each other and the larger world.

Barad's diffraction works well with Gee's Discourse to show discernable patterns within multiplicity. A diffractive pattern occurs when multiple wave patterns interfere with each other, causing chaos and obliterating boundaries. Rhetorically speaking, waves of Discourses colliding disrupt each other in a chaos that could be called *kairotic* space. A diffractive pattern, or a "third reality" that emerges from the collision (75), serves as a model for understanding *kairotic* moments. The conflict, confusion, and dissensus caused by different ways of thinking, speaking, and being, constitute the classroom. Rather than depending on traditional or established social hierarchies, the classroom becomes a space where students depend on each other for their senses of agency and self-identity.

By applying these two concepts to students' personal narratives, I can more readily understand the many ways students construct reality in the classroom and position themselves in the university and community. I follow three students through three phases of my project: an initial reflection, the final paper, and a final reflection. The assignments work together to get students to think about the relationships between their personal lives and their academic lives. Each of the three students I follow has aspects of intersectional identity that affect his/her/their academic writing, but only one student identifies as lower-class. While the other two students express a range of compatibilities and incompatibilities with academia, the lower-class student finds himself so incompatible with the social expectations of college that he fails the class. I conclude by discussing the personal narrative assignments as "positionality stories" (Cedillo and Bratta 219), or personal student accounts that help them to envision their roles in the university. Lower social classes in particular benefit from recognizing the rhetoricity of their own emotion

and life experiences as they relate to others. When students express the decisions they have had to make to become part of the university, they recognize their own agency and make themselves a normative part of academia. When classrooms encourage students to tell these stories, the university social imaginary begins to change.

In Chapter III, I argue for *argument as inquiry* as a teaching method in First-Year Composition. This method, put forth by Jack Meiland, challenges "the prevailing idea that the main purpose of argument is persuasion (186). It dehierarchizes the classroom by focusing on ethical inquiry rather than proving a point. Outsider discourse becomes a necessary and already-present element of argumentation. My interpretation of Meiland is influenced by John Gage's idea of "ethical argument," which reaches an "earned conclusion" by exploring the "best reasons" available (*Shape* 43). This process of building conclusions by thoroughly and honestly assessing alternate opinions compliments Nola Heidlebaugh's emphasis on moving through problematic situations by attending to the moment, finding "opportunity in problems" (144). It also compliments Catherine Chaput's idea of *Transsituation*, which shows how "a fluidity of everyday practices, affects, and uncertainties" energetically connect different times and places to any immediate situation (6). The convergence of these ideas has helped me to theorize Meiland's *argument as inquiry* as a process of argumentation in the classroom that privileges thorough understanding of situation. Before making a claim, students demonstrate understanding of all the views comprising an issue. Only after understanding how conflicting claims shape each other, working together to bring an issue to life, do they forward claims of their own. The claims should not attempt to solve a complex problem, but make a point worth making in a contextual moment. Making a good point that is contingent on other points cuts down on the impulse to flatten issues to win binary arguments. And reflecting on the multiplicities and contingencies of

logic creates the conditions for developing "practical wisdom," an ability to act according to the well-being of both self and others (Aristotle, *NE* 1140b). By incorporating the thoughts of others in their own arguments, students regain a sense of civil discourse and prepare for constructive public communication.

After theorizing *argument as inquiry*, I walk the reader through student learning in a ten-week term. The assignments progress from reading summaries, to an exploratory paper, to a final research paper, all meant to move students away from a single-clause thesis and easily rebutted counterargument. A number of students resist abandoning this type of one-sided, five-paragraph argument. Interestingly, more prepared students often cling to it most, since it has brought them success in the past. The fact that less prepared students transition to this sort of decentralized thinking more easily speaks to the equalizing effect the method can have for lower social classes. I recount interactions in group exercises that show how students adjust their thinking to include thought from social classes who have been excluded from academia. For example, a perspective-taking role-playing exercise causes one group to make a breakthrough understanding lower-class, conservative beliefs about taxes. After highlighting successes and struggles students have giving accurate and honest summaries of readings, I follow a single student through the Exploratory Essay and the Final Research Paper. In the Exploratory Paper, her language shows her difficulty in constructing a claim that can be reasonably argued between stakeholders with different opinions. But she also demonstrates patience and thoughtfulness when including other logics, even logics far from her own. In the Final Research Paper, she presents an argument with a clear relationship to other arguments, generously giving credit to the reasoning behind those she disagrees with and offering an idea that she sees as the best option for the specific time and place.

Finally, I expand the implications of teaching *argument as inquiry*, decentering dominant narratives and logics to even the playing field for lower-class students and other outsiders. If education is to be liberatory and not domesticating, the classroom needs to allow students to self-advocate freely. When teachers and fellow students do not understand the language or behavior of lower-class students, we tend to put parameters around their expression, reproducing hierarchical social behaviors in the classroom (Finn 126-27). An authoritarian classroom that uses the "banking method" (Freire 69) to socialize students into manageable subjects robs the lower classes of a liberatory education. But on the other hand, leaving students to their own devices robs the lower classes of the scaffolding they need to reach the same milestones as their peers. The shared practice of inquiry gives students both freedom and structure, the diverse situations and opinions of the dehierarchized classroom encouraging personal expression while also structuring activities. Shared inquiry and an acknowledgment of the validity of others' opinions develops the practical wisdom students need to move ahead in school and in public. The ability to make decisions based on one's own good and society's good might be the most positive and equitable skill the university has to offer.

In Chapter IV, I argue the university can improve its relationship with the public by adopting a stance of mutual inquiry, further normalizing the lower classes in academia. The cooperative attitudes and methods I discuss in the previous chapters prepare students and teachers to challenge what Walter Mignolo calls the "hegemony of zero point epistemology" (162). The university's internalization of western, colonial modes of thinking position scholars as knowers and *others* as research subjects. The research subjects most sought by academia occupy lower-class status, their lived experiences alien to the middle- to upper-class institution. Although research on less privileged communities usually comes from a place of good

27

intentions, the communities rarely receive anything in return. And the tendency for scholars to "help" communities, whether by raising awareness or through charitable acts, reinforces the subject-object relationship.

Breaking this habit of hierarchizing the upper-class, educated over the lower-class, less educated requires a sense of "research justice" (Jolivétte 5), partnering with the community rather than studying it. Rather than researching communities or trying to improve them by imposing upper-class, educated values, campus and community partnerships should identify shared problems. Bringing campus and community back together will require "new time- and space-appropriate methods" (Mathieu 17) that uncover a "third reality" (Barad 75), or hybridized language and thought between different stakeholders. Institutional goals should be set aside in favor of goals that emerge from community relationships. To build these kinds of equal and productive relationships, I suggest creating equalized spaces and using listening as a nonargumentative tactic.

Equalized spaces take multiple forms, from counterpublics to hybridized classes, and when successful, they trouble the boundary between campus and community. For example, the Community Literacy Center (CLC) in Pittsburgh sets aside institutional strategies for community tactics, addressing identities of "disenfranchised groups" as "public concerns" (Flower 33). The university does not "serve" underprivileged people in the community, but creates a special public where difference becomes a basis for reasoning. Another way to create a special public is to decentralize projects, distributing communication in a rhetorical ecology as the University of Colorado Boulder does with the local food movement. By distributing the project across the Boulder writing program, farms, art fairs, social media, and political platforms, all stakeholder "continuously 'write' the place" (House 57). The university does not study, help, or even guide

the community. It shares a goal of improving agriculture and food distribution with many other partners. No rules exist for equalizing spaces, but they always center mutual benefit and partnership.

I also explore listening as a tactic of care that leads people to new mental and emotional possibilities. Similar to the way *argument as inquiry* strengthens reasoning by including views of the *other*, tactical listening strengthens relationships through a sharing of personal values and emotion. For an example of this sort of nonargumentative listening, I look outside university walls to Deeyah Khan, a journalist of Punjabi and Pashtun descent, who practices radical compassion by hearing stories from hate groups. She listens to "build a relationship of trust that's based on dignity and respect" ("Extreme Listening" 42:08), not to counter with her own viewpoint. By acting tactically, finding opportunities in the moment to make sure her interviewees get all their thoughts and feelings out, she changes their attitudes. Using tactics of care can be criticized as passive or even enabling when it comes to social justice, as demonstrated by Saul Alinsky's combative tactics that serve as a "potent weapon" (129) in the name of justice. However, the program I present in this dissertation shows concrete results with inclusive storytelling and shared inquiry. Listening as a tactic of care continues the development of practical wisdom that began in the classroom. Lower-class communities deserve inclusion and agency when interacting with the university. Only through equal partnership will the social paradigm that excludes the lower classes from higher education begin to erode.

These chapters all work to normalize lower-class thought, expression, and ways of being in higher education. The lower social classes have been branded as outsiders to the university, making the connection between economics and level of education feel natural, not only to the more educated but to the less educated. However, the disparity in education is not a natural state

of affairs; it is a convention created by storytelling. We can change the story by acknowledging the rhetoricity of lower-class discourse and including it in assignments and discussions. The agency students gain by being in the center of discussions helps them to position themselves in academia. It also naturalizes their presence so they can be more readily accepted by others. And by applying these same principles to campus-community relationships, the university looks like a more welcoming place. The socioeconomic realities that make higher education difficult for some and impossible for others will not be solved in this dissertation, but large-scale changes begin in the mind. The composition classroom is well-equipped to work with minds. If this dissertation results in one lower-class student gaining acceptance, the project has been worthwhile.

CHAPTER II

THE RHETORICITY OF STORYTELLING: LOWER-CLASS DISCOURSE IN SELECTIVE UNIVERSITIES

Tradition tells us that the university experience is one of growth, an opportunity for students to meet new challenges and solve problems on their own before joining the ranks of the educated elite. This necessity for self-determination and grit is one of the foundations of higher education, and without academic rigor, college degrees would hold less worth. But in answering the question of who has had to meet an unfair *number* of new challenges (and who has been barred from trying in the first place) many universities, particularly selective universities, display only a rudimentary understanding of students' lived experiences. As Jenny Stuber asserts, since universities operate under the cultural norms and expectations of the dominant classes, "the material hierarchies and the symbolic/cultural hierarchies that structure class inequalities are ultimately inseparable" (38). This inseparability of economic status and its accompanying cultural qualities relegates the lower classes to the margins of higher education, even with grants, scholarships, or work-study.

The relationship between social class and education is a complex one, intersecting with virtually all aspects of identity and manifesting a lack of access differently in each case. Some lack access to the financial means to enroll and sustain basic needs for the number of years necessary to finish. Some lack access to the knowledge base to navigate applications, financial aid, and other social and technical obstacles, largely because of lower-class status and mindset stemming from poverty. Still others make it to the university only to experience alienation within, developing an "oppositional identity" (Ogbu) that prevents them from *allowing themselves* to fully access services, comforts, and mentorship necessary to excel academically.

When students resist or rebel, they do not act out because of laziness or ignorance; they act out because the institution has stripped them of agency, forcing them to adapt or fail rather than accepting them as integral parts of the university itself. By labeling a student as "resistant" or as an "outsider," the university not only fails the student but fails itself as an engine of equality.

An examination of students from lower-class backgrounds at elite universities is imperative considering the failure of the academy to recognize socioeconomic class as part of intersectional identity. While economic status drives educational success (Lehmann; Muzzatti and Samarco; Sennett and Cobb; Jack; Aries and Seider; Rothstein; Stuber; Sullivan; Walpole), teachers and administrators tend to overlook it as an aspect of diversity, instead perceiving it as the mark of an outsider that can be remedied through education. If a poor student makes it to an elite university, his/her/their lower-class status is not celebrated. In fact, the cultural markers accompanying lower-class status are regularly shunned, ridiculed, or fetishized in the classroom. To middle-to-upper-class students and teachers, personal expression from the lower-classes might seem on one hand "backward," marked by rurality, social conservatism, or anti-intellectualism, or on the other hand "ghetto," marked by urbanity, ethnic-sounding English, or aggression. Race and geography mark these discourses differently, but the university welcomes neither. And while academia often characterizes these two kinds of undesirable identity as opposites, they are both manifestations of lower-class status.

Assumptions made by richer students and teachers alienate lower-class students as they navigate economic, cultural, material, and emotional difficulties. Anthony Abraham Jack titles a chapter of his study of an unnamed selective university "Come with Me to Italy!" based on an overheard conversation between two undergraduates who casually discuss their international excursions, demonstrating the routineness of gaining cultural experiences and spending amounts

of money lower-income students could not imagine. On a regular basis, lower-income students suffer from feelings of inadequacy as their classmates or dormmates normalize frequent and expensive trips and judge less traveled peers as small-minded or shoddy (134). The markers of difference include not only luxuries such as vacations and cultural experiences but creature comforts such as dorm furnishings, electronic equipment, expensive fashion, cars, and frequent meals off campus. And these examples of wealth do not have to be extreme to make poorer students feel like outsiders; some students find it unbelievable that a peer's parents would cover the cost of tuition, or housing, or food. Faculty and administration often contribute to the normalization of wealth, as they easily identify with the travels and cultural experiences of wealthier students while failing to acknowledge the value of poorer students' experiences.

When discursive practices combine with material realities, lower-class students find themselves in crisis. Extravagant travel and material possession cause differences in long-term cultural literacy and worldliness, but poor students also expend extra energy to survive. Jack poignantly lays out the closing of campus cafeterias in his institution during academic breaks. Lower-income students who could not afford to travel went hungry, trapped on a desolate campus. He explains, "A particularly brutal irony is that one of the largest donations to [the university] in recent decades was made in the name of recruiting poor, academically talented youth. The closing of the cafeterias distressed exactly those students" (135). The university, in this case, budgeted for recruitment but not ongoing support. While part of the student population enjoys vacations, rest, and recharge, another part of the student population struggles, slipping further down the social hierarchy as they spend time surviving rather than having new experiences. When surrounded by people who make assumptions about so many aspects of lived experience, lower-class students cannot recognize their own agency. They do not see themselves

33

as constitutive elements of the university, but as outsiders trying to survive and blend in. This sort of disregard reproduces social strata.

Concrete change begins in the imagination, and transformative action in the university depends upon the larger social imaginary. The way administrators, faculty, and students perceive their institution and community determines who belongs, and people from the lower classes have never been considered insiders in selective universities. The stories we tell ourselves establish the boundaries between the inside and outside, and a broadening of norms and assumptions can begin with incorporating more "outsider" stories into the curricula. Amy Robillard claims, "there is rhetorical power in storytelling that we dismiss too quickly" (186), and as discourse that challenges hegemonic assumptions and disrupts the reproduction of social strata, stories from students' lives should have a place in the composition classroom. Once the classroom ecology more accurately represents the students who constitute it, the transformation of beliefs throughout the system begins. For any such transformation of belief to take hold, we will need to move beyond the illusion that the university has an inside and an outside, instead acknowledging the rhetoricity of students' *already present* counternarratives, even when those narratives disrupt the classroom.

A classroom that incorporates students' stories erodes the mechanisms of social reproduction built into higher education. Rather than functioning as a place to "empower" disadvantaged students by training them to be more like their socially powerful peers and teachers, the classroom can be a place of "ongoing, *serial* encounters" (Boyle 34) where students shape the class while simultaneously being shaped by it. As a living part of the institution, students and teachers engage in a "continual mediation of becoming" (54). Storytelling not only communicates meaning in an individual's life but affects those who hear it. The symbolic act of

telling others about oneself *means* something but also *does* something. The rhetoricity of this

symbolic action brings interior attitudes to the exterior (Burke, *Language* 5), revealing the

classroom for what it actually is: a contended space of competing discourse. An embracement of

these competing discourses dehierarchizes language and ways of being, allowing for more voices

and points of view. When so-called outsider students shape the classroom with their own

discourse, they feel like insiders. And when so-called insider students (and teachers) witness the

rhetoricity of this discourse, the outside permeates the inside.

In the winter of 2022, I introduced two low-stakes assignments into my Writing 123

class,[2] part of the FYC sequence that focuses on argument and research, to anchor personal

stories in the curriculum. Writing 123 emphasizes the construction of arguments that consider

multiple kinds of evidence, and the open structure of argumentation presents an opportunity for

individual students' stories to fulfill rhetorical purposes. The stories raise awareness of the

backgrounds and positionalities of students in class, but perhaps more importantly, they alter the

goals of the class itself. When students receive credit for producing formal assignments based on

personal feelings and experiences, personal stories from outside the classroom take on an

academic tenor. Students become less reluctant to express the parts of themselves that feel

incompatible with higher education and instead use the personal realm as a starting point for

exploring the academic realm. When I introduced personal narratives as part of the formal

assignment structure, students' approaches to inquiry and argument changed. They recognized

the differences between each other while recognizing the importance of each other's roles in

constructing a classroom ecology. These two simultaneous realizations established a classroom

space where students developed their voices and saw themselves as shapers of the environment.

---

[2] For full description of the class objectives, see Appendix A

In this chapter, I acknowledge lower-class status as an aspect of identity that prevents students from experiencing the types of growth and empowerment enjoyed by middle- and upper-class peers. Particularly, I focus on students from the lower classes matriculating at selective universities.[3] I follow three students through a study I conducted that asked them to write personal reflections about their relationships to academic writing. By analyzing their reflections with a concentration on how social class figures into their writing experiences, I draw out the intersections of social class with other identities as well as the effects these intersections have on each individual. I also analyze their final research papers in consideration of their personal reflections, looking for clues to how their unique situations affect their academic performances. Only one of the three students self-identifies as lower-class, but all three have things to say that speak to the relationships between social class and other aspects of identity. My goal in analyzing their language is to construct a "third reality" (Barad 75) for each student that represents the university as they experience it. The third reality generated by the lower-class student (who has the pseudonym Sam) tells the story of a university that has overlooked his financial and emotional needs. His financial issues, difficult family life, trouble with housing, loneliness, and damaged mental health converge to prevent his success.

I then explore the concept of "positionality stories" (Cedillo and Bratta 219) as a way to put storytelling about the university in the hands of students rather than educators and administrators. I consider students' reflections as counternarratives that challenge institutional assumptions about how students succeed. This active, rhetorical storytelling could impact individual students by letting them see themselves as makers of the university rather than passive observers. By harnessing the rhetoricity of personal storytelling, students recognize their roles in

---

[3] In the estimation of Bowen and Bok, selective universities make up 20-30% of institutions (15).

school and gain the power to decide how to take control of their own learning. This becomes particularly important for lower-class students, since their levels of preparation and cultural ways of being mark them as outsiders. The pressure to hide their real personalities steals their agency. But when a classroom full of students from different cultures and backgrounds all write about themselves in a formal assignment, the chaos of different backgrounds, cultures, values, and beliefs dehierarchizes narratives. Lower-class students who have been relegated to the outside find themselves in the middle of the conversation. Students and instructors see the classroom through many eyes, and limiting beliefs fall away. In the long term, this change of perspective will ripple through the larger university, affecting academia's social imaginary. Stories that limit people lead to limit-situations. Stories that show people in all their complexities lead to possibility. Instructors and administrators tend to see lower-class status as an obstacle only, and this limiting story not only hurts students but deprives the university of cultural diversity.

Reading Methods

Interpreting and disseminating accounts of students' personal thoughts and feelings challenged me to read their materials as accurately and compassionately as possible. I aimed to understand the reasoning and emotion that comes through in these assignments while portraying each student in a positive light. As theoretical grounding for my reading, I used James Gee's concept of Discourse (with a capital D) to account the multiplicity of each individual as they connect language with culture. I also used Karen Barad's concept of diffraction to look past binaries to identify hierarchical constructs.

Discourses (with a capital D), [4] Gee explains, "are ways of behaving interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing, that are accepted as instantiations of particular identities (or types of people) by specific groups" (3). The concept of D/discourse resembles Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* as "accumulated labor" that becomes "incorporated" or "embodied" over time (Bourdieu 15). But although habitus and D/discourse both represent a core personality developed within a primary socializing unit, Gee expands the concept with an examination of primary and secondary D/discourses. While a primary D/discourse resembles a habitus, as a core personality that provides a more or less "enduring sense of self" (Gee 156), secondary D/discourses are multiple, existing together in a single person. Secondary D/discourses develop throughout life in response to situations, and although they are not as firmly rooted in the core of one's being, they create a multiplicity within us. In this way, Gee brings us closer to a model for human agency in a "continual mediation of becoming" (Boyle 54), both shaping and being shaped from moment to moment. When examining how student language reveals ways of being, Gee provides tools to consider each individual's multiplicity.

Along with reading for multiplicity, I read for places of hybridity using Barad's concept of *diffraction*. In the field of physics, a diffractive pattern occurs when two waves, each individually predictable, interfere with each other, creating what appears to be a chaotic disruption of wave patterns but is actually a "composite waveform," that "make[s] the

---

[4] Unfortunately, Gee has made his terminology lexically confusing, as he subordinates traditional (lower-case d) discourse to his more broadly social and material (upper-case D) Discourse and distinguishes the two only through capitalization. The concept is useful for referring to the performative self at the intersection of mind, body, and environment, and since I will be discussing both traditional discourse and Gee's Discourse, I will designate capital D Discourse throughout this dissertation as "D/discourse." Not only does it make the term easier to spot, but it also emphasizes the importance and simultaneity of traditional discursive practice in the university.

determination of a 'real' boundary quite tricky" (75). By examining points of contact within this seemingly chaotic field, a new pattern can be discerned as it emerges from the disruption. The resulting *superposition* is not merely a combination or cancellation of waves, but a new, "third reality" that defies the previous patterns. This thought form has been helpful to me as I consider waves of student D/discourse colliding with waves of academic D/discourse. In rhetorical terms, I would call this emergence of reality from chaos an act of *Kairos*. A *kairotic* act, as "opportune, spontaneous, or timely….encourages us to be creative in responding to the unforeseen, to the lack of order in human life" (Hess 138).

By recognizing multiple D/discourses and attending to new possibilities for understanding how these D/discourses come into contact, outsider students no longer carry the entire burden of conforming to school. While lower-class students should not be coddled, they should be given the opportunity to start college on an equal playing field with their peers, and imagining a third reality brings students and instructors together. Student storytelling incorporates the outside with the inside, and this fresh view of reality provides a starting place for the university's transformation. When the university stops being a place that accommodates the community and recognizes itself as a place constituted by the community, students will no longer have to compromise their cultures and beliefs to fit in. Rather, their cultures and beliefs will already make up the institution.

A Study in Personal Narrative

In the winter term of 2022, I conducted a study in my Writing 123 class to understand how students' compatibilities and incompatibilities with academic expression and ways of being affect performance and self-perception. In the first week of class, I asked them what the

classroom discourse community should know about them personally to understand them as individuals. I also asked them to reflect on how they think those personal realities affect their ideas about writing. On the last week of class, I had them revisit these questions in the context of the research paper they had just finished and asked them to describe the relationship between their home expression and the formal assignment. By triangulating these reflections with the language in their research papers I hoped to draw some conclusions about how students use difference to succeed, as well as how some differences might hurt chances of success. The study proceeds in three parts. *Part One*: students initially assess their personal relationships to writing. *Part Two*: an argumentative research essay on the topic of their choice. *Part Three*: a final self-assessment of their writing in the context of personal identity. An analysis of students' personal thoughts, along with their formal writing assignment, will illustrate how students both shape the environment and are shaped by the environment. Attention to social class markers will show how socioeconomic status and mindset influence success and belonging in the complicated contexts of students' lives.

Part One

Week One Reflection: I'd like to know how you think your home life and/or habits and attitudes outside school affect your ideas about writing. What are some of the most important things classmates would need to know about you to understand you as a person, friend, or citizen? Outside of school, how would you describe yourself? And what is your relationship to writing?

Although I did not directly ask about race, gender, or class, most students self-reported on these aspects of their identities, and my group of participants proved to be quite diverse. Out of twenty students, nine identify as people of color; four identify as gender nonconforming or

40

queer; two report that English is not their first language; one identifies as working/lower-class; and one identifies as middle-class but with lower-class roots. Some common threads connect students across identity markers. About half explain they are either introverted or extroverted, and that self-description is almost always accompanied by a disclaimer that they are "good," "nice," or "likeable" despite their social tendencies. Nearly half express social justice as a lifelong goal, and several anticipate educating other students about it in class. About a third identify as "perfectionists" and explain their writing suffers because of it. Several report that they will take a stand against ideas that are not "progressive" or "educated." A love for creative writing is also a common theme, and students seem to use it as a contrast to academic writing, possibly because they feel obligated to include the topic of writing as part of the description of their personal lives, since they are in a writing class. Many markers of middle-to-upper class status are present, such as love of travel, expensive sports, such as skiing and boating, and parental guidance through college.

In this chapter, I will highlight three students.[5] These three students each offer candid thoughts on their personal thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. They also each write insightful responses at the end of the term, allowing me to connect their initial thoughts with their final thoughts. Only one student identifies as lower-class, but the different backgrounds these students come from give them different perspectives for comparison. Each of these three students can be imagined as an element in an ecology that simultaneously shapes the environment and is shaped by it. The centering of one student tells a specific story about the university and higher education, and the centering of three students individually shows the ways the university provides different experiences for different students. This ecological thinking tool looks past the

---

[5] In the next chapter, I will include more students from the study, although I will not examine them as closely as I examine these three.

categorical thinking that limits understanding and shows the institution in its multiplicity. The university is not one place that contains many individuals. Rather, each individual makes the university into a place. For one student, a classroom feels like a safe place of inclusion, while for another student, the same class could be a place of insult and injury. The radical perspective-taking required to center an individual student makes a single classification of the university impossible, each version as real as the next. Using pseudonyms, summaries of three students' Week One Reflections follow:

Kai is a well-prepared student of color who took AP classes in high school and scored high enough on the ACT test to skip the first class in the FYC writing sequence. He has positive relationships with his family, and he enjoys skiing, snowboarding, and surfing. He describes writing as "an invaluable skill." He expresses frustration with his high school for being "fairly one track when it came to ideologies," and he hopes that college is "a chance to challenge my own ideas and see new perspectives." He describes himself as middle class but explains that his father grew up poor in Los Angeles. His father joined the military before Kai was born, then became a police officer in Las Vegas. Although Kai reports having a comfortable life, he credits his father's hard work and "boot strap mentality" for making it so. Kai is an easy student to teach: he shows up to every class, turns in high quality work, and participates in conversations. In his first year, he seems to be making the transition to college with ease.

Rory is a queer student who is artistically oriented. Although they do not specify race in the reflection, they present as white. They report being "avoidant" of writing and want to use the class to "get past that self-made imaginary barrier." They write, "I didn't grow up with much culture, religion, or anything that defined me in any way, but I did grow up dancing and surrounded by dancers that…uncover new levels of strength and confidence within themselves

42

and…create a beautiful synergy." Rory writes less "correctly" than the other two highlighted

students, and they also talk less about family. They describe the dancers in their life as people

who "gather," but never as parents or siblings. Rory comments that they "lived simply" growing

up but leaves their socioeconomic status ambiguous. While Kai and Sam (below) comment

explicitly on their social class status, Rory does not. But they are the only other student surveyed

who might have readable markers of lower-class background. They concern themselves, first and

foremost, with expressions of queerness, but in the final response, Rory will explain in-depth the

identity struggles they have experienced in college and the incompatibility they feel with

academia. Their difficulty with self-expression stems from multiple sources, and attention to

social class offers avenues for thinking about the obstacles they face. Although they claim that

nothing has culturally defined them, they seem to be sharply defined by upbringing and lifestyle.

Features of their writing tell a cultural story.

Sam is a low-income, white student who has a difficult home life. He describes himself

as "anxious" and "shy," and as a child and young teen he wrote fiction stories as a form of

escapism. However, when he started working full-time in high school, he stopped writing. Now

in his third year of college, he says, "I'm still in the middle of discovering myself and I'm

constantly changing in subtle ways, but two things that never change about me are my active

mind and caring heart." Sam is a strong writer, and he is part of PathwayOregon, a program that

pays tuition and fees for low-income students, but he has been unable to do well in school due to

personal problems and mental health. His difficult relationship with his mother exacerbates both

his economic struggles and his mental health struggles, and these aspects of his life cannot be

separated. Whenever he describes obstacles to education, he includes socioeconomic status as

either a cause or a complication.

Part Two

After the Week One Reflection, students completed a series of assignments throughout the ten-week term, culminating in a final research paper.[6] In addition to requiring a variety of scholarly sources, correct MLA citations, and effective structure, the final paper required a reasoned thesis in the form of an enthymeme and multiple perspectives that demonstrate arguability among reasonable peers in the discourse community. The first six weeks of the course were largely geared toward preparing students to discuss a contended issue at length while including multiple stakes and reasoning, and the final four weeks were geared toward researching, outlining, and writing the paper itself. As they developed research questions and claims, they were exposed to each other's thoughts every day. As a discourse community, we agreed to measure the strength of a topic not by not how efficiently it could be argued but by how difficult it was to definitively answer. The purpose of the assignments was not to win arguments, but to make worthwhile points in complex situations. Every student in the room found this sort of ethical argument to be new, and it forced them to reassess what they had been taught about writing. Several students felt restricted, as the inclusion of other viewpoints in their own arguments prevented them from "proving" their points. Other students expressed relief that the topics were not prescribed and they could "explore [their] feelings instead of writing to satisfy the teacher."

When students explore their feelings in the context of other viewpoints, the classroom becomes *Transsituational*, or constituted by circulations of affect in a convergence of situations. Individual circumstances do not have to "fit" course objectives to be valid but can shape course

---

[6] See Appendix B for complete assignment

curriculum. This sort of *Transsituational* classroom ecology has allowed me to more clearly see the situatedness of students, each with different strengths and struggles that mark them as insiders or outsiders. Reading with an eye toward the multiplicity of thoughts, beliefs, and expressions (D/discourses) within each student helped me to see them as equal contributors to the classroom and provided clues to their positions in the academy. The ten-week process of writing and reflection invoked different senses of belonging in Kai, Rory, and Sam, as socioeconomic status contributed differently to their positions in the classroom and university. The way each student handles the assignment provides clues about their senses of belonging, and a feeling of natural belonging corresponds with success. Analyses of their papers follow:

The first student, Kai, demonstrates an academic competence that often comes with a middle- or upper-class upbringing. His final essay accomplishes the objectives of the assignment and helps him to form new research and drafting habits. His paper, entitled "The Necessity of Bipartisan Climate Legislation and the Associated Challenges," centers on the enthymeme, "The left and right must be willing to give ground on their stances on climate change, because giving ground on their stances on climate change will allow for the passing of bipartisan legislation that would satisfy both parties' wants with limited controversy." Both his title and enthymeme communicate that he has absorbed the lessons of class, and although the assignment contains obvious signals that he is a student following an assignment, he has clearly used the class to grow as a writer. He cites sources that explain the human tendency to form in-groups that reject outside logic and then uses that concept to explain the logics of the left and right stances on climate change: "The right worries about the possible economic fallout of placing governmental restrictions of the fossil fuel industry while the left believes that without external intervention, the corporations will destroy the climate." He uses multiple examples to demonstrate how these

ideologies are played out in the context of climate change, including the failure of Democrats and Republicans to find a single bipartisan moment when the 2007 cap-and-trade bill was on the floor. He also explains that, although he supports the Green New Deal, it is an "all-or nothing bill that perpetuates the polarization between parties." He comes to a conclusion that "a synthesis of ideas would bring new minds to the table and a combination strategy could be the strongest." He makes this claim as a best possible solution to the incompatibility of the logics on the left and right. The essay could be criticized for having a central argument that is too broad (what does it mean for the left and right to "give ground on their stances"?). It also remains somewhat intangible, arguing for a change in thinking that would fix the climate change impasse but offering no further concrete action. However, he reevaluates his prior assumptions about argumentative writing, thinks critically about multiple stakeholders, and produces a paper with a recognizably scholarly style and structure.

Kai has a complex identity: African American, from a military family, relocated from Las Vegas. But within the complexity of his identity, middle-class status seems to provide him with the means to succeed in college. The criticism I gave his paper has more to do with sharpening his conclusions than developing writing skills, his struggles not all that different from the struggles of more experienced writers, including me. He comprehends the assignment objectives and applies them without further guidance or explanation, and the "correctness" of the final product makes the paper successful, even if he still has improvements to make on specificity and style. Kai's racial identity puts him in a historically marginalized category, and father's status as a military veteran turned police officer complicates the matter. And as with any individual student, he faces obstacles that I will never learn about. But economic status gives him an advantage in college, not just because he can afford to be here, but because he has grown up with

46

a successful mindset. A middle-class mindset that grows from a safe home life, academic support from family, and the time and space to relax and reflect makes getting a college degree feel natural. It eases the transition from home life to college and allows students to enjoy the process of growth. Kai's description of his home life as preparation for college, along with the correctness and effective style of his writing, speaks to his successful transition. His knowledge and values at home grant him immediate insider status in school. Within the social imaginary of education, he belongs in school. His primary D/discourse seems well-tailored to the demands of school, and nothing he writes signals intellectual or emotional conflict with the assignment.

The second student, Rory, writes a paper that lacks the focus and discipline of Kai's, and their difficulty following the assignment seems to indicate less readiness for college-level writing. While Kai's clear writing and ability to satisfy assignment objectives connects directly to his preparation at home, Rory's home life seems to have little relevance to academia. Rory's Week One Reflection does not include forethought about college success, a feature common to more affluent households. And while their final paper explores an intriguing topic, they struggle with core concepts from class. The paper, entitled "Liberation Through Gender Nonconformity," centers on the enthymeme, "Gender nonconforming people embody the liberation of women, because gender nonconforming people disrupt the societal structure of the gender binary which acts as a linchpin in the patriarchal oppression of women." This enthymeme has the potential to produce a riveting paper, and Rory uses some strong reasoning in the beginning, but they are ultimately unable to put the pieces together to demonstrate the kind of ethical inquiry called for in the assignment. Early in the paper, they write, "In a women's movement dominated by straight and cisgendered white women, the voices of marginalized people have been set aside to snowball into invisibility." In consideration of the enthymeme, this statement seems to be setting up a

complex and contended argument about who has a voice in the women's movement, who should have a voice, and what the consequences of each might be. They then advocate for intersectionality in the movement, a relevant concept that could complexify the topic. However, they spend the rest of the paper explaining that the gender binary unfairly favors men, forsaking the original central claim that "gender nonconforming people embody the liberation of women." The abandonment of the enthymeme reduces the potential for making novel and arguable points. The paper turns away from the exploration of gender nonconformity as an asset to feminism and makes the argument that gender inequality is "bad." As a result, no room remains for other reasonable viewpoints, as the only counterarguments available for this binary argument would center on gender inequality being "good."

The flattening of an argument to "good" and "bad" cannot be pinned on social-class-related unpreparedness, but an incompatibility between life in school and life outside school typifies social class conflict with academia. However, queer identity could cause its own kind of incompatibility. In their Week One Reflection, Rory explains their emotional, artistic approach to life, and in Part Three of the study (upcoming) they reflect on the difficulty of making personal arguments about queerness in an academic paper. Although their class status remains ambiguous, Rory seems to have had mixed experiences. Amid rapid developments in identity, they do not mention family support or other resources, and while that does not indicate lower-class status, it does suggest the probability that their reasoning does not align with the upper-class and logic-based values of the university. They do not display the markers of an insider, but while their transition to academia remains incomplete, they also do not seem to be at risk of dropping out.

Conventional thinking within the academic imaginary suggests Rory needs to be socialized into academic culture to become an insider, but ecological thinking expands possibility by examining how a student like Rory already constitutes the academy. Using the concept of diffraction, the "failures" within the assignment become a third reality. With the visual metaphor of colliding waves, I can almost see the contact points between conflicting discourses. The conflict between a logical argument about leadership in the feminist movement and an emotional expression of the unfairness of gender construction shows a third reality. In this third reality, Rory's immediate need to address emotional pain overrides their longer-term task of building a reasonable case for political action. Rory's wave does not follow in the wake of the classroom discourse wave as Kai's does, but crashes into it. Rather than viewing the collision as a disruption or failure, I try to use it as a starting point for a new line of reasoning. In this case, Rory needs to find a way to understand their sense of outrage before moving on to a reasoned argument. This task should become not only Rory's task, but mine as well, as I shape class discussions and objectives toward this *already present* discourse. Academia's middle- to upper-class sense of reason gives way to a more urgent type of reason from the outside, and the combination of the two constitutes the classroom. Although the university assigns more prestige to a logical argument, it is not hierarchically above an emotional argument. The resources of rhetoric incorporate both. Rory does not seem to have the resources and self-assurance typical of higher social classes, but their complex situation would likely be even tougher to navigate if they were from the lower classes. Whether their conflicts with academic expression stems from class status or not, they seem to have a primary D/discourse that conflicts with the academy.

The third student, Sam, is the only student in class who clearly reports lower-class status, but he did not turn in his final research paper. The absence of his paper plays a part in shaping

the rhetorical ecology I am trying to expose with this study. He did complete both the Week One Reflection and the Week Ten Reflection. (The latter he wrote, I think, as a way to speak his piece.) The fact that Sam attended most of the classes, talked with me weekly during office hours, and completed the personal narrative assignments puts his wave of discourse into contact with the other waves of discourse in class, remining part of the *Transsituation*. My concern for Sam changed the way I conducted class as I tried to include his values in discussions and activities. For example, in one of our role-playing activities I asked students to reason from the perspective of a student who earned straight A's in high school but could not afford college. (I also model these characters from other identities as I try to match fictional identities to the identities of students in class.) I also reshaped class by adjusting due dates for everyone as I tried to help a few students (especially Sam) catch up. At the end of the term, multiple students mentioned my flexibility with due dates as an aspect of the class that made them feel valued, even when they did not need the extra time. The improvement to the classroom environment began with the centering of a single student to gain a new perspective on the larger situation. While I always try to incorporate universal design into the classroom, my way into the universally beneficial changes was the consideration of outside situations on the inside to create a third reality. In the next section, Sam's third reality becomes clearer, as does the rhetoricity of his resistance. His dissonant discourse will help me to emphasize student storytelling as a rhetorical form of expression on par with that of academia.

However I choose to interpret processes in the classroom, I still need to evaluate an end product. As I tried to enable each student to produce the best possible product, I gave Rory and Sam a lot of personal attention, while Kai did not want or need attention. The more I get to know students, the more painful I find it to grade papers, especially since the students I spend the most

time with usually receive the lowest grades. But understanding the larger environment through an individual helps me in several ways. I am able to see how they have used lessons in class to transform their thinking and communication, even if they do it in a hybridized form. For example, a student might not meet the assignment requirement of including multiple logics in an argument but succeed in giving multiple reasons for their single logic's value. Often that sort of partial application of a concept relates to their positioning in academia, as seen in Rory's step back from their central point in favor of expressing their feelings about intellectualizing a personal topic. Understanding the environment through an individual also helps me to see the final grade as less final and less definitive of success. Kai's high grade does not represent a higher success than Rory's mediocre grade, as Rory's grade was hard-won. Sam's failing grade will damage him in the short term, but it will also shape his future in ways that cannot be classified as positive or negative. Speaking from experience, I failed out of college in a similar way my first time around, and the rippling changes continue decades later. The experience of an individual student holds as much importance as the collective experience of a classroom, and close consideration of one student's circumstances provides tools for maximizing the success of future students. A student like Sam, who cannot find a niche in the classroom environment, holds the key for transforming education. And since so few lower-class students make it into selective universities, paying attention to his individual experience matters.

Part Three

Week Ten Reflection: Look back on your Initial Reflection assignment from Week One and the Research Assignment you just finished. How do you think your personal ways of thinking and being affected your research writing? What is the relationship between your expression outside

of school and your expression in the formal research assignment? Do you think those different

ways of expressing yourself are compatible? Why or why not?

Kai uses his final reflection to demonstrate a grasp of what he understands as the most important lessons from class. He is a savvy student, but it seems his eagerness to please the "teacher" causes him to miss the point of the assignment. Although he did well on the final paper and performed academically stronger overall than Rory and Sam, he does not express himself in this final reflection as clearly or assertively as Rory and Sam do. He seems unable to remove himself from the role of student, making this personal assignment feel contrived. His eagerness to demonstrate his skill as a student prevents him from writing about himself. He writes:

I've found how much my personal bias can steer the content I include within my papers. The final research project was a great example of this. I found myself having to force myself to include an opposing viewpoint that was painted in a reasonable light. It's easy to search out articles that seem so ridiculous that no common ground could be found. This research project showed me that to find sources that aren't exaggerated and include a viewpoint that conflicts with mine requires me to battle with my own biases. I feel that I did a good job of presenting both sides of the arguments in my research paper in non-biased ways. This helps the reader to form their own opinion as well as realize that I'm able to be trusted as a writer.

Removing your biases in real life is much harder to do. You don't have time to sit down and think about what you're going to say before you say it. This can lead to my biases becoming more obvious in conversation than in writing. It takes much more practice to constantly check yourself than have the ability to go back to your writing and analyze it. By analyzing myself slowly through my writing I can start to speed it up and

check myself while interacting with others. It is possible to check yourself in life as you

do in school, it just takes much more practice.

One thing that makes Kai a good student is his willingness and ability to apply concepts from

class to his writing. During the term, his wave of discourse was never at odds with my own wave

of pedagogical discourse. Nothing he wrote or spoke seemed "disruptive," in a discursive sense.

But when left to his own devices, his interpretation of the writing in class differs from mine. I

never speak in terms of "bias" in class, and I do not believe "removing your biases" is something

than can, or even should, be done. Instead, I ask students to understand the reasons for believing

things and accept that the reasoning of others affects our own opinions. He also feels he needs to

"force" himself to include perspectives other than his own as he sifts through the "ridiculous"

and "exaggerated" perspectives of others. He has gone through all the right motions, but he has

not embraced the idea that multiple perspectives do not hinder issues but comprise issues. Rather

than beginning with ethical inquiry and forming an opinion, he has formed an opinion and then

searched for counterarguments that act as convenient foils to his own argument. Rather than

engage in a genuine research process, he has mimicked the process.

This sort of mimicry is not a negative trait in a student; in fact, it might be a necessary

developmental step. When assignments require students to uphold the fiction that they are

already scholars, "they have to invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language,

finding some compromise between idiosyncrasy, a personal history, and the requirements of

convention, the history of the discipline" (Bartholomae 5). And the stakes are high, since

"students are expected to produce a kind of critical discourse that is withheld from them and they

are graded down when they hand in a poor version of it" (Graff 24). Kai puts such effort into

producing the right kind of discourse that he erases himself from his writing, even when directly

asked to describe his personal relationship to class material. He instead turns the response into a lesson about "removing your biases" in school so you can "check yourself in life." My guess is talking about himself felt too informal, so he decided to teach a "lesson." Pedantic writing feels more formal and important, even if it is not exactly scholarly. Kai has not mastered academic expression, but he demonstrates skills that will get him there. He plays the part of an "expert student."

Kai's middle-class status seems to have made the formal writing assignments feel natural to him, and the "lessons" he both learns and teaches seem close to the types of lessons he prepared for prior to college. In formal writing assignments he makes the kinds of moves that demonstrate learning, but in this more personal assignment he shies away. Many possibilities exist for his reluctance to write informally about himself, including a reluctance to discuss family culture in the semi-public classroom setting. As an African American student, he might be protective of his personal life. Another possibility is that his self-proclaimed "bootstrap mentality" prevents him from bringing up subjective feelings, preferring to make his way through earned merit. And considering this mentality's entanglement with his father's hard work to provide a middle-class life, race could continue to be a factor. However, during class Kai did not shy away from discussions on race, and the self-assured nature of his writing does not give me an impression of self-protection. A possible cause of his impersonal writing could be the socialization that brings him success in more formal writing. Academic discourse might be such a natural style of communication that he cannot pinpoint the relationship between his home discourse and school discourse—they are too close for him to discern. Ironically, being an "expert student" hinders his performance. Since the formal aspects of academic writing come more easily to him, he does not have to marshal his creativity and personal resources to complete

assignments. Might repeated success as a comfortably socialized student lead to a kind of complacency that hurts performance when assignments ask for a more personal expression? I feel that although Kai's middle-class upbringing prepared him for the rigors of college, it did not prepare him to challenge academic thinking, a trait that many in academia find valuable.

Rory addresses the assignment more directly than Kai, writing a heartfelt and metacognitive response. They feel they performed poorly on the final paper, but their self-reflection demonstrates how much they learned from the experience. The personal resources they use to communicate their thoughts on the writing process differ from Kai's. While Kai falls back on a more rehearsed and formal communication, Rory tailors their response to the immediate situation, making it sound less polished and more sincere:

When looking at my work on the research assignment, I think the fact that I am in constant question of my own gender identity strangely hindered me from writing about gender nonconformity in realizing how mentally exhausting it was to dissect such vast elements of life being sex and gender. I thought that I would be more inclined to write about subjects I am so intimately aware of, but in the exploration of sex and gender, I think my own feelings of lostness manifested in my inability to write this paper as I kept on encountering blockages when trying to explain how gender nonconformity can intertwine amongst women. I am pretty disappointed in myself because I feel that I failed to make an authentic argument and failed at writing this paper in general, but I am trying to be easy on myself in a moment in time where I am not very fond of words as means to describe such expansion of identity. I grew more and more anxious as did my feelings of incompetency to write this paper so I frankly sort of gave up out of refusal to let an assignment cause me so much anxiety. My favored modes of expression have always

been dance and art, which although I know have the potential to be compatible with writing, I feel that in academic writing I am deeply struggling to articulate into words what I feel, especially pertaining to gender identity. As I am very much more attentive to expressing myself through artistic movement, but this causes me to stray further and further away from more tangible expressions like writing, and this incompatibility became especially realized in the difficulty I encountered while taking this class. In saying this, I don't want to discount writing at all, as I think it is an extremely viable mode of expression, I have just felt reaffirmed, through this paper especially, that academic writing is something I still feel very foreign to, but perhaps I just need to figure out how to not lose my voice amidst trying to sound like an all knowing god of academia.

When I read this response, Rory's self-awareness and sincerity moved me, and I understood the difficulty they had turning inner thoughts into a written product. During a complicated time of life, they seem to have limited resources, and the vulnerable nature of the response suggests they are working through confusion largely on their own. When they write, "I think my own feelings of lostness manifested in my inability to write this paper," they signal an understanding of the assignment and where their process went wrong. The personal nature of the topic prevented them from entering a process of inquiry to ground claims in research, leaving the argument incomplete. They go on to say, "I feel that I failed to make an authentic argument and failed at writing this paper in general, but I am trying to be easy on myself in a moment in time where I am not very fond of words as means to describe such expansion of identity." This statement indicates an incompatibility between their own expression and academic expression. It also indicates their "expansion of identity" alienates them from university culture. This feeling of disconnection and alienation from university culture and communication appears

overwhelmingly in the lower classes, and regardless of Rory's immediate financial situation, they display these emotional characteristics. However, they also do not seem particularly concerned about money, and their frustrations have more to do with aspects of identity that do not directly correlate to social class. Times of vulnerability and uncertainty have the potential to give anyone feelings of alienation. While Rory does not seem to have the same kinds of preparation and family support Kai has, they also do not seem to be at a total loss for support.

Although Rory has a less polished set of composition skills than Kai, Rory's strengths lie in self-reflection and situational awareness in ways that Kai's do not. Kai's internalized understanding of academic thinking and expression does not require him to consciously identify how they relate to his nonacademic life, but Rory pinpoints the exact places where their discourse collides with academic discourse. In a striking moment of insight, Rory writes, "academic writing is something I still feel very foreign to, but perhaps I just need to figure out how to not lose my voice amidst trying to sound like an all knowing god of academia." Rory's attempt to be an "all-knowing god of academia" suggests they do not consider their own experiences and feelings to be appropriate for academic writing. Their emotional investment in the topic finds itself at odds with the "rational" characteristics of academia. They have not yet comprehended how successful rhetoric incorporates logic and passion to create relatable claims. But they are on their way to putting those pieces together, and I find that kind of growth to be one of the most exciting things about teaching composition. Even though Rory's primary D/discourse seems incompatible with academia, they seem to be developing secondary D/discourses to cope. They display a great deal of dynamism and development in progress.

From a diffractive perspective, the discursive wave in Rory's Week One Reflection depicting a dance community that "uncovered new levels of strength and confidence within

themselves" and "created a beautiful synergy" collides with the academic discursive wave of the assignment that calls for reasoning and inquiry. By pointing out the conflict between emotional, artistic expression and academic writing, they identify points of contact within the diffractive pattern. Although Rory has not yet completed the thought process, they have begun to sort out a new pattern within the chaos. They explain that confusion and conflicted feelings surrounding the project caused "incompetence." I would not use the word incompetence, as this paper has many strong qualities, but Rory is certainly deskilled in this particular circumstance. However, the cause of the deskilling signals their awareness of their next step in development as a writer. They have entered into a threshold concept, unlearning habits that have lost their usefulness and reconstructing a new approach. If Rory has had less preparation than some students, they compensate with a high level of self-examination and independent thinking. The next step will be to use the resources of rhetoric to incorporate emotion and logic into a relatable argument. Rory's social class background does not seem to make them automatically compatible with university culture, but they have found footholds.

Rory's perception that academic writing requires them to translate their feelings into logic throws their reasoning into chaos. Their belief that the final paper cannot include emotion or subjective experience collides with the assignment requirements that would be difficult to meet *without* some inclusion of emotion and subjective experience. Rory operates within *kairotic* space, a space Margaret Price defines as "less formal, often unnoticed, areas of academe where knowledge is produced and power is exchanged" (60). Using Aaron Hess's modern interpretation of *Kairos* as an "opportune, spontaneous, or timely" act that brings order to chaos (138), Price asserts that "in *kairotic* spaces, the 'meaning' of an emotion or reaction is never stable" (81). The chaos of this space, what Barad would call a diffractive pattern, generates new

knowledge and possibility. Although Rory has trouble integrating pathos to create a complete

rhetorical argument in the final paper, they use it powerfully in the reflection. A third reality

shows that Rory unnecessarily limited themselves, and I was slow to realize how intentionally

they held themselves back. While operating in a chaotic space, rich with possibility for making a

well-rounded argument about gender expression in the university, they lacked the confidence to

seize the opportunity to create a new pattern. Without Rory's personal story, I would have never

known that. In the future, I can arrange the timing of personal reflections to give me an idea

about how students are thinking about assignments sooner.

Sam completed the final reflection even though he knew he was going to fail the class,

and his comments tell a story of frustration, anxiety, and hopelessness that springs from lower-

class status. His motivations for writing this reflection were internal, but I believe he saw this

assignment as a way to be heard. He had been overwhelmed by obstacles throughout the term

and felt he had nobody to turn to for help. Although I suggested resources, each one he tried,

from mental health counseling, to academic advising, to student organizations, did not fulfill his

needs. He expresses the complexity of his emotional and material needs with an urgency that

should affect any educator:

There are challenges aplenty I've had to take on this term, mostly in my own

mind. I started this term with a fire in my soul to finally break this wretched cycle of

academic failure I had found myself in during Fall 2020 and Winter 2021 especially.

Back then, I told myself it was because of classes being all online and the terrifying

apartment I had found myself in by an unfortunate roll of the dice. The near constant

chaos in that apartment may have been a contributing factor, but overall I've found over

this term that it's not the external circumstances I may happen to find myself in that have

caused this stop-and-go carousel of my college career; my own uncertainty that this ambition is mine and mine alone consistently has me wondering if I'm making the right decision, if I can actually make it through this without selling my soul to something I don't believe in or losing my mind more than I already have. I'm constantly unsure if getting a degree is going to pay off in the long run, not just financially but also within my soul. The articles and posts and experiences I've seen over the years have shown me that having a college degree doesn't guarantee success, nor does it promise happiness. I've been shown that in this society we work most of the day for an average of 5 days a week with very little gratitude, very little downtime, and a heavy heart. I see this and think "so I worked so hard as a kid so I could gain my freedom to be myself for once in my life and really truly enjoy my life only to find out that I've worked to be free from one prison only to end up in a more complicated prison". I look ahead on this college path and see myself becoming my mother, someone with no higher aspirations in life, no hobbies, no friends. I see someone who completely ignores how alone they feel, someone who can't be bothered to bond with their oldest child whether it's because of the lack of time, the preoccupation with their occupation, or simply never having had that for themselves as a kid. My indecision about continuing college lies in the semantic distinction between surviving and *living*. If things were different, I don't think I'd be so uncertain about taking this road, but after being bullied into getting student loans I didn't need by my mother and the lack of opportunity to get anywhere in life elsewhere and the societal pressure to go to college, I feel like I've been backed into a corner with a gun in my face. What sucks the most about this is there's nothing anyone can do about this, not even me. All that can be done is to push forward along this path and hope someone stronger than

60

me, someone with more influence, makes the change that this world needs so we can all

live for once.

This reflection speaks volumes about the incompatibilities between the university and lower

classes, and Sam explains the material, emotional, and spiritual neglect so often felt by lower-

class students in selective institutions.

From a material aspect, Sam's money problems intersect every other concern. While

beginning college during the COVID-19 pandemic took a toll on everyone, Sam had to work

though it while living in a "terrifying apartment" with "constant chaos," an incomprehensible

circumstance to more affluent and well-supported students. He describes his mother's poverty

and the burden she felt raising him. He also worries about whether "a degree is going to pay off

in the long run," the time and expense of college representing an investment too costly to justify

without the right results. He laments the "lack of opportunity" without a degree but has no faith

his life will change for the better with a degree.

Sam connects financial hardship with a lack of mental and spiritual well-being, an

integral concept if the social imaginary in higher education is to change. My colleagues in this

selective university empathize with the challenges low-income students face with tuition,

housing, and books, but a lifetime of poverty causes more than stress over paying bills.

Connotations of cultural hierarchy force people in the lower classes to battle with feelings of

inferiority (Baxter and Britton 99), believing themselves incapable of forging pathways to

success. Sam writes, "a college degree doesn't guarantee success, nor does it promise

happiness." Middle- and upper-class students generally do not hang as many hopes for a happy

life on a degree. Earning a degree feels like a natural step toward the future. Meanwhile, Sam

feels doomed to work a job "with very little gratitude, very little downtime, and a heavy heart."

Working a job that makes him unhappy seems like almost a foregone conclusion, passed on from generation to generation as he looks to his mother, "someone with no higher aspirations in life, no hobbies, no friends." And the only way to change his life trajectory is to "make it through this without selling my soul to something I don't believe in or losing my mind more than I already have." Sam does not see "making it through" as hard work, inconvenience, or even compromise. He sees it as a sacrifice of self and sanity. He needs to betray his beliefs and values, at the cost of his mental health. He feels both the education system and his home culture have neglected his need for unique self-expression, and an attempt to appease either side will damage his mind and spirit. Sam addresses his mental health with phrases such as "losing my mind," and these references to mental illness entangle with his socioeconomic identity. Whether his pre-existing mental illness suffers because of his long-term economic/cultural situation, or his situation brings about mental illness, compounding circumstances work against his well-being.

As with many lower-class students trying to "make it" while struggling with their fears, values, and emotional needs, Sam has lost his sense of agency. He expresses "uncertainty that this ambition is mine and mine alone" in response to societal pressures to earn a college degree. While people from all social classes feel the same pressures, not everyone lives with as much fear of wasting resources on an education that might not pay off. The description of being "backed into a corner with a gun in [his] face" sounds overly dramatic, but in the emotional context of being forced to make a "distinction between surviving and *living*," the description illustrates his powerlessness. He ends the reflection by writing, "What sucks the most about this is there's nothing anyone can do about this, not even me. All that can be done is to push forward along this path and hope someone stronger than me, someone with more influence, makes the change that this world needs so we can all live for once." He has no control over whether he

"survives" or "lives." Although he deliberately makes his way down a path of his choosing, only someone "stronger" and with more "influence" determines his fate. Sam experiences social reproduction, not social liberation. As a result of a lifetime of experiences, his primary D/discourse prevents him from engaging college on his own terms. He has not internalized a sense of self that feels worthy enough to position himself in the university. He needs a good dose of "fake-it-till-you-make-it" that comes with the development of a secondary D/discourse—one that lets him mimic the sense of entitlement necessary to overcome obstacles. And the fact that he needs an artificial sense of entitlement to survive university life points to a flaw in the system.

The complete breakdown of Sam's education epitomizes diffraction as I have been using it in educational discourse. With this reflection assignment, I had hoped students would be able to find a connection between their home discourses and academic discourse, and that the metaknowledge they gained would help them to position themselves in the university. However, Sam's beliefs and ways of being collide with the assignment. He sees both home life and school life as "imprisonment," and he cannot find a way to productively move ahead. Instead, he loses himself in the chaos of conflict, held at gunpoint by perceived enemies who wish him emotional and spiritual harm.

Although Sam's lashing out seems to accomplish nothing, the situation makes me think of Rory and their inability to construct a logical argument before clearing their mind of the anger and confusion they felt writing about gender. They were unable to rectify the emotional and logical aspects of the subject, but their final reflection showed they were beginning to find new patterns within the chaos. The third reality that emerges from Rory's experience tells a story of an artistic person on a personal journey, resistant to an academic discourse that allows little space for emotional and artistic expression of self. Sam's third reality is one where being a good writer

(which he surely is) does not amount to a passing grade in a composition class, and a teacher like me who tries hard to allow students to succeed is not "strong" enough to make conditions manageable. It is a reality where a student will not find success without socialization into the university, but that very socialization feels like being held at gunpoint. Sam needs a new way to be heard. Although telling his story benefitted him in ways he did not comprehend, he will not move forward until he recognizes his story as part of the university story.

When students reflect on how their personal stories position them in the classroom and university, they gain insight to their roles and discover new avenues for taking control of their educations. They see themselves as constitutive elements of academia. And when they recognize that they are not *in* the university but *part of* the university, the limit-situation of conformity becomes the possibility of creation. As a *kairotic* act, Price welcomes this sort of disruptive or resistant discourse in the classroom as knowledge creation within the chaos of difference. And bell hooks embraces so-called "negative and disruptive" (184) discourse as a positive transgression against an elitist system. Sam needed to tell his story, and although telling it did not make up for his missing assignments, he undoubtedly gained useful perspective by doing so. Even though his story is about feeling powerless, seeing his role (or lack of role) empowers him to change that role. Rory needed to tell their story for different reasons, but they also benefitted from the possibility generated by seeing one's role. By describing the logical barrier preventing them from fully expressing their opinions, they began to understand how to approach argument using rhetorical appeals. And although Kai's story seems less urgent, maybe he needs to tell it just as much as do those who struggle more obviously. While he feels comfortable in academia, he could move past being an "expert student" and toward becoming a professional.

Kai, Rory, and Sam had to find ways to meet their unique challenges, and each brought their own perspective to the classroom. By reading these personal narratives and considering the third reality each illustrates, I learned that along with advantages of middle-class status come possible disadvantages. Kai's writing would have been easy to judge as that of a well-prepared student who needs very little, but his personal writing tells me something more is going on. While he did well in class, I witnessed his self-doubt when the assignments became informal and personal, his preparation centered on school but not creativity or self-expression. I want to know more about his reluctance to include himself in his writing, and in the future I will be able to learn more about students like Kai by timing reflections so I can follow up on them before they finish their final papers.

I learned that when university culture clashes with student identity, multiple aspects of self suffer. Rory exhibits characteristics of both the middle-classes and lower-classes, their socioeconomic status either easing their journey of discovery through sex and gender or making it more difficult. I will never know the complete story, but I can continue to think about the relationship between queerness and social class as I introduce topics for discussion in the classroom. Similarly, Sam's mental health coexists with lower-class status, one feeding the other, impossible to separate when reasoning through solutions to his problems. Kai's multiplicitous identity cannot be disregarded either, considering his complicated mixture of privilege and non-privilege. Considering primary and secondary D/iscourses, every student's struggle affects multiple aspects of his/her/their being. While lower-class students suffer "injuries of class" (Sennet and Cobb 245) that affect multiple aspects of identity, students with other identities suffer complex pain, too. Social class becomes important for finding resources to address the pain, and a focus on social class brings insight to all students, not just those who are poor.

65

This study also gave me a metaphor for thinking about convergences of D/discourse. Like waves in the ocean colliding, the thoughts, beliefs, and language of students and teacher collide in chaos. The patterns that emerge from the chaos *become* the classroom. The resulting *Transsituation* dehierarchizes knowledge and chips away at the illusion that the university has an inside and outside. Students' personal reflections provide the material for understanding all the individual waves, and finding patterns in the chaos becomes one of the goals of class. I have begun to experiment with more personal narrative assignments earlier in my classes to see if an early understanding of students' adaptations and resistances to academic language and assignments can help me improve the experiences of students who have been relegated to the "outside." Putting students' multiple discourses in the center of assignments and discussions is one small but concrete way to allow them to assert the rhetoricity of their own experiences and forge their ways into academia rather than looking to "more powerful" people to define the experience for them.

Showing students the rhetoricity of their personal stories restores the agency that low social status has taken away. Students who have had less access to material and intellectual resources feel less entitled to take control of their educations, instead looking to authority figures to provide rules or instructions (Aries and Seider 429). They do not see their own stories as stories about the university. But when their own words and feelings become assignments, they gain partial ownership of the curriculum. They also feel authorized to use their own types of expression and vocabulary to more fully participate. And even though some students still do not want to expose themselves to their peers, they have told me the personal nature of the class makes them more comfortable approaching me during office hours. When they begin to

understand their own language as rhetorical—not just meaning something but doing

something—possibilities open for taking more action in school.

When students and an instructor from one course witness how outside beliefs, logics, and

values always already constitute the classroom, they have chipped away at a social imaginary

that assumes the university has an inside and outside. Students have less pressure to conform to

university culture. Instead, the classroom becomes a place where students develop scholarly

language and ways of thinking as a secondary D/discourse—more like learning a new language

than transforming the self. Transformation of self still happens, but as growth, not conformity.

Rather than being pushed to the margins for being different, or even underprepared, they

recognize their relationships to the material and learn how others relate to it differently. Each

assignment turns into an expansion of new thinking rather than a departure from old. They have

the opportunity to spend less time in the chaos of incompatibility and more time exploring their

relationship to academic ideas and forms of expression. Students and teachers carry this model of

classroom ecology with them in the future, recognizing possibility where there was once

limitation and subtly changing broader assumptions across academia and society.

My thoughts about the classroom ecology continue to develop, and as I see assumptions

of my students change, I know assumptions in the larger university are changing, too. The

classroom activities I discuss in this study will continue to evolve. For example, I now believe

reflections in the middle of the term would teach students more. Rather than writing reflections

in the beginning and end of the course, they could reflect during key moments when their

abilities are being put to the test. They need insight in the moment, and I need more chances for

intervention, questioning them further or encouraging them to think in terms of possibility rather

than limitation. If I had been privy to Rory's thoughts on expressing queerness within the limits

of academic writing sooner, we could have discussed emotion and personal testimony as cornerstones of rhetoric. They would have been able to show their complete thoughts. If I had known earlier about Kai's reluctance to include himself in his writing, I could have asked why. Whatever his reason, he would have been able to self-reflect on the possibilities of giving ethos more weight. I do not know how earlier reflections from Sam would have changed our conversations, but they certainly would have changed. His emotional outpouring about the missing final assignment might have manifested in earlier missed assignments, and he would have been better able to harness the *kairotic* moment of possibility by making a direct and timely criticism of the situation the university put him in.

Although this dissertation centers on social class, using social class as a starting point leads to ideas for positive change that benefit everyone. Poverty does not confine itself to a particular race, nationality, or gender, but as an intersectional trait it compounds challenges for all disadvantaged groups. The invisible nature of lower-class status makes it a commonality between people that selective universities often do not expect. My study brings out the multiplicity in individuals as they reason through compatibilities and incompatibilities with academia. This deeper look at intersectional identity makes the university's already existing makeup more apparent.

Storytelling and Positionality

When educators tell the stories of lower-class students, they do so with the intention to raise awareness but seldom seem to believe in the possibility of concrete change. Mike Rose, an educator who has done tremendous work toward raising awareness, rails against the current system, proclaiming that "the wealthy have multiple avenues to assure a privileged education,

and the poor are barely in the running" (249). He rightly perceives education as a marker of privilege and believes the root problem is that "our cultural commonplaces are pretty much devoid of…a robust and nuanced model of mind and a foundational commitment to equal educational opportunity" (254). I agree that we need a new model of thinking to make lasting change, but raising awareness is not enough. Rose tells moving stories, but he does not say anything that Sam does not already know. Sam needs Rose's compassion, but he also needs his story to do more than stir up anger at a system of higher education mired in an unfair marketplace. By instilling a sense of helplessness, these ideas of unfairness reproduce an old story that casts administrations and state legislatures as villains and lower-class students as underdogs who succeed only with resilience and grit. When the story works, it feels satisfying, such as when Patrick Finn describes lower-class students who "master school discourse and powerful literacy in order to struggle for justice and equality" (206). But lower-class inclusion should not have to sound heroic or special for people to care. Lower-class inclusion should sound normal.

Lower-class students' stories need to become part of the larger social imaginary in the university, and telling those stories through a research project serves only as a beginning. Tragic stories that call on educators' compassion have motivated change. I have relayed tragic stories to motivate change throughout this chapter. But by doing so, I feel I have been working uncomfortably close to the line between telling students' stories and using students as subjects of study. Sam's willingness to communicate with me while failing my class has been fruitful for my research, and benefitting from his pain leaves me unsettled. I have told all the students' stories as honestly as I can. I have used a reading technique that considers the multiplicity of each student and the different yet equal cultural logics they use. By acknowledging the chaos caused when

different expressions and ways of being collide, I have avoided essentializing students as one-dimensional subjects. But when researchers mediate the lived experiences of those they study using academic language for an academic audience, we reinforce the inside-outside paradigm of the university. We produce scholarship by studying *others*, even if those *others* are people we care about. Although I genuinely care about what happens to Sam, I had a research project at stake while he had his education and well-being at stake.

When lower-class stories do not comprise part of the normative story of education, students who have been excluded suffer more than just academic disadvantage—they experience crises of identity. The exclusion of Sam's story causes him to feel "uncertainty that this ambition is mine and mine alone," eventually leading to the feeling that he is "losing his mind" or "selling his soul." His primary D/discourse does not intersect with academic culture, and surviving academia requires him to change himself more than he is capable. For many students, the impossibility of adopting new ways of thinking, expressing, and being in such a short time forces them to play a role in order to succeed. While playing certain roles in life might be necessary for everyone from time to time, the amount of pretending involved in being the right kind of student to satisfy expectations generated by the inside-outside paradigm can disrupt outsider students' core identities. Alfred Lubrano begins his book, *Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams*, with the line, "I am two people" (1). With only his title and first line, Lubrano captures the essence of a decades-long discourse on social class and higher education: for lower-class students, getting educated requires identity transformation, and a new and improved identity allows outsiders to become insiders to the university, presumably granting a middle-class life thereafter. But in reality, students rarely complete this transformation, and "injuries of class" occur when the virtue of hard work causes a student "to transcend situation after

situation…attached and identified with none" (Sennet and Cobb 245). Playacting the part of a middle-class academic drags lower-class students farther and farther away from their core beliefs and damages relationships. As Wolfgang Lehmann verifies, lower-class students face "a more troubled form of transformation" that will "come at some cost" (9). And the "cost" is often the straining of relationships with family and friends and the identity crisis of leaving behind intellectual and cultural ways of being in order to succeed in college. Sam seems to have fallen into this sort of progressive dissociation from self, at the cost of his mental health. Lubrano describes this as "a form of self-hatred" (193), and I could see this sentiment in Sam's writing and hear it in his voice during office hours.

When academic conformity pushes any student into identity crisis, we need to consider that the university has failed to deliver on its promises. Frantz Fanon explains the requirement for people in the African diaspora to trade one identity for another in higher education, causing a "shift and split" in identity (9). He describes the requirement to change identity as a "neurotic" mindset that accepts social hierarchy and forces people to restructure themselves instead of restructuring the world (62-63). Regina McManigell Grijalva describes exclusion and distortion of her Native American spiritual traditions, explaining she has been forced to "reassemble fragments of [her] identity." And the hierarchization of academic expression has caused others to "check pieces or parts of their ontologies at the door because they do not fit the dominant paradigm of understanding" (34). Remi Yergeau discusses the pathologizing of people with autism as "unempathetic and robotic," the dehumanization of" neurological queerness" ever-present in western medicine (213). With upper-class resources, people on the spectrum more easily find a place to "fit," but intersections with lower-class status leave them disconnected from their own educations. Instead, just as Fanon and Grijalva, they need to pretend to be

someone else. In all these cases, the carefully socialized language and culture of academia treats the stories of outsiders as topics to study rather than ecological elements of its own makeup, and that sense of outsideness tears people's personalities in two. Universities have made progress welcoming diversity, but they have done better with types of diversity easily seen. As Aries and Seider argue, "organizations have been well established on many college campuses, enabling minority students to identify others who share their ethnicity. But lower income students have a more difficult time identifying other lower income students to help find a new base of support for their identities." Lower-class status steals resources from people of all identities. It should be treated as a commonality that connects people from all races, genders, religions, ages, and abilities, but its invisibility and unprotected status under the law does not incentivize the university to do so.

The students from my study experience pressure to "split" themselves in ways that overlap with the stories above, to varying degrees. Rory faces a situation of identity crisis as they attempt to reconcile their genuine self with the discourse of academia. The university also expects Sam to perform a different personality to succeed, but he has not yet been able to. His pressure to become a different person might affect him more immediately than Rory's. bell hooks explains, "[d]emands that individuals from class backgrounds deemed undesirable surrender all vestiges of their past create psychic turmoil" (182), and Sam certainly feels the pressure to leave his social class background behind. These examples of people representing different races, genders, and social classes all face pressures to conform in ways that feel more like self-betrayal than growth. Social class cannot be separated from other aspects of identity. It complicates all identities, not only by limiting resources but by marking expression. As Gloria Anzaldúa asserts, "I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride

in myself" (59). Culturally marked language falls lower on the social hierarchically, connecting personal expression with self-worth. Students need more platforms to tell their own stories, rather than having their stories told for them. If these stories of psychological damage were to come straight from the students, becoming part of the university metanarrative, more students would recognize common goals. When we share stories, we learn to identify with each other's lives. And identifying with others creates a sense of wholeness.

A sense of wholeness—of being able to be oneself in academia—leads to not only more successful and mentally healthy students but also a stronger university, more connected with the community. One way to move the university's beliefs and assumptions closer to the real world is though *counterstory*. When a dominant narrative abounds, alternative narratives provide language for reimagining relationships. Aja Martinez uses counterstory by creating two fictional conversations, demonstrating that "the experiential and embodied knowledge of people of color is legitimate and critical to understanding racism that is often well disguised in the rhetoric of normalized structural values and practices" (37). She writes a hypothetical "stock" story that presents the dialogue of white faculty members as they meet with a Latina graduate student who has failed her qualifying exam. In contrast, a counterstory follows her as she talks with her mother, trying to sort out her feelings after enduring the microaggressions of the white faculty members in the meeting. By juxtaposing the dialogue in the meeting with her dialogue at home with her mother, Martinez shows the reader how the graduate student buries parts of herself to appease faculty who control a large part of her academic destiny. It also reveals her home D/discourse as equal to academic D/discourse. Between home and school, she not only plays two roles, but practices two cultural logics. Through counterstory, Martinez claims, "voices from the margins become the voices of authority" (53). Outsider students who have not found agency in

73

the institution can be encouraged to tell their own stories in ways that challenge the assumptions they face.

When considering the idea of counterstory in class, I prefer to proceed carefully. The rhetorical value of storytelling to directly challenge the status quo appeals to me, but I feel the use of fiction to make a situation "realer than real" unnecessarily complicates the messages I would like students to transmit to each other. I want to give them opportunities to relate actual life experiences. That is not to say students should not be exposed to counterstories as preparation for writing their accounts, since, as Richard Delgado claims, "Stories, parables, chronicles, and narratives are powerful means for destroying mindset" (2413). Since dominant groups also create stories, counterstories provide much-needed subversion. But the lived experiences of students represent an array of beliefs and experiences, all valid in the classroom. I would like them to feel the rhetoricity of their *own* stories in relation to the stories of others.

A useful adaptation, as put forth by Christina Cedillo and Phil Bratta, could be idea of *positionality stories*, which are "implicit enactments of counterstory." Students write about their own lives and consider their position in the university environment. Positionality stories, they claim, "are well suited to make space for identities not readily identifiable, such as disability or class" (219). They focus particularly on social class as "an often neglected cultural marker" (Russo and Linkon, qtd. in Cedillo and Bratta 220). When students write about lived experience in relation to academia, their experiences become part of the narrative. Lower-class status, which so often prevents students from engaging with authority, becomes an intersectional part of identity rather than a hindrance to relationship building. Students see the teacher as "a figure *with*, rather than *of*, authority gained through both personal experience and academic learning" (221). Sam's story shared features with positionality stories as he examined his relationship to

"powerful" people in the university. Unfortunately, he saw his role as one of surrender rather than repositioning himself. The idea of positionality stories fits well with my study, since students themselves have an opportunity to create stories about their lived experiences. They do not have to run *counter* to academic narratives, but they consider the relationship with academic narratives.

The reflections all my students wrote share features with positionality stories. When they wrote personal narratives, they began to think about their relationships to culture and authority in school. By considering their primary (home) D/discourse with their secondary (school) D/discourse, the amount of conflict between the two gave clues to how they saw their positions in academia. By reading students' formal writing alongside their personal writing, I was able to draw out a third reality that gave me a closer idea about how they saw their positions. Putting the stories completely in students' hands would bring them another step closer to getting their stories out to the larger university and public. When they share with each other, the stories will fall into relation with each other, creating an ecology of life experiences, a blending of inside and outside. A classroom with lower-class expression blended into assignments and discussions becomes a place of dehierarchized D/discourse. When students see themselves as belonging, they have no choice but to think about the role they play in academia. They no longer need to split themselves in two and playact a middle-class personality to be heard. And everything that happens in a classroom eventually expands from the classroom as students move ahead with their educations and encounter more courses and people.

The value of spending precious class time on nonacademic storytelling can be reasonably criticized. Just because a composition instructor considers personal testimony an academic resource does not mean instructors in other classes will. One could also argue that in a

competitive market, self-disclosure too often translates to vulnerability when the work force seeks logical thinking and efficiency. If a writing course does not directly serve students' professional futures, why bother? In answer to these criticisms, I attest in the broader picture, communication that begins with the personal does not conflict with communication that begins with the objective or logical. In the long term, the most persuasive claims argue for both the good of individuals and the good of society, a mix of objective and subjective reasoning. Aristotle explains that in addition to logic, persuasive claims include practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and virtue (*aretē*) and good will (*eunoia*)" (*Rhetoric* 1378a). Personal testimony is not subordinate to formal logic, nor has it been throughout most of history, but a traditional humanist education tends to splinter the rhetorical appeals in favor of measurable, scientific outcomes. Candace Spigelman explains that locating oneself in the milieu of ideological, material, and geographical experience gives us the self-awareness to subvert social structures that trap us. Rather than assuming a traditional humanist stance that separates human feelings from logic, we should consider our feelings and logics entangled. This way, a story that reasons through an individual's place in the world becomes a "rhetorically forceful construct" (30), not just a personal indulgence. A full range of rhetorical appeals makes reasoning stronger and more just. With attention to practical wisdom, virtue, and good will, students discover their roles in society and regain the agency to shape their environments. Students with this sort of agency hold the power to influence thinking and the self-assurance to consider the thinking of others.

Another objection to including subjective storytelling as formal assignments could be the need to combat the fractured state of public discourse with more unbiased communication. In what some call a "post-truth era," personal opinion seems to have replaced critical thinking in the news media and other social platforms. Public deliberation and decision-making often go

dangerously wrong when people ignore facts in favor of ideologies based on the authority of others. However, while the trend is alarming, it also presents the opportunity to "ethically engage and understand the rhetorical work of such *ethos*-heavy texts" in order to understand the "consequences of the increasing use of the personal as evidence in public debate" (Mack and Alexander 50). Personal expression has become, perhaps, the most effective tool of public persuasion, and individuals increasingly perceive themselves as public and political actors rather than private beings. Outsiders to higher education are not outsiders to the political drama unfolding in their neighborhoods, and if public trends are to inform the semi-public sphere of the university, the less academic experiences and cultural values of lower-class students should be a subject of academic importance.

Sam's positionality story had the potential to take shape as a real-time counternarrative to hegemonic assumptions engrained in education. The genre of the assignment could have encouraged him to channel his hopelessness and invisibility into a story about his journey. When he begins the reflection with, "There are challenges aplenty I've had to take on this term, mostly in my own mind," he alludes to the obstacles that have been placed in front of him but also signals his willingness to take the blame. He explains his situation, but he does not explain his role in it, instead letting his feeling of powerlessness lead him passively through the narrative. After learning from the study, I wish I could go back and encourage him to consider his agency and how he has used it. He would have to explain not just what has happened to him, but how he got himself there. In the reflection as it exists, he waits for "someone stronger" and "with more influence" to "make the changes," his passivity dooming him to failure. But if he were to actively describe what he does in the university, I do not think he would relegate himself to the role of being weak or waiting to be rescued by some undefined "strong" person. My guess is he

77

would describe his role as an underdog of some kind, smart enough to earn a college degree but too weighed down by finances and burdens of university culture. Nobody who sees their role as one of weakness or passivity would attempt college—that sort of feeling emerges after running into difficulties that make college unbearable. Sam's real story needs a chance to come out. More attention to his positionality story would help him find his ecological niche, and it would also contribute to a more accurate vision of the university.

When I say Sam would benefit from more intentionality with his positionality story, I do not echo Finn's sentiment that lower-class students need to develop extraordinary grit to overcome the system. While students certainly benefit from grit and determination, I believe Sam's positionality story could allow him to be kinder to himself. He would see his *already relevant* function in the university ecology and understand where his agency lies. The fact that he places his challenges "in his own mind" seems like an attempt at congeniality by showcasing his own weakness. But if he were to consider himself an agent in an ecology (rather than a passive outsider), he could shift his thinking and realize his obstacles have been created in the collective minds within the university. His largest obstacle is one of unbelonging, the disregard he feels from the system exacerbating his problems with finances, family, and mental health. His primary D/discourse has been *othered* by a lack of housing, the job market, and university pressures to conform. While every student enters college as a novice developing a secondary D/discourse in academia, Sam's poverty mindset exists too distantly from academic mindset for him to quickly develop the right kind of secondary D/discourse. A carefully administered positionality story assignment would not get Sam through school by giving him the grit to do so, but it would allow him to understand the actions he performed to get here and make his next actions clearer. He could turn away from the lower-class idea that education *happens to him* and toward the middle-

class idea that education is something he *does*. The notion of having a role in a dynamic environment would propel him toward a more action-oriented vision of himself, one that makes adapting to academia more like learning a second language than abandoning his core personality.

The use of positionality stories could change the way lower-class students see their roles in a classroom ecology, and it could also create a stronger, more accurate sense of community among students. Rory and Kai do not share all of Sam's challenges, but all three of the students' challenges overlap. Rory's action-oriented vision of their role in the university position them as a student who must construct a platform to express queerness academically. Rather than feeling stuck between the irreconcilability of emotion and logic, they could see their role as that of an architecton[7] who liberates themselves from the oppression of limited language. The agency of that role would invigorate their creativity as a resource, rather than a detriment, to expressing their feelings. Kai's positionality story could take him to new places where he explains the intentionality behind his education. If his role has been to become a well-adjusted student, he could ask why. He might discover stifled desires or hidden insecurities. He might question whether all his motivations are "his and his alone," as Sam did. His role would almost certainly be something more than being a "good student." He would find avenues toward a self-expression he has been holding back.

Through positionality stories, students find their agency. They see themselves less as students inside a classroom and more as constitutive shapers of the classroom ecology. They "compose" the classroom "though ongoing practice," deemphasizing the idea of inside-outside (Boyle 51). There is no outside, only a multitude of individual roles that harmonize and conflict to construct the classroom body. Tensions between colliding D/discourses either "enliven or

---

[7] See Richard McKeon's "The Uses of Rhetoric in a Technological Age: Architectonic Productive Arts."

79

disrupt the relationships they preconstruct" (Kameen 217), but these tensions are what the classroom is made of. A *kairotic* space reactive to immediate power exchanges rather than conventional academic discourse honors student interpretation of situations, freeing them to use difference as a rhetorical resource. And when freed from the mark of outsideness, lower-class students can take action in the classroom and university rather than acquiescing to the actions of "stronger" people.

The process of recovering agency through narrative has the potential to reterritorialize the classroom and university. Most students never have the chance to showcase the unique parts of themselves that do not fit into tidy categories, but those pieces of their personalities make the university what it is, regardless of whether faculty and administrators take notice. Bringing students' multiform identities to the surface makes their needs more apparent but also highlights the importance of embracing possibility rather than limitation to creatively change belief. With slightly different conditions, Sam could have passed my class with an A+. If it were "normal" to see lower-class students in selective universities, Sam would have had a more accessible network of support. The obstacles that prevent his success might not even exist if he were part of academia's social imaginary.

Although this chapter argues for embracing possibility rather than limitation, my study has a built-in limitation. My argument for including lower-class narratives in curricula applies to students who already walk the halls of this selective university, a fragment of the lower-class population. The lower-class population encompasses an array of underprivileged identities, and selective institutions limit their potential as engines of democracy by keeping those identities out. As Jack explains, universities draw attention to diversity through photographs and statistics, but "this does not mean that these institutions reflect the full variety of American society." Colleges

80

"hedge their admissions bets" by recruiting diverse students from elite high schools and prep schools. For example, low-income students make up a minority of the prep school population, and low-income black students make up a minority of that minority. This "tiny slice of a slice" represents the bulk of low-income enrollment, especially when low income intersects with minority racial status (10). These exclusions damages academia, depriving it of the diversity of thought that comes with truly diverse students. The responsibility to remove social class as an obstacle to education should rest on the institution, since people's class backgrounds cannot be changed (Ostrove and Long 384), but until those structural changes happen, we can keep working in the classroom from the ground up. I cannot begin to make recommendations for how to make college affordable, revise policy, and allocate material resources, but change begins in the mind. What I can do is persist in encouraging an environment where lower-class students define their own roles rather than having their roles defined for them.

CHAPTER III

ARGUMENT AS INQUIRY: SELF-ACTUALIZATION IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

In the last chapter, I discussed the cultural, emotional, and material realities that mark lower-class students as outsiders in selective universities. I argued that storytelling can be a starting point for students to find their roles in academia by challenging the boundaries that relegate them to the outside. By acknowledging the multiplicity within each student, the classroom became a convergence of D/discourses, creating a generative kind of chaos. I documented moments when students understood the relationships between their inner emotional worlds and the outer academic world, giving them access to a fuller range of rhetorical appeals. In this sort of *kairotic* space, students have freedom to impact the thought patterns of everyone in class by introducing something new. This chapter will continue to emphasize possibility over limitation with a method of argumentation I will call *argument as inquiry*. This method makes argumentation cooperative by incorporating competing thoughts more holistically than a typical "point-counterpoint" style of arguing. Acknowledging how the thoughts of others shape our own thoughts dehierarchizes the classroom. It also makes the classroom more public-facing and gives students tools to improve the damaged state of public discourse. This approach to argumentation benefits those who have been pushed to the margins by bringing their voices back into the fold. It also benefits people in the dominant classes by providing avenues toward more ethical reasoning. Lower-class students gain platforms for self-expression, and also a higher likelihood of allyship from people in the higher social classes.

In this chapter, I begin by laying out the method of *argument as inquiry* I use to bring students into a new argumentative mindset. This method provides an alternative to our current

culture's bad habit of polarizing issues and arguing to win by any means necessary. Instead of simplifying issues to win arguments, *argument as inquiry* encourages students to embrace complexity, seeking as many viewpoints as possible. Putting inquiry at the heart of argument means privileging complete understanding of a topic over proving oneself "right." By acknowledging how the logics and emotions of others shape their own, students build arguments that reach diverse audiences and include more voices. Consideration of other voices creates conditions for the development of practical wisdom, or an ethical sense of how to act for oneself and others in uncertain situations. Although many societal problems seem unsolvable in this historical moment, a developed sense of practical wisdom helps us make the best possible decisions and argue in more complex, less polarizing ways. Argument becomes more productive and cooperative by including more diverse voices.

Next, I explain the process students and I go through during an academic term to shift away from arguing to be right and toward arguing cooperatively. I analyze student language from a series of assignments as they go through the process, looking for transformations in their thinking. For the first five weeks, the assignments require them to understand and summarize the arguments of others. They demonstrate the ability to represent others' opinions accurately and fairly and show how different opinions relate to each other. Then they write an exploratory essay that explains why their research question needs to be asked, what the stakes of the question are, and how multiple viewpoints shape the issue. The purpose of the essay is to sharpen the research question, establish the arguments involved, and begin to construct an enthymematic argument for the final research paper. The final research paper incorporates multiple viewpoints and demonstrates how the student's own argument depends on those other viewpoints. The research should demonstrate honest inquiry. The central argument should make an important point within

a complicated situation while acknowledging the contingent nature of the situation. Students meet the challenges of this complex type of argumentation in different ways according to their strengths, experiences, and beliefs.

The end of the chapter considers the larger implications of teaching *argument as inquiry*, as the development of practical wisdom allows students to self-actualize as writers and communicate across difference. Human reasoning is not a product of self-contained minds, but a convergence of logics and emotions from ecological agents. Since reasoning can only take place in cooperation with others, we can only develop our thoughts in relations to others. And we are most lucid when we understand the radical contingency of our own thoughts and actions. In a classroom ecology, underprivileged students have more equal footing when every student understands how D/discourses depend on each other for definition, shaping the environment and being shaped by the environment. Rather than socializing outsiders, such as lower-class students, into the dominant D/discourse, students and teachers strengthen each other through difference. And contacting each other's minds through difference turns situation into *Transsituation*, or a convergence that contains pieces of reality from an array of situations, places, and times. This energy, what Chaput calls *affect*,[8] connects the university to the public, making the university's dependence on the public easier to see.

Lower-class students benefit from *argument as inquiry*, because their lived realities *already* compose the situation. There is a subtle but important difference between learning to "do school" by pretending to be the right type of student and learning to "do school" by being a shaper of classroom activities, discussions, and meaning-making through shared practice. Having an equal voice in a class full of multiplicity opens pathways for less acclimated students to

---

[8] See Introduction for a complete explanation of *affect* as a communicative energy that transcends the reason-emotion divide. It shows how the convergence of situations in a moment "inspire behavior instinctively" (7-8).

succeed, but those students also carry their difference into the center of the academy. *Argument as inquiry* does not privilege lower-class realities; it treats them as equal elements in an ecology. In fact, students who find themselves on the outside of academia for any reason, regardless of social class, benefit from being in situations they *already* compose. The cooperative vision opens our eyes to each other.

Argument as Inquiry

Over the past few years, my teaching has responded to the many confusing and polarizing societal problems that have prevented healthy communication. At the global level, we live in a persistent state of uncertainty, considering the entanglement of science, culture, technology, medicine, climate, and politics. At the national level, the post-Trump era continues to generate unproductive public discourse, political ideologies overshadowing both logic and good will. At the classroom level, I notice the effects of society's communication problems when students call each other "Nazis" or classify differing opinions as "violent." Nola Heidlebaugh highlights the incommensurability of competing societal values with the example of "freedom of expression" on one hand and citizens' right to be "free of harassment" on the other hand. She asks, "What rights are the more fundamental, requiring more protection?" (1-2). Robert Danisch argues the contingencies caused by our late modern risk society call for a reworking of rhetorical theory that can guide deliberation in the public sphere (174). I have been working toward a classroom method that brings order to at least some of the chaos of disagreement, a way to discern a third reality within the diffractive pattern. Values that seem to be at odds, such as freedom of expression versus freedom from harassment, do not have to be at odds if we prioritize the understanding of the logics behind the sentiments. The idea of *argument as inquiry* has given me

a starting point for discussing deep disagreement with students and finding productive ways forward.

Jack Meiland's idea of *argument as inquiry* challenges the cultural tendency to treat argument as persuasion only. With this method, "the function of argument is to put forward possible reasons for belief and then test those reasons" (187). My interpretation of Meiland's theory is influenced by John Gage's *The Shape of Reason: Argumentative Writing in College*, in which he describes an "ethical turn" in argumentation that emphasizes inquiry ahead of persuasion, "communicating effectively the very best reasons" to arrive at an "earned conclusion" (43). The concept of valuing inquiry first and persuasion second has influenced the way I think and teach, and I have attempted to give the term *argument as inquiry* a specific life and usage in my teaching. The idea has much in common with Wayne C. Booth's "philosophy of good reasons," which attempts to connect human motive with the choices we make (*Modern Dogma* 39). We often hold onto beliefs unreflectively, and an exploration of the quality of reasons behind those beliefs can bring people together through difference. The search for reasons and evaluation of their quality slows down the process of argument and provides a common practice.

By thinking through the reasoning behind competing opinions, students begin to develop "practical wisdom," or the ability to make decisions while simultaneously considering their own goods and public goods (Aristotle, *NE* 1140b). In a risk society with rapidly changing technologies and identities, complexity obscures ethical action. When unable to discern the right action, Gage states that "[m]aking such choices on the basis of fairness, equity, and justice is acting ethically, even when we cannot know for sure which action is right in some universal sense" (47). In other words, in uncertain ethical times, the ethical action considers the reasoning

of the *other*. It looks to justice as a governing force, and defining justice requires learning outside

viewpoints. Chela Sandoval argues for "prophetic love" as a way to break racist, sexist, classist

ideologies (Barthes, qtd. in Sandoval 145). Prophetic love begins with "a passage from language

to process," rhetorically engaging power differentials and arriving at a "third meaning," or new

kind of consciousness (Sandoval 146).[9] She stresses that this liberatory change in consciousness

happens deliberately, through rhetorical work. The idea of developing a third meaning parallels

the idea of practical wisdom, which transforms consciousness through practice. Students can

learn concepts in class, but expansions of consciousness happen in cooperative situations.

Students from underprivileged races, genders, and social classes gain a voice in the classroom

and more consideration in academic discourse.

With rapid technological, environmental, and social changes contributing to breakdowns

in communication, practical wisdom becomes particularly important. We need classroom

methods in which differences are not "only theoretical or poetic inscriptions to consider"

(Sandoval 149), but integral to and inseparable from reasoning. When we address human

problems in a writing class, "we are necessarily teaching practices of ethical discourse," but the

challenge becomes the facilitation an ethical space without imposing ethical rules (Duffy 119). In

a classroom composed of people from diverse backgrounds, some of whom have been

historically marginalized or oppressed, instructors need to ask, "who is silenced by my rules?"

and "what kinds of discourse are ruled out by such rules?" (Gage, "In Pursuit" 35). In the last

chapter, Rory believed their queer discourse to be "ruled out" by academia, even though the

academy aims to contribute to students' well-being and growth. Sam felt silenced as he was

---

[9] Sandoval's interpretation of Barthes's "third meaning" shares qualities with Karen Barad's "third reality." Barad troubles the boundaries between epistemology and ontology further than Sandoval, but both break binary thinking and demonstrate a unity of mind and material reality.

ignored by a system that has built-in ethical imperatives meant to help him. Any ethical system will marginalize somebody, but practical wisdom makes us more adaptable and ready to address questions of justice in the moment. It is an ability to make the best possible decisions when no outside guide will do. If the classroom provides enough situations for students to exercise that ability, they develop an intuition for deciding the most ethical actions in dynamic situations. Individuals like Rory and Sam see that positioning themselves in academia strengthens the academic community. But more importantly, the reasoning in the classroom becomes more complex and inclusive, the construction of arguments beginning with consideration of the *other* in *Transsituation.*[10] Practical wisdom does not develop in response to questions about right and wrong (questions that would presuppose a universal human). Rather, it develops with practice in ever-changing situations. Students do not learn what they *should* do; they act in situations to develop a sense of how to move ahead as ethically as possible when faced with problems that transcend a contained place or time.

My interpretation of *argument as inquiry* troubles the means and ends of written argument. Although written argument is often considered, especially by students, as a linear process of picking a stance, reading for evidence, and writing it all down, this sort of process treats inquiry as no more than a mean to the end of proving a point (a point already settled in the writer's mind before research even starts). This one-sided process of *pseudo-inquiry* is usually all students have been taught before arriving at college, and finding ways to encourage them to honor genuine inquiry takes up the majority of class time. I do not blame students for holding onto this habit, since it has given them success in the past. In fact, to test this sort of argument's ubiquity, I searched for "how to write an argumentative essay" on YouTube and watched the first

---

[10] Catherine Chaput defines *Transsituation* as a circulation of *affect* that transcends place and time.

seven videos that popped up. Every one of them advised the writer to pick an argument, find sources to support it, and write a series of paragraphs (usually five) to convince the reader that they are right. The couple that addressed counterarguments did so only to emphasize the need for rebuttal, and even went so far as to express the need to "shut down" and "crush" the opposition. *Argument as inquiry*, on the other hand, privileges the process of learning about all the perspectives surrounding an issue over persuasion. It makes arguable points worth making within a complex situation. Students should not only represent the perspectives of others accurately but also show how the beliefs of others shape their own. A successful argument deals in possibility by bringing an idea forward rather than dealing in limitation by attempting to settle it.

All students (and all people) benefit from going through a process of understanding the reasoning behind as many perspectives as possible before making an argument. But students from the lower classes make specific gains. In the last chapter, I explored personal stories as a way for students to reflect on their relationships to academia. By thinking about their active roles, they have opportunities to assert their own values more deliberately and carve a niche for themselves. And by understanding the roles of others, they more clearly define themselves and their positionalities. In addition, lower-class language, expression, and values become more familiar to other students (and the instructor) as normative elements of arguments, the stakes of lower-class outsiders becoming as important as the more familiar insider stakes. Familiarity begets acceptance and inclusion. And when students have a role to play as well as the inclusion of peers and teachers, they enjoy personal growth rather than having to invent coping mechanisms to "make it through." This kind of personal power as a learner amounts to "self-actualization" rather than "domestication," ideas I will discuss more in the upcoming sections.

Argument as inquiry welcomes lower-class D/discourse, not by explaining the importance of diversity, but by normalizing its presence as an *already* integral aspect of academia. It also fosters practical wisdom by creating "ongoing, serial encounters" (Boyle 34) in which bodies inform each other and lend each other agency. As we move forward together through a series of situations, we see our agencies entangled with others, sharing consequences. When the classroom gives students the right conditions to influence each other, reasoning becomes multiform, and difference changes from limitation to possibility. I find Nola Heidlebaugh's metaphor of weaving to be a particular elegant description of what we need rhetoric to be when moving forward through seemingly irreconcilable difference and institutional barriers to inclusion:

> [T]he artistic weaver locates ways to work new patterns, new elements into fabric. Thus, she moves through the work, responsive to the demands of the moment, with neither the patterns, the elements, nor the openings fully her own. The desire to work the fabric in a certain direction occasions the exercising of judgment. However, a clear mental picture of the completed work does not drive the judgment of the weaver so much as a loosely figured picture does. In other words, the weaver sees only that something, within some loosely describable bounds, must be produced. Consequently, the weaver concentrates on the moment and thus may find the opportunity even in the problems created by dropped stitches or other errors (144).

Difference is creation, and no ideology or set of rules can prescribe ethical actions in the milieu. But if students face situations in college that not only require them to use logic but also give them a chance to exercise their good will, they will experience a growing intuition for navigating uncertain situations that call for the best possible judgment. The judgments they make will not be

limited to personal ideology but in service to the horizonal goal of building a just society. Responsiveness to conflicts caused by difference results in new patterns, or third realities, that our separate powers of cognition would not have conceived. The impossibility of making the world into what we want it to be is not a failure of justice but a way to move forward, cresting a new, shared reality together.

The Process of Argumentation

For almost every student, developing a sense of *argument as inquiry* requires rethinking their writing habits. They often feel reluctant to move on from strategies that have brought them success in the past: being single-minded with a claim, making several discrete points to support the claim, including an easily rebutted counterargument. I do my best to assure them that their skills are legitimate, that high school did not fail them, and that their ability to write a five-paragraph essay will make a great jumping-off point for a more complex form. Still, incorporating multiple perspectives and allowing their own claims to be shaped by those perspectives proves to be the most difficult task they face.

Every student responds to this new kind of argumentation differently, but in general, the students with the most technical skill (clear grammar, sentence structure, etc.) resist the most. Commonly, the most polished writers will plow ahead with research ahead of schedule and write a first draft that thoroughly *explains* their topic of interest. In the past, they have earned high grades by writing "correctly" and demonstrating knowledge of a subject. Although all the assignments leading up to the paper scaffold ideas of complexity and competing logics, they tend to fall back on explaining a single opinion, including the history behind the opinion. For example, one student recently wrote a paper calling for an end to police violence that did nothing

but detail the entire history of violence in the LAPD. Another student wrote a paper in favor of the Black Panthers and spent ten pages on biographical information explaining the Panthers' good deeds. When students write these papers, they feel like they are making arguments, because they passionately support a stance. But without other viewpoints, the papers come across as expository. I sympathize with these students. The instinct to demonstrate understanding on a topic runs through me, too. But a paper that explains a single viewpoint in-depth does not represent the sort of ethical inquiry that will open their minds to humanizing others in the class, much less others out in the world.

A major obstacle to "selling" *argument as inquiry* to students, especially since 2016, has been the idea that words harm vulnerable people. I grapple with this idea right alongside my students, and we discuss it in class often. For example, when the hateful language of white nationalism creeps into the mainstream, the dehumanization of people of color and immigrants becomes public. At what point does engaging with such ideas become counterproductive by lending energy to harmful ideologies? On the other hand, at what point does protecting oneself from the opinions of others limit one's ability to make worthwhile points? In some cases, making an argument that includes multiple perspectives might not be the right approach. One-sided, exclusive arguing has a place in society. As Gage states, "A rhetoric of incivility…may be needed to keep the dominant discourse from being too dominant" ("In Pursuit" 35). I cannot prescribe where to draw the line between the right to expression and the right to feel safe— everyone needs to make that judgment on their own. But amid a breakdown of civil discourse, the writing classroom needs to include "deliberative language that might explore ambiguities, express doubt, admit error, or accommodate ideas that contradict our own" (Duffy 8). Students starting college already know how to make a one-sided argument, so I ask them to pocket that

skill for later use. If they, instead, practice for the multiplicity of public discourse, they will enjoy a sense of self-empowerment as they exercise not only argumentative logic but also good will. Those who develop the ability to make ethical judgments in the moment "find the opportunity even in the problems created by dropped stitches or other errors" (Heidlebaugh 144). By making the best possible decisions amid uncertainty, we can use difference to weave discourse ethically in problematic situations.

Emphasizing inquiry over argument makes room for more voices in academia and in public. When complete arguments depend on thorough knowledge of other perspectives, the inclusion of silenced or dissonant voices becomes a normative expectation. People from the lower classes, who have been particularly silenced in higher education, become insiders. The *insideness* does not prioritize lower-class voices but recognizes lower-class expression and logic as equal. However, equality falls short considering most of the people behind those voices have not made it into the room. When I did my study of lower-class relationships to academia, only one student reported lower-class status—and he did not finish his final paper. Good intentions of inclusion aside, the absence of his voice, and voices like his, limits what academia can accomplish. To mitigate this limitation, the writing class can look to the public facing qualities of *argument as inquiry* to invite those voices back in. When students and instructors develop the habit of considering different D/discourses equally, the gaps reveal themselves. A conspicuously missing voice has rhetorical power in its silence. The silence remains a problem to be addressed.

Given the resistance to incorporating multiplicity into argument, I try to make the topic entertaining. When possible, I connect rhetorical lessons to current events to increase interest and demonstrate the relevance of concepts from class. In the spring of 2022, days after the 94th Academy Awards where Will Smith slapped Chris Rock on live television, my students and I

discussed the event as a rhetorical ecology that lent itself more to inquiry than persuasion. We used the incident heuristically, as a loosely structured model to make sense of a complex situation. After watching a clip of the incident that began with Chris Rock's joke comparing Jada Pinkett-Smith to G.I. Jane and led to Will slapping Chris and yelling profanities at him, we mapped out the ecology to try to understand its *Transsituational* nature. Although I did not frame the idea of *Transsituation* as a circulation of affect through different times and spaces, I did ask what outside situations affected the situation in question. First, we drew a diagram on the chalk board that included as many of the physical elements of the ecology as we could think of, including each individual involved, the physical audience, the academy as an organization, the theater, the stairs to the stage, the cameras, the television audience at home, the internet, and more. We then mapped out the intersections of nonmaterial elements that made the event *Transsituational*. Just a few examples of the connections we made are:

- The possibly ableist nature of the joke

- Uncertainty about Chris's knowledge of Jada's alopecia

- The implications of race and gender when commenting on a black woman's hair

- The academy's approval of the joke before Chris said it

- Jada and Will's public relationship troubles

- Chris's history of being bullied

- Will's recent role in *King Richard* that may have affected his mindset

- Lack of intervention from the audience or security

- The tradition of roasting audience members

- Past relationships between Chris, Will, and Jada

- The intersections of race, gender, and economic privilege

94

- Moments for which there is no camera footage

- The ability of the media to edit the video and show specific parts of it

- The reproduction of the incident across media platforms

- Public perceptions of rich and famous people

The chart went far beyond the examples above, filling the chalk board to overflowing. The copious number of circumstances that ranged across time and space and included humans, social norms, history, technology, and even architecture presented a *Transsituation* in which no single person or thing could be completely blamed or exonerated. The agency of each person involved was not the product of single, cognitive will, but an adaptation to the immediate environment, influenced by secondary environments. By the end of the exercise, student inquiry evolved from questions like, "Was Chris Rock's joke ableist?" and "Was Will Smith wrong to slap Chris Rock?" to questions like, "What role does taboo humor have in the social justice movement?" A study of the situation as an ecology exploded possibility for inquiry, and the more in-depth and worthwhile questions it generated reflect awareness of multiple perspectives.

An exercise involving rich and powerful people at an awards show might seem irrelevant to my concern with the self-actualization of lower-class students, but the ecological view we established became a model for how to think about complex situations throughout the course. Societal assumptions and expectations about people's places in power hierarchies can obfuscate other realities that are just as real but not as prioritized. Just as an ecological mapping of the Academy Awards decenters Will Smith and Chris Rock, revealing instead an entanglement of people and things with interdependent agencies, so will an ecological approach to inquiry encourage students to recognize the importance of their own contributions to class. When we look past hierarchies, we perceive elements and people of a rhetorical ecology as equal

contributors. Rhetoric becomes a way to understand, express, and enact embeddedness rather than a way to imprint the world, erasing the hierarchy between subject and object (Boyle 41). One identity cannot be defined without the contrast of others. Rather than directing efforts toward persuading an audience, an act that relies on dominant discourses and consensus, students begin to see the value in deeply understanding the circumstances and logics of those who are not in the spotlight, in some cases preserving dissensus in the spirit of understanding. Just as framing the Oscars as *Transsituational* decenters the stars and equalizes camera operators, audience, and custodial staff, students in class who might otherwise feel a sense of outsideness recognize their own stories as part of the scene. I cannot help but think of Sam, the lower-class student from my Winter 2022 study, who felt he could only be saved if "powerful" and "influential" people changed the system and made him visible. He felt like an audience member witnessing the spectacle of stars on stage, but he was actually an equal element of the scene. Sam was not part of the class in which we discussed the Smith slap, but I wonder how he might have seen himself differently after such an exercise.

 Argument as inquiry emerges from this sort of decentering exercise quite easily. Students understand and value the perspective-taking necessary to see a larger picture when a familiar event serves as a model. And when situation becomes *Transsituation*, the expanded possibilities for reasoning include more student D/discourses, as they more readily see themselves as constitutive elements. The idea of all agencies, even the agencies of powerful people, being interdependent on others transforms the way reasoning can be used to include less privileged people as equally important elements of society. By prioritizing the importance of entangled elements of societal problems, argumentation becomes *necessarily* ethical. From a posthumanist perspective, all actions, human or nonhuman, cause an "enactment of boundaries…that always

96

entails constitutive exclusions and therefore requisite questions of accountability" (Barad 135).

This expanded definition of ethical consequence, an accountability for affecting the world, dehierarchizes actions further. Personal opinions can be understood as beliefs incorporated by the beliefs of others, every opinion shaped by the thoughts and actions of others. This expanded sense of responsibility to all elements of a situation uncovers the logics of those who have been pushed to the margins, revealing them as actors, not just observers or subjects to be influenced. For example, someone who believes poor neighborhoods bear complete responsibility for lifting themselves up have developed that belief as a reaction to competing beliefs that say otherwise. One belief contains the energy of multiple other beliefs, and we cannot understand our own mindset without understanding the mindsets that have incorporated it.

In the spirit of understanding other mindsets, students engage with the process of *argument as inquiry* through roleplaying. I have found roleplaying scenarios bring a light-heartedness to class that facilitates open-mindedness. First, I put a scenario on the overhead projector that represents a complicated problem in need of deliberation. Last spring, I used a scenario of a new state prison being proposed in the city of Eugene.[11] I listed facts about the situation, including such things as the likelihood of a private prison being built if the state prison were rejected, the living conditions at the current prison, the project's environmental impact, and the impact on taxes. I ask students to consider the complexity of the scenario as well as what the scenario inevitably excludes. When considering the stakeholders, the situation becomes *Transsituation*, as the attitudes, beliefs, and priorities of diverse people from intersecting situations weigh in on the issue. The proposal means something different inside each frame, whether the frame be political, racial, economic, generational, or cultural.

---

[11] For full scenario, see Appendix C

I then split students into small groups and assign each group a different perspective.[12] Each perspective briefly describes the values and life experiences of an individual with a stake in the issue. Here is an example of one of the perspectives I used last spring:

> You are lower-class and conservative. You are against taxes and in favor of privatization of government services, such as the post office, sanitation, and even some emergency services. You do not want to pay for social programs, including those that prevent crime. You have spent some time in a private prison for a non-violent offense, and it was a horrible experience. You have heard that state prisons are better maintained than private prisons and wish you had been able to do your time there instead. Neither the in-town state prison nor the out-of-town private prison would be built near you.

This perspective explains a few of the thoughts and values of a lower-class conservative, but it does not go so far as to stereotype the character. Other groups worked with perspectives representing different demographics. Students do not analyze or assign value to the fictional character's thoughts, but only try to get inside the character's head and figure out what they would do. When the small groups report back to the large group, they are to describe the kinds of challenges they experienced while figuring out what they thought the character would decide. They are also to report the following:

1. What is your character's stance (claim)?
2. List all the reasons you can think of that would support the claim.

This two-part claim and reason contains the material for constructing multiple enthymemes. Even if the character settles on one stance, he/she/they will have numerous explanations for choosing. Concentrating on the complexity of one fictional individual's thoughts makes the

---

[12] For a description of all three perspectives students roleplayed, see Appendix D

multiplicity of processes necessary for decision-making apparent. When each group reports their character's stance and reasoning, they simulate a community, a group of people who need not have anything in common other than the problems and decisions involved in living where they live. Dissensus does not damage the community; dissensus comprises the community. And without understanding the clashing ideas of a community, we cannot understand the issue.

Students demonstrate comprehension of *argument as inquiry* by using terminology from earlier lessons. They usually discuss the ethical importance of considering each character's viewpoint before making value judgments about the right course of action. Often, they comment that their own opinions about the issue have changed after taking a close look at reasons used by people with different priorities. For example, one group last spring described how their small-group work gave them insight into how poorer conservatives thought of taxes. Although higher taxes would likely benefit low-income conservatives by qualifying them for social programs, they would rather struggle independently than receive "handouts," especially if the money came from taxing the rich. According to conservative reasoning, the group posited, liberals scapegoat the rich as an excuse to unfairly take their money. Fair is fair, no matter your income, and taking someone else's money is dishonorable. Of course, this was conjecture, but I believe it was productive conjecture. It served as practice for thinking through the opinions of others to understand an issue more fully. It also lessened the effects of stereotyping on public deliberation. A *serial practice* of this sort of reasoning could be called practical wisdom.

In addition to discussion, every assignment in class gives students practice using *argument as inquiry*. For the first few weeks, students read and discuss while contemplating topics that interest them. The assignments ask them to honestly and communicate the arguments in the readings accurately. They hold off on their own opinions and reflect on relationships

between the readings and the world. Next, they complete an exploratory essay that introduces their topic and the exigency behind their research question. They demonstrate the complexity of the arguments surrounding the issue but do not make their own argument. Finally, they write a research paper, centered on a single argument. However, the paper contains multiple perspectives in relationship to that argument. Students do not need to disprove counterarguments; they need to acknowledge other perspectives and make a point worth making in consideration of the entire situation. Below are brief descriptions of the assignments, followed by student language that that demonstrates comprehension of *argument as inquiry*.

Reading Response One

Reading Response One[13] asks students to write a summary of each reading so far. For the term in question, they read Audre Lorde, Cheryl Clarke, and Angela Davis. After summarizing each reading separately, they write a paragraph that puts the readings in relation with each other. They have leeway for doing this, able to interpret the relationships however they choose, as long as they stick to exploring the readings. The following excerpts demonstrate how students met the challenge of creating a relational understanding of the first three readings.

Most of the students in this class pinpoint the common thread of intersectional feminism the readings explore, and the different ways students interpret the details shows how they grapple with not only the relationships between readings but relationship between the readings and their own perspectives. This student expresses a problem with which all three authors engage and then uses a single author, Davis, as a specific example.

---

[13] For full assignment, see Appendix E

Davis, Clarke, and Lorde all speak about the exclusion of women with intersectional

identities from the Women's Movement being a hindrance to the goals of the movement.

Clarke and Lorde both spoke of this exclusion as being intentional by white men to

prevent the different groups of women from coming together and tackling all of the

problems of sexism with their combined skills and backgrounds and resources. Davis

would agree with the necessity for women of all backgrounds to work together as

evidenced by her section on Sojourner Truth, in which she describes Sojourner Truth as

being able to speak for women in an effective manner due to being a former slave who

actively participated in the campaign against slavery which gave her political experience

that many white women at that time didn't have.

This student finds a way into inquiry by adapting a summary technique from class: she explains

the main idea broadly and then illustrates the idea with an example from one of the texts. With

the clause, "Davis would agree…" she uses a piece of advice I gave the class to imagine what

these authors would say in an actual conversation with each other. The student extrapolates

Davis's inner thoughts to find agreement with the other scholars. She puts the readings in

relation with each other by finding a commonality and locating details that bring that

commonality into being. Seeking agreement establishes a relationship and takes a step toward

inquiry-based reasoning.

Another student takes a similar approach, but the following excerpt complicates the issue

further. Instead of looking for a single point of agreement, the student draws a conclusion that

emerges from disagreement.

The most apparent commonality across all three writings is the focus on intersectionalist

feminist movements, and what their priorities ought to be. Davis and Lorde take the

stance that there are imbalances between the representation of issues regarding white

women and women of color that ought to be brought to the attention of all feminists. On

the contrary, Clarke objects by saying that highlighting these differences between

feminists isn't the main goal of their movement, and putting too much focus on one

another will distract from the ends these feminists all wish to achieve. What this

demonstrates is that, even though there exists a movement whose members typically

identify with each other's woes, there exists several different viewpoints on the topics

that reach different conclusions. Although these people identify under one banner, they

come from a multitude of backgrounds and experiences, leading them to reach various

conclusions.

This response demonstrates principles of *argument as inquiry* well. Rather than trying to "settle"

the disagreement over what the role of difference should be in the women's movement, the

student identifies where the differences collide and allows the diffractive chaos to remain. The

"imbalances between the representation of issues regarding white women and women of color"

do not need to be solved in this single assignment, but these problems do need to be "brought to

the attention of all feminists." The student works to understand different stakeholders before

passing judgment. The idea that these scholars all "identify under one banner" but "come from a

multitude of backgrounds and experiences" suggests the possibility of a cooperative argument.

When operating under "one banner," personal goods and societal goods overlap in recognizable

ways, and rigorous debate serves a unifying purpose. The *Transsituational* "multitude of

backgrounds and experiences" will produce a third reality that uncovers deeper understanding

between people who already understand each other well.

The student from whom I pull this next excerpt wrestles with his own perspective but manages to make a sincere inquiry. He finds himself amid a diffractive pattern when reading about feminism, his belief system clashing with the scholars' belief systems.

> Overall, I feel the Davis and Lorde readings helped me further understand the perspective of where the feminist movement is coming from, and where it ultimately hopes to go. The Clarke reading on the other hand feels fairly alienating and doesn't seem to invite the support of outsiders into the movement. At the end of the day, I believe the approach presented by Lorde was not only the one I found to be the most reasonable, but I also feel it would allow for the feminist movement to grow and thrive. For many years I have thought the feminist movement was a hyper aggressive movement that was represented by the "Kill all men" and "All men are bad" types that are commonly found on social media today. The Davis and Lorde readings were able to help me understand what the movement is about. I really feel like the strength in community message of Lorde has the potential to make the most impact today.

The student describes his own relationship with the three authors, finding more resonance with Davis and Lorde and clashing with Clarke. Although the assignment asks students to interpret the readings rather than argue with or against them, he frames the response as an assessment of each scholar's effectiveness, going so far as to characterize Lorde's argument as the most "reasonable." His perspective, fueled by the belief that feminism is "hyper aggressive," gets in the way of a closer analysis of the relationships between the authors. However, he demonstrates good will by saying the readings helped him to "further understand the perspective of where the feminist movement is coming from." And in the end, he identifies a specific point of agreement concerning Lorde's ideas about community. Through inquiry, he more clearly defines his

relationship with feminism, and by scrutinizing the limits of his thought, he creates room for possibility. The process of inquiry begins to change his mind.

Reading Response Two

Reading Response Two[14] asks students to do a similar task as Response One. They summarize the recent readings, in this case by Malcolm X and Luis Rodriguez. But then they put all the readings in relation with each other, including Lorde, Clarke, and Davis. They also apply their own thoughts an experiences. The building complexity of relationships begins the snowballing of complexity called for in the final paper. They end this assignment by asking a question that emerges from their thoughts on the readings and class discussions. The following excerpts demonstrate how students expressed the relationships of five readings.

The student below offers thoughts on which readings he liked or agreed with the most, adding some of his life experiences to explain why. Although he does not put the five readings in conversation with each other, he does put them in conversation with current events and his own opinions.

Considering all of the readings from this class so far, I think my favorite one was definitely "The Ballot or the Bullet" by Malcolm X. I really liked it because I've never really learned anything besides the most basic facts about Malcolm X and it was really cool to actually learn some of his ideologies and stances. In my educational experience, I only learned about Martin Luther King Jr. mostly, as well as a little bit about Rosa Parks. They probably didn't want to teach us about Malcolm because he was more supportive of violence and way more critical of white people. One of my favorite things that Malcolm

---

[14] For full assignment, see Appendix F

talked about was how white people never needed a piece of paper to tell them that they had rights and freedom, so why should African American? I liked this because when I was younger I remember learning about the Civil Rights Movement and thinking it was super important and a turning point in history, but now I'm not so sure it really changed anything. Like Malcolm said, why should they need a piece of paper to give them something that is already theirs? The more I learn as I get older, the more I realize everything I was taught as a young kid was just a curated white-washed history that is nowhere near real life or the whole truth.

Another reading that I found myself agreeing with a lot was "Women, Race and Class" by Angela Davis. It was cool to see how ahead of her time was in the stuff she talked about because her speech was basically all about intersectionality, even though she never actually said the word. My favorite part of her speech was when she said that sexism can never be seen in isolation, because it has to be put in context with other things like racism and class exploitation. I liked this part because everyone is fighting against the same evil which is the slave owner, capitalism, and colonialism. It's way more effective to talk about all the issues together at once because people are just more than just one identity and they could fall into more than one category. Davis also brings up examples of how much harder it is to get recognized for your work if you're not a cis white male, like Julia Wilder and Maggie Bozeman. This part of the speech reminded me a lot of the movie *Hidden Figures* because those women had to work so much harder and go through so many obstacles just to be in the same position as their colleagues. Even then, they didn't get the recognition they deserved because they were probably the smartest people there.

By highlighting his two favorite readings, this student expresses relationships Malcolm X and Angela Davis have with his own experiences. He begins to develop ideas that could become topics for a final paper, which is one of the objectives of the assignment. He touches on the shortcomings of high school history class, which could produce an intriguing controversy. He makes another observation that could lead to a paper topic, saying we need to address "all the issues together at once because people are just more than just one identity and they could fall into more than one category." Again, this idea of intersectionality and political action could generate a worthwhile paper. Although I enjoyed seeing his thoughts, this response does not quite reach the level of inquiry I hoped for. The assignment encourages an exploration of difference as possibility, not limitation. This student points out problems, but not the complex nature of the situation. Difference should not be something to consider or factor into an argument; difference should be the center of reasoning itself (Sandoval 149). If the two readings were considered together, more opportunities would arise to understand how race, gender, class, violence, education, and other concepts shape each other.

The next student makes a similar move as the last student by discussing the readings separately, not in conversation with each other. Although I like to see more syntheses of readings and ideas, students do well as long as they show they are generating thoughts toward choosing a topic to write about.

> As a Family and Human Services major interested in working specifically with
> underserved and minority communities, I found these readings to be exceedingly
> insightful. All of these readings had one thing in common: they all illustrated the
> frustration of marginalized citizens that have been excluded from the narrative
> surrounding social issues in the United States for much too long. When speaking about

women of color's role in the feminist movement, Angela Davis directly addressed white women who have excluded women of color stating, "Ask yourself, whenever you begin to talk about a women's issue, what is the special perspective of working-class women, of women of color?" (Davis 9). Something that has been a fairly recent topic of conversation regarding inclusivity within the ongoing women's movement is the term "white feminism", which describes a type of feminism that still continues to push the agenda of the white patriarchy. Angela Davis gave her speech (Women, Race, and Class) 40 years ago, and yet the issues that she addressed are still prevalent within the feminist movement today.

The events that occurred during the 2020 Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement drew extremely close parallels to the Civil Rights movement in that two different approaches to implementing change were heavily debated throughout. Malcolm X's "The Ballot or the Bullet " encourages the violent path to change, just as many protestors during the BLM movement did. In fact, just as Malcolm X criticized Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 's "peaceful protest" avenue to change, many people thought of peaceful protest during the BLM movement as a useless method to implement change. Clearly, although nearly 60 years has passed since the height of the Civil Rights movement, the debate of whether or not violence has a place in social movements still remains.

Although this student, like the last one, separates the readings and ideas, she does put them in conversation with the world. I am interested in what Malcolm X can say about Black Lives Matter. A group of people who share similar values concerning racial justice but different values concerning violence would benefit from coming together in a process of inquiry. No clear moral rule seems to exist when it comes to using violence for justice—the situation must be reassessed

moment by moment. Navigating the uncertainty of this sort of public action is an act requiring

practical wisdom.

The next student does not mention the readings at all, but she has much to say about her

life experiences. Many students struggle to balance ethos-based stories with academic

conventions of argument.

> I am a brown woman living in America, and with that it is unfortunate to know that I
>
> have to be a little more careful in the world than my white friends, especially male
>
> friends. As a woman who supports other women, it's very unfortunate to know that we
>
> live in a world where women are objectified and degraded by men, and even by other
>
> women which comes from the influence of men. I truly believe that everyone, regardless
>
> of race, sex, or sexual orientation are all equal. I do think it's a shame that the world has
>
> progressed so far with things like technology, but something as simple as empathy and
>
> kindness continues to be a struggle. It is disappointing to know that even with all these
>
> different movements for equality, America, or even the world, still has a lot of work left,
>
> but I am hopeful that one day everyone will be equal and we all can live in peace.

In this response, I see the potential for a potent topic with relatable arguments—I just do not

know what the arguments would be. This response makes me think of Kai, from the last chapter.

When asked to synthesize personal thoughts with academic writing, he fell back on formal,

logical communication, unable get a handle on a fuller set of rhetorical appeals. This student

does the opposite by relying on personal, emotional appeals at the expense of the assignment

guidelines. Preparation for the final paper presents obstacles for students when they want to write

about things that directly affect them. I encourage them to write passionately about things they

care about while also engaging a process of genuine inquiry. Students commonly want to argue

that the world is full of inequality. But arguing that the world is unjust is not actually arguing; it is expressing an exigency from which an argument can emerge. When students go through a process of *argument as inquiry* by exploring questions they have not already answered in their minds, they find more specific and impactful arguments.

These two reading response assignments ask students to think in ways they usually have not been trained to think. In these early assignments, I emphasize relationships between ideas rather than assertions of some ideas over others. Dwelling in this area of curiosity and nonjudgement for the first five weeks helps students construct stronger, more ethical arguments in the second five weeks. The student in Reading Response One who grappled with feminism was able to "further understand the perspective of where the feminist movement is coming from." The assignment probably did not "fix" his relationship with feminism, but he began to understand it in ways he had not before. Even if he were to make an argument against feminism in a future assignment, he would be more obliged to start from a specific place of disagreement rather than a place of ignorance or disinformation. When different perspectives find more equal footing at the beginning of an argument, constructive conversations begin. Lower-class viewpoints, which are among the most discounted, get the same boost.

Exploratory Essay

Next, students write the Exploratory Essay.[15] This assignment consistently proves to be the most difficult, and I give extra critical comments on the first draft. They introduce the research question they plan to use in the final paper and spend most of the paper showing the conflicting answers to the question, including the reasoning behind those answers. They give

---

[15] For full assignment, see Appendix G

these multiple viewpoints enough time and space to be heard and taken seriously. In the last paragraph, they explain what their own argument will be in the final paper by presenting their enthymeme and a brief explanation of how they will go about asserting it. This assignment is almost like a "reverse" essay: instead of making a claim in the beginning and working though the reasoning, it works through reasoning, in *Transsituation*, and then looks forward to the final paper by making a claim at the end. Students write two drafts of this paper, and I use my comments on the first draft to steer them toward specific and honest inquiry. I will highlight the Exploratory Paper and the Final Research Paper of a single student, whom I will call Amara, to show how she develops her ideas from one to the next. The excerpts from the Exploratory paper below show her thought process as she works through challenges common to many others at this point of the term.

Amara proposes the research question: "How can the government provide more affordable housing for low-income families in the United States?" This topic has plenty of potential, but the wording of the question will likely hold back an inquiry seeking multiple perspectives. If the paper becomes a list of ways for the government to provide low-income housing, little opportunity will exist for discussions of individual and societal good. The conversation will center on logistics. Throughout the paper, she proposes several ways to raise money for affordable housing, a slightly different topic than the research question promises. The ways she proposes are:

- Tax longtime homeowners
- Tax the rich
- Tax building developments in targeted areas
- Reduce the military budget

110

- Create job programs to reduce poverty and let the economy run its course

Amara does a good job of explaining why each solution might work and also what kinds of opposition each might have. For example, she explains why taxing the rich makes sense, writing,

> We know that income inequality in our country is a real issue, and that the top tenth percentile of the population owns a very large portion of the wealth. Due to this, it makes sense to set higher income taxes on the wealthy citizens of the country. They would likely not see too large a decrease in their wealth, and the tax money could go to building affordable housing in communities where it is most needed.

The idea of taxing the rich and using the money to build affordable housing needs more detail to be believable, but this assignment permits rudimentary arguments, since students have just begun researching their topics. She counters this argument with,

> The wealthy people like their wealth, and aren't likely to willingly part with a part of their income in order to provide affordable housing for communities that need it. To enact a policy that reflected these proposed taxes would be nearly impossible. Although politicians' purpose is to represent people, they are also trying to get reelected. This creates a huge conflict of interest because the majority of the people that they represent will not donate to their campaigns but the ones that do will probably have their issues tended to first.

She displays a spirit of inquiry, allowing the problem to go unsolved, setting herself up with a problem that will force her to "earn" a conclusion. However, the topic does not hold together. The refusal of the rich to pay more taxes does not counter the claim that rich people *should* be taxed to pay for affordable housing. It is certainly an idea that should appear in the paper, but it is not part of the central argument. Even though she does not have the argument put together in a

way that will work yet, this idea would work in an argumentative research paper with some refining.

One important goal of this assignment is to help students clarify a central argument with a clear, specific enthymeme. The enthymeme in this paper needs revision:

Claim: The United States government should impose higher income taxes on wealthier

individuals to fund affordable housing.

Reason: The country is in need of more affordable housing for lower-income families.

Aside from the fact that there is no clear shared term, the content limits the argument. The reasoning does nothing but state a need, which is unnecessary since a need is implied. Considering the lack of cohesion between the claim and the rest of the paper, I suggested bringing a new element into the reason. During office hours, we discussed who had stakes in the housing problem and why. We thought back to the perspectives exercise from class and looked more closely at the rhetorical ecology comprising the convergences of material, cultural, spiritual, linguistic forces that gathered around low-income housing. And after we talked, Amara began work on her final paper.

Final Research Paper

The Final Research Paper[16] brings together the elements of inquiry we discuss throughout the term. The paper asks for a specific and arguable enthymeme that can withstand the scrutiny of opposing viewpoints. It challenges students to also include multiple perspectives, cited evidence, clear organization, and all the elements of correct MLA formatting. The assignments leading up to the final paper prepare them for this challenge, relieving some of the pressure from

---

[16] For full assignment, see Appendix B

this large final project. Amara's paper demonstrates attention to genuine inquiry in argumentation.

In the final paper, Amara presents a revised enthymeme: "The United States government should provide more affordable housing, because more affordable housing would help to negate racial disparities and income inequality in America." With this enthymeme, the implicit research question changes from the original ""How can the government provide more affordable housing for low-income families in the United States?" to "should the United States Government provide more affordable housing?" The refined question invites more genuine disagreement. The new enthymeme includes the element of race, proposing an arguable reason rather than the original that echoes the claim.

The paper begins with an acknowledgment that housing affects many groups of people and then explains that "The people most greatly affected by housing inequality have been people of color, leading to a wealth gap that largely sees minority communities at the bottom." The specificity of the problem announces an exigency, and importantly, it signals that she will make a point worth making within a milieu of circumstances. She supports the idea that housing presents a specific injustice for people of color, writing,

> There are many different reasons throughout history that are to blame for people of color in the United States being impoverished more than white people. It is easy to point to the racist early history of the country and deem that the cause of inequalities that we see today, but there have since been multiple subtle policies and attitudes that contribute to the current state of the country. The largest and most blatant historical example of discrimination in the housing market was the G.I. Bill of Rights, followed by government

113

redlining of neighborhoods that effectively created lasting effects of segregation in the

United States.

By connecting housing policies to racial inequality, she creates the context for specific inquiry.

The original reason, that the U.S. needs more affordable housing, would have led to general

arguments about unfairness. Those kinds of arguments, common in the composition classes I

have taught, get mired down in ideas of morality too broad for nuanced discussion. The post-war

boom in housing and subsequent redlining gives the argument a tangible focus, the idea that

"homeownership is a vehicle for wealth accumulation over different generations."

Having established her own argument and reasoning, she turns to converging situations

that have shaped the issue. She explains the problems with Department of Housing and Urban

Development, such as the disrespectful treatment of residents by Public Housing Authority

representatives. The bureaucracy involved in receiving Section 8 housing has become difficult to

manage. And the condition of the housing has gone downhill from lack of funding. The

government provides housing, but no the social support and property maintenance necessary to

sustain it. The idea that the government should provide low-income housing comes under fire

from the very people who receive it. These differing perspectives paint a fuller and more honest

picture of the situation than a point-counterpoint argument would. Amara argues for an

expansion of affordable housing but does not claim her argument will "fix" any problems. She

leaves space for disagreement and continues to work through the possibilities.

She includes a counterargument in favor of job programs instead of housing programs.

She also includes the logic behind the counterargument:

The government could assist individuals in need with finding, applying for, and keeping

jobs that would help lift them out of poverty. The ideology behind this solution is that

nobody wants to live off of handouts. If people have a choice to work for their livelihood

versus continuing to receive government benefits and not working, they will hopefully

choose to work.

She includes more of the reasoning behind this viewpoint as well, exercising good will and

giving the idea space in the paper. The private sector might be more equipped to handle the

issue:

Because government agencies that are meant to administer affordable housing are often

put in a position where they are required to develop and fix up public housing properties,

the process can often be slow and inefficient. They are not built to work on this aspect of

affordable housing, as larger firms and organizations such as the government or HUD can

not react as quickly to many issues, and will also typically spend more money fixing

issues than would be spent by smaller private firms.

The thorough treatment of other perspectives makes this paper worth reading, not only a

classroom exercise in winning an argument but an honest inquiry into a topic.

When she returns to her own opinion, she does so with a spirit of cooperation rather than

competition, writing that she has decided what "the best rebuttal" would be. She does not dismiss

the logic of other viewpoints but offers thoughts on why her argument has value despite the

counterarguments. She even goes as far as to say that "a program to push people to get jobs is not

a bad idea," building further good will with the audience. She states that "affordable housing can

be seen as a convergence point for the issues of racial inequality and wealth inequality in

America." Homeownership has largely determined generational wealth, and although

government housing does not equal homeownership, "federal subsidization of Section 8 housing

will allow families to concentrate a smaller amount of their income on rent, and a larger portion

of their rent on important things such as health care and nutrition." Increasing low-income housing does not solve the income problem for people of color, but it is still a good idea. Amara practices practical wisdom by considering possible courses of action in terms of social goods and following the path that seems most likely to do more good than harm. The flaws stand as shapers of the situation, but she moves forward through uncertainly to make a point worth making in an imperfect situation. She embodies Heidlebaugh's weaving metaphor.

Composition and Self-Actualization

A liberating education does not depend on a teacher transmitting knowledge to a student. Freire calls this sort of "banking method" of education "propaganda," arguing instead the goal of education should be to uncover the fact that the world is "the right of everyone." Dialogue is a shared investigation "mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (69). This naming of the world, or positioning oneself in the world, broadens possibility for outsiders. Without this kind of honest and shared investigation, students leave college with different senses of literacy, each prepared for different societal positions. Patrick Finn claims students from higher social classes learn "powerful literacy" that enables them to create knowledge and control their own lives, but students from the lower classes learn a "domesticating literacy" that teaches them to follow rules and do things correctly. In this way, "we replicate the attitudes and behaviors of powerless people…in our classroom (126-27). By teaching competence and rule-following (domesticating literacy) in lower-class schools and knowledge creation and self-advocacy (powerful or liberatory literacy) in upper-class schools, institutions reproduce social strata. This reproduction carries over, at least to a degree, in higher education.

116

Institutional goals in universities set up expectations that prepare students for different

positions in society, sometimes steering lower-class students toward more utilitarian livelihoods.

To illustrate the different treatments of different groups of people, I looked up writing program

descriptions from as many universities as I could find in the city of Chicago. The contrast

between the University of Chicago and Chicago State University shows how students with

different levels of privilege receive different training. First, the University of Chicago:

> In Humanities Writing Seminars, first-year students study various methods for the
>
> construction of sophisticated and well-structured arguments as well as the complications
>
> and limits of those arguments. We also address issues of readership and communication
>
> within expert communities. As students present papers in the seminars, we use the
>
> reactions of the audience to introduce techniques that expert writers can use to transform
>
> a text from one that serves the *writer* to one that serves the *readers* (U of Chicago).

The University of Chicago has high admission standards and high tuition. It has a moderate

amount of demographic diversity, but little economic diversity. First-year writing consists of

Humanities Writing Seminars that correspond with a first-year sequence of classes. The

assumption that students arrive well-prepared makes first-year writing less a place to become

proficient and more a place to develop into a professional. With emphasis on "sophisticated"

argumentation, including their complexities and usages, an underprepared student would

struggle. The rhetorical canon of delivery, in the form of paper presentations, promises training

in communication with particular audiences. This program trains students into "expert

communities."

A nearby neighbor, Chicago State University, has lower admission standards and tuition.

It is also classified as a Predominantly Black Institution:

The abilities to think critically and to communicate clearly and logically in writing are

crucial to success in college and the professional world. Therefore, all students who wish

to earn a degree from Chicago State University must demonstrate competence in writing.

Competent writing is defined as writing that is clear, logical, and thoughtful. In addition

to being clear, logical, and thoughtful, competent writing demands the correct use of

American academic English (CSU).

The language for the CSU program anticipates less-prepared students, using a form of the word

"competent" three times in four sentences. It also stresses "correct" use of English that contrasts

with University of Chicago's promise of elegant communication. The first example expresses a

more explicitly rhetorical program geared toward expert communication while the second

example expresses clarity and correctness for a more tangible (and less lofty) "success."

The different sets of expectations put students from these programs in different situations,

and the educations they receive will serve to liberate or domesticate them to different degrees. If,

as Freire argues, humanizing each other through liberation is the main human vocation, then a

writing program should aim to see students become self-actualized writers, not only proficient

students and workers. The University of Chicago seems to come closer to that goal, and it is not

coincidental that the school has a wealthier (and consequently whiter) student body. Chicago

State seems to offer a more domesticating program, and it is also not coincidental that the student

body has less wealth (and the lack of wealth correlates with its status as a PBI). The expectations

laid out by the schools mirror class-based assumptions of success, replicating social class

structures, and racial disparity inevitably follows.

We do not need to look from school to school to see this social class replication, because

these two different kinds of education can be experienced in the very same classroom. While

grading papers, I have had difficulty deciding how to give less prepared students feedback that guides them toward clarity and an understanding of convention without taking them "back to basics" and prescribing a domesticated version of communication. But *Argument as inquiry* has given me a method for giving consistent criticism for students at different levels of preparedness. A process of *argument as inquiry* brings attention to the privileging of higher-class D/discourses and allows students to interact equally in shared *practice*. Boyle's definition of rhetoric as a *practice* posits bodies in contact with each other, simultaneously making and being made in an environment. In this way, "practice is the site for continual rewriting, ongoing invention" (48). The shared practice of inquiry brings students together as equal knowledge creators. And when inquiry becomes a *serial practice*, students (and all people) develop an intuition for how to incorporate thoughts from the *other*. The focus on honest investigation and consideration of others acts as a shared *serial practice* that levels the field. In fact, less prepared students often embrace a fair and honest process of inquiry more completely than their more prepared counterparts, allowing me to give them extra grammatical and structural advice while keeping them in the center of the intellectual discussion. More proficient students deserve the freedom to hone their writing craft, but if less proficient students have that freedom taken away until they learn the "basics," some students self-actualize while others are socialized.

The writing classroom needs to be a place for students to self-actualize as writers, not be socialized as a manageable students or efficient employees. The development of practical wisdom, or a social sense for how to move forward with others, positions students in society and gives personal choices institutional and societal meaning. When lower-class students and upper-class students share the practice of inquiry, they interrupt the university apparatus. They undo social class reproduction by constructing arguments that *already* include lower-class discourse

rather than using a language of victimization or charity to "deal with it." For example, Amara, whose paper I analyzed above, does not frame the issue of affordable housing as a problem for the *other*. She frames it by writing, "affordable housing can be seen as a convergence point for the issues of racial inequality and wealth inequality in America." A consideration of the multiple D/discourses involved allows her to engage in a practice of inquiry that includes every perspective and every cultural style of expression. Notably, Amara does not identify as lower-class, but she dehierarchizes her own D/discourse through *argument as inquiry*. A self-actualized student has the power to act *in situ* and make decisions with no discernable patterns available. They find themselves comfortable in diffractive patterns, able to discern third realities within the chaos.

I would like to illustrate two common approaches to teaching composition that use different strategies to empower students but do not lead to the practical wisdom that self-actualized students need. One school of thought, as laid out in David Bartholomae's seminal essay, "Inventing the University," argues that all students, upon entry to college, are thrown in at the deep end, and writing instructors have a responsibility to directly teach the insider discourses that will enable them to succeed. He claims that "students have to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse, and they have to do this as though they were…members of the academy" (4-5). Doing so requires students to uphold a fictional sense of authority until they find more commonplaces with real experts. They "must imagine for themselves the privilege of being 'insiders'—that is, of being both inside an established and powerful discourse, and of being granted a special right to speak" (10). The problem with this kind of socialization as an "insider" is that the more different a student's home environment is from the university environment, the more harrowing the transformation will be—or in Wolfgang Lehmann's terms, the higher will be

the cost (Lehmann 9). But it is also true that, as argued by Bartholomae and other scholars such as Gerald Graff, Patricia Bizzell, and James Vopat, teaching academic discourses allows students to express ideas in a way that they otherwise would not, and keeping this sort of knowledge away from them would be unethical. I agree that student deserve to be taught the rhetorical conventions and academic discourse necessary for success, but why should that require "privilege" and "a special right to speak"? The assumption that academic D/discourse is intellectually and morally higher than every other D/discourse incorporating the university has remained unquestioned for so long it seems like the natural order.

A school of thought that contradicts the call for such strict socialization is laid out in Peter Elbow's (also seminal) book, *Writing Without Teachers*. He argues that writing improves with practice, and a more egalitarian classroom encourages students to develop their voices and support each other as they attempt to "transmit" ideas from one mind to another. Elbow explains, "The main idea behind the teacherless writing class is that you can't trust theory, you can only trust facts" (117). Writing is amorphous and difficult to explain or assess with theoretical models. Elbow describes his reaction to student work as he realizes the difficulties in using convention to grade, saying, "if I tried to say *how* and *why* I actually did respond, I was immediately out of bounds: it was all mixed up with my mood and my personal quirks or taste and my temperament" (119). He perceives writing as a milieu that cannot be explained or taught with the assumption that the writer merely learns conventions and applies them to produce good writing. For Elbow, and others such as Janet Emig and Donald Murray, the emphasis of process over product, encouraging students to take control of their own growth, helps students find the strength and interest inside themselves to generate their own goals toward improving their writing. This approach preserves student agency in a way an approach like Bartholomae's does

121

not, but it offers little guidance or preparation for measurable milestones. Overemphasis on socialization harms lower-class students, but those same students suffer without teacher interventions to level the playing field. Practical wisdom cannot be prescribed, but it does depend on structured situations.

In practice, most teachers do not fail students by using an extreme method of teaching, opting instead for a hybridized version, deciding when to directly teach convention and when to relinquish control to students. In fact, Fulkerson criticizes the conflation of process theory and expressivism, noting that attention to cognitive steps taken during writing is not the same thing as forsaking rhetorical convention (123). And Elbow's later work offers more connections between freewriting and convention, laying out a process of "careless" writing followed by the "care" of revision (*Vernacular Eloquence* 208). But deciding how to teach students to write conventionally while preserving their agency remains tricky. If overemphasis on convention pushes lower-class students toward obedience and free rein of creative expression leaves them behind, a liberating practice must exist in a third reality emerging from the chaos at the convergence. At the very least, students need to be put into situations that require decision-making in consideration of other stakeholders. *Argument as inquiry* provides structure while preserving student agency.

Students develop their skill, knowledge, and judgment in diverse situations, and self-actualized writers begin the reasoning process by ethically engaging the circumstances at hand. After Amara acknowledges the variety of viewpoints constituting the topic of affordable housing, she figures out how those viewpoints affect her own by characterizing alternatives as "not a bad idea." She comes up with "the best rebuttal," honoring the validity of other opinions. However, she does not acquiesce to the judgment of others. She uses her own ethical judgment, a

virtue she possessed before attending college, in the context of the problem. The assignment does not teach her how to use her ethical senses—it just nudges her to continue to develop them. Duffy discusses Gage's pedagogy for developing *phronesis*, explaining, "The role of the teacher, in this conception, shifts from the promoter of rules to *creator of situations*" (123). Rather than socializing students into the right kind of expression, we can ask them to seek out circumstances that require them to practice ethical inquiry and good will. A process of ethical inquiry that includes multiple voices, logics, and emotions welcomes student expression. And the navigation of difference provides structure. After all, convention is only the product of generations of writers engaged in the serial practice of repeatedly addressing problems. The awareness of both self and others in mutual situations dehierarchizes lower-class reasoning and strengthens academia.

Going through a writing process that stresses inquiry over argument restores lower-class student agency by decentering agency as a humanistic concept. Restoring agency by decentering agency might at first sound paradoxical, but a more-than humanist reconsideration of writing and individual cognition brings each writer to the same level. Richard Coe argues writing tends to be taught according to a "traditional rhetoric [that] reflects the logic which dominated Western science and culture from the early-seventeenth through the mid-twentieth centuries… reducing wholes into component parts, which could then be arranged in order and analyzed individually" (232). And this hierarchical categorization perpetuates harmful hegemonies, in education and beyond. Sharon Crowley claims humanism privileges reading canonical works over writing about real human events and interprets texts in ways dictated by "universal" (but actually western) ethical values (14). Letting go of the universalism inherent in humanism humanizes people *more*. Marilyn Cooper claims a writer's thoughts are not forged "within the privacy of his

[or her or their] own mind" (365), but rather in "a variety of socially constituted systems" (367) that clash, hybridize, and meet ever-changing circumstances. Cognition resides in a convergence of phenomena, not exclusively in an individual mind. Dobrin and Weisser claim an approach that includes "relationships between individual writers and their surrounding environments, writers and texts, texts and culture, ideology and discourse, and language and the world" (572) is "crucial to survival," since "oppressive hegemonies manifest themselves in discourse" (573). With this growing call for posthumanist forms of rhetoric to replace traditional, western writing instruction, Raul Sanchez asks, what is to gain if the writing subject is no longer assumed "an unproblematic point of departure," and instead individual agency is seen as "one of many functions of writing"? (99).

In answer to this question, I have worked to teach writing as a process of cooperative inquiry rather than individual argument. It is a modest answer, but it is something my students and I can accomplish in a ten-week term. We explore agency as a "function" of writing by noting how outside agencies shape our own during the process of inquiry. The students and I experience self-actualization not as a humanistic expression of an independent cognition or will, but as a development of ethical senses toward each other. Rather than ethics based on a universal humanness inside us, we employ what Carol Ann Taylor calls an "ethics of care," an understanding of the human as "always and only in-relation-to-non-humans who are no longer 'others' but are, intimately and always, ourselves as the body multiple" (15). We cannot "be" ourselves separately from others, relationships continually giving us the boundaries to define who we are. And our boundaries affect others just as theirs affect us. The automatic accountability involved with enacting these boundaries gives us an "exteriority within" (Barad 135), a sense that we are simultaneously ourselves and a product of other agents. *Argument as*

124

Inquiry normalizes the voice of the *other* in the classroom, ethical inquiry leading to arguments such as Amara's that put lower-class voices at the center of reasoning, not as an act of sympathy or charity but in response to the shared problem of housing. A more-than-humanist pedagogy that decenters individual agency increases possibility for people in the lower classes inside and outside the institution.

By teaching *argument as inquiry* and observing the results, I have witnessed students grappling with the difficulties that come with using a personal sense of ethics to navigate complex situations. I believe the new self-awareness will help them take control of their learning in the future, as comments from the Final Reflection in my Winter 2022 study illustrate. Following are examples of students' thoughts on their personal relationships with writing that demonstrate varying degrees of growth after writing a research paper with a focus on *argument as inquiry*:

> Since there are so many ways I can misjudge or misinterpret a view of something, I find it hard to fully express what I want to say. I don't find [expression inside versus outside school] compatible at all and I think that's what makes the human mind special. Being able to look at things from different viewpoints and having that argument in your head proves how much you can expand and express. I could be completely on board with an argument I wrote about in school but something might alter my view towards it outside of school which can change my opinion entirely. I think it's a good thing that the ways I express myself aren't compatible. I am able to express myself in much more different ways.

This student shows a great deal of metacognition about the tensions between the multiple D/discourses he navigates in different situations, all dependent on and being shaped by the

D/discourses of others. He feels the difference between his expression at home and that required at school, but the experience of incorporating multiple viewpoints in the composition class normalizes the idea of the multiple self. While a student with a home life significantly different from school life could experience academic work as self-betrayal, this student thinks of it as something like a second language—a tool at his disposal that does not require a relinquishment of self to be used. He also considers his opinions to be fluid as circumstances change. Rather than considering a fluidity of opinions to be a weakness of character, he feels "that's what makes the human mind special." The use of judgment in a constantly changing environment is an application of practical wisdom. This student's willingness to be immersed in multiple viewpoints and shape his opinions in relationship to them is exactly what I had hoped would come out of the *argument as inquiry* approach to teaching class. If a student enters the class feeling like an outsider, this kind of realization about the multiplicity of agencies and ideas could make a difference in how he/she/they position themselves in the institution.

Another student expresses the idea of multiple self but does so more privately, going through inner conversations to find the arguable aspects of her opinion:

It was difficult for me, initially, to think of any other perspectives on this topic. It required a combination of diving deeper into the complexities of the issue, as well as adopting a contrasting opinion in order to develop a debatable stance on the issue. I think this has taught me, in my writing career and in how I go through my life, to adopt multiplicity in my understandings of complex issues. Partly due to identity politics being a queer woman, it makes up an immense deal of how I walk through the world and self-identify….It's helped me learn to hold more space towards separation and radical understandings of difference.

126

This student uses the idea of difference and multiplicity to deepen her self-identity and position herself in the world. She has a realization about the importance of embracing complexity, and although I am not sure about whether she is referring to her own complexity or the complex relationships she has with the world, her thoughts on "separation and radical understandings of difference" tells me she is thinking about how differences are what situations are made of. She recognizes her opinions and ways of dealing with the world as contingent on environment and the thoughts and actions of others.

Yet another student demonstrates a specific application of *argument as inquiry* that does not demonstrate a development of opinion in relation with other opinions but does show how "communicating effectively the very best reasons" (Gage 43) can transform communication:

I would talk about how men are disgusting and selfish and cruel because they're men who are disgusting and selfish and cruel. It wasn't until I got older, and especially not until I took this class where I was able to find more justifiable reasons explained in a much more sophisticated and well thought out way to convey the message.

While writing her paper, this student had difficulty arranging her topic in a way that left room for reasonable counterarguments, but even though she struggled with that aspect of the assignment, she showed growth from having extensive discussions about her topic with classmates and with me. The enthymeme driving her research paper was: Porn minimizes the female orgasm, because porn is a substitution for the absence of proper sex education. The idea is excellent, but this enthymeme does not represent what she wrote in the rest of the paper. While her topic was an important one, she was unable to incorporate inquiry, instead using an emphatic kind of explaining. Through meetings with me and revision, she accomplished a great deal of growth through her engagement with the issue, and even though she did not quite transform the project

127

into a multi-perspective argumentative paper, she did transform the paper into one of good reasons. Although her final product was missing some of the assignment requirements, a paper with good reasoning is still a worthwhile piece of writing, even though it is a different genre than the assignment called for. Her journey through the process of *argument as inquiry* changed her approach to reasoning and strengthened her writing, and she was able to develop her work by rhetorical means and under her own power.

Building a habit of inquiring to understand rather than to argue does more than make students better writers. A serial practice of writing that engages *otherness* develops practical wisdom and good will, elements of rhetoric that have been neglected in comparison to logic in a scientific era, and as Aristotle explains, these appeals build "trust" (*On Rhetoric* 1378a). In the last chapter, I suggested including students' personal stories in class encourages a return to a full valuation of rhetorical appeals by acknowledging student experience (ethos) and emotion (pathos) as rhetorical. To acknowledge the rhetoricity of appeals that fall outside the measurable, repeatable limits of educational standards is to exercise an ethic of inclusion.

The results of my Winter 2022 study show that students met measurable assignment objectives by demonstrating multiple viewpoints in their arguments, but the study also has emotional and intuitive results. The student language excerpts above tell part of the story, but the rest of the story unfolded through interactions in the classroom, conversations surrounding the assignments, and the growth of relationships throughout the term. Going through the process of inquiry and then reflecting on their personal relationships to academic writing helped students understand their positions in the institution and the possibilities for repositioning themselves. By spending less time on persuasion and more time attending to the relationships that allow communication, they imbue every written word with ethical value. Students who at first feared

engagement with other opinions would dilute their own expression ended up with final reflections that said things like "Being able to look at things from different viewpoints and having that argument in your head proves how much you can expand and express," and "It's helped me learn to hold more space towards separation and radical understandings of difference," and "I was able to find more justifiable reasons explained in a much more sophisticated and well thought out way to convey the message." The emergent quality of opinions plays out in the classroom, and students can use that understanding to position themselves in the future.

The idea of creating an environment where student D/discourse comes first and the language of academia comes later reminds me of Rory, from my Winter 2022 study, who felt unsatisfied with her performance, saying, "academic writing is something I still feel very foreign to, but perhaps I just need to figure out how to not lose my voice amidst trying to sound like an all knowing god of academia." Her point is well-taken. Losing one's voice in academia means more than adopting an unfamiliar style of prose or working in a new genre—it means losing parts of the self. Gloria Anzaldúa's assertion that taking pride in language is taking pride in self too often gets buried beneath imperatives writers face to demonstrate their manageability as students, unable to bring a sense of sincerity to writing that feels like it belongs to somebody else. For students with lower-class D/discourses, urban or rural, Black, Latinx, Asian, or White, the sacrifices of personal ways of thinking, speaking, and being, including the loss of relationships, outweigh the sacrifices made by their wealthier counterparts. Lower-class students should not have to "join the club"; they should take part in building the club. A method like *argument as inquiry*, that privileges the understanding of others and a higher *Transsituational*

129

awareness over socialized expression and competitive arguing, creates the space for that equal contribution.

Inscribing lower-class thoughts, expressions, and ways of being into curricula makes lower-class D/discourse an academic pursuit, not just a problem to study. And when students become self-actualized writers and communicators, they carry their agencies into the world. *Argument as inquiry* simulates public deliberation in the semi-public classroom, considering the students and instructor a discourse community, but it will reach its full potential in the public sphere. In our current tumultuous moment, we need public communicators who can forge new partnerships and break through political deadlock. If communication is to move forward in a world of increasing uncertainty, we will need be willing to build cooperative visions among people who disagree.

Since "the public" is *necessarily* a place of dissensus, constituted by "strangers" (Warner 55), reason itself is always an attempt to navigate uncertainty.[17] Human reason is often mischaracterized as a means of asserting ideas or searching for objectively true things. However, it is just as much a tool for understanding, evaluating, and incorporating the beliefs of others. Mercier and Sperber state, "The capacity to produce arguments could only evolve in tandem with the capacity to evaluate them" (332), and their fascinating assessment of this cooperative process characterizes reason not as a human capacity to determine what is true but an evolutionary trait that allows us to identify collective goals through interacting with each other. The reasons we use in arguments can only exist as emergent phenomena of our relationships with others, giving them an automatic ethicality. If we want to reason ethically about less privileged people, we have to be

---

[17] As explained by Habermas, Warner, and others, the presence of strangers is what constitutes a public. Unlike premodern times when strangers were mysterious and dangerous, modern nations, markets, and publics exist as networked strangers who are an automatic part of the social imaginary.

in relationship with them. Selective universities have few positive relationships with the lower classes, making reasoning about the lower classes problematic. But teaching students to move through uncertainty by developing wisdom, imagination, and good will brings the university and underprivileged communities closer together.

The most ethical way to reason about any underprivileged populations is to have them represented inside as well as having ties to their communities. If the university is a state apparatus (Udas and Stagg 75) that reproduces social strata but also contains the elements of its own remaking (Legg 131), then attention to its diverse inner workings will change the way it operates. Students who have been labeled outsiders become the elements of the university's remaking; they are, as Barad would say, the "exteriority within" that makes the boundaries between the inside and the outside tougher to determine. This exteriority within illuminates an already existing reality: the university and community are one. Although the idea of the university as a contained environment has been naturalized over time, it cannot exist without the surrounding communities. The university depends on the geographic, biological, cultural infrastructures of the community for its definition. And when the university forsakes the community, it forsakes itself. The teaching of *argument as inquiry* looks toward the public, making a modest but concrete contribution to a neglected relationship. The real work will be done outside the university walls.

CHAPTER IV

LISTENING LOCALLY: NONARGUMENTATIVE TACTICS FOR BUILDING

COMMUNITY

This dissertation is in the process of reimagining the relationships between the classroom, campus, and community to map a shared ecology and argue for the dehierarchization of institutional knowledge, values, and ways of being. In Chapter Two, I challenged the inside-outside paradigm of the university by considering lower-class D/discourses as constitutive elements of the university. In Chapter Three, I suggested an ethical pedagogy for connecting the composition classroom with lower-class students through *argument as inquiry*. This chapter will build upon those discursive and ethical ideas concerning lower-class students in the university to reimagine the university's role in the larger community. I will argue that the university can develop stronger and healthier relationships with communities by listening locally and seeking shared exigencies. Since middle- to upper-class communities tend to share more obvious characteristics with the university, service learning and literacy projects tend to involve the lower classes. The power differential between the university and poorer communities, especially considering the campus as the physical, financial, and ideological home base for projects, prevents mutual collaboration. But the university depends on surrounding communities for self-definition. Building genuine partnerships improves both the campus and the community. Genuine partnership makes it obvious that we are not separate communities at all.

I will explore ways to bring together campus and community by sharing discourse and space. While I will not claim to have invented the "right" way to collaborate, I will point out some of the "wrong" approaches programs commonly use. When faculty and students unreflectively set out to "help" the community, justice cannot be served. I will also show

examples of programs that work well in a variety of contexts with a variety of limit-situations, paying particular attention to the kinds of physical and discursive spaces that hybridize communities and generate possibility for partnerships. Some programs, such as Linda Flower's Community Literacy Center, create "literacy counterpublics" that use social difference as a resource for finding shared problems. Some, such as Veronica House's local food project, radically decenter location and discourse, letting a circulation of affect determine the project's direction. And some, such as the Inside-Out prison program, do not function as publics, but create hybridized spaces between institutions so specific groups can work together. While different circumstances call for different approaches, I argue for tactical, rather than strategic, actions that put relationships first and objectives second. Lower-class communities benefit from equal relationship, not institutional objectives.

I will then move on to theorize a tactical kind of listening that could serve as a method for nonhierarchical relationship-building. Krista Ratcliffe has been at the forefront of rhetorical listening, restoring listening as a part of logos. Our culture has emphasized the expressive functions of logic, reading, writing, speaking, and listening treated as inventive modes for point-making. But by listening with an "undivided logos," not only to determine our agreements and disagreements, we hear the "exiled excess" that represents a fuller reasoning and shows our relationships to each other (25). This foundation of rhetorical listening allows me to push further into the idea of listening as a mean for relationship building rather than argument. Deeyah Khan listens tactically, in a way that that compliments the hybridization of discourse and spaces. Listening without the intention of inventing arguments makes sincere understanding the end, leaving room for resolution to happen later. This sort of tactical listening, emphasizing care rather than problem-solving, runs counter to some practices of justice that use tactics as leverage

133

for improving lives of underprivileged people. While combative tactics have a legitimate place in social justice movements, tactics of care encourage connection. Forging connections between campus and lower-class communities brings the inside and outside together, and a sense of togetherness can change attitudes more than confrontation.

Dehierarchization of D/discourses and embracement of shared inquiry generate the conditions for equal relationships between campus and community. By understanding the rhetoricity of nonargumentative tactics, guideposts emerge for scrutinizing the subject-object relationship universities often adopt when interacting with communities. Western thinking assumes the position of the knower as a universal neutral seeking out what is to be known, a paradigm Santiago Castro-Gomez calls the "hubris of the zero point" (qtd. in Mignolo 160). With rationality categorized as the purview of the knower (who is usually western, male, white, and of a higher economic class), other logics are automatically relegated to the realms of pseudoscience or superstition, and narratives positioning the university as a place of enlightenment that cultivates democracy and citizenship take on a similar tone of universality. While higher education has moved away from more explicit goals of refining taste and training an elite class that it held before the turn of the twentieth century, it still operates under assumptions that education creates a more sophisticated, more responsible citizen. And the institution's vision of citizenship carries with it assumptions of whiteness, wealth, and Americanism. By debunking the myth that the knower is neutral, unimplicated in the local, and in possession of a universal logic, we are able to disrupt the "hegemony of zero point epistemology" (Mignolo 162). Local relationships, discourses, and logics constitute each other, each working from their own contingent positionalities, and community members who might seem incompatible with the university have the power to transform attitudes in higher education.

134

Rather than framing cross-cultural interactions as universally "rational," the university could work within a frame of "reasonableness," as espoused by rhetoricians such as Stephen Toulmin and Wayne Booth, that looks to relational situations for logical starting points, increasing possibilities for campus-community partnerships.

The effort to create mutuality between campus and the most incompatible parts of the community presents a complex puzzle, but the reasonable and contingent characteristics of a rhetorical ecology make it easier to see multiple truths and navigate power dynamics. While the values of the university (including things such as field-specific specializations, technological advancement, and the furthering of democracy through education) can dominate the less predictable values of local communities, local communities also need the sort of knowledge university-educated people have to offer. By continually working toward the practical wisdom that comes from listening to and working with different communities in different situations, campus and community can develop a mutual language and discover mutual goals. This more cooperative and contingent rhetorical approach keeps shared goals in mind while navigating uncertain territory. Although students, faculty, and community members have complicated, often incompatible notions of social and moral life, understanding larger rhetorical ecologies brings different ways of thinking and being into the same sphere.

Challenging the hierarchy between the more educated and less educated does not diminish the value of education, but rather shifts the focus from "helping" communities to sharing local logics to solve mutual problems. If "[t]o speak a language is to appropriate its world and culture" (Fanon 21), then university insiders and outsiders will only understand each other if they gain membership in each other's communities. Coercing outsiders into to abandoning their values and ways of being to become insiders not only damages individual

psyches but prevents the university from understanding its own makeup. A better solution is mutual inquiry that uses the knowledge of all involved. Acceptance of local logics as equal resources for problem solving brings the institution and the community together with a shared exigency, and a pooling of resources creates a hybrid community where difference works as strength. Nonargumentative rhetorical tactics that focus on relationships and common problems preserve the dignity and autonomy of those previously overlooked.

Publics, Counterpublics, and Hybridity

The university needs a new starting point for reasoning through relationships with the public, especially lower-class publics. When scholars "study" lower-class people and neighborhoods, we perpetuate a "zero point epistemology" (Mignolo 162) by creating a subject-object relationship. No matter how positive the intention, studying the lower classes sets up a binary that reproduces social strata. While scholars have worked to dehierarchize different cultural logics by emphasizing a plurality of literacies, their efforts have fallen short. Thinking in terms of multiple literacies has been overall positive, but the "type" of literacy prominent in a community still serves as a main marker of social status. The close relationship between literacy and identity, compounded by the fact that few people with lower-class forms of literacy attend selective universities, positions those studied as the *other*. We need a nonbinary, problem-solving approach for building relationships rather than a research-based approach that reproduces the *other*.

An example of an important and influential work that would benefit from an ecological reimagining is Shirley Brice Heath's *Ways with Words*. This foundational ethnographic study accounts for the cultural significance of different racial, geographical, and economic realities

136

from which language and ways of being emerge. Heath's study of "Roadville" (a predominantly white working-class community), "Trackton" (a predominantly black working-class community), and the "townspeople" (a mix of blacks and whites in the region who hold positions as educators and higher management) demonstrates the development of different literacies, all rooted in cultural experiences and suited to the needs of the community. Heath's book is a *tour de force* for raising awareness in the field of education, explaining the value of different literacies, and making clear the disadvantages for students who have practiced different kinds of literacy than their more prepared (usually richer) peers. But the ethnographic approach she takes toward communities that use literacy in nonacademic (and arguably nonintellectual) ways reinforces stereotypes and *others* people as objects of study.

Heath's subject-object relationship with her research participants creates an impression that working-class African American literacy consists of nothing but mundane acts. For example, she includes on her list of typical reading materials "boxes and cans of food products, house numbers, car names and license numbers, calendars and telephone dials, written messages on television, and name brands which are part of refrigerators, stoves, bicycles, and tools" (190). These textual artifacts permeate households in the U.S., regardless of race or class, and their inclusion as "reading materials" signals the reader of Heath's research that black, working-class residents treat words on household objects the way white, upper-class residents treat books. She also states that "[f]or Trackton adults, reading is a social activity," going on to describe the reading of newspapers and mail on front porches and the subsequent discussions between neighbors about obituaries, medical services, or daycare (196-97). She describes these conversations in such a way that suggests people in the community would not comprehend their mail without public discussion of its meaning. In her accounts of Roadville (a working-class

137

white community) and the townspeople (middle-class people from multiple races) she does not emphasize public discussion of written materials, but similar collaborations surely take place. And in her own academic setting, public discussion of textual meaning is the norm. Heath does not intend to ridicule the people in her study, and her research does turn scholarly attention toward the injustices of higher education. But her subjective sense of these communities, observing from the standpoint of a financially well-off, educated researcher, portrays her subjects in a less than flattering light. Similar subjective portrayals of *otherness* abound in Heath's book, from accounts of childhood language acquisition to reported interactions on job sites. She plainly develops strong relationships with the people in her study, and she does not seem to inflict harm on anyone, but the mere fact of learning about less educated communities to further scholarship for more educated communities hierarchizes knowledge between social classes.

To prevent this sort of hierarchy and social reproduction, any research on underprivileged communities must be done with a sense of "research justice." Research justice "centers community voices and leadership in an effort to facilitate genuine, lasting social change." It creates an "active disruption" of social inequality (Jolivétte 5). Studying communities to learn about them might not damage them, but the "radical love" (7) of treating participants as family or friends rather than objects of research empowers everyone involved. By letting go of the role of the knower, resisting zero-point epistemology, scholars stop working in a limit-situation and embrace possibilities for moving ahead together. Treating community members' voices as equally important to our own enacts practical wisdom. By addressing mutual problems and using her good will, Heath could have approached the people of Trackton as colleagues rather than research subjects. They could have worked on a project that benefitted everyone, engaging in the sort of ethical reasoning present in *argument as inquiry*. Heath seemed to have already built

positive relationships with the participants, so her next step could have been to let go of her agenda and follow the community's lead.

Scholars have been trained to follow a research agenda, and breaking that habit requires a new model. Typical institutions spend significant time, energy, and money creating strategic plans that guide departmental learning objectives and, ultimately, curricula. Strategies, though, are generated and enacted from places of power, requiring adherence to top-down rules for success. A *strategy* exercises power, "isolated from an environment." It operates rationally, from a "proper place," and treats those outside of it as "competitors," "targets," or "objects of research." A *Tactic*, on the other hand, is informal and timely, "on the watch for opportunities" in the moment. A tactic is a tool of the *other* (De Certeau xix). A strategy can best be understood scientifically, or as a measurable proof, while a tactic can be best understood rhetorically, or as contingent and changeable (Mathieu 16). If a strategy uses preexisting frameworks to reach a predetermined goal, then a tactic resists established frameworks and deemphasizes end goals in favor of adaptation to immediate conditions. A research agenda acts as a strategic framework that governs all other activities. Relationship building acts as a tactical activity, uninhibited by institutional limitations. If Heath had visited Trackton with the intention of becoming part of the community, her scholarship would not have been limited to recording and classifying literacy habits. She would have studied what the people of Trackton had been interested in studying, and the conclusions they came to would have been mutually beneficial. Bringing a strategic mindset to a public with no stake in university objectives limits ethical inquiry, but a spirit of mutual problem-solving and curiosity tactically builds shared knowledge.

No community project should be undertaken by the university without a sound understanding of local realities and the consequences of intervening in local people's affairs.

And the knowledge and expertise of the community will never share equal footing with that of

the university when limited by assignments that end when grades are posted. Paula Mathieu

cautions against this sort of student-first interaction with an example of a student who e-mails

Spare Change News, a street newspaper for people with low incomes or experiencing

homelessness, to explain she had been assigned to them to create proposals and campaigns to

educate the public about their organization. In the e-mail, she asks to have all their informational

materials sent to her, have a meeting with someone who would explain how the organization

works, and be allowed to sit in on their meetings. Mathieu explains that "Problems…occur when

teachers themselves are not connected to the community and *assign* organizations to students or

ask students to *seek out* sites themselves" (100). In this case, the teacher sends a student into a

situation she does not understand. The student expects the newspaper staff to burden themselves

with extra work, planning, and access to meetings that could be sensitive or confidential. The

teacher also assumes the newspaper has no extant plan for self-promotion and that they would

readily hand over such a project to a college student. And after all the effort, inconvenience, and

compromise, the newspaper would likely receive little or nothing from the student, who is a

novice writer with no knowledge of the newspaper business or the issues the publication deals

with. A sound understanding of local needs is crucial, since "When institutional priorities

intersect with community needs, people can get hurt" (122). This assignment that centers student

experience at the expense of a newspaper for low-income people, largely without homes, could

have been mutually beneficial if it had been a project that sought a long-term partnership and a

shared exigency rather than strategic learning objectives for a student. For example, if the student

had entered the situation through an already-existing volunteer position, the class could have

built learning objectives around the newspaper's needs. And if the newspaper had no such position, it might be best not to use it for an objective-driven course.

David Coogan illustrates the challenges and rewards to bringing university rhetoric into a public space with an account of a white undergraduate student in Chicago who conducts an interview at a black public housing development for a service-learning project. The student reports feeling trepidation at the thought of visiting a poor black area of town and admits that his expectations had been shaped by stereotypes of violence and social language barriers. However, he is surprised by the warmth with which he is greeted as everyone he meets, from the front of the building to the office of the director, acknowledges him and shows him kindness. He characterizes the people at the housing development as "honorable and respectful" (462). Coogan recognizes the value of moments like these, since they "disable our knee-jerk assumptions about difference" (462). But service-learning programs often treat this kind of personal growth as the objective, privileging student experience and ignoring the partnership between university and community. If service learning aims for social change, an appreciation of difference should not be a final lesson, but a place to begin the real work. Building relationships between communities means entering an unfamiliar sphere, and exposure to new kinds of difference alters both communities involved. The undergraduate student learned that he functions in this particular public only with the good will of others.

Student-first projects can lead to missed opportunities or even damaging interactions between the institution and community, but too much focus on "helping" communities can be just as damaging. As the university attempts to both further democracy and train students to be elite forces in the marketplace, it finds itself in the position of a "cultural benefactor" with "the ability to transform surrounding communities and, indeed, a moral obligation to do so" (Hessler

28). Brooke Hessler calls this attitude an "enlightened self-interest" (29), a belief in the intellectual and moral superiority of academic knowledge and a responsibility to lift up communities through charitable acts. Drawing from Freire, Mathieu also opposes the charity model as a "problem orientation." Within everyone, she claims, lies a "perfect, funny, creative, accomplished, skillful" heart, but a problem orientation seeks to eliminate the undesirable parts of people rather than creating tactical projects that encourage growth of the vibrant and positive parts (xix). This sort of action does little to benefit the community, instead acting to ease the guilty consciences of the privileged "helpers." Further, as Lara Smith-Sitton explains, the "service model" of charity reinforces the idea of giver and recipient, allowing community members little input for projects that could be done better and more sustainably by the community members themselves (75). Whether giving charity, fixing problems, or offering service, these attitudes reproduce the inside-outside paradigm of education and fail to recognize the value of local expertise and culture.

Improving interactions with lower-class publics requires attention to how attitude inside the institution affects community spaces. Attitude can be fostered inside the university by putting students into situations that encourage development of practical wisdom. For example, the presence of mind encouraged by *argument as inquiry* could be described as a tactical sense for acting ethically in an unpredictable, ever-changing public. The public-facing values of cooperative argumentation, acknowledging *otherness* as constitutive of any situation, prepare students for the messiness of public discourse. And with an attitude that values *otherness* as a component of one's own makeup, a more inclusive agenda follows. Open inquiry naturally alters strategic institutional goals, adjusting in the moment to find the best pathways toward the collective good. Of course, learning objectives, budgets, time restrictions, and other institutional

142

realities play a part, too. Limit-situations do not disappear, but the cultivation of an attitude of mutual inquiry allows students to make the best possible decisions in less-than-ideal situations.

Although classroom activities can cultivate an inclusive attitude, communities need to be understood in specific public settings. A humanist philosophy might envision egalitarian public discourse in a Habermasian public sphere. However, Nancy Fraser cites Habermas's failure to account for the plurality of publics, in which "[t]he public sphere was always constituted by conflict" (61). The power dynamics between private citizens disqualify subaltern issues from discussion. Considering this multiplicity and competition, a public is not a place or a group of people, but a circulation of discourse. Jenny Edbauer's theory of rhetorical ecology once again becomes useful for understanding the contingency and moveability of publics. "Sites" are not simply places, but "made up of encounters, experiences, and moods that cohere around material spaces" (11). Just as a classroom should be seen as a *transsituation* of colliding D/discourses, so should a neighborhood be seen as a place of productive dissensus. As Warner asserts, "A public is a space of discourse organized by nothing other than discourse itself….It exists *by virtue of being addressed*" (Warner 50). Membership resides not in personal identity or location but discursive relationships. Although "the public" cannot be self-aware, self-actualized communicators have the power to create specialized public spaces.

If a public is a circulation of discourse, a counterpublic is an *oppositional* circulation of discourse, socially conscious of itself and centered on identity in a way the general public is not. Warner explains that dominant publics can be assumed (incorrectly) to be normative, but counterpublics cannot operate under that assumption in the first place, as "it is hoped that the poesis of scene making will be transformative, not replicative merely" (88). Counterpublics circulate discourse self-consciously, giving them power to transform the larger public sphere. For

example, the performative nature of the Black Panthers, the Black Lives Matter movement, the

LGBTQ+ community, or Antifa all disrupt the status quo and challenge traditional ways of

speaking, acting, and being, and they do so with an intentional circulation of oppositional

discourse. They clearly state what they are for and what they are against with the goal of making

specific changes.

Community literacy calls into being a different type of counterpublic. Rather than

organizing around a specific transformative goal, it intentionally constructs a community of

disagreement. It seeks internal discursive conflict and welcomes a "collaboratively supported

style of dissensus" (Flower 40). With dissensus as a starting point, participants need to overcome

sociocultural difference to make meaning. This space with no preexisting goals or commonalities

holds possibility for new relationships. Rather than reinforcing a relationship of privileged-

underprivileged or expert-layperson, literacy communities use intercultural inquiry to call into

being a local public with a hybrid discourse. Difference and conflict act as resources, not

obstacles. This sort of collaboration requires a step away from the objective-driven,

argumentative rhetoric routinely taught in the classroom in favor of exercises in inquiry that

allow students and instructors to be hybridized as members of a new public.

When considering power differentials between the university and surrounding

communities, relationships depend on genuine exchange. Different publics operate with different

rhetorics, and "we need to stay grounded in the rhetorical practices of the communities we wish

to serve if we are to have any hope of successfully partnering with these communities" (Coogan

468). Successful collaboration between the university and public begins with open inquiry, not

learning objectives, and the rhetoric of the particular community at hand is the most important

resource for discovering shared exigencies. The recognition of community rhetorics as resources

becomes easier when students and instructors have practiced facing situations that cultivate a sense of practical wisdom, learning to speak *with* rather than only *for* and *against*. If a transformative relationship is the goal of community literacy and service-learning projects, we must resist the urge to "teach" the community or make the community "better" and instead speak with the community in the spirit of shared inquiry. Community literacy becomes an ongoing dialogue within the crosscurrents of difference, and service learning becomes less about the university serving the community and more about the university and surrounding community working toward a shared cause.

While the institution clearly has the power to take advantage of the community, even if unintentionally, the fact remains that the institution also has the power to engage and sustain projects that benefit the community. If people in surrounding neighborhoods are sometimes pulled into projects that take up time, energy, and emotion without a return, the same thing could be said for faculty and university staff who put in extra time and effort to try to get collaborations off the ground (De Ott; Mathieu; Bay; Hessler; Smith-Sitton). Finding mutuality is not a matter of trading sacrifices equally but identifying activities that bring campus and community together in a shared exigency, which can be a nonstrategic and messy business. On one hand, we who are socialized into academic thinking need to develop more nonhierarchical attitudes toward the community, but on the other hand, we must realize that the power differential enables us to be the ones to reach out and create the circumstances for collaboration to begin. The institution has the ability to designate spaces where different stakeholders or interested parties can come together and experience each other without the artificial separation of the university mindset. A community is not comprised of people with shared ideologies and cooperative attitudes, but rather, as succinctly phrased by Iris Marion Young, "people who live together, who are stuck

145

with one another" (126). If we can navigate tricky social differences and assumptions, we can understand the already contingent and hybridizing nature of our communities and institutions.

In an imperfect world, faculty and students must walk a line between the kind of "radical love" demanded by research justice (Jolivétte 7) and the necessity to stay true to institutional goals and standards. Leaving behind institutional goals brings people together in neighborhoods to do immediately relevant work, but including institutional goals brings resources to the table that can sustain projects long-term. A place that continually navigates the tensions between open collaboration and institutional resources is the Community Literacy Center (CLC) in Pittsburgh. As a literacy counterpublic, the CLC depends on a constant influx of strangers[18] to operate, and dissensus rather than consensus drives it forward. By identifying problems and including perspectives of different stakeholders, community literacy becomes a "rhetorical model" for ethical, inquiry-based action (Flower 19). Rather than depending on institutional strategy, participants act tactically, developing a sense of practical wisdom by inviting conflicting beliefs without the immediate need for consensus. Social problems present possibility, not limitation (85-86).

This sort of open inquiry does not always satisfy institutional goals and economic realities, but the CLC has balanced institutional demands with community needs by implementing a rolling set of outcomes. These more flexible outcomes measure activity but resist becoming either academic requirements or programs of "outreach." The CLC builds on past projects and looks forward to long-term visions but does not purport to being a positive influence over a disadvantaged or underprivileged environment and does not see itself as being in control of the community's future well-being. It maintains the balance between institutional authority

---

[18] As explained by Habermas, Warner, and others, the presence of strangers is what constitutes a public.

and radical embracement of difference by bringing together a local plurality with a shared discourse (29). And shared discourse can only be accomplished with radical acceptance of each participant's D/discourse (in Gee's sense) as equally valuable.

A literacy counterpublic such as the CLC requires participants to have a full sense of rhetorical appeals, not an overemphasized sense of logos common to the university. It values scientific assessment and measurement equally with emotional and personal testimony. The lower classes fare better when they can position themselves in society with lived experience, not logic only. Flower says that "for disenfranchised groups, denying one's identity as a working-class student, an inner-city African American, or a migrant laborer denies the reality of social difference, of power, and inequality—the very issues these groups want us to see as *public* concerns" (33). The discourse of the educated elite tends to seek consensus through rationalism, overlooking other kinds of reason.

Radical acceptance of diverse expression that includes not only logic but personal and emotion testimony allows difference to be a resource for open inquiry. Flower demonstrates this full range of rhetorical appeals with the "Risk and Stress Project." By treating urban teens and health care professionals as partners, an open conversation on health and stress evolved into a discussion on racism and policing in the students' neighborhood. One student produced a text explaining specific events in which she had been victimized. The "story behind the story," told of "stress, anger, and vulnerability," coupled with the helplessness of being unable to respond (48). Adult accounts of racist policing, even accounts given by African American adults at the table, lacked the immediacy expressed by the thirteen-year-olds. The conversations revealed rifts between the ways teens, accustomed to helplessness under authority, expressed themselves in comparison to adults in the room. Students, accustomed to "being marginalized in discussions

about themselves…are likely to bring a rhetoric of complaint and blame to situations" (49), since they have not had the opportunity to develop skills for participating in public discussion through reasoning and argument. But on the other hand, adults tend to center discussion on rational argument, failing to allow open questions to stand as such. In Barad's terms, this sort of exploratory discussion occurs within the chaos of colliding discourse. The practice of keeping as many rival hypotheses on the table as possible without rushing to conclusions frames conflict itself as a resource, and as the definition of the problem itself grows, so does the range of possible actions. A third reality emerges from the diffractive pattern.

As the stakeholders worked toward understanding each other, a new and unexpected action emerged. The teens at the table wrote a performative script on police violence that "created a series of ripples" (63), bringing publics together and forcing people to consider the thoughts and feelings of individual teenagers. In the performance, Shirley and her friends, all thirteen-year-old black girls, witness police harassing older boys until the police (from Shirley's perspective) get scared and leave (54). She demonstrates a rhetorical agency through this interpretive act, taking action not to resolve the problem but to make the most of the limited possibilities available. She positions herself in the situation and describes the positions of the older boys and the police, explaining individual consequences in real time. The audience cannot perceive "bad" cops and "bad" teens as undifferentiated aspects of "bad" neighborhoods. Rather they see a more complicated social problem through the teens' inner thoughts and feelings. This third reality could only have come about through the sustained inquiry of the very different people at the table as they searched for new patterns in the chaos.

Influenced by the CLC, The Community Writing Center (CWC) in Salt Lake City is an off-campus center of Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) that creates a hybrid space by

drawing on the college's resources while addressing writing needs identified by the community. It's longest-lasting program is the *DiverseCity* writing series, a writing and publishing project meant to connect people from different racial, social, end economic realities through writing. Since the center is not a service-learning project, and therefore not bound by the same curricular restraints and assessment requirements, it attends tactically, in "an organic way" to the needs of adult nonstudents in the community (Rousculp 68). Influenced by Flower's sentiments on community building, *DiverseCity* has gone beyond writing "*for* or *about* the community" and into writing "*with* the community" by printing the words and stories of community members themselves (71). The move from "student-presentation" of community to "self-presentation" of community by members themselves has brought new voices to the project and allowed people unaffiliated with the college to speak and be heard in ways they had not previously. Like the positionality stories highlighted in Chapter Two, the act of speaking freely with one's own language gives a sense of agency, and those outside the institution who participate in the sort of place-making that shared discourse brings have found a niche. By partnering with community organizations such as women's shelters, homeless shelters, senior centers, and cancer associations, the CWC engages nonacademic D/discourses far and wide while remaining moored to the college and the talent of student and faculty with writing expertise. These "multiple discourse communities" are "supported, but not constructed, by an educational institution" (74). And writers in the community find motivation by interacting with groups and workshops rather than being empowered from the outside.

Although the CWC has achieved a productive level of collaboration and trust with the community, it has remained financially sustainable by also meeting the needs of the college. Securing buy-in from the administration has been key to the center's continuance, and that buy-

in has been accomplished, largely, by convincing them that the center fulfills SLCC's mission, which is built around community, creativity, and diversity. As a cornerstone of the college's mission, SLCC can "claim" the CWC, along with the awards it has received, on its website and promotional materials (77). Of course, connecting to the mission statement, as Mathieu would assert, creates an intersection between institutional priorities and community needs in which people in the community could get hurt, but the CWC exemplifies a balance between tactical community work and institutional strategy. Mathieu argues that community projects should be "local, specific, responsive, and timely," which "may require foregoing institutionalized service-learning projects altogether or insisting that programs are only institutionalized from the bottom up, project by project, relationship by relationship" (Mathieu 114). The CWC does not accomplish all of these all of the time, but it is difficult to bring all voices to the table when the institution "literally provide[s] the table" (Flower 46). The CWC, as a program of a community college, automatically resides closer to the community than a four-year university program could, but the unique opportunities afforded with community literacy translates to four-year universities as well. The need to satisfy institutional goals to secure funding is inescapable, but programs can still make the best possible choices to work toward the horizonal goal of erasing the campus-community hierarchy. At the very least, community collaboration can strive to be "local, specific, responsive, and timely," calling into existence a counterpublic by using difference as a resource for considering shared exigencies.

Veronica House's work with the local food movement in Boulder, Colorado epitomizes the "local, specific, responsive, and timely" interactions with the community by decentralizing its activities into multiple classrooms, farms, community centers, and events. By allowing local exigencies around food to shape the curriculum, the writing program at Boulder can consider "a

place's landscape, climate, laws, people, history, and institutions," all of which are actors that "continuously 'write' the place" (57). The issues involved in the local food movement are "far too complex and rhizomatic to be adequately approached in a single course," so the writing program has developed multifaceted participation through multiple courses. The local food board identifies areas of need, and the writing program answers. The needs include researching the complexities around failing farms, improving their web presence, creating a social media campaign, conducting an arts competition, and raising awareness with lower-income communities (59-60). In the long term, the courses circulate writing and discourse to redefine the idea of local food to include the changing stakes of everyone involved. The curricular focus drives actions toward measurable results, but measures of success change with the community. No single strategy could possibly meet the needs of all stakeholders involved, so cooperative tactics of care become the most ethical and reasonable way to manage the ever-changing project.

The circulation of discourse, as a rhetorical ecology, dehierarchizes projects and puts them in the hands of the literacy counterpublics involved in sustaining them. The lower classes benefit from decentralization since assumptions around literacy often push lower-class ideas and expression to the margins. Food practices affect everyone, and any communication or action regarding food cannot be considered inclusive or just without going through the dissensus of diverse thought. House claims local food projects such as the one in Boulder should involve "deep listening," "collaborative imagining," and a sense of "what is possible" (56). With these actions in place, curricula can sync to needs that emerge from the community, tactically adjusting to include more overlooked people.

Programs do not have to engage the public to humanize people through "local, specific, responsive, and timely" action. Aside from creating literacy counterpublics through community

literacy projects and learning centers, universities often create hybrid learning situations that expose underprivileged people to education. A local program connected to the UO that calls this sort of hybridity into existence while still satisfying institutional expectations is the Inside-Out Program.[19] As part of the UO Prison Education Program, Inside-Out cooperates with the Department of Corrections to offer credit-bearing classes at the Oregon State Penitentiary (OSP). Classes are made up of half UO students and half people who are incarcerated, and they attend class together at OSP. Each class has an "Inside TA" and an "Outside TA." The prisons that participate in the program have "think tanks" that consider justice within the criminal justice system, organize events, and help with curriculum and training for the classes. Neither the university nor the prison can be considered a public, but they cooperatively hybridize a learning space where some of the most privileged and least privileged citizens create knowledge together. The collision of different, seemingly incompatible D/discourses forms a diffractive pattern from which a third reality can emerge.

People who are incarcerated are an overlooked part of the community, and the demographics inside the prison system are heavily represented by the least privileged identities. Lower-class status runs through all these identities, and those at the intersections of disadvantage are some of the most vulnerable to research injustice. As a response to this reality, the director of the program, Shaul Cohen, states, "we are particular in saying we learn with and from one another. We're not going into the prison to study people, and we don't do research on them." A former Inside-Out instructor, Elizabeth Wheeler, describes the training institute faculty members attend to learn the program's teaching methods that include equal interchange between the faculty members and the members of the prison think tank who are helping to train them, along

---

[19] Not to be confused with my use of the term "inside-outside" as a binary paradigm in university thinking. The similarity is coincidental, but the concepts are compatible.

with movement, personal stories, humor, and examinations of how we make choices. The exercises "relax both groups of students, put them on an equal footing, and open up their humanity to each other." These techniques for learning *with* and *from* set up conditions for a hybridized literacy situation that satisfies Jolivétte's call for research justice while meeting the demands of both the educational institution and the prison institution.

The maintenance of such a program can only be done with careful intention and rules. Applicants from both inside and outside fill out the same form and go through an interview process to confirm they will be comfortable listening and contributing. They also must demonstrate the ability to be discreet and follow etiquette to avoid getting inside students in trouble or damaging the delicate relationship between UO and OSP. Both UO and OSP have reasons to proceed in such a way that preserves institutional rules, goals, and liabilities, and the sustainability of a hybrid class depends on its ability to demonstrate value. For the university, Cohen states course evaluations regularly indicate that this is the best course students have ever taken. The program also shows its value by bringing other faculty and administration to the prison to participate and understand. For the Department of Justice, studies have shown that participants in education, even if they do not yield a degree, have a lower recidivism rate. Although these institutional realities need attention, Cohen stresses, "Our business is not affecting criminological patterns. Our goal is to create educational opportunities." The purpose of demonstrating value is to get to the real work, which is the creation of a hybridized space to build transformative relationships and work toward shared learning situations.

While institutional realities seem cumbersome, the resources they bring to the table enable a program that affects students on the inside and outside in a way Cohen describes as "profound." On the first day of class, students arrive full of trepidation. Students in prison

sometime worry they will not be able to handle social graces. They also worry they will not be able to keep up academically or will be exposed for having educational gaps, especially since they might not have been around people for a long time. The fact that OSP is an all-male facility sometimes leads to difficult feelings when the campus side includes women. Students from the campus sometimes fear they will not be able to hear and absorb what students in prison have to say. They worry they will be judged for their privilege, or that people in prison will believe they are being judged for their lack of privilege. But however awkwardly class begins, the act of speaking to each other one-on-one gets students intensely engaged within minutes. Once the first day's question and answer session begins, there is a "shock at how easy it is to engage with people across that difference and how valuable it is to hear what they have to say. That lesson stays with people" (Cohen). The class provides inside students a place to "drop the fierce front they need to wear much of the time. They can smile." And they have a "space to hear feminist viewpoints and discuss the toxic masculinity and homophobia of the prison culture" (Wheeler). After the class is over, "they don't lose the memory of being able to appreciate and be appreciated by many dimensions of people who had previously been visible to them—if at all— only in a one-dimensional way" (Cohen).

Being away from the cell blocks[20] (for inside students) and being surrounded by penitentiary walls (for outside students) means every student carries discursive habits to a new space. Inside students bring a prison vocabulary. They sometimes have nicknames. They naturally reference things that are foreign to campus-based students. And, as Wheeler states, because of the think tank, "inside student share an understanding of structural inequality that

---

[20] One of the many motivations people in prison have to participate is the opportunity to move freely in a part of the prison they would not otherwise have access to. Just as students from UO are off campus, they are, in a sense, outside of jail.

greatly enriches the knowledge base of the outside students." Outside students bring pop culture and the sort of expression that comes from technology and online culture. The gap between these D/discourses could be seen as an "experiential abyss" (Cohen), but genuine collaboration and understanding happens when students dwell in the diffractive pattern and decipher a third reality. Once they recognize differences, students shift their expression to give others access to the references and connotations necessary for understanding. The dehierarchization of different D/discourses allows students to hybridize their expression for the comfort of others. They humanize each other through negotiation of language.

Freire has claimed that humanization is the human vocation, and I believe humanization, or what I have sometimes referred to in this dissertation as *self-actualization*, should be the measuring stick for education. As a parting statement, Cohen offers this:

> In a prison culture, respect is a very important currency. All of us participating earn respect, share respect, cultivate respect. But at an even more fundamental level, every time we go into the prison, we're hoping that we're creating a space in which people can feel their own dignity and have that be recognized by others in a place that, by design, strips you of your dignity and strips you of your individuality.

The creation of a place where people can "feel their own dignity" and self-actualize as human beings is not an automatic feature of any institution, but every institution has the ability to encourage the development of such places. Local, specific, responsive, and timely programs assemble the kinds of dehierarchized spaces that can use difference and dissensus to create third realities. Literacy exists as multiplicity, not despite it, and as soon as a university, classroom, or educator assumes the natural superiority of one discourse over another, the mission of education has failed.

155

Dehierarchization of discourse and preservation of dignity inside institutions carry over to the larger public. Members of the Inside-Out think tank, in cooperation with students from Willamette University, have formed Oregonians United to End Slavery. This public group has been organizing for Measure 112, a campaign to eliminate the "slavery loophole" in Oregon's state constitution, which allows "slavery" [or] involuntary servitude…as a punishment for crime" (*Oregon Constitution*, Art. 1, Sec. 34). Sterling Cunio, formerly incarcerated at OSP, now speaks for Willamette University's Transformative Justice Initiative. At a press conference for the Abolish Slavery National Network (ASNN), Cunio states, "For the prisoners, [Measure 112] is about shedding the status of slaves. And for the students, it's about wanting to live in a society where slavery does not exist in any form." The shared problem solving between those who have been incarcerated and those who simply want a more just world speaks to the Freirian idea that oppression harms everyone involved, including the oppressor. It also shows the power of possibility when people with radically different identities and backgrounds share inquiry. The Inside-Out project did not set out to build an organization to campaign for prison reform; The exercise of care in a hybridized space created the conditions for it to grow.

Another program at the University of Oregon that hybridizes academic and lower-class D/discourses is the Summer Academy to Inspire Learning (SAIL). SAIL is a pre-college program that targets middle and high school students from "low socioeconomic, first-generation, and underrepresented backgrounds," offering experience with faculty, mentors, and campus resources. The Executive Director, Lara Fernandez, describes lower-class status as a "hidden identity" and makes raising awareness in the institution about the relevance of socioeconomic status in the student body part of her routine when talking with faculty and administrators. The natural diversity that comes with low economic status brings with it a group of students with

unique needs and unpredictable relationships with education. Fernandez states, "We have had to carve our own path. There is no one strategy." In other words, the program has proceeded tactically, seeking timely opportunities and acting as a tool of the *other*. This sort of "exteriority within" recognizes lower-class high school students as constitutive elements of academia who have the potential to remake the university apparatus in a more inclusive way.

Similar to Inside-Out, SAIL puts faculty and volunteers from UO into contact with people, in this case minors, who operate in D/discourses that at first seem incompatible. Fernandez states that whatever the situation, it is important to "work with the individual every single time" to constantly build relationships. And when working with students, faculty, administration, or donors the staff build relationships the same way, centering inquiry around the same questions and creating experiences of mutual learning. Even the staff training involves the use of stories and experiences from all stakeholders involved as well as scenario trainings in which staff imagine themselves interacting with specific people in specific circumstances. The use of personal stories for training is similar to my suggestion of using the rhetoricity of personal stories for self-positioning in academia, and the use of specific scenarios is a feature of *argument as inquiry*, which relies on specific situations instead of set models or procedures to arrive at cooperative opinions. As a practice, the sharing of circumstances and cooperative problem-solving builds practical wisdom, helping all involved to develop an intuition about actions toward the social good.

SAIL is not a program that recruits students to attend the UO, but an outreach program with the mission of bringing individual students with limited resources into contact with higher education. Fernandez says that with so many stakeholders, both private and institutional, staying on mission can be challenging, but a constant focus on the individual and individual situations

keeps intentions and actions on track. Of the middle and high school participants, approximately 75% go on to college, many of them starting at community college, and about 20% eventually attend the UO. But success is not ultimately measured by numbers or where students end up but by individual stories. By centering individual underprivileged students from diverse backgrounds and lower-class status, SAIL transforms relationships inside the institution and out. It also troubles the inside-outside paradigm of the university, creating conditions for students with outsider status to not only enroll but become shapers of university culture. It brings together the rhetorics of campus and community, creating more conditions for breaking through boundaries and doing the difficult work of building relationships.

I volunteered for SAIL in the summer of 2022, and the space students, faculty, and volunteers created brough an "exteriority within" to the UO. While my role as writing support for application letters socialized students to college writing, they also learned about the limit-situation they were about to enter. They were a racially diverse group, and their diversity of thought correlated with low economic status. As they explored their options for education, they paid close attention to family needs, emotionally and economically. Most of their application letters reflected a desire to stay close enough to home to continue to help. These students reminded me of students from less selective institutions, their goals and concerns more geared toward bringing success home to the family than staking out personal career paths. While many students at the UO assume they will be striking out on their own and establishing themselves in a professional field, the students in the SAIL program hoped to stay nearby and find careers that will benefit their loved ones.

Before I arrived, students had already discussed how to begin an application letter by telling a personal story and connecting it to a valuable character trait. I used the opportunity to

158

talk with them about how their stories might position them as agents in the university. They shared stories with me about difficult homes lives full of addiction, violence, and abandonment. But their stories also told of compassion and emotional connection. These students needed to translate emotional personal experiences into appeals logical enough to give college admissions officers information to make decisions. Every incoming student needs to tell some sort of story when applying, but these students had primary D/discourses further away from university expectations than most. The diffractive pattern at the intersection of university language and the language of under-advantaged high schoolers told a new story about the students and the institution. In this third reality, lower-class students interested in college needed guidance from university insiders to imagine how their life experiences could add to academia. The values they learned from difficult home lives, such as patience, determination, and independence, overlap with the values of academia. While their material situations, habits of thought, and personal beliefs did not conform to university standards, they already had the core strengths the university looks for. And one could argue these students had more of a sense of self-reliance and toughness than their middle-class counterparts.

This third reality also tells the story of a university that values lower-class diversity of thought. I have argued that the institution generally overlooks social class as a valuable aspect of diversity, especially since economic status is not a protected class, but the institution does not view lower-class students as hostile or undesirable. While many individual students and faculty express prejudicial beliefs about the lower classes, those prejudices do not represent the majority, nor do I believe those prejudices carry over to administrations. The problem with enrolling lower-class students is one of economic demand and bureaucracy. And the fact that the SAIL program exists means the administration at the UO has an interest in including students who

159

could easily be ignored. The "exteriority within" these students bring to the university, whether they ultimately enroll here or not, changes the university's constitutive makeup. Not only will the SAIL program encourage more lower-class students to enroll, but more faculty and grads will encounter the diversity of thought that accompanies lower economic status. On one hand, programs like these, at least to a certain degree, socialize students into campus life so they will be manageable. But on the other hand, students bring their difference into the institution, changing the landscape. The university continues to work as a "state apparatus" that reproduces its own thoughts and assumptions (Udas and Stagg 75). However, the elements that maintain that reproduction change. The subtle but constant evolution of the social imaginary becomes an element of the institution's remaking (Legg 131).

The hybrid social spaces that SAIL encourages change the future makeup of the student body, but perhaps more importantly, they change the immediate intellectual makeup of faculty and graduate volunteers. Occupying a privileged place in the university brings with it a tendency toward a "zero point epistemology" (Mignolo 162), or a habit of assuming a subject-object attitude when interacting with academic outsiders. Dwelling within collisions of conflicting D/discourses makes that hierarchical tendency more difficult to fall back on. The same goes for the hybrid classes in the Inside-Out program and the literacy counterpublics of the CLC and CWC. Selective universities have too often disregarded or even disapproved of nonacademic people in surrounding neighborhoods, and intentionally constructing nonhierarchical, hybridized spaces begins to set assumptions and attitudes straight. Mathieu argues that community projects should be "local, specific, responsive, and timely" (114). I would take that argument further and say this sort of attentive duty to time, place, and individual needs will not work in public unless it has been cultivated inside the university. Research justice provides guidelines for operating

outside university walls that protect people and encourage good will. On a broader scale, changes to the social imaginary begin with an "ethics of care" that puts the idea of "the body multiple" at the center of reason (Taylor 15). The idea that we shape each other and depend on each other for self-identification changes the relationships between the inside and outside.

The convergence of multiplicity and care sum up my motivation for writing this dissertation, and the theoretical underpinnings of my arguments have all worked toward encouraging the sort of body multiple Taylor expresses. Within our differences, we find shared values, as demonstrated by the ingenuity of SAIL students and the curiosity of Inside-Out students. If we think of academia as a secondary D/discourse, or a stance we take in the world that resembles a second language more than a personality trait, differences become a matter of mutual inquiry. The "radical love" (Jolivétte 5) of beginning with genuine curiosity and care rather than a "zero point epistemology" (Mignolo 162) humanizes people and changes limiting assumptions in academia. Informal, flexible attitudes toward the values of less educated, less wealthy members of communities do not necessarily come naturally to higher education, but those attitudes can grow with experience. The institution can nurture some of these habits of thought by doing things like teaching *argument as inquiry*, connecting with low-income students in the SAIL program, or hybridizing classrooms to include people in prison. But to transform the relationship between campus and community, we need guidance from the outside. Stopping social reproduction means letting go of old habits. It means arguing less and listening more.

Listening as a Nonargumentative Tactic

If I were to compare the idea of an *argumentative strategy* to the idea of a *nonargumentative tactic*, I would be willing to bet most people would find a more positive

connotation in the former. Universities have strategic plans for future improvement. So do cities. Likewise, argument sounds like active change, unlike nonargument, which sounds inactive and neutral. However, as illustrated by De Certeau, tactics function in immediate situations, adapting to find outcomes in the moment (xix), increasing possibilities for flexibility, creativity, and care. And nonargument leaves room for multiple perspectives to exist at once, a feature of shared inquiry. The immediacy and flexibility of nonargumentative tactics might go further in stopping the reproduction of social class and interrupting the inside-outside paradigm of education. Strategies do not have to be abandoned, but we also have room for other approaches, especially when collaborating with lower-class publics.

I am aware of potential criticisms of nonargumentative, nonstrategic approaches to community building. One is that nonargument could be seen as nothing more than a sneaky way of arguing, the real objectives hidden behind a friendly front. Another is that nonargument could be interpreted as a sort of complacency that does not challenge injustice. And finally, I am aware that nobody is a blank slate. In diverse social situations, we inevitably hope that others will eventually come around to our own thinking. Rather than rushing to rebut these complications, I would like to allow them to remain open questions to be addressed as they arise. While tactical, mutually beneficial action between campus and community will never be done completely "right," the pathways it opens point us in the direction of justice and give us a horizon to pursue. The idea of nonargumentative community building changes the conversation from meeting objectives and performing evaluation to valuing relationships and honoring possibility, and difficult questions are part of the landscape.

Just as *argument as inquiry* increases possibility by letting these complications stand, the university could increase possibility with the public by centering communication on public

162

suggestions and grievances. Breaking communication habits that reproduce subject-object

relationships requires looking outside the institution for fresh approaches. As an example of a

nonargumentative style of communication free from institutional limitations, Deeyah Khan

demonstrates what could be called *tactical listening*—with striking results—in her journalistic

work with extremist groups around the world, including jihadis and white supremacists. As a

woman born in Norway of Afghani and Pakistani Muslim parents, Khan grew up in an

environment of prejudice. She dedicated her journalism to understanding cultural conflict and

advocating for multicultural solutions to civic discord. After receiving a flood of hate mail and

death threats following a BBC interview, she decided to try to meet with the extremists behind

the threats to "get behind the hatred and extremist ideology to find out what they are really like

as human beings" (*White Right* 5:55). In her resulting documentary, *White Right: Meeting the

Enemy*, she interviews white supremacists, not with the goal of confrontation or argument, but to

simply understand who they are. By dedicating herself to listening while refraining from

argument or judgment, she eventually witnesses profound transformations.

Of the relationships she forms during the documentary, one stands out as most

remarkable: Khan's relationship with Jeff Schoep, Commander of the National Socialist

Movement (NSM) and most prominent neo-Nazi organizer in America. In her initial interview

with him, Khan acts tactically, adjusting her questions to Schoep's answers. While a tactic can be

interpreted as a move toward gaining leverage or advantage (as in tactical warfare), she uses

tactics of care. More in line with De Certeau's definition of a tactic as informal, timely and "on

the watch for opportunities" (xix), Khan listens without an agenda, leaving questions open-

ended, allowing Schoep to speak for as long as he chooses and refraining from responding with

163

anything other than another question. She embraces the contingencies of the situation and uses questions to help him explain his reasoning as thoroughly as possible.

Schoep explains the ideology of the NSM, a fight to preserve white culture and identity. He characterizes multiculturalism as a plot against the white race, perpetuated by mass media controlled by Jews, to "dumb down the population and…make us easier to control." She listens without interruption until he has said everything he wants to say and then asks, "What if you're wrong?" Her question has no tone of argument or accusation, but stands simply. Schoep becomes visually uncomfortable, smiles awkwardly, and says, "That doesn't really come into play very often in my head. I…I really haven't questioned if I'm doing the wrong thing." She allows significant time and silence for him to formulate an answer, but he remains unable. She then asks what attracted him initially to the ideology Hitler expressed in *Mein Kampf*. He awkwardly smiles, fidgets, and says, "it was a long time ago." She reassures him that she only wants to understand his feelings, since it was an important point in his life. After a long, uncomfortable pause, he says, "My mind is wandering right now. Like, I think I'm kind of getting burned out on the questions or something." Near the end of the interview, she reads him some of the threatening e-mails she had received after the BBC interview. He becomes visibly upset, shaking his head with closed eyes. He condemns the threatening language, saying he does not condone illegal activity or violence and finally explains, "I understand the people's anger. I understand where it's coming from. When a people feel they are being genocided (*sic*) and their whole world is changing around them, I understand why they have those reactions." The racial slurs dismay him, and he asks her not to use them in reference to herself. He also distances himself from the racist and threatening comments by repeatedly referring to those who verbally attacked her as "they," even though he is a commander in a large white supremacist movement that feeds

their beliefs. Although Khan speaks only to ask short, simple questions, Schoep eventually loses his words and can only shake his head (6:15-10:33).

The idea of tactical, rather than strategic, intervention has become a popular idea in community literacy, and Khan's interactions with Schoep both affirm and trouble current best practices. The idea of tactical listening without objective ends might seem a bit *laissez-fair* to some. A valid argument can be made that work with the community should be done in the pursuit of justice. And tactics, just as in warfare, should be used to find an advantage for arguing toward just ends. Eli Goldblatt recognizes that the campus and the public need to be dehierarchized, but he also sees a tactical approach as one that leverages power toward that goal. As a social equalizer, Goldblatt suggests a "theory of action devised for neighborhoods rather than for higher education" (123). His tactical methods speak to activism, not nonargumentative collaboration. As a model, he turns to Saul Alinsky, political organizer and activist who had a hand in growing the power of labor unions in the 50s, 60s, and 70s. Goldblatt presents a list of principles gleaned from Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals* that he believes would equalize the working relationship between the university and community:

1. Draw on the inevitability of class and group conflict as well as the unpredictability of events for your creativity to invent tactics that fit the moment.

2. Be guided by a broadly defined sense of self-interest, taking on multiple issues, and encouraging all other participants to do the same.

3. Try to see every situation in as stark a light as possible, unblurred by ideological imperatives, traditional hatreds, or conventional moralities.

4. Communicate with others on their own ground, amassing personal experience and solid relationships among the people with whom you intend to work.

165

5. Respect the dignity of people by creating the conditions for them to be active participants in solving their own problems rather than victims or mere recipients of aid.

6. Shape educational experiences that matter in people's lives by helping individuals identify issues they can grasp and do something about.

7. Build the leadership capacity of the group being organized and take as the goal the independent functioning of that community (Cited in Goldblatt 128).

Khan's tactical listening intersects with this list of tactical techniques for activism, but her focus on care diverges from Alinsky's focus on combat. Khan buys into ideas like building relationships on people's own ground, looking past ideology, and allowing people to be active participants in solutions. However, she does not use conflict to her advantage or act solely in self-interest. An activist would criticize her for missing opportunities to forward just causes, or even question her judgment for showing compassion to a clear enemy.

While Alinsky's methods have produced results in the political arena, I have reservations about using his combative tactics. While his union organizers worked toward just causes, their intention was not to understand commonalities and differences across D/discourses but to make allies to crush the opposition, flattening complexity to simplify arguments and win at any cost. Their collective action serves as "a most potent weapon" of "warfare" (Alinsky 129). The seven principles from Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals* presented by Goldblatt represent tactics for bringing people together on one side of an issue, but the bulk of Alinsky's tactics center around disrupting and discrediting the opponent by any means necessary. To contrast the kind and generous side of Alinsky presented by Goldblatt, I will reference a few of the more hard-nosed tactics from Alinsky's list of thirteen rules:

- The first rule: "Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have."

166

- The third rule: "Whenever possible go outside of the experience of the enemy."

- The fifth rule: "Ridicule is man's most potent weapon."

- The twelfth rule: "The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative."

- The thirteenth rule: "Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it. (126-30).

Theses rules represent tactical combat rather than tactical care, based on deceit, polarization, and insult. I find the twelfth rule particularly troublesome. Alinsky's refusal to accept a "constructive alternative" contradicts methods of ethical decision-making that create new possibilities and commons, as it places ideology ahead of relationships. He fears the enemy's "sudden agreement" will thwart the attack by forcing civil dialogue (130). While civil dialogue can be a front for a kind of "polite" dialogue that perpetuates the status quo, a more cooperative ethics insists the use of genuine civil dialogue should still be a goal.

To be clear, I am not condemning Alinsky's methods or these tactics. The pursuit of justice should not limit itself to polite or even civil discourse. For example, Gage reflects on the idea of incivility as a counterweight to discourses that have become too overbearing ("In Pursuit" 35). Freire also espouses oppositional tactics, claiming, "With the establishment of a relationship of oppression, violence has *already* begun. Never in history has violence been initiated by the oppressed" (Freire 37). In the context of community literacy projects, the idea of oppressor and oppressed matters, and an understanding of community hinges on an understanding of the power differentials and injustices people in a particular community face. The question becomes a matter of where to draw the line. Khan uses care to bring Schoep into the same space as her before challenging any of his oppressive behavior. The good will she offers opens his heart, and when her questions become more critical, they come across as the concern of a friend rather than a counterpunch at an enemy. While her tactics of care can be criticized, especially considering the

167

hateful background of her interviewee, she brings about a change in his humanity rather than forcing him to retreat or attack.

Schoep had agreed to only one hour for his interview with Khan, but it lasted five hours at his own request. He and Khan went on to spend many hours together, from the interview in 2017 until the present, and he eventually left the movement altogether and started speaking for peace. On a podcast with Simon Sinek, Khan explains why Schoep had spent so much time with her in the initial interview. While he had done many interviews in the past, none had gone the way hers had. Until then, interviews had had one of two outcomes: either he dominated the interviewer by arguing louder, or the interviewer backed him into a corner, allowing him to play victim. Either way he won. However, nobody had simply listened and let him express all his feelings ("Extreme Listening" 15:45-16: 52). For her project with white supremacists, Khan began with the question, "Can I find a way of understanding them as human beings?" (13:30) and decided, "I'm just going to listen, and I'm going to wait until the human being starts coming out" (14:30). With Schoep, as well as most others she interviewed, it took very little time for the human being to appear.

When Sinek asks how we can learn to listen the way she does, Khan answers, if you want to truly listen to someone you disagree with,

> you first have to figure out why you want to have the encounter…. Allow for people to finish. Allow for people to empty whatever the stuff is. And once they've emptied, it's kind of like a rag has been wrung…and finally we can really speak. It takes time….You have to sit in your discomfort (39:55-40:26).

While she enters encounters with objectives, those objectives center on learning, not arguing or asserting her own agenda. She also expresses a certain amount of cost to self. The experience

168

might not be pleasant, and the unpleasantness will last as long as it needs to for the "rag" to be "wrung." Silence in the face of hateful speech can trigger thoughts of oppressed people, silenced by dominant races, genders, or classes, but Khan's listening differs. Her position as an interviewer and filmmaker gives her control, and she has the power to end the interview at any time. This positioning changes social dynamics in a similar way student positionality in the composition classroom can change the classroom ecology. Khan practices a type of thinking that could be compared to *argument as inquiry*, aiming to understand every angle of an issue as D/discourses shape each other. Demonstrating a deep understanding of the issues can be more persuasive than making logical points.

She goes on to express the complex nature of power and responsibility with the end of developing relationships, not winning arguments:

If we don't listen, then we don't understand what makes somebody tick. We don't understand what value they actually can bring to you and what learning they can actually bring to you. There's no reason somebody is going to listen to you if you're not willing to listen first. In order to build a relationship of trust that's based on dignity and respect, somebody has to make that gesture first. And it most likely not going to come from the neo-Nazi first (41:38-42:15).

The contrast between Khan, an educated, award-winning journalist, and the white supremacists, who are largely lower-class, less-educated men, presents complicated power dynamics. By allowing her adversaries to express the reasoning behind their claims, she does not acquiesce to their beliefs, and she does not tacitly condone racism. Rather, she sees knowledge as empowerment for all involved, and understanding what makes an adversary "tick" is a step toward connecting as two human beings. Her many metaphors of getting below the surface to see

169

the human beneath make it clear that, in a Freirian sense, oppressive racist ideology damages to not only those oppressed but the oppressor as well. And when she speaks with someone who damages themselves and others by wearing layers of ideology, she is the one with the power to initiate change. This stance comes with controversy, as work done in feminism, queer theory, and critical race theory tell us that the underprivileged have been responsible for educating the overprivileged for too long, and voices of the oppressor should no longer be platformed. These arguments are not wrong, and my admiration for Deeyah Khan does not diminish them. However, in consideration of the ever-evolving conditions in a rhetorical ecology, this sort of tactical listening also has a place. And if Khan can build relationships with white supremacists with tactics of care, imagine the possibilities for building relationships with friendlier communities.

Khan's tactical listening shows the transformative power of sustained, noncoercive human contact, but she has the luxury of keeping her agenda open-ended. Her role as a journalist makes her responsible for ethical interviews and truthfulness, but she bears no responsibility for the actions of others. However, when educational institutions are involved, dialogic spaces will always be pedagogical sites. From Khan's point of view, the scholarly treatment of human issues through abstract theory "makes you feel hopeless. It makes you feel there's nothing to be done, and certainly nothing for you to do" (37:27-37:40). I whole-heartedly agree, but when instructors take on responsibility for the well-being of others, parameters around cooperation must be respected. The university's outcome-oriented structure might be able to be relaxed somewhat when interacting with the community, but commitments to curricula, mission, and responsible teaching will always play a part, even outside the classroom. Educators should pay heed to Khan's warning against listening as an academic exercise, but we must proceed mindfully.

Listening as a trope offers a new metaphor for understanding across difference and power in which one can "listen also for the exiled excess and contemplate its relation to our culture and our selves" (Ratcliffe 25). Krista Ratcliffe's rhetorical listening locates that which has been ignored, disregarded, or undervalued by understanding the power that stifles it. When treated as a trope, regardless of whether one is engaging written or audio text,[21] the nonargumentative attitude of listening becomes "a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any other person, text, or culture" (25). This stance of openness and attention to cultural positioning feels familiar. I try to adopt this stance in the classroom, and especially in office hours. But openness to others does not build relationships; active acceptance does. An open heart remains invisible and ineffective in silence. One cannot listen for "exiled excess" when the other does not talk. And lower-class students and community members often stay silent in situations with higher-class, richer people.

Ratcliffe's attitude is in the right place, but Khan's habit of making sure the other speaks not only first but as continually as possible requires not just tactical listening, but tactical questioning. For Khan, by the time the "rag" has been "wrung," the people involved in the interview have reached a new place. Rather than engaging in a "cross-cultural exchange" (Ratcliffe 73), they have emerged from a diffractive pattern into a third reality. And in this third reality, they do not need to culturally understand each other—they need to see the humanity behind each other's emotional beliefs. Ratcliffe argues that striving to understand both commonality and differences between each other creates the space to "appreciate that the other person is not simply wrong but rather functioning from within a different logic" (33). Her argument is valid, but Khan addresses a fuller set of rhetorical appeals by getting her

---

[21] As a generator of openness and possibility, all of the senses, beyond seeing and hearing, could be included in rhetorical listening.

interviewee's emotional reasoning into the open. I believe when Khan expresses the hopelessness of applying abstract theory to human situations, she is referring to the academic tendency to value logic disproportionately over emotion and lived experience. The subtle but important difference between listening to understand and listening to hybridize into a new reality separates her from Ratcliffe. Ratcliffe has revolutionized academic thought on listening, but Khan adds a much-needed perspective that provides missing aspects of reasoning when interacting with the lower classes.

Tactical listening uses care to encourage the speaker to empty all their thoughts and feelings until they can open themselves to new reasoning. This is what Boyle means when he describes rhetoric as a practice that informs bodies: "Once a body is informed, that body continues exercising its tendencies until they become saturated and another body resolves, activating new capacities" (27). When I worked with lower-class student writers in the SAIL program, I felt the urge to give them productive starting points for reasoning that would most likely get the attention of admission readers. When they explained their drafting plans, my instincts told me to interrupt, clarify, and nudge them in better directions. If I had done so, I would not have given them the space to "wring their rags" (their "saturated" bodies of knowledge and emotion) and guide me to a new reality where we could have a deeper conversation. Instead of interrupting with constructive criticism, I let them talk until they finished. Then I asked questions to keep them talking longer. Listening for understanding, even with a cross-cultural focus, did not get us to a third reality; we reached that place only when students talked more than they had planned to talk, drifting into their casual thoughts and feelings about applying to college. A plan to write about developing independence by living in a single-parent household could develop into something more. For example, growing up in such a

172

household means extra concern for siblings and an ability to bring care to situations involving others. When students become "saturated" with the practice of surviving in difficult homes, their experiences eventually "resolve, activating new capacities." These new capacities, or deeper expression of values and abilities, intersect with values and abilities the university looks for. The capacity to bring care to interpersonal situations adds emotion and personal testimony to make a more poignant case. I did not direct students to use these rhetorical appeals; they arrived at the decisions by sifting through their thoughts and feelings in a space where they remained the center of attention for as long as it took. When they finally got to a place where they could see the inseparability of logic and personal feelings, they discovered a truth that could connect with a broad range of others. Khan's interviewees began to feel changes in their systems of belief as she let them express all their thoughts and feelings. The SAIL students experienced evolutions of thought, too.

Principles for Campus-Community Collaboration

With tactical listening, the institution can learn to shape learning objectives around community needs. If, as Warner claims, "A public is a space of discourse [that] exists *by virtue of being addressed*" (50), then publics appear and transform in the moment, depending on who is talking and listening. And if, as Fraser claims, publics are multiple and "constituted by conflict" (61), the act of listening opens possibility for changes yet unimagined. The hybrid characteristics of publics transfer to semi-publics, as illustrated by institutional programs that refrain from imposing values on *others* and encourage a "collaboratively supported style of dissensus" (Flower 40). Emily Simnitt explains the importance of preparing students for literacy sites while also trusting them to exercise care. Setting parameters and "giving people cues on how to

173

perform" causes them to "perform like students" instead of engaging and deliberating. When students enter a situation with an understanding of multiple literacies and the power of the institution to dominate those literacies, "it makes organic things happen." Public citizens do not conform to roles and stick to narrow objectives, and neither should community literacy projects. This stance of openness exemplifies an attitude of possibility rather than limitation.

The organic possibilities of attentiveness, flexibility, and care exemplify the central concerns of community literacy projects. House trusted the public to deliberate and circulate discourse around local food practices. Cohen built learning objectives around the preservation of dignity in the Inside-Out prison project. And Khan invited white supremacists to empty out all their feelings until they were ready to connect human-to-human. All these cases of successful collaboration involved deep reflection on relationships as the central concern for learning. They also demonstrated how people's best natures rise to the top when they feel heard. Expert discourse in universities might not always be received the way we would like, but it is always heard. The same cannot be said for lower-class community discourse. If the university is to mend its damaged relationship with the lower classes, it needs to put aside the urges to explain, teach, help, mentor, and socialize. As a new starting place, an attitude of attentiveness, flexibility, and care can replace all of these.

Given the power differential between lower-class communities and the university, the university has a responsibility to initiate contact. However, making initial contact should not serve as justification for taking the lead. The goal should be to become a friend to the community without an agenda. The act of being together generates possibilities for hybridizing discursive spaces and, eventually, recognition of mutual problems. The following principles for campus-community collaboration create conditions for mutually beneficial relationships.

174

Begin with tactical listening. Rather than beginning with objectives, proposals, or negotiations, teachers and students should spend significant time listening. De Certeau's definition of a tactic, as informal, adjustable, and operational in a specific time and place (xix), serves this open attitude well. And Taylor's "ethics of care," a stance that acknowledges the shared fate of self and others (15), reminds listeners to break the habit of using tactics for leverage. Tactical listening includes not only asking questions and encouraging others to talk, but also being present and patient enough to develop a deep understanding of other logics and emotional appeals. Used as a trope, it includes any activity that allows the expressions of others to shape our own beliefs and feelings. For example, volunteering in a nonacademic capacity means taking in community expression without imposing our own. When we treat listening as an end in itself, rather than argumentative invention, any future proposal or agenda will be a shared one that benefits the community.

Exercise research justice. By making each interaction an "active disruption" of social inequality (Jolivétte 5), we demonstrate the kind of "radical love" (7) that creates genuine bonds between people. People in lower-class communities become researchers themselves, not research subjects. They pursue topics that matter to them, and once scholars understand why those topics matter, they can collaborate more productively. Literacy ethnographies have forwarded ideas of justice in education, but perhaps shared inquiry better suits our current needs. Studying less privileged people does not directly give back to the community, but learning together benefits everyone. Just as listening can serve friendship rather than argument, so can research serve friendship rather than scholarship. When relationships are the ends rather than the means, we learn that nobody is who we expect them to be. Possibilities for future research increases, and

limitations of seeing people as research subjects no longer get in the way of deeper understanding.

Hybridize spaces. If we listen without an agenda and treat community members as friends rather than objects of study, we form new communities where people can see themselves in new roles. Even with unavoidable limit-situations, such as the rules that must be followed to maintain the Inside-Out prison program, a stance of openness causes people who may be very different to shape each other's beliefs and values. Khan expresses the importance of being the first one to open up, and the act of opening up begins a process of hybridization. Lower-class D/discourse clashes with academia, but when people from lower-class communities find even footing to express themselves, shared problems become clearer. When Flower's Risk and Stress Project put teens into contact with adults with different beliefs and ways of expression, an unexpected project on police violence in the teens' neighborhoods resulted (63). Without time and contact in a dehierarchized space, they would not have had a platform to develop their ideas in ways that were understandable to others. Not only does the hybridization of literacy sites make it clear that we can all add to each other's communities, but it also makes clear that campus and community are not separate from each other. People can come together in any combination at any time.

Do not try to be right. It is easy to assume the lower social classes lack decision-making abilities. To most college educated people, choosing a gang over school seems like a bad decision. So does voting conservative. Lower-class people across identities seem to be in bad situations, and we educated people wish they would adopt more of our kinds of thinking. But when radically different D/discourses collide, emergent third realities (Barad 75) shed new light on disagreement. We see each other's logics and shift our own perspectives. Dissensus in such a *kairotic* space breaks binary positions and makes new relationships possible. In the Inside-Out

176

project, people in prison formed genuine friendships with university students, even though their decisions had taken them down very different paths. Deeyah Khan befriended racists despite the irreconcilability of their beliefs with her own. With most projects, community members' beliefs and values will be more alike those of university educated people's than different. Frowning on lower-class values will not bring us together, but finding shared values will. Attitudes of care cause everyone's best qualities rise to the top.

Acknowledge the rhetorical power of lower-class discourse. When I think back to Chapter Two and my interactions with Sam, I realize he repositioned himself in the university by telling his story. He needed to use personal and emotional appeals to determine his role. The same goes for the larger community. When we hierarchize different literacies and expression, we devalue human beings. And when people feel dehumanized, they cannot imagine occupying successful, important, or joyful roles in society. Lack of power is lack of positioning, and when language positions people as unsophisticated, illogical, and immoral, people on top push them into those roles. By valuing lower-class logics and expression equally, we will not only understand the community better, but we will see how the lower classes already constitute the university. Campus-community collaborations should be led by the community and conducted in the language of the community.

The difficulty of navigating campus-community relationships is what makes them necessary and worthwhile, and keeping in mind principles for relationship building increases possibilities for moving ahead together. Just as Khan turns away from persuasion as a rhetorical end and dedicates her energy to relationships themselves, opportunities arise, to varying degrees, to do the same in campus-community collaborations. The examples I have shown throughout the chapter represent these principles to varying degrees, and my purpose in examining how

177

different programs navigate their institutional situations is not meant as a critique but consideration of the many different priorities that influence decisions. Community literacies are not always and only about underprivileged people, but the work done between the university and underprivileged communities has the most impact on society. Partnerships will always be imperfect, but we can work to continually improve them. People in the lower classes have much to say about learning, and listening to them will change the university for the better.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Lower-class status is one of the main obstacles to gaining higher education (Lehmann; Muzzatti and Samarco; Sennett and Cobb; Jack; Aries and Seider; Rothstein; Stuber; Sullivan; Walpole), and its intersection with all other identities makes accessibility for the lower classes an urgent priority. I have chosen to focus on lower-class people's relationships with selective universities, because the practices at these universities bar most poorer students from entrance and marginalize those who make it to the inside. Politically, state budgets, financial institutions, and underfunded secondary schools make education an uphill battle—these obstacles remain horizonal goals that drive my inquiry. But I have concerned myself with social practices that change attitudes. The devaluation of lower-class logics and expression that relegate poorer students and community members to the outside do not occur naturally. They are stories we tell ourselves, and stories can be revised. Sam, the low-income student from my Winter 2022 study, changes the narrative of student success by rhetorically positioning himself as an agent in a bureaucratic system that does not recognize him. His choices earn him a failing grade, but a collective failure of the people and mechanisms around him also contribute. By following his progress through the institution, many assumptions about student life and responsibilities begin to fall away.

Campus and community do not exist separately, even if stories about the inside and outside make it seem so. The exercises students go though in the university prepare them for decision-making in their communities, and the more relationships the university builds with surrounding communities, the more connected to the real world students will be. By creating socially complex situations, the composition classroom can be a place where students develop

personal qualities that prepare them for the unknowable challenges of public life. I envision better relationships between universities and local communities, but more importantly, I envision students who leave college with a deeper understanding of the body multiple that constitutes communities. Attitudes of openness and care could be an engine for dehierarchizing the classroom, campus, community ecology.

A dehierarchized classroom explicitly invites different D/discourses to shape each other, an act that I consider a leap of faith. As bell hooks explains, "[f]ear of losing control in the classroom often leads individual professors to fall into a conventional teaching pattern wherein power is used destructively" (188). But as Paul Kameen explains, we are all "motivated to do some sort of 'good' though our work" (216), and even though the tensions can either "enliven or disrupt" (217), these tensions constitute the classroom. If we resist the fear of chaos, we encounter the positive intentions within it. A *kairotic* space reactive to immediate exchanges rather than conventional academic discourse honors student interpretation and frees difference from negative assumptions. Perhaps most importantly, when students see their beliefs, values, and ways of being represented in curricula and discussions, they see themselves as agents in an ecology rather than outsiders looking in. And when we cultivate these creative spaces of possibility in the classroom, students and teachers carry the experiences with them to the community. The ideas of losing control and teaching through disruption sound unpleasant, but any teacher who wants to stop participating in the social reproduction built into higher education must be ready to seize those moments.

I began this dissertation with the desire to create a program to restore agency to lower-class students in selective universities, broaden the social imaginary to normalize lower-class culture and expression, and carry these paradigm-changing attitudes to the public. This

transformation of the campus-community ecology feels simultaneously overwhelming and simple: overwhelming because it challenges long-standing assumptions about how education and society operate, and simple because it all starts with a single shift in thinking. Social structures and political power exist in the mind, and when our collective mindsets change, so do they. We live in a time of rapid social change. Social movements, combined with technology, have regularly reversed public opinion and belief. An organized and concerted effort to broadcast the value of lower-class people in higher education could make similar headway. An overhaul to the system is not a naïve or utopian idea—it just takes cooperative thinking.

While I have suggested changing the mindset in several ways within and without the university walls, if I were to choose one place of action, it would be the first-year composition classroom. The size and scope of FYC in the United States prompts Duffy to call for a reckoning of what we have done with this "extraordinary opportunity" to evaluate our ethical approaches to communication (21). In my opinion, the exclusion of lower-class voices represents a failure of composition and the university to fulfill an ethical mission. While that ethical shortcoming exists as a limit-situation, it gives instructors a focal point for improvement. Universities and English departments have become steadily more inclusive over the past hundred years, and an examination of lower-class exclusion could be the next challenge. The shift in mindset that leads to opening the gates of education can begin with the normalization of lower-class ideas, values, and ways of being in the composition classroom.

Shared inquiry brings us all together. When students feel free to express their own thoughts and values while investigating mutual problems, they feel like they belong in academia. In situations where we can all express ourselves without compromising our personalities, we humanize each other. When I teach a group of students who embrace dissensus as a shared

181

practice of knowledge production, I feel a togetherness that I rarely feel elsewhere. During those

terms of togetherness, I learn more about them. More students visit my office hours. More ask

for my help or advice. More do extra work on assignments and class activities. Most importantly,

they become friends with each other, increasing the possibilities for carrying the spirit of care

outside the classroom. Students and I do not experience this sense of togetherness in every

course. While students feel at home discussing social justice in class, not all of them have been

in learning situations that emphasize care for the individuals immediately surrounding them. But

when a group of students embraces their differences on a personal level, the likelihood of

camaraderie increases. This intangible mindset defies traditional assessment, but I can detect it

qualitatively in their language. Students write papers that demonstrate how different viewpoints

shape each other. They write reflections that show how carefully they've thought about others as

they wrote. They also listen to others during class activities and ask each other questions rather

than just answering mine. Their thoughtful attitudes come across as practical wisdom: they

challenge each other's ideas while paying close attention to each other's right to speak. They

understand their own positionalities and work to understand the positionalities of others. They

perpetuate a kind of civil dissensus and continue to move ahead with inquiry. With shared

inquiry comes pathways for discovering personal agency in cooperation with others.

     I imagine a large-scale commitment to cooperative dissensus in the classroom—the kind

of community building dissensus that diversifies thought inside the institution and helps students

develop the right mindset to deliberate in public as equals. The lower classes would benefit from

a wave of students with these values graduating and entering communities, but the benefits

would not end with them. Any underprivileged person benefits from mutual problem solving and

tactics of care. And privileged groups benefit as well, as oppression dehumanizes both oppressor

and oppressed (Freire 25). Teachers could treat the development of practical wisdom as a learning objective. Might it even become part of the mission for entire departments, or nationwide for the Writing Program Administration? A sustained emphasis on the good of others prepares students to enter the messy business of public deliberation with a sense of equality and care rather than point-counterpoint. People in the lower classes, who have been overlooked or misrepresented in education and the broader world of media and text, will gain a stronger voice. Cultivating a spirit of genuine curiosity and care in the composition classroom pays off long after students graduate.

APPENDIX A

WRITING 123 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In WR 123, students can expect to deepen their understanding of WR 121 outcomes by engaging in a critically reflective academic research writing process. Students will:

1. frame and assess research questions in a discipline-appropriate manner, remaining open to exploration throughout the process;

2. critically evaluate and synthesize multiple topic and genre-appropriate sources, then articulate their findings in a genre-appropriate manner;

3. develop audience awareness through a process of collaborative review and revision of their writing based on the feedback of peers and instructors;

4. describe and practice a critical research process, including finding and gaining familiarity with scholarly sources;

5. identify and critically apply style conventions for writing in an academic context.

APPENDIX B

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER

For this essay, you'll present a complex issue and make an important claim about it. Make an argument while also fairly and honestly expressing viewpoints other than your own. The point of this essay is not to prove that you are right and someone else is wrong, but to make a specific claim, backed up by reasoning and evidence, within a larger, unresolved conversation. Convince your audience that your argument is a good one, but also demonstrate your ability to fairly and accurately express disagreements, difficulties, and complexities.

Length: **10-12 pages**

- This draft can be rough, but it must be a complete draft to have a chance for full points on the peer review

The essay needs to include:

- **An enthymeme**. The enthymeme should clearly state your central claim and the reasoning behind your claim. It should be structured correctly (with a shared term, reasoning that isn't circular, etc.). The enthymeme, which is a reasoned answer to a single question, acts as your thesis.
- **Multiple perspectives** (i.e., at least one counterargument). Demonstrate, in a fair and ethical way, that the question you're addressing is "at issue" by explaining the reasoning behind viewpoints that challenge or complicate your own. But always bring the reader back to your own claim by rebutting or following up on these conflicting perspectives. The audience should feel that you've considered the situation broadly and remain confident that your claim is an important one. *Note: you don't have to explicitly state your research question—it is implied by your enthymeme.*
- **Evidence**

  o Include and cite evidence from at least one reading used in class discussion (i.e., Davis, Rodriguez, etc.). You are welcome to use more if you choose.
  o Include and cite evidence from at least two scholarly outside sources. You are welcome and encouraged to use more.
  o You <u>must</u> use at least five sources total. I don't recommend using more than about ten.

- **An organization** that allows you to effectively present your argument. Your audience should understand your central idea and details about that idea throughout the paper without feeling lost. Paragraphs should be coherent internally and in relation to each other. The arrangement should make your argument clear.
- **In text MLA citations** for all quotes, paraphrases, and summaries that are not your own. Must be formatted correctly.
- **A Works Cited page**, formatted correctly in MLA style. Refer to one of the online resources (I suggest the OWL) and my examples on Canvas as guides.

APPENDIX C

PERPSECTIVES ACTIVITY

It has been proposed in state congress that an eco-friendly state prison be built inside the city limits of Eugene, about a mile away from campus. Here are some details of the situation:

- The old state prison is in bad repair, and prisoners live in uncomfortable conditions
- An environmental study shows a new facility wouldn't be as eco-friendly as originally promised, but still better for the environment than other prisons
- Officials say the facility would be safe, but neighborhood organizations question its safety
- Building it would require a vote for a small increase in taxes for the next three years
- If the state prison isn't built, a private "for profit" prison might be built instead
- A private "for profit" prison would cost tax payers half as much as the state prison would
- If a private prison is built, it will be outside the city limits, but not eco-friendly
- A political action group is protesting "for profit" prisons as abusive and underregulated
- Another political action group is protesting the attention to prisons rather than crime prevention
- "Law and order" politicians argue a new prison will be good for the economy, and they support the private "for profit" option

APPENDIX D

FICTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Frist Perspective:
You live in the neighborhood where the proposed state prison is proposed to be built. You are middle-class and slightly left of center, believing in a strong criminal justice system but unhappy about privatized prisons. Criminals need to pay, but the system should be as compassionate as possible. You are middle-aged. If you had children they are grown, so school districts are not an issue you're worried about. You are generally in favor of paying taxes for things that are needed. Still, you enjoy your neighborhood as it is.

1. What is your stance (claim)?
2. List all the reasons you can think of that would support your claim.

Second Perspective
You are lower-class and conservative. You are against taxes and in favor of privatization of government services, such as the post office, sanitation, and even some emergency services. You do not want to pay for social programs, including those that prevent crime. You have spent some time in a private prison for a non-violent offense, and it was a horrible experience. You have heard that state prisons are better maintained than private prisons and wish you had been able to do your time there instead. Neither the in-town state prison nor the out-of-town private prison would be built near you.

1. What is your stance (claim)?
2. List all the reasons you can think of that would support your claim.

Third Perspective
You are a left-wing activist who is against imprisonment. You believe putting someone in jail is inhumane, and every criminal should be rehabilitated by means other than prison time, even if their crimes were violent. There is no proposal in congress for creating non-prison types of rehabilitation, and you are worried that whatever plan is passed will be the cruelest possible. Your political views are part of a small minority, and you know there is no way in the near future imprisonment will be abolished.

1. What is your stance (claim)?
2. List all the reasons you can think of that would support your claim.

APPENDIX E

READING RESPONSE ONE

Length—four paragraphs (about 2 pages)

For this assignment, please write four paragraphs in response to the prompt below. Do not treat this like an essay with an intro, body, and conclusion. I'd like you to simply follow the prompt.

Write a one-paragraph summary for each of the three readings we did this week: Davis, Clarke, and Lorde. Each summary should explain the biggest main idea while also giving specific details to show how the author made her point. **Use a quote** with a correct in-text citation for each author.

For the fourth paragraph, write about what you got from reading these texts together. You can go about this in multiple ways. For example, you could talk about an overriding point or sentiment you notice throughout. Or you could talk about a larger idea in current media that these readings provide insight for interpreting. You could even talk about how ideas in these readings clash with each other. However you choose to put these readings into relationship with each other, help me understand what kind of meaning or feeling these pieces provoke.

Use MLA formatting. Revisit my video demonstration from Week One if you need to see how it's done.

APPENDIX F

READING RESPONSE TWO

Length: about three pages

Part one: Write a one-paragraph summary for each of the readings we did this week: Malcolm X and Luis Rodriguez. Each summary should explain the biggest main idea while also giving specific details to show how the author made his point. **Use a quote** with a correct in-text citation for each author.

Part two: Consider ALL the readings so far (Lorde, Davis, Clarke, Rodriguez, Malcolm X). Also consider things that matter to you socially, politically, ethically, etc. Write a couple paragraphs that explain how your personal ideas and/or experiences relate to some of these readings. Use as many specifics as you can—specifics about the readings and specifics about your own feelings.

End this assignment by asking a question that emerges from this complex mix of scholarship and feelings. Make sure the question is "at issue."

APPENDIX G

EXPLORATORY PAPER

Length: 4-6 pages

In this paper, you will explore a topic that can be more fully developed later in your final research paper. The point of this paper is to establish the importance of your topic and convince your audience that it needs to be more thoroughly discussed. You will not be arguing for a solution or a correct point of view (you'll have a chance to do that in your final paper), but instead you'll be demonstrating that your topic is complicated, difficult, and in need of attention.

Center the entire essay around <u>one</u> question at issue. This is your research question. **Do not answer the question**. Instead, tell your audience what makes it "at issue." Write about multiple possible answers for multiple stakeholders. You can explain who the stakeholders are and what they have to win or lose. You can talk about the context surrounding the question and how the context complicates the issue at hand. You can talk about your personal feelings (without expressing only one answer). If your question has never been asked, you can hypothesize why. For example, tell us whose voices are missing and why they should be heard. Or maybe a similar question is routinely asked, but you propose asking it in a different way. There are countless ways to approach this task, but your goal is to convince your discourse community (the class and me) that the question needs to be asked, and that there is not a simple answer.

- Make your research question the title of the paper.
- Use the entire paper to show the complexity of the issue, using specifics. By citing specific texts, you'll be showing multiple perspectives. Remember, you are not arguing for your own perspective—you are showing multiple arguments that are causing your topic to remain unsettled. The more details you use from sources, the more complexity you'll be able to show.
- Cite <u>at least</u> two readings from class (in MLA style with page numbers). Optionally, you can also cite <u>no more</u> than two sources you find on your own. You'll have a chance to do more independent research with your final paper.
- In the last paragraph (and only in the last paragraph!) you will explain the argument you intend to make in your final paper. This paragraph will contain your logic and feelings. It will end with the <u>enthymeme</u> you plan to use in the final paper.
- Include a Works Cited. For this paper, the Works Cited doesn't have to be perfect, but it has to be recognizable as an MLA style Works Cited (not just cut-and-pasted websites, etc.).
- The entire paper should follow MLA formatting (see video from Week 1 if you need a refresher).

This paper will be peer reviewed. The review of your peer's paper will be worth 25 points, and you'll need to have this draft turned in to participate.

REFERENCES CITED

Alinsky, Saul. *Rules for Radicals*. Vintage, 1972.

Anzaldua, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

Aries, Elizabeth, and Maynard Seider. "The Interactive Relationship Between Class Identity and the College Experience: The Case of Lower Income Students." *Qualitative Sociology*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2005, pp. 419–43. *SpringerLink*, doi:10.1007/s11133-005-8366-1. Accessed 18 June 2019.

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated and edited by Roger Crisp, Cambridge UP, 2000.

---. *On Rhetoric*. 2nd ed., translated by George A. Kennedy, Oxford UP, 2007.

Barad, Karen Michelle. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke UP, 2007.

Bartholomae, David. "Inventing the University." *Journal of Basic Writing*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1986, pp. 4-23. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/43443456. Accessed 9 April 2021. Accessed12 May 2021.

Baxter, Arthur, and Carolyn Britton. "Risk, Identity and Change: Becoming a Mature Student." *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, vol. 11, no. 1, Mar. 2001, pp. 87–104. doi:10.1080/09620210100200066. Accessed 28 April 2019.

Bay, Jennifer L. "Research Justice as Reciprocity: Homegrown Research Methodologies." *Community Literacy Journal*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2019, pp. 7-25.

Bitzer, Lloyd F. "The Rhetorical Situation." 1968. *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, vol 1, 1992, pp. 1-14. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40237697. Accessed 8 July 2022.

Booth, Wayne C. *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent*. U of Notre Dame P, 1974.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge UP, 1977.

Boyle, Casey Andrew. *Rhetoric as a Posthuman Practice*. The Ohio State UP, 2018.

Braidotti, Rosi. *The Posthuman*. Polity Press, 2013.

Burke, Kenneth. *A Grammar of Motives*. 1969. U of California P, 1945.

---. *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method*. U of California P, 1966.

Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs. *Man Cannot Speak for Her*. Greenwood P, 1989.

Cedillo, Christina V. and Phil Bratta. "Relating Our Experiences: The Practice of Positionality Stories in Student-Centered Pedagogy." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 71, no. 2, 2019, pp. 215-40.

Chaput, Catherine. "Rhetorical Circulation in Late Capitalism: Neoliberalism and the Overdetermination of Affective Energy." *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2010, pp. 1-25.

Coe, Richard M. "Eco-Logic for the Composition Classroom." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1975, pp. 232-37.

Cohen, Shaul. Personal interview. 12 Feb. 2022.

Coogan, David. "Counterpublics in Housing: Reframing the Politics of Service-Learning." *College English*, vol. 67, no. 5, 2005, pp. 461-82. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/30044644. Accessed 4 Sept. 2021.

Cooper, Marilyn. "The Ecology of Writing." *College English*, vol. 4, 1986, pp. 364-75. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/377264. Accessed 2 Jan. 2021.

Crowley, Sharon. *Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays*. U of Pittsburgh P, 1998.

Cunio, Sterling. ASNN Press Conference with the Freedom 5." *YouTube*, streamed by Abolish Slavery National Network, 6 Oct. 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?app= desktop&v=0YSOOvN2Wzs&fbclid. Accessed 12 Oct. 2022.

Danisch, Robert. "Political Rhetoric in a World Risk Society." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2010, pp. 172-92.

De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. U of California P, 1984.

Deleuze, Giles. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. U of Minnesota P, 1987.

Delgado, Richard. "Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative." *Michigan Law Review*, vol. 87, no. 8, 1989, pp. 2411-41. *Law and Society Commons*, repository.law.umich.edu/mlr/vol87/iss8/10. Accessed 7 Aug. 2022.

De Ott, Andrea. "A Holistic Continuing Education Approach for Social Services Development: Promoting Partnerships Between Universities and Social Service Agencies." *Reflections*, vol. 26, no. 4, 2020, pp. 32-39. reflectionsnarrativesofprofessionalhelping.org/index.php/Reflections/ issue/view/136. Accessed 13 Aug. 2021.

Dobrin, Sidney I. *Postcomposition*. Southern Illinois UP, 2011.

Dobrin, Sidney I. and Christian R. Weisser. "Breaking Ground in Ecocomposition: Exploring Relationships Between Discourse and Environment." *College English*, 2002, vol. 64, no. 5, pp. 566-89. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3250754. Accessed 11 Nov. 2020.

Duffy, John. *Provocations of Virtue: Rhetoric, Ethics, and the Teaching of Writing*. Utah State UP, 2019.

Edbauer, Jenny. "Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2005, pp. 5-24.

Ehrenfeld, Dan. "'Sharing the World with Others': Rhetoric's Ecological Turn and the Transformation of the Networked Public Sphere." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 50, no. 5, 2020, pp. 305-20.

Elbow, Peter. *Vernacular Eloquence: What Speech Can Bring to Writing*. Oxford UP, 2012.

---. *Writing Without Teachers*. Oxford UP, 1973.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. 1st Evergreen ed., Grove P, 1991.

Fernandez, Lara. Personal interview. 1 Feb. 2022.

Finn, Patrick J. *Literacy with an Attitude: Educating Working-Class Children in Their Own Self-Interest*. State U of New York P, 1999.

Flower, Linda. *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Public Engagement*. Sothern Illinois UP, 2008.

Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." *Social Text*, 1990, vol. 25, no. 26, pp. 56-80. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/466240. Accessed 21 Aug. 2021.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Seabury P, 1970.

Gage, John. "In Pursuit of Rhetorical Virtue." *Lore*, 2005, pp. 29-37, www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/drwswebb/lore.html. Accessed 20 March 2021.

---. *The Shape of Reason: Argumentative Writing in College*. 4th ed., Pearson, 2006.

---. "What is *Phronesis*? Can It Be Taught?" *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2018, pp. 327-34. *Taylor and Francis*, doi: 10.1080/07350198.2018.1497882. Accessed 20 March 2021.

Gee, James Paul. *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*. 4th ed., Routledge, 2012.

Giroux, Henry A. *America on the Edge: Henry Giroux on Politics, Culture, and Education*. Palgrave MacMillian, 2006.

Goldblatt, Eli. *Because We Live Here: Sponsoring Literacy Beyond the College Curriculum*. Hampton P, 2007.

Graff, Gerald. *Clueless in Academe: How Schooling Obscures the Life of the Mind*. Yale UP, 2003.

Grijalva, Regina McManigell. "The Ethics of Storytelling: Indigenous Identity and the Death of Mangas Coloradas." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 72, no. 1, 2020, pp. 31-57.

Habermas, Jurgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. 1962. MIT P, 1989.

Heath, Shirley Brice. *Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms*. Cambridge UP, 1983.

Heidlebaugh, Nola J. *Judgment, Rhetoric, and the Problem of Incommensurability: Recalling Practical Wisdom*. U of South Carolina P, 2001.

Hess, Aaron. "Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography: Rethinking the Place and Process of Rhetoric." *Communication Studies*, vol. 62, no. 2, 2011, pp. 127-52. *Taylor and Francis*, doi: 10.1080/10510974.2011.529750. Accessed 6 Dec. 2021.

Hessler, Brooke H. "Composing an Institutional Identity: The Terms of Community Service in Higher Education." *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2000, pp. 27-42. *WAC Clearinghouse*, doi: 10.37514/LLD-J.2000.4.3.03. Accessed 14 Aug. 2021.

hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Routledge, 1994.

House, Veronica. "Keep Writing Weird: A Call for Eco-Administration and Engaged Writing Programs." *Community Literacy Journal*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2016, pp. 54-63. *MUSE*, doi.org/10.1353/clj.2016.0014. Accessed 14 Jan. 2022.

Jack, Anthony Abraham. *The Privileged Poor: How Elite Colleges Are Failing Disadvantaged Students*. Harvard UP, 2019.

Jolivétte, Andrew J. "Research Justice: Radical Love as a Strategy for Social Transformation." *Research Justice: Methodologies for Social Change*, Policy P, 2015, pp. 5-12.

Kameen, Paul. *Writing/Teaching: Essays toward a Rhetoric of Pedagogy*. U of Pittsburgh P, 2000.

Khan, Deeyah, director. *White Right: Meeting the Enemy*. Fuuse, 2017.

Legg, Stephen. "Assemblage/Apparatus: Using Deleuze and Foucault." *Area*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2011, pp. 128–133. *alliance-primo.com*, doi:10.1111/j.1475-4762.2011.01010.x. Accessed 22 Feb. 2019.

Lehmann, Wolfgang. "Habitus Transformation and Hidden Injuries: Successful Working-Class University Students." *Sociology of Education*, vol. 87, no. 1, 2014, pp. 1–15. *alliance-primo.com*, doi:10.1177/0038040713498777. Accessed 22 Feb. 2019.

Linkon, Sherry Lee and John Russo, editors. "What's New about Working-Class Studies?" *New Working-Class Studies*, Cornell/ILR P, 2005, pp. 1-15.

Lubrano, Alfred. *Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams*. Wiley, 2004.

Mack, Katherine and Jonathan Alexander. "The Ethics of Memoir: *Ethos* in Uptake." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 49, no. 1, 2019, pp. 49-70.

Martinez, Aja Y. "A Plea for Critical Race Theory Counterstory: Stock Story versus Counterstory Dialogues Concerning Alejandra's 'Fit' in the Academy." *Composition Studies*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2014, pp. 33-55. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43501855?seq=1. Accessed 17 Nov. 2020.

Mathieu, Paula. *Tactics of Hope: The Public Turn in English Composition*. Boynton/Cook, 2005.

Mercier, Hugo and Dan Sperber. *The Enigma of Reason*. Harvard UP, 2017.

Mignolo, Walter D. "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom." *Theory and Culture*, vol. 26, no. 7-8. 2009, pp. 159-81. *Sage*, doi: 10.1177/0263276409349275. Accessed 13 Aug. 2021.

Muzzatti, Stephen L., and C. Vincent Samarco. *Reflections from the Wrong Side of the Tracks: Class, Identity, and the Working Class Experience in Academe*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006.

Ogbu, John Uzo. "Voluntary and Involuntary Minorities; A Cultural-Ecological Theory of School Performance with Some Implications for Education." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 2, 1998, pp. 155-88. *Anthrosource*, faculty.washington.edu/rsoder/EDUC310/OgbuSimonsvoluntaryinvoluntary. Accessed 9 July 2022.

Oregon Constitution. Art. 1, Sec. 34.

Ostrove, Joan M., and Susan M. Long. "Social Class and Belonging: Implications for College Adjustment." *The Review of Higher Education*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2007, pp. 363–89. doi:10.1353/rhe.2007.0028. Accessed 22 Feb 2019.

Price, Margaret. "Ways to Move." *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life*, U of Michigan P, 2011, pp. 58-102.

Ratcliffe, Krista. *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness*. Southern Illinois UP, 2005.

Rickert, Thomas J. Thomas Joseph. *Ambient Rhetoric: The Attunements of Rhetorical Being*. U of Pittsburgh P, 2013.

Roberts-Miller, Patricia. *Deliberate Conflict: Argument, Political Theory, and Composition Classes*. Southern Illinois UP, 2004.

Robillard, Amy E. "Seeking Adequate Rhetorical Witness for Life Writing." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 49, no. 2, 2019, pp. 185-92.

Rose, Mike. *Lives on the Boundary. The Struggles and Achievements of America's Underprepared*. Free Press, Macmillan, Inc, 1989.

Rousculp, Tiffany. "When the Community Writes: Re-Envisioning the SLCC DiverseCity Writing Series." *Reflections*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2005, pp. 67-88. reflectionsjournal.net/wpcontent/uploads. Accessed 30 Jan 2022.

Sanchez, Raul. *The Function of Theory in Composition Studies*. State U of New York P, 2005.

Sandoval, Chela. *Methodology of the Oppressed*. U of Minnesota P, 2000.

Sennett, Richard and Jonathan Cobb. *The Hidden Injuries of Class.* Knopf, 1972.

Simnitt, Emily. Personal interview. 22 Sept. 2022.

Sinek, Simon, host. "Extreme Listening with Deeyah Khan." *A Bit of Optimism*, episode 11, 10 Aug. 2020, podcasts.apple.com/tm/podcast/extreme-listening-with-deeyah-khan. Accessed 13 April 2022.

Smith-Sitton, Lara. "Pathways to Partnerships: Building Sustainable Relationships Through University-Supported Internships." *Community Literacy Journal*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2019, pp. 73-82.

Spigelman, Candace. *Personally Speaking: Experience as Evidence in Academic Discourse*. Southern Illinois UP, 2004.

Sullivan, Patrick, et al. *Teaching Composition at the Two-Year College: Background Readings*. Bedford/St Martin's, 2017.

Sullivan, Patrick, and Howard B. Tinberg. *What Is "College-Level" Writing?* NCTE, 2006.

Taylor, Carol Ann, and Christina Hughes. *Posthuman Research Practices in Education*. Palgrave
      Macmillan, 2016.

Toulmin, Stephen. *Return to Reason*. Harvard UP, 2001.

Udas, Ken, and Adrian Stagg. "The University as Ideological State Apparatus: Educating to
      Defend the Corporate Status Quo?" *International Education Journal: Comparative
      Perspectives*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2019, pp. 66–79.

Vatz, Richard E. "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, vol. 6, no. 3,
      1973, pp. 154-61. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40236848. Accessed 8 July 2022.

Walpole, Marybeth. "Socioeconomic Status and College: How SES Affects College Experiences
      and Outcomes." *Review of Higher Education*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2003, pp. 45–73. *alliance-
      primo.com*, doi:10.1353/rhe.2003.0044. Accessed 10 May 2019.

Warner, Michael. "Publics and Counterpublics." *Public Culture*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2002, pp. 49-90.
      Muse, muse-jhu-edu.libproxy.uoregon.edu/article/26277/pdf. Accessed 16 Aug. 2021.

Wheeler, Elizabeth. Personal interview. 11 July 2022.

Yergeau, Remi M. "Cassandra Isn't Doing the Robot: On Risky Rhetorics and Contagious
      Autism." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol 50, no. 3, 2020, pp. 212-21.

Young, Iris Marion. "Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of the Ideal of Universal
      Citizenship." *Ethics*, vol. 99, no. 2, 1989, pp. 250-74. *JSTOR*, doi: 10. 1086/293065.
      Accessed 2 May 2022.