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Critical Experiential Learning And Rhetorical Interventions In New Media Ecologies

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CRITICAL EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND RHETORICAL INTERVENTIONS IN NEW MEDIA ECOLOGIES

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my children, Tucker and Quinn, whose presence remind me daily of the purpose behind my research, writing, and teaching.

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching is often referred to as a "calling," a spiritual pull, a desire to serve. And perhaps in no discipline is this more true than English, at least according to the narratives presented in pop culture. Whether it be Mr. Keating inspiring young prep school adolescents to break convention or Mrs. Gruwell giving hope to underprivileged minority teens outside of Los Angeles, the English teacher is revered as reaching students at a more personal level to help them realize their potential and take hold of their destiny[1]. When I began a public relations job at a liberal arts college, these archetypes were affirmed by the reverent treatment of the tweed jacketed professors (literally, yes) strolling around campus with their coffee mugs in hand. I felt that while I was assigned to write ego-boosting profiles of college donors they were the ones changing students' lives in a more hands-on manner, presenting them with knowledge about life and encouraging their future directions.

Education has always been seen as having transformative powers. Aristotle believed that through education and the power of reasoning students could become virtuous and happy citizens who would create politically idyllic societies, a belief echoed during Age of Enlightenment. John Dewey believed education could foster democracy. The Frankfurt School believed the application of critical theory could expose oppressive powers and institutions. Paulo Freire believed literacy would politically and economically empower Brazilian peasants. For me, education gave me choices. It allowed me to choose how to make a living, what spiritual philosophy to guide me, and where to call home. It was not my initial degree that empowered me, but the ability to learn and create change for myself.

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[1] Mr. Keating was the fictional, life-shaping English teacher portrayed by Robin Williams in *Dead Poets Society*. Mrs. Gruwell is a real life teacher, who chronicled her time spent teaching English to low-performing students in Long Beach in the book *Freedom Writers*, which later became a movie.

When I obtained my first "real" job after college, I remember the pride I had moving into my first place and telling my parents I would be making $36,000 a year (2001). If I hadn't begun taking graduate level writing and literature classes out of sheer boredom, I might have been satisfied with this, as I was unable to imagine more for myself. Entering college again, I became swept up with the grand narrative of education that began in Ancient Greece and, for me, ended with Paulo Freire. Having left my salary and benefits to become an impoverished graduate student, I came into the field with a higher purpose in mind and gravitated immediately towards social epistemic rhetoric (Berlin) and critical pedagogy. Both made complete sense to me as I reflected on my own struggles as a first generation college student, leaving a working class agricultural life to sit in classrooms where I clearly didn't fit in. My professors lectured to me, sometimes in small rooms, other times in large theaters. I did not find my own voice or place in a classroom until I began taking creative writing classes. All my experiences confirmed what James Berlin and Ira Shor argued about the formation and role of ideologies and the power of language.

As I reflect on how I came here, I realize the journey was as much emotional as it was intellectual. And perhaps that is the problem. We all bring our own baggage to the classroom, students and instructors alike. Within this reality, I soon realized the limitations of theory and my own pedagogy, as every classroom is a collection of individual journeys which affect the reception and success of the carefully constructed activities. I remember the first negative reviews I received as an instructor for being "liberal." It was a class with a handful of non-traditional students, roughly the same age as me, who were going through an accelerated trade program at the community college where I was teaching. My theme of social change online did

not impress them and was deemed a waste of time. They wanted skill drills and how-to lessons to fix their writing and move on. This was my first lesson in student resistance.

To mediate student resistance, I moved to a more student-centered model, where students determine the civic and social agenda of the class. This approach has been successful in classes where the students have a strong shared background, such as at Delta College's urban satellite campus where students mostly come from the same socioeconomic, high-crime neighborhoods. In these classes, the city becomes our principle text and object of study. We are able to pull up the latest headlines from the *Saginaw News* and have meaningful discussions. However, this approach is more difficult in classes where students come from an array of backgrounds, towns, and generations. No teaching situation, though, is the traditional model of critical pedagogy as difficult as in online classes, where students range from dual-enrolled high school students to middle-aged students balancing a full-time job and a family.

I began teaching composition online to negotiate the difficult situation of starting a new tenure-track position when I was thirty-six weeks pregnant with my first child. While I still look back and shudder at the memory of that first semester at my new job, teaching in an unfamiliar format, with a colicky newborn who refused to sleep more than three hours at a time, I gained an invaluable insight into how people become forced to take online classes due to life circumstances. Rarely does a semester go by when I am teaching online classes where I don't encounter a student who was in exactly my situation, taking an online class so that they could give birth to a child without worrying about attendance policies or babysitters or breastfeeding.

It was through these online experiences, both of my own and my students, that I realized that critical pedagogy needs to happen online just as much as in that inner-city classroom where

half the class disappears when there is a local funeral. At least my inner-city students have a community. Online students traditionally are islands, in so far as they are separated from the traditional classroom structures and class fellowship. However, they are still islands being interpellated by the various social and political institutions at play in their lives, including the institution of higher education. Because these students do not have physical classes, twice a week, in a building, they are potentially "always" in class. This is education in a control society.

While my online island students are in some ways more isolated than my traditional students, they are also more connected. Instead of being immersed in the local problems of a community, these students are immersed in a highly networked online environment. Ignoring the social impact of network technologies in an online class seems to make as much sense as ignoring the local community at a community college. At the heart of this project is exposing the affordances of online environments to discover critical practices that work best within them. I believe this study is of value not only to online classes, but all classes, as all students will need to be able to rhetorically function in digital networks to sustain personal relationships, engage in civic action, and, in many cases, perform their future careers.

In order to focus my study on the effectiveness of critical pedagogy goals in new media online environments, I conducted my field work in several sections of an online composition class and a section of a new media writing class. By eliminating face-to-face interactions, I believe I could more accurately assess the successes and failures of our online collaborations and community building initiatives. The courses utilized tools designed for community building and online activism and engaged students through problem-based experiential learning. In the chapters 2-4, I connect their productions, successes, failures, and reflections to theories on affect, gaming, subjectivity, networks, agency, cybernetics, and aesthetics.

Connecting New Media and Critical Pedagogy

Throughout my graduate studies, I have struggled to connect my new media and critical pedagogy interests. While literacy is key in both these areas, literacy means something different to Paulo Freire's Brazilian peasants than it does to students in online environments. Gregory Ulmer argues that the term literacy does not even fit when it comes to navigating multimodal, digital ecologies. Sociopolitically, the diffuse online world of weak-tie networks and immaterial labor have little in common with Paulo Freire's small group of illiterate Brazilian peasants, who are collectively dealing with the same struggles and oppressors.

The type of reconstruction critical pedagogy requires as it moves from a factory society model to a immaterial labor model resembles the same type of reconstruction John Dewey faced when he looked to revamp educational practices to deal with the aftermath of industrialization. Much of my first chapter is spent arguing that John Dewey, rather than Paulo Freire, offers a better foundation for a critical pedagogy that is able to withstand the shifts wrought in the areas of labor, politics, and literacy as new forms of capitalism and power emerge in our information society. As I discuss in my first chapter, choosing Dewey is not a complete abandonment of Freire. At their pedagogical cores, Dewey and Freire share much: critiquing classroom models where knowledge is dispensed and not created, prioritizing the daily lives and interests of students, exposing the hidden curriculum of schooling (which Dewey refers to as "collateral learning"), and creating classes based on problem-solving.

In my first chapter, I begin with a genealogy of critical pedagogy, giving the historical movements and theoretical inspirations that led to its emergence in the 1980s and then chronicling the subsequent criticisms. In order to address the affective and pragmatic concerns of

its detractors, I argue that critical pedagogy should return to its roots and re-examine the work of John Dewey from the perspective of today's control society, which is driven by data and immaterial labor. His work on experiential learning helps critical pedagogues move past rational, disembodied critique to enter a more biological realm, which ties learning to evolutionary growth and a cybernetic psychological process.

My subsequent chapters each tackle a separate critical pedagogy dilemma. The first being the neglect of affect in critical pedagogy theory, the next being agency in late-capitalism, and then finally I discuss critical literacy in new media ecologies. Each chapter defines the dilemma and then moves on to a theoretical response and possible classroom application. My students enter and analyze gaming environments, create online advocacy campaigns, and make persuasive arguments through video remixes. Through it all they learn how virtual experiences shape perspectives, how their agency is distributed among a network and shaped by their chosen technology and web interfaces, and how to create rhetorical interventions through juxtapositions and elicit audience participation.

CHAPTER 1 "THE RISE AND FALL OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY"

"Whoever wishes to foresee the future must consult the past" -- Machiavelli

A quick glance at the number of references to "critical pedagogy" in recent composition and pedagogical publications might suggest that the field remains as strong as during its "heyday" in the early nineties. While publications have remained steady since critical pedagogy's peak years of 1991-1994—a time that the saw the publication of key texts in the field such as Ira Shor's *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change* (1992), bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), and Henry Giroux's *Living Dangerously* (1993), and when popular anthologies in Composition studies carried such titles as *Composition and Resistance* (1991)—the tenor of the publications shifted from celebratory practice to increasingly negative discussions, beginning in the late-nineties and intensifying over the next decade. Criticisms in 2004-2005 pointed at the unexamined problems in the practice of critical pedagogy with David Seitz's *Who Can Afford Critical Consciousness? Practicing a Pedagogy of Humility* (2004), Gwen Gorzelsky's *The Language of Experience: Literate Practices and Social Change* (2005), and Richard E. Miller's *Writing at the End of the World* (2005). Somewhat ironically, critical pedagogy, which was driven by the critical scrutiny of dominant educational practices and classroom politics, has now itself become a target of critique, being variously indicted as intellectually naive, impractical, or a symptom of the same negative institutional forces it was designed to combat.

One might categorize these reprobations into three distinct categories: (1) the *conservative critique*, which argues that critical pedagogy ignores the capitalistic desires/goals of the students (Durst, Smith, Seitz); (2) *the pragmatic critique*, which questions its efficacy (Miller, Vitanza, Lindquist); and (3) *the radical critique*, which calls for more revolutionary

classroom encounters and activism (Bizzell, McLaren). The conservative critique argues that the majority of students that make their way to mainstream composition classes are not oppressed minorities or alienated by the capitalist economy. Thus, Jeff Smith contends in "Students' Goals, Gatekeeping, and Some Questions of Ethics" that as college instructors we have an ethical obligation to help students fulfill their goals, even if those goals are to gain social mobility by joining, rather than critiquing, the dominant class. The pragmatic critique suggests that critical pedagogy does not so much place unfair impositions on students, but does not impose much of anything at all; in other words, it suggests a naiveté on the part of those who believe pedagogical methods can significantly affect the beliefs and politics of students, and thus critical pedagogy begins to look like nothing more than an intellectual exercise for the student. As Richard Miller explains in his now classic essay "The Arts of Complicity: Pragmatism and the Culture of Schooling," students never forget that there are in a classroom and will espouse whatever view necessary to get them the desired outcome. On the other end of the spectrum is the radical critique, which argues that most critical classrooms do not go far enough in their interrogations of capitalism and identity. For instance, in order to imagine an alternative social vision outside of capitalism, Peter McLaren argues that what is needed is a "critical revolutionary pedagogy," which expands "the pedagogical encounter to consider its own insinuation into globalized social relations of exploitation and to live up to its revolutionary potential of becoming a transnational, gender-balanced, multiracial, anti-imperialist struggle" (*Capitalists & Conquerors* 10).

Simply put, if critical pedagogy was routinely referred to as the "future" of composition and pedagogy studies the direction that we should or would be taking in order to further professionalize or "intellectualize" the discipline and make it more politically relevant, references today more commonly refer to critical pedagogy as the "past" of the discipline: a

wrong path taken, the experiment that failed, or part of a mindset we need to shed in order to rethink the direction of the discipline in the present. It is not altogether difficult to pinpoint the time in which this shift took place. In the late 90s, critical pedagogy fell under criticism for denying issues of teaching authority and for not taking into account the desires of students, who might resist the political perspective. These criticisms coincided with the backlash against political correctness, the flagship issue of the culture wars in the 90s. Indeed, what emerged from the culture wars at this time was a portrait of cultural studies that no longer seemed revolutionary. As Thomas Frank explains in *One Market Under God*, beneath the bluster of the "wars" was "a militantly pro-corporate right that, like consumer society itself, had no problem with difference, lifestyle, and pleasure; that cared not a whit for the preservation of disciplinary boundaries; that urged the deconstruction of cultural hierarchy in language as fervid as anything to appear in the pages of *Social Text*" (300).

Though efficacy of critical and cultural studies has been called into question over the past decade, composition's intersections with the same remain highly valued for moving the field past the stigma of being a "service" discipline. As the title of Gary Olsen's 2002 anthology *Rhetoric and Composition as Intellectual Work* indicates, there remains a genuine need, if not anxiety, to define the rigor and scholarly validity of Composition Studies. Egos aside, most professors are unwilling to give up their goals of instilling critical literacy and fostering civic engagement in the classroom. If anything, the objectives of critical pedagogy are more relevant now than ever. However, what may no longer be relevant is how these objectives are situated within reactionary rhetoric against the Fordist factory, mainstream mass media, and other increasingly moribund institutional forces. The heart of the diagnostic portion of my dissertation will focus on how critical pedagogy's conception of three key vectors - labor, politics, and literacy -- have

undergone large transformations in the relatively short amount of time from critical pedagogy's 1980's emergence to the present moment. Rethinking these categories, I will argue, is necessary for any attempt to reimagine a critical pedagogical praxis that does justice to the forms of power, politics, and education today.

After tracing the ways in which the intersections of pedagogy with labor, literacy, and politics have mutated over the past several decades, I will examine a possible path that critical pedagogy could take to reach its progressive education goals of socially empowering students and instilling critical literacy skills. What I prescribe is a "critical pedagogy 2.0" that thrives and functions within new media ecologies and takes into consideration new forms of capitalism and modes of power. In order to remain relevant as a pedagogical approach invested in the relationship between culture, labor, and education, critical pedagogy must immerse itself in the digital, the nexus of both immaterial labor and community building. As with the use of "2.0" and similar designation in software releases, the "2.0" of my title does not indicate a replacement but an update in response to changing needs and technologies. In order to develop this update, throughout my diagnostic and prescriptive sections, I will be focusing on three key questions: How has labor changed? How have modes of social power changed? And how does our conception of critical literacy need to change?

In this first chapter, I will explore the genealogy of critical pedagogy, looking at its progressive and Marxist roots to the dominant narrative that emerged of a pedagogy of resistance against neoliberalist education policies and capitalist culture. After chronicling the trajectory that emerged from the work of Paulo Freire, I will then discuss the common critiques of critical pedagogy and how we can respond to them in light of the socioeconomic changes that have occurred since the publication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

The Rise of Critical Pedagogy's Ideological Vision

Freire's pedagogical choices were influenced by his political vision, a vision to dismantle capitalism and encourage bottom-up revolts. It is moored in the post-colonial world of Brazil, a world of stark contrasts between the social classes with capitalists exploiting cheap factory labor. The central goal is to free the oppressed of their internalized oppressors, so they may abandon their necrophilic ideologies to become active subjects constructing their own reality and history. He put into practice a pedagogy developed in response to Althusser's and Gramsci's work on ideologies and used it to teach illiterate Brazilian in impoverished areas. His theoretical vision offered a fresh perspective after decades of failed attempts to promote a radicalized progressive education agenda in the United States. As I look to construct a new possible path for critical pedagogy, it's important to understand why education scholars and reformists broke away from progressive pedagogy and came to embrace the radical vision of Freire.

When John Dewey constructed his theories on experiential learning, laying the groundwork for progressive education, he was writing in response to one of the largest cultural shifts experienced by human society -- industrialization. While theorists like Karl Marx focused on the effects of industrialization on the worker, Dewey focused on the children. Dewey believed that through industrialization children lost their sense of community, experienced weakened familial connections and stability, and no longer practiced problem-solving skills in their daily chores. His vision was a classroom that offered intellectual inquiry and direct connections to their interests/lives while fostering a sense of continuity in relation to their heritage/future and environment/community at large.

Like the critical pedagogues that would follow, Dewey addressed the current mode of labor in his pedagogy. Responding directly to Frederick Winslow Taylor's model of scientific management in *Democracy and Education*, Dewey writes: "the great majority of workers have no insight into the social aims of their pursuits and no direct personal interest in them...They do what they do, not freely and intelligently, but for the sake of the wage earned. It is this fact which makes the action illiberal, and which will make any education designed simply to give skill in such undertakings illiberal and immoral" (260). In the Taylor system, there was only one way to do things -- the scientifically proven best way. Tasks were carried out by workers scientifically matched to the job, and workers were driven to carry out these method efficiently through a reward system. Each worker's wage directly corresponded to their production. And finally, to ensure the process was going smoothly and each worker understood their function, managers maintained friendly communication with the workers as they supervised them.

While Dewey recognized the efficiency of Taylorism, he rejected the idea of workers working to meet a quota. Instead, he believed that worker satisfaction and personal investment should feed productivity. Dewey explained: “The tendency to reduce such things as efficiency of activity and scientific management to purely technical externals is evidence of the one-sided stimulation of thought given to those in control of industry—who supply its aims” (*Democracy and Education* 99). Dewey further criticizes Taylorism for its narrow definition of intelligence: “Intelligence is narrowed to the factors concerned with technical production and marketing of goods. No doubt, a very acute and intense intelligence in these narrow lines can be developed, but the failure to take into account the significant social factors means none the less an absence of mind, and a corresponding distortion of emotional life” (ibid.). Though Dewey doesn't use this term, it is clear his observations mirror Marx's theory of alienation. The alienated worker has no

control over the conditions of his labor and little personal investment. Mechanical efficiency does not address worker's external motivators and can lead to worker malaise.

Dewey believed that the classroom was the place to correct the wrongs that were instilled by capitalism and the venue for promoting democratic values. As W.F. Warde explains, "[Dewey believed] the transformed schools would remake American society in two ways. First, by bringing forth the most desirable attitudes in the student body, experimental education would create new generations of inquiring, equalitarian-minded, scientifically oriented individuals. These in turn would intervene in the solution of social, economic and political problems and remodel our culture after the pattern of their school training and experiences" (54). Unfortunately, Dewey's optimism could not combat the social realities students faced when they left the classroom nor could it fend off the detrimental relationship between big businesses and schools.

In the 1930s and 40s, a group of social reconstructionists emerged who worked to radicalize the progressive education movement started by John Dewey. The reconstructionists believed that education is not neutral and that teachers had an obligation "to assist in the progressive socialization of their students" (Stanley 11). According to William Stanley, author of *Curriculum for Utopia: Social Reconstructionism and Critical Pedagogy in the Postmodern Era*, the work of Harold Rugg, George Counts, and Theodore Brameld came to represent the reconstructionist position. They argued that those in power "exercised controlling power over major social institutions and used an outmoded ideology to maintain their control" and exploited certain groups in particular, such as the poor and racial minorities. Unfortunately, the social reconstructionists were unable to overcome the political climate of the 1950s, which brought with it the Cold War and new wave of conservatism. According to C. Wright Mills:

> The rise of bureaucratic structures of executive power, in the economic, the military, and the political orders, has lowered the effective use of all these smaller voluntary associations operating between the state and the economy on the one hand, and the family on the other. It is not only that the institution of power has become less political and more administrative. It is within this great change of framework the organized public has waned. (360)

During sociopolitical climate in the period Giroux marks as 1945-1980, even the Civil Rights and Feminist Movements and protests of the Vietnam War did little to "address the deep-seated inequalities that underlie the structure of American schools and American society, and generally substituted a focus on problem-solving and critical thinking for a pedagogy committed to overcoming the problems of sexism, racism, and chauvinism" (*Schooling and the Struggle*, 14). While Giroux recognizes the ground-breaking movements of the 1960s and 1970s, those movements did not translate into an overhaul of the educational system.

Underlying the failures in the educational system was the question of why minority and working class students were not performing as well as their white, upper-middle class peers. Drawing from Marxist materialism, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976) argued the hierarchical divisions of labor are replicated in the educational system. The way schools enforce behavioral norms and reproduce class inequities would later be termed as the "hidden curriculum." While they made important observations, they could not get past the economic determinism of their analysis, leaving no room for agency or resistance. These arguments were echoed in Paul Willis' ethnographic study of working class high school students in England. He follows a group of young men who develop what he terms a "counter school culture," which resists the enforced behaviors and rules of the education system. Instead of adapting to the authority of formal education, they clung to what they had come to value: street smarts, the masculinity of manual labor, and a self-determination that comes from absconding rules set by

others. Working class life is not something they long to escape from but something that is integral to their identity and values.

The work of Willis and other humanities and social science scholars during the 1970s moved away from strict class analysis towards cultural analysis. Following the rise of poststructuralism, culture was viewed as a system of representations. Stuart Hall noted that culture should not be merely studied or appreciated but viewed as a "critical site of social action and intervention, where power relations are both established and potentially unsettled" (Procter 1). Taking inspiration from Antonio Gramsci, the Birmingham School looked at the influence of culture to determine why the working class elected Margaret Thatcher, shifting from the Labour Party to the Conservative Party. Their work supported Louis Althusser, whose critique of Marxist economic analysis stresses the importance of ideology. As explained in Seehwa Cho's book, *Critical Pedagogy and Social Change*:

> Althusser (1971) contended that the ideological state apparatuses (such as the family, education system, political parties, trade unions, religious organizations, mass media, and cultural agents) played a significant role in the formulation of the subject. The basic point of Althusser with regard to the role of the ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) is that superstructural institutions have become much more complex, and their role and influence have increased, with growing intervention in the 20th century... Althusser's identification of ideology as a representation of the 'imaginary' relationship of individuals to their material conditions, and the subjectification or the creation of subjects through discourse and interpellation became the basis of much of the later cultural studies. (49)

Overall what emerged was a politicized view of education as a tool for hegemony. Through the relationships, discourses, and norms impressed, an ideology emerged that was internalized by the working class. This ideology worked against their own interests, but fueled their desires, influenced their decisions, and drove their actions.

As I previously stated, one of the most prevalent critiques of progressive education's forefather John Dewey is his failure to address the role of social psychological domination in the

educational setting. It is this line of inquiry that drove Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as, like Gramsci and Hall, he examined what factors cause the economically depressed Brazilians to support a government that exploited them and worked against their interests. He also worked to move past economic and cultural determinism, including not only a critique but a vision of reconstruction. It is for this reason he has been deemed "critical pedagogy's prophet of hope" (Kincheloe 72). He offered, what Giroux termed, "a language of possibility." He also provided educational scholars, such as Giroux, a concrete counterhegemonic classroom practice that coincided nicely with popular cultural theories emerging from the Frankfurt School and Michel Foucault. Within *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire laid out three key concepts, which helped form the standard classroom approach to critical pedagogy: the oppressor-oppressed dialectic, the banking concept, and conscientizacao/praxis. These three concepts tie directly to what has emerged as the common goals of critical pedagogy: critiquing labor practices, critiquing modes of social power/politics, and developing critical literacy.

The Oppressor-Oppressed Dialectic

In his exploration of the oppressor-oppressed dialectic, the influence of Hegel, Lenin, and Gramsci on Freire is the most obvious. Though he doesn't pose the question of why didn't the proletariat rise up and overthrow the bourgeoisie, it seems to drive his inquiry. Like Lenin, he believes that revolution needs to take place from the bottom of the social strata. Like Gramsci, he believes that the proletariat were complicit in their own oppression and is interested in forms of consciousness and how oppression is reinforced through cultural practices. To better understand the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressors, Freire adapted Hegel's "master-slave dialectic" in order to emphasize the dehumanizing nature of capitalism.

Hegel defines the master-slave dialectic as a relationship where one being is subordinate to another. The master depends on the labor of the slave to maintain their lifestyle and vision of the world. However, once the slave recognizes that the power to create resides within them, they can assert themselves as acting subjects. Once the slave gains consciousness, the master and slave relationship dissolves and the parties become equal. This benefits the former master and slave as both require the acknowledgment of an equal to gain full human consciousness.

In the oppressor-oppressed dialectic, both groups are dehumanized through the dynamics of their relationship. The oppressors cannot free those below them because their selfhood is dependent on what they reap from those whose work they exploit and whose identities and values they suppress. In order to free themselves, the oppressed must first be able to see themselves as separate from the relationship they hold with their oppressors. They are hindered by what Freire terms as a "fear of freedom" (46). Freedom means abandoning all their known prescribed behaviors and desires and becoming responsible for their reality and the realities of others. They must rid themselves of their internalized oppressor to become liberated, authentic beings. This "fear of freedom" also exists within the oppressors, who know themselves only through this dehumanizing relationship. Freire suggests dismantling this relationship through dialogue. To have true dialogue, there must be equality in the exchange, a shared act of meaning making. Through this shared act, the oppressor and oppressed can break their dialectic relationship to free them both.

In contemporary terms, the Hegelian master and the slave are seen as the worker and the capitalist. The capitalist's existence wholly depends on the commodities produced by the hands of others. Schweingruber summarizes this perspective in Marxist theory as concluding that "[t]he creative potential of most human beings is eliminated because they must sell their labor to

capitalists. Most people have the goal of owning, not expressing their potential." The worker looks to own commodities instead of their own labor. Their desires are defined by their oppressors, who benefit both from their labor and their purchases. In *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* Marx argues that industrial production alienates workers from their product, which is not designed or determined by them; from the act of producing, which is reduced to repetitive tasks distributed amongst the workers and assigned by those in power; from their "species-being," which strips away the desire and potential of self-determined achievement; and from other workers, who are seen as competitors.

Educational systems are often seen as training grounds for future "workers," who must learn to fall into line and play by the rules set by those in authority. Most teachers, without realizing it, become oppressors, educating students not to determine the system they are entering, but to productively contribute to it. Instead, Freire proposes teachers and students enter into dialogue to model a new type of relationship, to allow students to co-determine how their education and future may unfold.

The Banking Concept

One of the ways the oppressed are forced to remain in the role of objects is through the educational approach Freire calls the "banking concept." The banking concept casts teachers as the sole creators of knowledge and the students as merely empty receptacles that need to be filled. In these classrooms, the teacher does not consider the students' desires and needs when assembling the curriculum. The role of the students is to listen passively and give in to the authority of the teacher. This type of instruction denies students the opportunity to critically examine their world or discuss ways they can shape reality. As Freire explains, "Verbalistic lessons, reading requirements, the methods for evaluating 'knowledge,' the distance between the

teacher and the taught, the criteria for promotion: everything in this ready-to-wear approach serves to obviate thinking" (76). This approach leaves no room for questions or other possibilities. Again, this models a type of blind acceptance that those in positions of power know better and that to succeed students (and later workers) must allow their teachers/bosses' expertise to determine their existence and potential.

Freire's critique emphasizes that teaching is not politically neutral. Schools are often sites of indoctrination, where elitist and capitalistic values are promoted, alienating students. Through their pedagogical choices, teachers can either aid in the dehumanization of their students or be a part of their liberation. In order to liberate their students, teachers must view them as partners in the quest for and creation of knowledge. There must be unity and equality in the exchange of ideas in the classroom.

To liberate students, Freire suggests replacing the banking concept with a problem-posing education. Instead of a class led by the actions of the teacher, the teacher and students become co-investigators, examining and questioning class materials together. As Freire explains, "Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers" (80). Through becoming creators of knowledge, students will begin to see themselves as acting subjects that have the power to intervene with the reality they have passively accepted. Also, through this process, teachers will understand how their position of authority can limit students' freedom and their own learning growth if they let it hinder true dialogue. *Both* students and teachers must change to enact a political and economic shift.

Freire recognizes schools as a site of disciplinary power. Disciplinary power, as defined by Foucault, shapes, regulates and monitors individuals within an institutional space, such as a

prison, hospital, or school. Behavioral norms are established and enforced through the setting and protocols. Having students seated in rows of forward-facing desks in front of the podium where a teacher stands and delivers lectures is an example of a setting and standard practice that works as a form of disciplinary power. Critical pedagogues look to disrupt this practice by having students sit in a circle and engaging in discussions as equals with the teacher, who is seated among them.

Critical pedagogues argue that students are disciplined and indoctrinated through schools to become passive, consumer-driven beings with homogenous upper middle-class values that can be exploited by corporations. They will not question the practices of capitalism, but become cogs in the system. Their beliefs, desires, and knowledge will echo the mainstream media. Gramsci refers to this form of control as hegemony. He claims a primary function of a State is "to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling class" (258). Hence, a primary function of critical pedagogy is to create counterhegemonic practices and discourses to question the norms, desires, and values being promoted.

Conscientizacao and praxis

One counter-hegemonic practice undertaken by Freire is problem-posing dialogue. This dialogue is generated through the real life experiences and concerns of the students. As Freire explains, "Education as the practice of freedom-- as opposed to education as the practice of domination-- denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people. Authentic reflection considers neither abstract man nor the world without people, but people in their relations with the world"

(81). It begins by listening to what each person has to share. Together the class builds knowledge about the issues surrounding the point of discussion, which will inform the actions they take in regards to topic. Through problem-posing dialogue Freire believes students can achieve conscientizacao, which "refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (35). Freire's conscientizacao or critical consciousness is what drives praxis, an action-based critical reflection. Praxis is most often discussed as a type of intervention on the dominant narrative and history that have oppressed and marginalized masses of people. Freire describes the process as such, "Humankind emerge from their *submersion* and acquire the ability to *intervene* in reality as it is unveiled. *Intervention* in reality--historical awareness itself--thus represents a step forward from *emergence*, and results from the *conscientizacao* of the situation" (109). Through critical consciousness, students are able to deconstruct and move past their limit-situations.[2]

At the heart of conscientizacao is a critique of the enlightenment rationality, in particular the expression of positivism. Positivism takes an empirical approach to knowledge formation, focusing on objective appearances rather than examining how an object, norm, or social reality came to be. This approach leaves little room for critical possibilities:

> The question of essences--the difference between the world as it is and as it could be--is reduced to the merely methodological task of collecting and classifying facts [...] Questions concerning the genesis, development, and normative nature of the conceptual systems that select, organize, and define the facts appear to be outside the concern of positivist rationality. Since it recognizes no factors behind the 'fact,' positivism freezes both human beings and history. (Giroux, *Theory and Resistance*, 15)

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[2] Freire defines limit-situations as falsely perceived barriers that keep individuals in their current dehumanizing states unable to recognize their own abilities to create opportunity and change.

Without critical inquiry, history becomes fixed and serves as proof of existing realities. Through rebuilding history or pulling apart the layers of events, individuals understand how society came to be and can then move forward with shaping the trajectory of the future. The dialectic of critique begins with reflecting on the false portrayals in representations of reality. To critique is to question the norms, truths, and practices that make up the dominant culture. Through this process contradictions will emerge, such as the concept of school's offering equal opportunity and the educational practices that create an uneven playing field. What will be revealed are the ideological interests truly being served by the cultural norms that dictate the practices in cultural institutions. By examining how beliefs and norms are created, individuals can then move into restructuring practices to achieve their own self determination as a form of praxis. This ability to not only read the world but to develop the tools to transform it is what would later be referred to as critical literacy.

The concept of critical literacy begins with the idea that our identities, world conception, and reality is mediated by language. However, just because we are told a certain history, a desired behavior, or a cultural identity, does not mean that these items are fixed and intractable. Freire emphasizes the idea that the world and each human within it are in the process of becoming. There is no final word, no finished product. Critical literacy is a specific vein of conscientizacao. It is the development of conscientizacao through the process of learning to read and write.

Ira Shor sees this concept as an umbrella term connecting ideas laid out by many philosophical scholars and artists:

> Critical literacy, then, is an attitude towards history, as Kenneth Burke (1984) might have said, or a dream of a new society against the power now in power, as Paulo Freire

> proposed (Shor and Freire, 1987), or an insurrection of subjugated knowledges, in the ideas of Michel Foucault (1980), or a counter-hegemonic structure of feeling, as Raymond Williams (1977) theorized, or a multicultural resistance invented on the borders of crossing identities, as Gloria Anzaldua (1990) imagined, or language used against fitting unexceptionably into the status quo, as Adrienne Rich (1979) declared. ("What is Critical Literacy?", 282)

As the quote indicates, literacy becomes a form of social action or praxis when it is used to question the social constructions and normative discourses that suppress and marginalize people.

This concept of critical literacy extends into and creates a relationship between cultural studies and critical pedagogy. The key figure linking these two areas is James Berlin, whose concept of "social epistemic rhetoric" echoes the arguments critical pedagogues make about the relationship between ideology and language. Berlin argued the rhetoric used in both literary works and popular media "can be read so as to favor one version of economic, social, and political arrangements over other versions" (*Rhetoric* 477). Hence instructors must develop students' critical literacy so that they can decode and identify the competing discourses embedded within the cultural texts they consume (books, movies, etc.), which shape how they view themselves and others.

As detailed above, it is through the concepts of Freire that a clear picture emerges of critical pedagogy as a counterhegemonic practice that seeks to unveil the hidden agenda behind the cultural norms that shape the quality and direction of students' lives. Though the narrative of critical pedagogy has been reconstructed over the years to tie it to work done by indigenous groups, African-Americans, third world activists, and feminists, at the core remains this emergent practice that ignited when the work of the Paulo Friere was paired with the theories of the Frankfurt School and Foucault's work on institutions.

While there is still much that can be and should be maintained within the typical formation of critical pedagogy -- viewing education as means for social change, encouraging teachers to become public intellectuals, creating curriculums driven by students' interests and experiences, and supporting diversity and multiplicity -- the dialectical approach driven by a counterhegemonic sociopolitical vision against capitalism has become problematic. Criticisms emerged and grew as critical pedagogy moved from theory into practice. Educators struggled to manipulate a model based on the informal education of Brazilian adults to fit the institutionalized classroom setting where work is required for credit and graded. Based on the response of students and instructors own discomfort with critical pedagogical practices, two key critiques emerged -- the conservative critique and the pragmatic critique. As stated in the beginning of the chapter, the conservative critique argues that critical pedagogy ignores the capitalistic desires/goals of the students and the pragmatic critique questions its efficacy. On the other end of the spectrum is the radical critique, which is undertaken by instructors who believe that the reason critical pedagogy isn't working is because instructors are not encouraging more revolutionary classroom encounters and activism. All of these can be addressed with consideration to changes in labor, power, and literacy since critical pedagogy's inception.

The Radical Critique

The radical critique argues that most critical classrooms do not go far enough in their interrogations of capitalism and identity. For instance, in order to imagine an alternative socialist vision outside of capitalism, Peter McLaren argues that what is needed is a "critical revolutionary pedagogy," which expands "the pedagogical encounter to consider its own insinuation into globalized social relations of exploitation and to live up to its revolutionary potential of becoming a transnational, gender-balanced, multiracial, anti-imperialist struggle" (*Capitalists &*

Conquerors 10). In order to promote or get students to consider these viewpoints, of which they may be fundamentally opposed, Patricia Bizzell argues that we must allow authority back into the critical classroom, an "empowering authority" as defined by Henry Giroux:

> First, the purpose of schooling can be defined through a democratic public philosophy based on an ethical discourse that is critically attentive to the issues of public responsibility, personal freedom, and democratic tolerance, as well as to the necessity of rejecting norms and practices that embody and extend the interests of domination, human suffering, and exploitation. On the basis of such a public philosophy, teachers can defend the curriculum choices they make through a discourse that aims at developing an educated, empowered, and critical citizenry. Second, such a public philosophy provides the guidelines for carefully mediating between the imperative to teach and defend a particular selection and view of knowledge and the necessity of avoiding a pedagogy that silences the voices of students. (*Schooling* 107-108)

Bizzell gives the example of asking a student to reconsider a paper that rejects feminism due to biological characteristics of women. One cannot help but see the contradiction here as Bizzell is, even though her intentions are good, silencing this student's voice.

Often students inhabit the economic and racial profile of what Freire terms as "the oppressors." In situations like these, not only are they asked to abandon their desires and belief systems, they are demonized. As Jennifer Seibel Trainor explains, "We are asked, on the one hand, to respect, even love, students (in Paulo Freire's words, we can only liberate those on whom we risk "an act of love" [70]), and we must, on the other, organize our teaching around attempts to change students" ("Critical Pedagogy's 'Other'" 634). Instructors need to consider how to address issues related to social justice and oppression while being considerate of students' "whiteness." Lack of consideration has led to backlash in the form of student activism. Trainor cites a study by Charles Gallagaher, who interviews white college students to gather their reaction to identity politics. What he discovered is that white students felt they had become a

target and were being victimized by new policies that catered to minority students. As Trainor explains:

> We need to be more aware of the rhetorical frames our pedagogies provide for students as they structure identity. We need to examine the ways that critical pedagogy fails to problematize adequately the different means by which race influences and shapes the dynamic and the results of critical teaching. Without such examination, we risk promoting a devastatingly unintended consequence: the development of a conscious, essentialized, and angry white identity predicated on reactionary political values. (647)

The negative backlash from identity politics have been clearly demonstrated again and again. Students now host Conservative Coming Out Days in campuses across the country. On the surface level it may seem that students only fear punitive action against their grade for defending positions their professors do not agree with. Below the surface, though, these students are speaking out against being ostracized and villianized for their beliefs. As Jeff Pruchnic explains:

> In this sense, the students are not so much protesting the difference between their political position and that of their instructors, but a pedagogical imperative to critique ideologies and politics coded as "dominant" and/or retrogressive in the classroom, but that also happen to be the conservatives' own. Consequently, this imperative puts the students in an unenviable position; they are configured as subjects to be judged in the classroom, and encouraged to take part in this judgment. Through this process, the seemingly paradoxical — at least outside of a Log Cabin Republicans meeting — action of "coming out as conservative" begins to make sense; from the viewpoint of conservative student protestors, "liberal bias" emerges as the prejudice of an authority that denounces the students' values to such a degree that they can appropriate, however hyperbolically, the "coming out" trope as a declaration of their unwillingness to feel shame or guilt in their values and practices. It also helps explain such conservative student complaints as the increasingly common critique that their humanities classes provide "indoctrination" rather than "education". ("Ironic Encounters" 60)

What we see emerging in classes driven by a liberal-agenda, however well meaning, is the replacing of one totalizing discourse for another, as Pruchnic puts it, a Hegelian "negation of a negation." Hence, the formally promoted voices and values of the dominant culture, upper middle-class, white, and/or conservative students are now placed in a defensive position

rhetorically. What is being challenged is their identity and belief systems. Victor Vitanza argues that those who believe that these issues can be dealt with through rational critique are "potentially being both dangerously utopian and blindly ideological" (143). In her ethnographic study of a mostly white high school English class, Trainor noted that within the hidden curriculum of schools are "emotioned rules." The students she studied grew up in an environment that promoted a positive attitude in class, sports, and extracurricular activities. It is this attitude they brought with them to Maya Angelou's *I Know Why The Cage Bird Sings*, which they read as negative and "whiny" ("The Emotioned Power" 91), a position that would often not only be challenged, but labeled as racist. What is missing here is a mediation between these emotioned rules and the interpretation of the story. As Trainor explains, "We tend to analyze white students one moment at a time...where the goal is to expose fragments of racist discourse. In this mode, we fail to place student racism in larger contexts, and thus we fail to understand its emotioned meanings for students, as well as our own role in creating the dynamics that give racism its emotioned power" (92).

The Conservative Critique

The conservative critique argues that the majority of students that make their way to mainstream composition classes are not oppressed minorities or individuals alienated by the capitalist economy. Thus, Jeff Smith contends in "Students' Goals, Gatekeeping, and Some Questions of Ethics" that as college instructors we have an ethical obligation to help students fulfill their goals, even if those goals are to gain social mobility by joining, rather than critiquing, the dominant class. Similarly, Russel Durst argues for instructors to acknowledge that students are taking composition to gain skills for their future careers. However, he does not suggest that instructors shy away from critical examination of power structures and ideologies, as long as

they acknowledge and accept those students who wish to hold onto their conservative beliefs and faith in meritocracy.

Complaints like these arise because critical pedagogues don't distinguish between career-mindedness and extreme careerism. Careerism is discussed by Freire, Giroux, and McLaren, as a force oppositional to democratic values. Henry Giroux states:

> I think Jacques Derrida was right in arguing that the university should be a place of unconditional resistance, a place in which nothing is beyond question. At one level, this points to the need for academics to beware of the pitfalls of specialization and professionalism, which often substitute a professional vocation for an intellectual vocation. Professionalism has more to do with reverence than critique, careerism than an engagement with public life. (*America on the Edge*, 20)

What is lost in this dichotomy is the middle ground and the belief that individuals can make a difference through their careers. Engineers can incorporate more environmentally friendly approaches. Medical professionals can treat their diverse patients with better understanding and sensitivity. Scientists and innovators can question the patent system.

This false dichotomy between civic and professional life is felt keenly by those in the technical writing field. As Sullivan and Porter explain:

> [W]e feel that many people in computers and composition have not paid sufficient attention to workplace studies in professional writing, and to some extent have even exhibited hostility to the workplace, or at least reluctance to see the workplace as a potential site for change. However, by dismissing workplace practice, computers and composition fails to engage the key site students will inhabit. The field ends up separating the workplace agenda from the social change agenda in the composition classroom, thereby reinforcing an old binary (classroom v. workplace), that, we contend, is ultimately harmful to students. (xiii)

Sullivan and Porter are looking to escape the ethical quandary where professors have to choose between helping students succeed in their chosen fields and avoiding cultural reproduction of corporate values. It is important to remember one of the key tenets of critical pedagogy, which is

that student interests should drive the content of the curriculum. Critical pedagogy often comes up short in its goal, as it selects which interests matter. While hip hop music is embraced, the career goals of the students are neglected.

A central claim in much critical pedagogy scholarship is that schools are a reproduction of capitalistic corporate society (Giroux, Shor, Mclaren, Apple). During the 1980s, the parallels between the factory line and the classroom were easy to make -- they were both housed in centralized institutions, employed standardized forms of labor, etc. However, today such comparisons are much more difficult to make as scholars from various fields have begun researching the increasingly dominant status of "post-fordist" or "post-factory" categories of labor: affective labor (Hardt and Negri), immaterial labor (Lazzarrato), knowledge labor (Drucker), virtuous labor (Virno), linguistic labor (Marrazi), symbolitic analytic labor (Reich), ludolabor (Dibbell), info-labor (Berardi), spectacular labor (Bellar), cognitive labor (Moulier-Boutang), etc. What all of these formulations have in common is a recognition that the classic Marxian “labor theory of value” that drove critical pedagogue’s conceptions of labor and capitalism (as well as much work in critical and cultural studies work of the 70s and 80s) no longer makes much sense (even as many turn to another conception of Marx’s—his references to “General Intellect”—for contemporary inspiration).

Lazzarato divides immaterial labor into two parts: "informational content" and "cultural content." The informational content is comprised of communication within computerized and cybernetic systems, whereas the cultural content involves consumer and lifestyle choices that can be tracked and monitored. Taken together, the two result in what Mario Tronti calls a "social factory" in which labor in increasingly less defined by time and location (as in the traditional factory), creative and “intellectual” work takes precedence over physical labor, and products tend

to be created for smaller groups of consumers and more flexibly attuned to shifting consumer demand (Thoburn). While some fields, such as healthcare, remain tied to time and location, other fields and jobs are increasingly being handled "online," such as the retail industry.

The large encompassment of immaterial labor supports Antonio Hardt and Michael Negri's claim in *Empire* that there is no longer an outside when it comes to capitalism:

> There is nothing, no 'naked life,' no external standpoint, that can be posed outside this field permeated by money; nothing escapes money [...] The great industrial and financial powers thus produce not only commodities but also subjectivities. They produce agentic subjectivities within the biopolitical context: they produce needs, social relations, bodies, and minds- which is to say, they produce producers. (22)

Traditionally, critical pedagogues applied tools of postmodern critical theory—foregrounding the contingency or 'constructed' nature of societal norms, recovering marginalized identities or subjectivities—to resist the corporatization of schools. What the conservative critique illustrates is that the hidden curriculum still exists, just in a different form. The hidden curriculum exists because central to critical pedagogy is a political vision. The political vision hinges around critiquing the hegemony of the superstructure. However, capitalism no longer needs hegemony to thrive; in fact, the opposite is true. Capitalism can extract more by targeting us as individuals rather than as a group. Based on their analysis of contemporary shifts in the flows of capitalism, which feed off of the fragmentation of social identities, Hardt and Negri map contemporary capitalistic power as a system that is "not only resistant to the old weapons [of resistance] but actually thrives on them, and thus joins it would-be antagonists in applying them to the fullest. Long Live Difference! Down with essentialist binaries!" (138). Thomas Frank, to give just one more example, has echoed this analysis more eloquently, and with more of a focus on the cultural politics of American Leftism; he writes in his essay, "Why Johnny Can't Dissent," (an allusion to Rudolf Flesch's famous 1955 essay on literacy, "Why Johnny Can't Read"):

"Corporate America is not an oppressor but a sponsor of fun, provider of lifestyle accoutrements, facilitator of carnival, our slang-speaking partner in the quest for that ever more-more apocalyptic organism…Consumerism is no longer about 'conformity' but about 'difference'" (34). Hence, critical pedagogy's strategies of resistance may have become themselves absorbed into the capitalistic system they once targeted, at least in first world countries.

It's important to note that there are multiple forms of capitalism and socio-political power operating simultaneously. Thomas Frank is making commentary on American culture and the viability of counterhegemonic practices in the United States. The important question, for me, that arises from this, if there is no practice outside the capitalistic system, what can we do from within it?

The Pragmatic Critique

As previously noted, the pragmatic critique suggests that critical pedagogy does not so much place unfair impositions on students, but does not impose much of anything at all; in other words, it suggests a naiveté on the part of those who believe pedagogical methods can significantly affect the beliefs and politics of students, and thus critical pedagogy begins to look like nothing more than an intellectual exercise for the student. As Richard E. Miller explains in "The Arts of Complicity: Pragmatism and the Culture of Schooling," "In the right setting, we can forget that we are the individuals vested with the responsibility for soliciting and assessing student work…The students, however, never forget where they are" (18). Essentially, due to the location of the class and the role of the teacher, it is impossible to know if the transformations in thought we notice are authentic or represent a true change in consciousness.

Elizabeth Ellsworth claimed in "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy" that critical pedagogy does not go far enough in problematizing the role of the instructor and the limitations of dialogue. No matter what the sociopolitical vision of the instructor may be, classroom equality is an illusion as critical pedagogy practices leave the "authoritarian nature of the teacher/student relationship intact" (306). In addition, the instructor's personal stake and relation to their sociopolitical vision is often left unexamined. Ellsworth suggests shedding the goal of "utopian moments of 'democracy,' 'equality,' 'justice,' or 'emancipated' teachers -- moments that are unattainable (and ultimately undesirable, because they are always predicated on the interests of those who are in the position to define utopian projects)" (308). In moments like these, instructors are envisioning the change they would like to see happen for their students or society, but not considering how they themselves and their classroom approach needs to change to pursue these goals. Class projects need to be co-defined and named through an equal dialogic exchange between students and the teacher.

However, these dialogues may be more problematic than Freire describes. If as Ellsworth and others (Elbow, Wright) assert, the critical class retains the unequal relationship between teacher and student, it is not a safe zone where students feel free to say anything without repercussion. As Ellsworth notes in her own class examining race through literature:

> Things were not being said for a number of reasons. These included fear of being misunderstood and/or disclosing too much and becoming too vulnerable; memories of bad experiences in other contexts of speaking out; resentment that other oppressions (sexism, heterosexism, fat oppression, classism, anti-Semitism) were being marginalized in the name of addressing racism-- and guilt for feeling such resentment; confusion about the levels of trust and commitment surrounding those who were allies to another group's struggle; resentment by some students of color for feeling that they were expected to disclose 'more' and once again take the burden of doing the pedagogic work of educating White students/professor about the consequences of White middle-class privilege; and

> resentment by White students for feeling they had to prove they were not the enemy. (316)

None of these possible road blocks are acknowledged in the abstract theoretical vision of critical pedagogy. Though Ellsworth doesn't used the terminology, issues related to affect are also noted in her classroom discussions of race, which are, to use Jennifer Seibel Trainor's term, "emotioned." The term "emotioned" is used to describe how "beliefs become persuasive through mediating and mediated processes of emotional regulation, individually experienced feelings, and dynamics of persuasion and rhetoric" ("The Emotioned Power" 85). Emotioned is not the same as emotional, as it points to the "related dynamics of lived affective experiences, emotional regulation taking place through institutional and cultural practices, and language." Race is a lived experience, not simply a property held by individuals.

The neglect of students' affective and emotional responses in the classroom is well documented by Laura Micciche, Julie Lindquist, and Lynn Worsham. This lack of acknowledgement is dangerous and a key reason why critical pedagogy fails. As Worsham writes: “The sex/affective production system of corporate capitalism (or the dominant pedagogy of emotion) ensures the continued misrecognition of the enemy, the source of injury and cause of violence” (240). Emotion has been undervalued because it is seen as irrational and not based on reason, a mere effect rather than a production. Laura Micciche argues that emotion should be seen rhetorically as a "performative that produces effects" (1). Emotions are produced in relation with others and become an adhesive generating "belief, attachment, and investment" (108).

Affect theory explains the limitations of rational discourse. Students cannot fully articulate the reasoning behind their subject positions or beliefs because of the pre-cognitive elements that shape them. Furthermore, when individuals are presented with facts that irrefutably challenge their beliefs, their beliefs become further entrenched, a phenomenon psychologists call

belief perseverance[3]. As reported by *Scientific American*, "Everyone does it, but we are especially vulnerable when invalidated beliefs form a key part of how we narrate our lives. Researchers have found that stereotypes, religious faiths and even our self-concept are especially vulnerable to belief perseverance" (Arnold). Interestingly, the beliefs we are most reluctant to scrutinize and change are the ones most often touched on in a critical classroom. No wonder the pragmatism of critical pedagogy is being called into question.

To address the pragmatism of critical pedagogy, one must address the key tool which much of the curriculum hinges upon, literacy. Two key considerations much be made here -- one acknowledging the role of affect and the other acknowledging that we have moved from a print-based to multimodal networked world of communication. In "Experiential Knowledge: How Literacy Practices Seek to Mediate Personal and Systemic Change," Gwen Gorzelsky argues experiential knowledge is necessary to address "the disjuncture between students' experiences and the conceptual and procedural knowledge of social critique" (404). She defines experiential knowledge as "the combination of procedural memory and the subjective, emotionally grounded nature of perceptions and cognition" (401). One way Gorzelsky discusses how individuals can gain experiential knowledge is through guided meditation, which allows practitioners to embody a perspective and gain empathy. Essentially, what she argues is that we need a literacy that allows us to communicate with and elicit response from the non-rational body.

Experiential knowledge gives us a new means of understanding subjectivity, beyond ideological construction. As Brian Massumi explains, "Affect holds a key to rethinking

[3] The concept of belief perseverance was validated by a University of Michigan study. See Hollyn Johnson and Colleen Seiferts 1994 article "Sources of the continued influence effect: When misinformation in memory affects later inferences" in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*.

postmodern power after ideology. For although ideology is still very much with us, often in the most virulent forms, it is no longer encompassing. It no longer defines the global mode of functioning of power. It is now one mode of power in a larger field that is not defined, overall, by ideology. This makes it all the more pressing to connect ideology to its real conditions of emergence" (104). Consider how we elect the figurehead for United States. Massumi and Berlant, among others, have discussed the role affect has played in the election of the president. Massumi explains how, despite his verbal gaffes and disjointed speeches, Ronald Reagan was elected:

> The actualizations relaying the Reagan incipience varied. But with the exception of the cynical, the aphasic, and the agnosic, they consistently included an overweening feeling of confidence-that of the supposedly sovereign individual within a supposedly great nation at whose helm idiocy and incoherence reigned. In other words, Reagan was many things to many people, but within a general framework of affective jingoism. Confidence is the apotheosis of affective capture. Functionalized and nationalized, it feeds directly into prison construction and neo-colonial adventure. (103)

If we consider literacy as the "relational manner in which meaning is produced" (Lankshear and McLaren 10) than we must take into account the role affect plays and expand its definition.

This expanded notion of literacy as a political formation that has both affective and ideological dimensions needs to be applied to the multimodal, networked world of the Internet. Here we are not bound only by institutions but by access, infrastructures, software, and site design. The strength of one's voice is determined by the ability to network, draw "hits," and construct texts in various formats (websites, blogs, videos, etc.). Critical literacy means understanding not only how/why institutions distribute and control information, but how websites work and how the varying elements change perceptions, privilege certain information, create boundaries, and shape identities.

While many critical pedagogues recognize the need to revamp approaches of the past to address globalization and advances in information technology, they don't address the cultural shift that resulted as we moved from a factory (discipline) society to a control society. In the factory/discipline society, each institution has its own set of behaviors and norms that shape those inside it, casting them into a mold. The control society operates instead through modulations, a constantly changing set of expectations that aren't bound by institutional structures (for example: distance learning). Instead of preparing individuals for a task or a role, individuals are being targeted for multiple roles and tapped for their potential. This shakes the foundation of critical pedagogy, which was designed as a pedagogy of resistance against the hegemony created by factory society institutions. Hegemony is no longer necessary in the control society, as difference is not a hindrance but a new vector of information that can be utilized to target individuals more efficiently. Because critical pedagogues fail to address the limitations of ideological critique and rationality, they leave the affective dimensions of identity, politics, and education unexamined. These issues need to be considered when addressing the common criticisms of critical pedagogy and creating a path with which to move forward.

A Deweyan Solution

One way to address these issues and move forward is to return to the work of John Dewey. Most of Dewey's pedagogical theories focus on one key element, experience. An experiential, rather than a strictly rational, ideological vision is better equipped to address today's political formations as it values and factors in the affective dimension. He examines the habits of individuals from both a biological and cultural perspective:

> The basic characteristic of habit is that every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, while this modification affects, whether we wish it or

> not, the quality of subsequent experiences...[A habit] covers the formation of attitudes, attitudes that are both emotional and intellectual; it covers our basic sensitivities and ways of meeting and responding to all conditions which we meet in living" (Dewey *Experience and Education* 35).

By recognizing that students come in with varying habits that shape and mold their reception to new ideas and experiences, he recognized his limitations as an educator. However, while he could not guarantee outcomes, he could design classroom encounters and interactions that were more likely to yield educative experiences. An experience is educative if it "arouses curiosity, strengthens initiative, and sets up desires and purposes that are sufficiently intense to carry a person over dead places in the future" (Dewey *Experience and Education* 38). As designer of these encounters, Dewey recognized the instructor as a group leader whose maturity sets them apart from their students.

In addition, instead of focusing on dialogue as Freire did, Dewey viewed "collaborative community as the core of democracy" (Fishman and McCarthy *Pedagogy of Hope* 67). Dewey's view of democracy is both a social and political vision. As he stated, "A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (Dewey MW 9:93). He views communication as reflective expressions where we articulate our experiences in consideration with our audience. These articulated experiences say something larger when aggregated with others in the public sphere.

While Freire does address the affective and experiential in his work, Dewey does it more directly without relying on the Hegelian dialectic or tying the affective to theological virtues. Dewey's emphasis on experience, communication, and art also pair nicely with new media theory. When taken together we can look at ways to foster experiential learning in interactive online/gaming environments and update the Deweyan vision of industrial democracy to move

towards an informational democracy. Through Dewey, I believe we can create a "critical pedagogy 2.0" that thrives and functions within new media ecologies and takes into consideration new forms of capitalism and modes of power. In order to remain relevant as a pedagogical approach invested in the relationship between culture, labor, and education, critical pedagogy must immerse itself in the digital, the nexus of both immaterial labor and community building.

Many of the key practices we associate with critical pedagogy first began with Dewey, not Freire, such as the banking concept, integrating student interests/daily lives, the hidden curriculum (which he refers to as "collateral learning") and classes based on problem-solving inquiries. While there are many similarities between the Dewey and Freire, they offer two differing progressive visions. Both believe that education can be a tool to foster democracy and social reform, yet they approach these objectives in two different manners. One is radical, one is pragmatic. One favors revolution, one favors everyday modifications. Stephen Fishman explains the distinction as such: “Whereas Dewey’s focus in both politics and pedagogy is on helping individuals contribute intelligently and wholeheartedly to a meaningful whole, Freire’s focus in both democratic governance and school reform is on overcoming the imperialistic relations between leaders (teachers) and followers (students) that are antithetical to the trust and mutuality of hope” (Hope 69). Interestingly, their visions both focus around a pedagogy that is centered on problem-solving. Dewey uses problem-based learning to fight the alienation that arose with industrialization; Freire uses problem-posing dialogue to allow both students and teachers to be active subjects in classroom, who work together as critical thinkers to demythologize reality.

At the heart of Dewey's work is experience and "all human experience is ultimately social" (*Experience and Education* 38); hence, when discussing the movement from the

industrial factory towards the "social factory" Dewey becomes in some ways more relevant to Autonomist Marxists than Marx himself. To situate Dewey in our late-capitalist, information society, I am going to pair his work on experiential learning, communication, and art with persuasive video games, online networks, and new media aesthetics. Through connecting Dewey to the affordances of new media, we can address three of the major dilemmas facing critical pedagogy today: integrating the affective dimension, finding agency in late-capitalism, and updating our conception of critical literacy to function in new media ecologies. To integrate the affective dimension, will pair Dewey's work on experiential learning with digital gaming environments. To address agency in late-capitalism, I will draw on Dewey's work on the public sphere and cybernetic systems to pair with new media assemblages. To update our conception of critical literacy, I will pair Dewey's view of aesthetics with the concept of remix and spreadable media online. Each pairing will be given its own chapter to move us toward a critical pedagogy that offers educative experiences that can alter its environments. As Dewey writes, "Every genuine experience has an active side which changes in some degree the objective conditions under which experiences are had" (*Experience and Education* 39).

CHAPTER 2 "THE AFFECTIVE GAMING LAB: CRITIQUE AND PRAXIS THROUGH PLAY"

In the previous chapter I discussed how critical pedagogy has been often been criticized for neglecting the affective dimension of students' experiences, beliefs, and identities. In addition, critical pedagogy's privileging of the rational dimension via critiques to raise consciousness has not been proven to be effective. Despite decades of ideological critique in American classrooms there has been a lack of structural change in U.S. culture. In order to guide students towards the type of praxis Freire argued for, instructors need to account for affect. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg explain the large role affect has in determining our actions:

> Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces--visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion--that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability. (1)

Affects dictate what actions and thoughts are possible--it is how we mark and are marked in our encounters with residue and impressions that create new or reinforce old tendencies. Marshall Alcorn explains that rational critiques do not change the attachments people hold because their drives and desires are "written in the body" (107). Ideology does not mask or create realities; it is "the complex dialectical interplay between our conscious and unconscious selves as they emerge in specific social practices and material environments" (Rickert 100). Thomas Rickert sees it as a protocol for emergence; it sets the parameters, but it is not the field. Worsham describes ideology's primary purpose as organizing "an emotional world, to inculcate patterns of feeling that support the legitimacy of dominant interests" ("Going Postal" 223).

One of the emerging trends since the "Affective Turn" of the early to mid 1990s in rhetoric and composition studies is a re-examination of the role emotion plays in persuasion, beliefs, action, and identity formation. Emotion is seen as a performative act (Micciche), as a key component of lived experiences (Trainor, Gorzelsky, Lindquist), as what maintains beliefs (Crowley), and as a binding agent to social order (Worsham). It overpowers rational critique and must be addressed in order to maintain the hope that education can be an agent for systematic change. In order to do this, I suggest we begin the journey of critical pedagogy anew by returning to John Dewey. It is within the work of John Dewey that we see seeds for both affect theory and critical pedagogy, as he wrote both theories of emotion and about the public sphere. He seen affect and cognition as co-productive agents in the response to stimulus, a dynamic that he would later apply to experiential learning. Dewey's concept of experiential learning is what I will be building off in this chapter as I look to update his model of a laboratory school and situate it within interactive gaming environments. Through this type of "hands-on learning" I believe a new form of critical literacy emerges, which recognizes the procedural rhetoric embedded within the interfaces and simulations in digital environments. I look not to dismiss the idea of critique, which is the centerpiece of critical pedagogy, but to approach it as an engaged, interactive practice that can happen through play in gaming environments.

Experiential Gaming: Pro-Social Interactions and Continuity

My call for a return to Dewey is a call to reconnect the affective and the critical. In *Language and Experience*, Gwen Gorzelsky describes how critical and constructivist pedagogies are lacking as separate pedagogies, but together make up a holistic pedagogical practice that is both attentive to the affective dimension of identity and the political formations that shape our ideologies and hinder opportunity. Constructivist pedagogy examines how learning occurs

through the interactions between the beliefs and ideas the students already hold and the new knowledge they come in contact with. It is a pedagogy that builds upon several of John Dewey's key ideas, such as viewing learning as a feedback loop. He believed, "Each learner is a living organism with her own history, needs, desires, and, perhaps most importantly, her own interests" (Hickman, Neubert, and Reich 9). Students are not blank slates waiting for knowledge to be imprinted upon them. Instead, their knowledge reception is influenced by their past. The amalgamation of their past experiences and present interaction is what will shape their future learning and application of that knowledge.

While the previous chapter discusses how Dewey's progressive vision was designed to fight against the alienating practices within industrial factories and retain communitarian values, it does not discuss the role affect plays in individual growth. Dewey acknowledges past experiences make an imprint not only in our conscious memories, but upon our body. In his *Theory of Emotions* work, he developed a circular schema to describe behavior, which included the outside stimulus, cognitive interpretation of the situation, the bodily response, and the embodied emotional attitude (Garrison 419). Garrison explains, "There is no fixed central processor; instead, we find the activities of coordination durationally and extensionally distributed around the circle." We see in the work of Dewey, not a dichotomous split or a hierarchy of value, but a coordination between the cognitive mind, the affective body, and the external environment. It is this coordination that makes the work of Dewey, not only a valuable contribution to affective pedagogy, but extremely relevant to new media theory, where agents work not autonomously, but in conjunction with technology.

The return to experience I am arguing for via Dewey is not an argument to turn away from discourse, ideology, or rationality. It's an argument to expand the field, to embody rhetoric,

and to break open the self-contained subject. For Dewey, experience is an interaction, a mechanism setting off a feedback loop in a cybernetic system. The term cybernetics, which was derived from the Greek word for steersman (*kubernetes)*, describes "the rich interaction of goals, predictions, actions, feedback, and response in systems of all kinds" (Pangaro). Norbert Weiner explains this trial and error system in terms of feedback loops. For example, when a missile senses information from the target through heat detection and sonar devices, it relays that information back to the machine whether it is on course (positive feedback) or if it has committed an error (negative feedback). This feedback allows for adjustments to be made. The cybernetic self, who emerges from the work of Dewey, is not bounded by skin but is constituted through a network of information that loops around the unconscious, conscious, and external world, dictated largely by their actions in trial and error fashion. As Pangaro explains, cybernetics "evolved from a 'constructivist' view of the world where objectivity derives from shared agreement about meaning, and where information (or intelligence for that matter) is an attribute of an interaction rather than a commodity stored in a computer."

The influence of the interaction is referred to by Dewey as continuity, which is what will shape the reception of future experiences; in cybernetic terms continuity is how "we make adjustments." The results of an experience vary from person to person; what is a positive encounter for one may result in a negative reaction in another. Dwight Giles and Janet Eyler describe Dewey's position as follows: "For Dewey there were two aspects of the quality of experience: agreeableness and effect on later experiences. If an experience had one of these but not the other it was not educative. For example, an experience could be agreeable or pleasurable in itself and not have a positive effect on future experiences" (79). A mis-educative experience is

one that "has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience" (*Experience and Education* 25).

Dewey's distinction between educative and mis-educative experiences can easily be connected to Spinoza's influential concept of affect, which deals with forces than enhance or diminish a body's capacity to act. An educative experience is one that enhances one's potential; it "arouses curiosity, strengthens initiative, and sets up desires and purposes that are sufficiently intense to carry a person over dead places in the future" (*Experience and Education* 38). His words bring to mind more modern research into how positive affective encounters enhance the productive potential of emerging political formations. Negri discusses how the affect of Joy is related to conception of liberty:

> Spinoza comes to ask himself how liberty comes to deposit itself in the weave of appetite which leads man towards a sovereign good. His first determination is that of joy. 'Joy' is an affect whereby the body's power of activity is increased or assisted. Pain, on the other hand, is an emotion whereby the body's power of activity is diminished or checked. Therefore (Pr. 38, IV) joy in itself is good. (qtd. in Ruddick 31-32).

Because joy increases an individual's ability to act, theorists like Negri and Hardt and many others participating in the ‘affective turn’ in the social sciences and humanities have thematized it as likewise a tool for political empowerment. Because, as Dewey argues, democracy and education are intertwined, we need to examine how we can create the possibility for such encounters in the classroom. These encounters, though, must not only be agreeable, but educative, meaning they need to create the kind of growth that will have a "favorable effect on the future" (*Experience and Education* 50).

An educative experience is partially determined by the environment in which the experience takes place or as Dewey terms it "the objective conditions" (45). It is the teacher's

role to set up a mode of delivery and activities in a way that can facilitate "worth-while experiences," usually by engaging the students socially and with hands-on problem-solving. It is with this vision in mind that I approach experiential learning through the employment of video games and interactive virtual environments. The following sections offer four different perspectives on the value of video games: Dyer-Witheford's perspective of games as a training site for the multitude, McGonigal's perspective of games as a facilitator of collaboration, Flanagan's perspective of video games as emotioned environments of critical play, and Bogost's perspective of video games as hosts of procedural rhetoric.

Video Games as Games of the Multitude

If standardized cars and housing were the ideal-type commodity in the Fordist era, Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter argue that virtual games are the ideal-type commodity of the Post-Fordist era, which are training grounds for "networked work, war, and governability" that emerged from the military-industrial matrix ("Empire@Play").

What began as video game consoles attached to tube television has escalated to become a multi-device, wireless and networked experience that no longer needed to be bound by structures of time and location. Not only are players expected to consume the video games, but they are expected to collaborate on them and create a whole subculture around them. Video game companies ask players to collaborate strategies via other media platforms and gather for tournaments and trials: "Video gaming thus became one of the first industries to perfect a post-Fordist 'cybernetic cycle' between production and consumption" (Dyer-Witheford "Sim Capital" 126). Games have become both a commodity and a place of immaterial labor, blurring the distinction between work and play. They have become "the media of Empire" as "Virtual games

simulate identities as citizen-soldiers, free-agent workers, cyborg adventurers, and corporate criminals: virtual play trains flexible personalities for flexible jobs, shapes subjects for militarized markets, and makes becoming a neoliberal subject fun" (*Games of Empire* xxx).

When Dyer-Witheford and dePeuter refer to "Empire," they are referring to the terminology given to the form of sovereign power that has moved beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. Negri and Hardt explain it as follows: "In contrast to imperialism, Empire establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a decentered and deterritorializing apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. Empire manages hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges through modulating networks of command" (*Empire* xii-xiii). Empire extends the reach of capitalism, which can now target individuals at multiple points, at work, at home, at school--there is no escape. The game industry has thrived in this environment by pioneering "methods of accumulation based on intellectual property rights, cognitive exploitation, cultural hybridization, transcontinentally subcontracted dirty work, and world-market commodities" (*Games of Empire* xxx). However, because games also require that the players produce materials, communicate with other players, and engage in collaborative play, subversive and alternative play is possible. Hence, games can also work for the multitude, the multitude being the group of decentralized individuals who bear a "subjectivity that emerges from this dynamic of singularity and commonality" (Hardt and Negri 199). The Multitude is not an organized group, but a collective that comes together to reappropriate information and knowledge, to oppose the exploitative practices of global capital and corrupt political formations, and assert self-definition. In the following two sections, I detail how video gaming environments facilitate collaborations and subversive play.

Video Games as Collaboratories

To facilitate educative encounters/experiences, we need to revisit Dewey's model of the laboratory school. In his lab school, students learned through hands-on, constructive activities. Core curriculum was tied to life skills, students' personal interests, and past individual experiences. It was a model that was infeasible for most school districts due to the resources required to carry out such interactive and personalized learning stations in the late 1800s, earlier 1900s. However, we may no longer need to construct a series of hands-on laboratories outside of the classroom to create the type of interactive learning proposed by Dewey. All we may need are computers and high-speed access to the Internet.

An example of how schools can utilize online resources to create a lab-model of learning can be seen at Quest to Learn in New York City, which one could call a modern version of the Dewey Laboratory School. It's the creation of both game researchers and teachers, which "re-imagines school as one node in an ecology of learning that extends beyond the four walls of an institution and engages kids in ways that are exciting, empowering and culturally relevant" ("Quest to Learn"). Learning emerges from play as students engage in games/quests and tackle narrative challenges in collaboration with each other. For instance, to learn math and science skills, students navigate a shrunken mad scientist through a simulation of the human body, where he is lost, and report their findings to a simulated research lab. By learning through games, which occur in both fully simulated video games and mixed-reality learning environments, students are able to practice their problem-solving skills. Unlike textbook narratives, games are non-linear and require applied critical thinking. Greg Costikyan explains how games depend on decision-making: "Decisions have to pose real, plausible alternatives, or they aren't real decisions. It must be entirely reasonable for a player to make a decision one way in one game, and a different way

in the next" (194). An example of a game that tests students problem-solving skills is *The Disease Transmission Game*, where students work collaboratively to fight against a disease outbreak in an avatar community. In these simulated realities, students are able to tangibly learn cause and effect instead of simply memorizing the right answers for a test.

Dewey discusses extensively how we build knowledge through confronting problems, experimenting with possible solutions, and making discoveries. Experimentation is key and is an integral part of video game design. Players navigate environments and instigate events and outcomes through their actions. Games operate often through trial and error as players try to achieve their desired results. As James Gee explains, "[Video games] situate meaning in a multimodal space through embodied experience to solve problems and reflect on the intricacies of the design of imagined worlds and the design of both real and imagined social relationships and identities in the modern world" (48). Video games are hands-on, experiential, customizable, and often inquiry-based models of learning.

As mentioned earlier, Dewey asserted that a collaborative community is the core of democracy. Often gamers learn from each other, divulging their discoveries and cheats. This component of gaming has grown exponentially as games have moved beyond their initial console boxes to become networked online. The largest example of game networking may be the World of Warcraft Wiki, which contains over 99,000 separate pages. Individuals contribute and collaborate on this Wiki because they are engaged and interested, not because it is a requirement of their job or part of a school assignment. It's this distinction that has driven the gamification movement. In games such as the *World of Warcraft*, players are in control of their learning/growth and must engage cooperatively with other players in order to succeed. Essentially, these games model the type of education Dewey advocates, which is the project

method, where students work in teams to become active, responsible learners who rely on, collaborate with, and assist others to make the project a success. In such situations, not only do students learn disciplinary knowledge and project management skills, they learn a model of community-centered problem-solving that they can apply outside the realms of school and work. As Dewey argues in *The Public and Its Problems*: "community is simply another name for democracy, an opportunity to join with others, to find common projects and concerns" (qtd. in Fishman and McCarty *Challenge of Classroom* 52).

In *Reality is Broken*, Jane McGonigal argues that video games can be seen "as global collaboration laboratories, or collaboratories: online spaces for young people from around the world to come together and test and develop their ability to cooperate, coordinate, and cocreate at epic scales" (279). She gives the example of a game she designed for the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, *Lost Ring*. The game premise is that ancient Greeks banished an Olympic sport and tried to destroy evidence of its existence. Now, gamers must collaborate and work together to piece together the history and rules of this lost sport. Once collaborators discovered the whole history of the sport they began to play it, gathering in various cities to revive the lost sport. On the last day of the Summer Olympics, six teams assembled in various cities across the globe and competed for honorary medals in the Lost-Sport Olympics. As this example demonstrates, a global collaboratory was formed as people worked together to cooperatively revive a sport and create events.

Recent interest in interactive games and online collaboration have led to games based on real world problems, such as our dependency on oil. The game *World Without Oil* creates a simulated oil crisis and asks online players to consider life without oil, what the effects would be, and how they would adapt. Essentially, players are engaging in problem-based learning in a

collaborative game setting. Learning is individualized based on the locality, interests, and lifestyle of the players. A farmer, soldier, college student, and auto worker all have very different experiences. Together their narratives and reflections build a larger simulated reality. The game was divided up into thirty-eight regions and the quality of life in those regions depended largely on the players abilities to handle the crises that emerged from the oil shortage: "rolling brownouts from oil-dependent power companies; airlines canceling flights and dramatically raising the cost of tickets; empty shelves and food shortages due to inability to deliveries made to local stores" (McGonigal 307). One successful strategy emerged from a Tennessee hobby farmer who trained others "how to grow their own food and increase their food self-sufficiency" (306). McGonigal explores why individuals would participate in a game based on a negative forecast rather than an escapist fantasy. She discovered:

> By turning a real problem into a voluntary obstacle, we activated more genuine interest, curiosity, motivation, effort, and optimism than we would have otherwise. We can change our real-life behaviors in the context of a fictional game precisely because there isn't any negative pressure surrounding the decision to change. We are motivated purely by positive stress and by our own desire to engage with a game in more satisfying, successful, social, and meaningful ways. (311)

In addition, these games indicate the larger political impact that can be had through the pooling of general intellect. In *Grundrisse*, Marx predicts a turn in capitalism whereas wealth will come to depend on social knowledge due to automation and communication and transportation networks. Dyer-Whitford discusses the complexity of general intellect in the post-fordist world as such:

> Read sympathetically, 'general intellect' can be seen as a prescient glimpse of today's knowledge economy, with production teams, innovation milieux and university-corporate research partnerships yielding the "fixed capital" of robotic factories and global computer networks. The dialectical prediction of "classical" Marxism was that "general intellect,"

> though generated by the world market, would destroy and supersede it... The assertion of neoliberalism, although phrased in very different terms, is that the world market is completely compatible with general intellect. The concept of "the new economy" is a marriage made in heaven between high-technology systems and the commodity form, a perfect union of Net and Market: "friction free capitalism." ("Sim Capital")

However, within gaming environments, Dyer-Whitford sees potential for resistance. Players are asked constantly to shape the reality of their virtual environments, making narrative choices, designing avatars, and managing populations. This ability to imagine alternatives as well as to plan to strategies can be applied to social problems. In addition, the ability to imagine provides the ability to hope. And while the pooling of intellect is key, so is the ability to emotionally impact players as I will detail in the next section.

Video Games as Pro-Social Behavior

While it is clear that video game players are problem-solving, collaborating, and building/envisioning new worlds, the question remains whether or not these activities will impact their geophysical behaviors and civic engagement. I would like to treat video games like Dewey treats experiences-- not all are educative, and some have negative effects. You cannot isolate the variable of video games to create a uni-directional causal relationship in a complex decision-making process, whether that decision is committing a violent act, electing a particular government official, or becoming a social activist for a cause. Instead we need to view video games as an interaction with our prior knowledge, predisposition, and belief system. While no one can predict outcomes, "The educator's part in the enterprise of education is to furnish the environment which stimulates responses and directs the learner's course...all that the educator can do is modify stimuli so that response will as surely as is possible result in the formation of desirable intellectual and emotional dispositions" (Dewey *Democracy and Education* 212). Because the terminology "desirable intellectual and emotional dispositions" could read as a type

of indoctrination and begs the question, desirable to whom?, I suggest we use the terms "pro-social behavior" and personal empowerment and examine how certain video games can act as a stimulus.

Pro-social behavior is a behavior that has a benefit to others and/or society, such as volunteering, promoting tolerance, or advocating a cause. To consider how we can approach pro-social behavior in a way that aligns with Dewey, I suggest we look at Fishman and McCarthy's *John Dewey and the Philosophy and Practice of Hope*. In this book, they use Dewey's work on morality to construct a theory of hope, a habit of hope which is "intelligent and wholehearted in the promotion of collective goods, it is, indeed, a virtue" (14). It is through this virtue of hope that we can promote democracy, which Dewey believes is "the social arrangement that affords the richest opportunities for the greatest number to develop their abilities to achieve fulfilling harmonies" (17). I would argue, then, that for Dewey, pro-social behavior would be actions that illustrate this virtue of hope, actions that promote "the development of open, cooperative inquiry and service for the common good" (99-100).

Dartmouth and NYU have designed a host of games around the concept of pro-social behavior called Values at Play. Instead of reading about oppressed populations, such as Darfur refugees, you can inhabit their lives through game play. Through embodying these characters, players gain experiential knowledge and develop empathy. Though research on the effects of pro-social video games is relatively new, recent studies have been positive. In a comparative study of players engaging in different types of games, researchers from Notre Dame discovered: "Those who played the helping game were more likely to describe the story characters as having concern and empathy for others in the story. Prosocial video game playing had at least short-term priming effects for prosocial thoughts, feelings, and attributed behaviors." Many of the emerging

"empathy games" involve giving voice to those who have been marginalized or silenced. For example, the Half the Sky Movement created a game designed to illustrate to players the difficulties faced by women globally. It tackles the issues of human trafficking, health care, education, economic opportunity, and gender-based violence. Perhaps games like these could answer the post-ideological call of scholars like Alcorn:

> Complex human problems, formed by changing historical conditions, are not solved by a simple application of a correct ideology or belief structure. Instead, political issues have to respond constantly to concrete conditions of human experience, particularly experiences of suffering and enjoyment...we must practice a form of discourse that will allow information about suffering and desire to circulate effectively within groups of people with diverse beliefs and values. (4-5)

Five months after its launch in March 2013, the Half the Sky Movement game attracted over a million players globally.

To circulate "information about suffering and desire" one must engage in what Micciche calls the "rhetorics of emotion." As she explains, "Emotion as performative emphasizes the does, making clear that, as teachers, we cannot install empathy over indifference or political anger over contentment among our students, for emotion does not belong to people but is produced among them" (109). In Zen Buddhist guided meditations, the rhetorics of emotion are performed through visualizations. In her discussion of meditation as a literate practice, Gorzelsky gives the example of a guided meditation designed for a man dealing with the loss of a loved one. First he is asked to visualize the circumstances of his loss to elicit the negative feelings he holds. Next he is led to consider the larger circumstances of the event, considering the nature of life and the whole lived experience of the person he lost, visualizations designed to help him adjust his perspective and neutralize destructive emotions. Finally, he is led to a self-reflexive moment where he can appreciate the time he had with his loved one.

If one characterizes apathy as a destructive emotion, then empathy games are much like the guided visualizations of Gorzelsky's example. They help players visualize and experience the lives of others in an immersive state designed to stimulate emotional responses. An often-cited example is *Darfur is Dying*, a video game designed to shed light on the experiences of the Darfur refugees. Game play is set in a refugee camp that is being threatened by Janjaweed militias. Players inhabit the role of a refugee who must fetch water without being seen by the armed militia, rebuild their village, and survive attacks. Mary Flanagan explains, "While *Darfur is Dying* allows players to safely experience the trauma of being a displaced Darfurian refugee, the game is so closely tied to real people and events that it unsettles the player and disturbs her sense of comfort" (*Critical Play* 246). It's this disturbance that is critical to social change because, as Manuel Castells explains, "At the individual level, social movements are emotional movements" (*Hope and Outrage* 14). It's important we understand that video games are rhetorical texts that have the ability to elicit emotions, which I will further discuss below.

Video Games as Procedural Rhetoric

Due to the interactive nature of the web and new media, critical literacy needs to involve not only the control of information, but the control of experience. To understand how online experiences are controlled through virtual environments and interfaces, one must understand procedural rhetoric. In "Composition at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century," Richard Fulkerson uses the term procedural rhetoric to discuss a system of rhetorical conventions and strategies that was the dominant tradition of composition in the 1970s and 1980s. Situation and audience determine a set of conventions that are to be followed. Students gain procedural knowledge by mastering moves and techniques appropriate to the rhetorical situation. Gaming theorist's Ian Bogost's use of this term has both similarities and differences to the type of

procedural rhetoric described by Fulkerson. Game designers, like writers, apply moves and conventions appropriate to their audience and purpose. Also, games are situated within a particular context that dictates rules and expectations. However, unlike a written text, procedural rhetoric is not just a component in the design of the game but how the game is enacted as well. Rhetoric is not simply received via reading or listening but executed. As Bogost explains, "This type of persuasion is tied to the core affordances of the computer: computers run processes, they execute calculations and rule-based symbolic manipulations" (*Persuasive Games* ix).

Procedural rhetoric in game environments is based on rules, options, and protocols, which guide players toward a particular viewpoint. Bogost builds off Derrida's concept of archive fever to argue that games contain within them simulation fever: "Writing about authority and origin in writing in general, Derrida has argued that archivization, in written and other forms, always implies inclusion and exclusion, the preservation of something to remember, and the omission of something to forget. … Archive fever is the simultaneous drive toward and fear of archivization" (*Unit Operations* 108). Essentially, archive fever describes how recorded experiences derive from a perspective that closes off other experiences. Bogost describes simulation fever as "the nervous discomfort caused by the interaction of the game's unit-operational representations of a segment of the real world and the player's subjective understanding of that representation" (136). It refers to the disconnect between players' geophysical lived experiences and the rules of the game. The example he uses in his book is the game *September 12*, which illustrates how terrorists are created through the bombing of a Middle East Village, a response to the September 11th attacks designed to show how violence leads to more violence. The players experiencing "simulation fever" reacted strongly against the simplicity of the game play, which neglects the complex factors motivating the September 11th

attacks. When I had my students choose games for analysis, one student reacted strongly to the game *Spent*, which portrays the causes and reality of poverty in a manner that was at odds with her own experience of homelessness and poverty: "It got me all riled up because it perpetuates so many stigmas about poor people. If you're setting out to counter a stigma, you certainly should be sure that you're not adding to it!" As Bogost explains, gaining procedural literacy means "[w]orking through simulation fever" and "learning how to express what simulations choose to embed and to exclude" (109).

Bogost's explanation of procedural rhetoric is applicable not only to games, but to digital interfaces as well. The politics of interfaces was first brought up by Cynthia and Richard Selfe's article by the same name in 1994. They claimed, "Within the virtual space represented by these interfaces, and elsewhere within computer systems, the values of our culture-ideological, political, economic, educational-are mapped both implicitly and explicitly, constituting a complex set of material relations among culture, technology, and technology users. In effect, interfaces are cultural maps of computer systems, and as Denis Wood points out, such maps are never ideologically innocent or inert" (485). Within the article they discuss how desktops are designed to replicate office spaces, how the icons and clip art are geared toward "upper-class white culture and professional, office- oriented computer use" (487), and how the standardized language of computers is English. In general all digital environments -- software programs, social media sites, search engines-- have embedded affordances and restrictions, shaping the identities, encounters and products created within those environments.

Assignment Makeover: The Rhetorical Analysis

When I began my career as a graduate assistant composition instructor, I was handed a coursepack designed by my advisors. In it were a collection of assignments, readings and examples. One of those key assignments was the rhetorical analysis (see Appendix A). Students were to select an editorial and analyze it either in terms of the classical appeals (ethos, pathos, and logos) or the 5 A's (allusion, analogy, anecdote, assertion, and authority). The students' opinions on the topic of the editorial were not to be stated. Instead, they were to provide a neutral summary, a thesis regarding the quality of the rhetoric, and an analytical and evaluative section on each of the rhetorical strategies utilized.

As stated in the assignment sheet, "By analyzing the rhetoric, then, we can better understand not only how arguments are meant to persuade us (and how we can resist those arguments), but also how we might make use of the same rhetorical techniques in our own writing." This sentence indicates that rhetoric is exclusively rational, an argumentative strategy that can be critically analyzed and then applied. Pathos is a logically chosen strategy to elicit emotions that we, the readers, decide analytically whether or not is effective.

In "The Pathos and Pathos: The Treatment of Emotion in Contemporary Composition Textbooks," Gretchen Flesher Moon discusses how the role of pathos and "emotions, feelings, prejudices and the like" is minimized in textbooks (33). Moon analyzed 25 textbooks and discovered "[f]ive books make no reference to emotions, feelings, or pathos...Several attend explicitly to emotional appeals or pathos as handbooks do, by defining the term and providing an example or two within a single paragraph...or as fallacies" (35). She further notes, pathos is often linked with manipulative practices by advertisers and politicians or seen as a less important sidekick to logos. In the broader sense, the impression given by textbooks is that emotions are to

be avoided, especially in our diction where neutrality is valued, or they are unimportant, playing a minimal role in writing process.

Micciche takes up this argument in her book *Doing Emotion* writing, "In relying primarily on classical formulations of rhetoric that privilege reason, compositionists tend to either neglect or underestimate emotion's presence in the process of meaning-making, as do many writing textbooks that describe Aristotle's pathetic appeal. We treat emotion as additive to meaningful discourse at a cost, for emotion suffuses everything from political arguments to social movement to everyday acts of communication and understanding" (1). Instead of viewing emotion as an additive, Micciche views it as a bonding agent, connecting us to people, beliefs, ideas, and objects. She distinguishes between "the study of emoting, or the expression of feeling, and that of rhetorics of emotion, or emotion as a performative that produces effects." When we view emotion this way, it becomes more than an appeal delivered to us to be passively received or analytically viewed. Emotion is produced through interactions.

To better understand how "emotions are enacted and embodied in the social world," I suggest we add an immersive environment to our assignment makeover. In her book, Micciche uses Nathan Stucky's concept of deep embodiment, where students re-enact transcribed conversations by assuming another's identity, mannerisms, etc. The purpose of Stucky's assignment is "to position performance as an 'investigatory tool' through which the 'act of the performance is the study of the interactional moment of an other body, an other human experience" (135). The value of doing so, he suggests, evolves from how "the body can learn from interrogating other bodies through enactment" (138). I believe this type of enactment can also come through playing video games.

For my rhetorical analysis makeover, I am building on the textual component to include reflective writing and a pro-social video game. It will be multi-purposed as it will examine rhetoric in multiple forms, draw awareness to the role of perception and emotion, and include a virtual environment designed to engage students civically and socially. The goal of this assignment is two-fold: one, to create what Dewey would term an educative experience, and two, to gain an understanding of procedural rhetoric. By having students choose online computer games that address a social or political issue, the goal is that their future experiences of those same social or political issues would be enhanced by the experience of playing the game they chose. As Dewey states the goal is "to select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences" (*Experience and Education* 28). For example, if a student chose to play the game *Queer Power*, the goal would be that playing the game would positively impact how the student will respond in the future when confronted with issues related to the Lesbian-Gay-Transgendered community. The type of impact, however, cannot be predicted because the game-playing experience will be influenced by past experiences related to the issue.

Recognizing the tension between students' lived experiences and the simulated reality of the game is key part of the assignment, which asks students to react personally both to an article about the topic and the game itself. As I stated in the previous chapter, two considerations must be made when reconceptualizing critical literacy-- one acknowledging the role of affect and the other acknowledging that we have moved from a print-based to multimodal networked world of communication. To help students gain knowledge of the procedural rhetoric embedded in online interfaces and interactions, I ask that they read Ian Bogost's essay, "The Rhetoric of Video Games." In this essay, Bogost gives a model analysis of the game *Animal Crossing* and explains

how procedural rhetoric and representations work and how the games like the ones we will be using in the assignment below use procedural representations and rhetoric to "make claims about the cultural, social, or material aspects of human experience" (123). To highlight how this is a different type of rhetoric than we commonly employ in writing, I ask students to compare the textual representation of an issue to the procedural game-based representation.

Because the class I am giving the assignment to is an online class, I relate his discussion to the procedural workings of our Learning Management System, which shape the functioning of our online class. Success in the class is dependent not solely on content absorption but on the management of a collection of small tasks and constant interactions with the grading system and the instructor. Some students may even experience a simulation fever if they have only taken face-to-face classes before as the workings of the class does not match up with their previous experiences of how education happens in a classroom.

Assignment: Reflective Rhetorical Analysis of a Video Game

Background

As Delta College students, we are limited to the experiences allowed by our class schedules, demands of our loved ones, financial concerns, and geophysical location. Through this assignment we are going to inhabit a simulated reality, live as characters that exhibit no resemblance to ourselves, and make decisions regarding issues we may never have considered.

Step One:

Pick a game from the following websites (games must involve a social or political issue)--

http://www.gamesforchange.org/play/

http://www.tiltfactor.org/games

http://www.persuasivegames.com/games/

http://www.molleindustria.org/

Step Two:

Find a print article regarding the topic you have selected. Read and react to it. How do you feel about the issue after reading about it? Do you feel as though you understand it? Write 300-500 words, giving first a summary of the article and then a thesis statement with your reaction.

Step Three:

Play the game. Because it is your only assignment for the week, I expect you to log in at least six hours and document the activities or events you experience within the game.

Step Four:

Compare your experience playing the game to reading the article. How was it different? Which made a more effective argument? Which had a stronger impact on you? Explain in 300-500 words.

Step Five:

Read about procedural rhetoric in Ian Bogost's essay, "The Rhetoric of Video Games." Discuss the role this type of rhetoric played in your gaming experience and overall impression of the effectiveness. Analyze the argument made by the game via procedural rhetoric in at least 500 words.

Assignment Reflection

In their game analysis, all students noted a difference between reading about an issue and playing a game based upon the issue. Most believed the two mediums complimented each other, with the text article giving more informational details and the game providing more active engagement with the issue. One student writes in comparing the game *Debt Ski* to an article on credit card debt: "It's a fun way to learn and it's easy to correct your mistakes in the game or redo a level or just simply try again, but when you read something that is in print with hard facts, you don't get a redo or to try again. In real life you can suffer the consequences, learn from your mistakes, and do better but there aren't any redo's in life." Her opinion represents a large portion of the class who believed that facts and statistics, not fun and silly games, make a stronger argument. However, as she goes on in her analysis, this point weakens when she states:

> Any article can describe the future of young people in conjunction with credit card debt; any article can give you statistics and studies about what's to come if young adults keep borrowing money they can't pay back. However, the video game, Debt Ski in this case, can make the players go through the process of buying things with money they don't have to spend, can give them the option to pay something off or with credit if it's a big sum of money, can teach them good and bad spending habits.

What emerges in her analysis is two different types of learning, one passive and one active. While the games we chose were short, persuasive low-budget ones we could download for free, a greater outcome, beyond understanding a viewpoint or learning about procedural rhetoric, could emerge through more extended and in-depth game play, which would allow the students to determine the outcome or shape of the game (i.e. to insert their own rhetoric).

However, for the more limited purposes of the rhetorical analysis assignment, we did note other elements that make games successful, such as the ability to receive instant feedback. One student describes this as a key motivator when playing the game *SuperBetter*, a game

designed to improve personal resilience: "If I remember to stand up at my computer more often, I can click the 'I did it' button and get a great big affirmation back. This sounds ridiculous, but it really works. While playing the game, you want to earn those affirmations and get those points. You really get caught up in it." Through this game, the student now estimates she stands 30% more often when doing work. As game designer, Jane McGonigal, explains, "All of the neurological and physiological systems that underlie happiness--our attention systems, our reward center, our motivation systems, our emotion and memory centers--are fully activated by game play" (28). This goes back to the cybernetic schema proposed by Dewey; if an action summons an external stimuli that gives us a positive feeling, such as a reward, we will work to obtain that feeling again.

Progressive New Media Practices

One of the key dilemmas for critical pedagogy is bridging the gap between social critique and students' lived experiences. The above assignment works toward bridging this gap by giving students a new experience, one in a gaming environment. Because we are working with students' lived experiences, which serve as the foundation for the reception of their online interaction, the outcome of the assignment cannot be wholly determined. However, the goal is to have students move beyond apathetic acceptance of a harmful practice.

The purpose of critique is to help students envision an alternative and to work against dehumanizing practices. Critiques are most commonly a rational exercise where students engage in picking apart a particular cultural text or narrative myth. However, critiques can also take place in a less negative, more interactive manner in online games. Critiques are embedded in the game play through procedural rhetoric, as are often alternatives. In explaining the power of

games, *Sims* designer Will Wright, comments, "If you could just get everybody to be a little bit more aware of the world around them, and how it works, and have that feed back into the course the world is taking, gaming could be an incredibly powerful mechanism for steering the system" (cited in Morgenstern 2007). By engaging simultaneously in alternatives and critique, video games can offer students hope and a greater sense of control. As Castells explains, "[F]or enthusiasm to emerge and for hope to rise, individuals have to overcome the negative emotion resulting from the avoidance motivational system: anxiety. Anxiety is a response to an external threat over which the threatened person has no control. Thus, anxiety leads to fear, and has a paralyzing effect on action" (14). Matthew Levy refers to this as a type of cynicism that keeps students from intervening in their own oppression or modifying negative behaviors: "To the ethical and empirical revelations of philosophy and science, cynicism responds: Yes, what you say is true, but nevertheless we are constrained by 'the power of things'" (348). He suggests teachers move towards activities that reveal possibilities and opportunity for agency rather than prove to them that the system is broken and corrupt.

Video games not only offer an alternative reality but a new way of introducing students to marginalized voices. Instead of putting students in a potentially defensive position, students are asked to embody the marginalized position. Often students inhabit the economic and racial profile of what Freire terms as "the oppressors." In situations like these, not only are they asked to abandon their desires and belief systems, they are demonized. As Jennifer Seibel Trainor explains, "We are asked, on the one hand, to respect, even love, students (in Paulo Freire's words, we can only liberate those on whom we risk "an act of love" [70]), and we must, on the other, organize our teaching around attempts to change students" ("Critical Pedagogy's 'Other'" 634). Instead of pitting students against each other or making them the object of scrutiny, video

games place them in an alternative subject position, allowing them to experience and try out a new identity.

Instead of choosing a pop culture text in order to perform a negative critique, a common culture studies class move, I suggest we approach choosing a pop culture text in order to further our understanding of an issue, a group of people, an event, etc., in relation to ourselves, to create an interaction and experience. The games I have chosen have critiques embedded with them. Through playing them we engage with the critique, not only rationally, but bodily. And while we cannot control students affective responses, we can ask them to become aware of their responses. This is why in the assignment makeover, I moved from rational analysis towards personal reflection to highlight the rhetoric of emotions. This assignment is also designed to highlight procedural rhetoric, which needs to be understood for a student to gain critical literacy in the digital age. As John Street states, "Technology is invested with meaning and expectations, and any account of its role in modern society must recognize the implications of this process. The effect of technology on the way we live is partly determined by the images, ideas, and practices which are incorporated in it" (qtd. in Selber 87). The way our experiences and actions are shaped by technology will be developed further in the next chapter, which deals with network theory and agency online.

CHAPTER 3 "THE NETWORKED COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY: AN INFORMATIONAL DEMOCRACY"

Critical pedagogy has often referred to itself as a pedagogy of resistance, resistant of capitalism, resistant of oppressive ideologies infused within our culture, resistant of narratives that marginalize identities and silence voices. This identity has been complicated by the movement from fordist capitalism towards post-fordist or late capitalism, where mass production and mass media have become personalized and consumer driven with consumer created niches of products and information. Much of immaterial surplus labor comes from new practices in media creation and consumption. Instead of a top-down distribution of mass culture (a key cultural critique made in the work of Ira Shor) with the revolution of flexible specialization, niche-marketing, e-commerce, and social software applications, students are increasingly "creators" or "producers" of mass culture; at the very least, the boundaries between activities of economic and cultural production and consumption have undergone a sea-change since the early days of critical pedagogy (hence, the recent popularity of terminology like 'pro-sumer' that combines the previously separate categories of producer and consumer).

Knowledge is not exclusively distributed from one central source, but built in a communal fashion through Wikis, social bookmarking, blogs, etc. Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams describe these changes in their book *Wikinomics* in relation to what they call 'n-geners' (people of the net generation, usually classified as being born in the 1980s and 90s):"N-Geners are not content to be passive consumers, and increasingly satisfy their desire for choice, convenience, customization, and control by designing, producing, and distributing products themselves" (52). Traditionally, critical pedagogy has focused more on students' roles as consumers and how they are shaped ideologically by dominant discourses fed to them through

mainstream mass media. Today, however, the more pressing need may be for students to critically examine their own productions and interrogate the niches that they inhabit.

As stated in the first chapter, one of the core tenets of critical pedagogy is to investigate schools as institutional sites that indoctrinate students through disciplinary power. However, Foucault's concept of discipline as a mode of social power housed in institutional sites has been in many ways challenged by the rapid disintermediation of these sites, as the factory, the school, and the hospital give way to outsourcing, distance education, and telemedicine. As Gilles Deleuze documents in his essay, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," paralleling the growth of capitalism, socio-political power has become more expansive and less dependent on particular institutional sites as locations of mediation or interpellation:

> The family, the school, the army, the factory are no longer the distinct analogical spaces that converge towards an owner-state or private power-but coded figures deformable and transformable-of a single corporation that now has only stockholders [...] Control is short-term and of rapid rates of turnover, but also continuous and without limit, while discipline was of long duration, infinite and discontinuous. Man is no longer man enclosed, but man in debt. (6)

The changes Deleuze describes are the result of an intensification of power, a movement from discipline to the more efficient form of what Foucault called "biopower." Where discipline uses power to suppress and elicit action within institutional sites, biopower intervenes directly on all forms of life within both public and private realms. As Jeffrey Nealon explains: "In short, 'who you are' has become increasingly bound up with what you (are able to) consume, what kind of work you (are able to) do, and what niche you occupy" (5). If subjectivity and biopower are inseparable, where do students find agency? Again, critical pedagogy's conception of resistance is challenged by the lack of an outside. Agency is everywhere and fueling biopower. However, while cultural critics like Frank focus on the negative effects of resistance, Nealon is more

positive: "The Foucaultian question or problem is not so much uncovering resistance, as it is a question of 'tuning' it -- finding channels, concepts, or practices that can link up and thereby intensify transveral struggles into larger, collective but discontinuous movements" (106). It is this question of tuning that must be explored as we look to redefine political action in an era where the binaries of self/other, subject/object and public/private have been dismantled.

To deal with issues of agency, we must examine the network formations of power in digital ecologies because, as Rainie and Wellman state, the network is the new social operating system. By network I am referring to the organizational form of the digital ensemble, which creates a more efficient system of production that no longer relies on "place, proximity, and centralization as was the case in the industrial mechanical ensemble" (Savat 124). Here, in nexus of immaterial labor, "What is produced...is not just material goods but actual social relations and forms of life" (Hardt and Negri 94). As a relational system, it is both celebrated for its decentralized nature and demonized for its surveillance. It helps construct and spread activism and fuels the attention economy. What can be gleaned from the debates of the cheerleaders and naysayers is that the Internet is a contested space. It is a network where nodes spar for spectators and information is spread and exploited. It allows for both grassroot movements and monopolies. To plot a way to move within and shape our networks, I will be drawing from Dewey's views on communication, democracy, and the public sphere. First I will consider Dewey's views on how communication forms the public sphere, a practice that is being threatened by filter bubbles. Next, I will update Dewey's vision of an industrial democracy, which was a vision of democracy that extended into the realms of labor and culture, to imagine what an informational democracy would look like in today's attention economy. Finally, I will examine what happens to Dewey's

concept of interaction and continuity in an online environment, where instead of acting subjects, we become flows of information.

The Public and Its New Problem

Dewey's emphasis on individuals lived experiences carries over into his view of the public sphere. Here individuals represent not one essential position, but the multiple positions created by their varied experiences. They group not because they share a singular view but they group to share their experiences, reconceive of them in light of the experiences of others, and discover and devise a course of action that is needed at one particular moment. In *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey states publics form when individuals gather to discuss adverse effects to government policies and activities: "Indirect, extensive, enduring and serious consequences of conjoint and interacting behavior call a public into existence having a common interest in controlling these consequences" (126). The cohesive element of the public sphere is communication.

This vision of the public sphere has been corrupted by what Eli Pariser terms as "the filter bubble." The filter bubble is comprised of both self-chosen and data-driven personalization, which walls off Internet users from divergent opinions, important world events, and holistic views. Our Google searches yield different results based on the digital record of our prior clicks, purchases, and affiliations. Pariser echoes Dewey's belief that democracy "requires citizens to see things from another's point of view" (5). However, our filter bubbles are silencing voices and alternative views are becoming buried under what Facebook and Google believe we want to read.

Online filtering not only harms our democracy, it harms individuals' personal empowerment. Yochai Benkler argued in the *Wealth of the Network*, that individual autonomy is enhanced by the "the diversity of information available to individuals":

> It does so by enabling sources commercial and noncommercial, mainstream and fringe, domestic or foreign, to produce information and communicate with anyone. This diversity radically changes the universe of options that individuals can consider as open for them to pursue. It provides them a richer basis to form critical judgments about how they could live their lives, and, through this opportunity for critical reflection, why they should value the life they choose. (134)

Filtering and personalization is impoverishing the network and, hence, impoverishing the autonomy of its users. It limits our view of what is possible. It also limits our educative experiences. As Siva Vaidhyanathan explains in *The Googlization of Everything*, "Learning is by definition an encounter with what you don't know, what you haven't thought of, what you couldn't conceive, and what you never understood or entertained as possible. It's an encounter with what's other--even with otherness as such. The kind of filter that Google interposes between an Internet searcher and what a search yields shields the searcher from such radical encounters" (182). When Dewey discussed communication, it wasn't as a means to reaffirm beliefs or knowledge, it was a means to become educated on the views of others. He explains, "To be a recipient of a communication is to have an enlarged and changed experience....The experience has to be formulated in order to be communicated. The formulate requires getting outside of it, seeing it as another would see it, considering what points of contact it has with the life of another so that it may be got into such form that he can appreciate its meaning" (*Democracy and Education* 6). These types of encounters need to be encouraged, not stifled, online.

Dewey envisioned a public sphere that contained within it "the means by which a scattered, mobile, and manifold public may so recognize itself as to define and express its

interests" (*The Public and Its Problems* 146). This public sphere cannot exist in an Internet which is "sorted and manipulated by algorithms, fragmented by design, and hostile to dialogue" (Pariser 164). Part of the work of critical pedagogy is identifying the walls created by our filter bubbles so that we may begin to dismantle them. David Savat defines political action in today's informational society of control and modulations as "anything that affects the constitution of flow, whether that be in the ability to participate in a flow, the ability to constitute a flow in the first instance, or any change in an already constituted flow. This is why so many political issues surrounding digital media are couched in terms of access...In short, access is such a focus of attention in much scholarship precisely because connection -- the construction of the digital human assemblage -- is what enables all subsequent actions in the digital ensemble to occur" (183). The personalization and nichification of the web is limiting the flow and access of information.

To dismantle our filter bubbles, we must consciously search for results outside of the ones we are given, visit sites with oppositional views, and become less predictable. Essentially we must change the flow of information we emit to change the feedback we will receive. As Savat explains, we are being observed so that our actions may be anticipated. One way to move outside of our self-created and algorithm-fashioned egocentric networks is to engage with materials and individuals outside of the "friend"-based networks we have on social media sites like Facebook. On these sites, the concept of "public" takes on a very different meaning than the one intended by Dewey:

> Participants in social network sites want to be public where public means interacting with all people who might have similar tastes or be entertaining or provide useful information. They do not wish to exist in a public where they are harassed or where they have to deal with people who have power over them... Because context is egocentric and networked in social network sites, the speaker always sets the relevant context. The

> speaker addresses their Friends. Some of those Friends may wish to react and address their Friends but the audience of this response differs from the audience of original statement. The context shifts. This is also how viral messages spread when new recipients share it with their Friends and those for whom it resonates pass it on. (boyd, "Friends")

Consider this with what Dewey defines as conversations of a public capacity where "the consequences of conversation extend beyond the two directly concerned" and "affect the welfare of many others" (*The Public and Its Problems* 46). I would argue, then, that the only true conversations of a public capacity that occur in egocentric networks are viral messages. Viral messages being messages that others' spread on their own pages, feeds, and blogs. Often times, it is because these messages reflect an image or status that people want others to identify them with, i.e. if I share this they will think I am funny, well-read, or conscientious. However, for this to happen, the originator of the message must create something that will elicit a response from a large, impersonal audience. I will go into more detail on this phenomenon in the next chapter. Overall, though, what viral messages demonstrate is the importance of capturing an audience's attention. In the next section, I will discuss how the attention economy has challenged the concept of the public sphere.

The Public in the Attention Economy

According to Dewey, the problem the public faces is distractions, which creates multiple publics formed around issues other than politics:

> Persons have always been, for the most part, taken up with their more immediate work and place. The power of 'bread and the circus' to divert attention from public matters is an old story. But now the industrial conditions which have enlarged, complicated and multiplied public interests have also multiplied and intensified formidable rivals to them...The increase in the number, variety and cheapness of amusement represents a powerful diversion from political concerns" (*The Public and Its Problems* 116).

The proliferation of publics seen by Dewey as the result of industrialization was but a preview of things to come. If you took all the recorded amount of information in the world as of 2003, it would equate to 5 billion gigabytes, the same of amount of information we now create in two days time (Pariser 11). Information has become overabundant; hence, attention has become a scarce commodity.

While I addressed in the first chapter how resistance has been co-opted by corporations, I neglected the other side of the story where consumerism has been co-opted by activists. We've become accustomed to the idea that every dollar is a vote. To shop ethically is to protest sweat shops, child labor, environmental damage, GMOs, and American job loss. We now must accustom ourselves to the idea that every click is also a vote. As Patrick Cogan and Samuel Kinsley explain, "The drive which animates the proponents of attention economics, namely to capture, quantify, predict, and monetise the attention paid by individual brains, fails to comprehend this disjunction between the economic calculation of the value of attention and the role of attention in the very production of the values of the culture upon which the economy feeds" (18). We create value by what we click, like, follow, share, and download. As Savat would argue, we reinforce or change the flow of the system.

The difference between spending money and attention is that money is an external item we are exchanging for an object; attention is an internal component that we are giving. If attention is truly a scarce commodity, then shouldn't we be given monetary award in today's exchange economy? This is Jaron Lanier's argument in *Who Owns the Future?*. Lanier goes as far as to claim that the middle class is being eliminated because individuals are not being given monetary compensation for the work they are doing online. He suggests we move to a micropayment system: "Keep track of where information came from. Pay people when

information that exists because they exist turns out to be valuable, no matter what kind of information is involved or whether a person intended to provide it or not. Let the price be determined by markets" ("Fixing the Digital Economy").

Lanier's idea moves us toward what I am terming an informational democracy, an updated version of Dewey's vision of an industrial democracy. What Dewey wanted was for the concept of democracy to extend beyond politics into the realms of culture and work. He was adamant that all men should be the "masters of their own industrial fate." In *Democracy and Education*, he describes the conditions alienating industrial workers: "The majority of workers have no insight into the social aims of their pursuits and no direct personal interest in them. The results achieved are not ends of their actions, but only of their employers" (304). To be free and have work that contributes to their self-realizations they need "direct participation in control" (268-269). In the information society, we are not alienated from our immaterial labor. However, this de-alienation has led to an intensification of our exploitation. Eran Fisher explores this relationship through social-networking sites (SNS):

> SNS offer a media environment where audience work can potentially lead to objectification: users have much more control over the work process and the product (although not owning it legally); work entails communication that helps users connect with others and objectify more facets of their species being... SNS establishes new relations of production that are based on a dialectical link between exploitation and alienation: in order to be de-alienated, users must communicate and socialize: they must establish social networks, share information, talk to their friends and read their posts, follow and be followed. By thus doing they also exacerbate their exploitation.

Essentially we give these sites our attention, our opinions, and our identity to use for their own profit. In an informational democracy, an individual would be able to choose whether or not to sell their speculative labor instead of creating surplus-value that is being exploited by Google, Facebook, etc. It's important to note to our ability to choose relies on the interfaces and coding of

the digital environments we inhabit. We act not as individuals, but as digital-human assemblages, as I will detail in the next section.

The Public as Digital-Human Assemblages

As the previous section notes we have become networked beings -- always connected. In *Networked: The New Social Operating System*, Lee Rainie and Barry Wellman argue that individuals today are simultaneously alone and together, a phenomenon they refer to as "networked individualism." In this description, an individual is constantly operating on real-time feedback from various sites of connectivity as they negotiate multiple tasks at once. It gives new meaning to Deleuze and Guattari's argument that your head is "fundamentally a crowd" (29).

Networked individualism is but one example of what it means to be "posthuman." N. Katherine Hayles describes posthumanism as such:

> Among the characteristics associated with the posthuman are a privileging of informational pattern over material instantiation; a construction of consciousness that sees it as an epiphenomenon rather than the seat of identity; a view of the body as an originary prosthesis that we all learn to operate at birth and that is supplemented later in life by other prostheses; and above all, a configuration of the human so that it can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines... Just as postmodernism has many contributory currents, from information technologies to postcolonialism, so the posthuman is taking place at a variety of sites for diverse reasons, not all of which are compatible with one another. ("Desiring Agency" 146)

This posthuman vision, which breaks us out of our flesh envelopes to build human-digital assemblages, gives us a vision of a distributed cognition. Because cognition is distributed, agency is as well "for multiplying the sites at which cognizing can take place also multiplies the entities who can count as agents" (ibid.).

The lack of stability and contingency on other agents creates a process of continual "becoming" online. Becoming, in Deleuzean terms, is when an element of an assemblage takes

movement and begins the process of change. It is part of a constant mutation or flow between events and states. This concept moves us away from thinking about static starting points and end points and moves us toward thinking about the constant evolution of forms. This movement is a line of flight, an element deterritorializing itself and reterritorializing itself, becoming a new assemblage, which will also morph and sprout new lines of flight. It's Dewey's vision of interaction and continuity unbound by organizing principles or in bodies without organs. The entity interacting is no longer a subject in the traditional sense. Savat argues that in the digital ensemble we become superjects instead of subjects, meaning we are only conceived in terms of events instead of unified essences. When we leave our spatial bodies to become virtual projections we become "open to, even dispersed amongst, an endlessly proliferating number of information streams" (qtd. in Savat, Mansfield 155). The unified subject is dispersed into codified events that can enter multiple streams of information, where there is the potential for greater continuation and a greater number of future interactions.

The constant mutations and flexible flows in the network schema are also what defines the control society: "whereas in a panoptic schema some center, even an absent or implied one, must act as a point of surveillance or domination, control systems are based on an infinite series of linkages — the important point being not that control systems lack centers, but that they operate through multiple connections" (Pruchnic *Rhetoric and Ethics* 127). A control society is constantly tracking and recording movements and using those movements to alter the environment. Marketing campaigns follow lines of flight, modifying their responses to respond to new potential markets. Because social control constantly morphs to adjust to network feedback there is no static entity to resist, which means we need to think of political action in new terms. In response to this intensification of control, Pruchnic suggests we return to the writer

who inspired Deleuze's concept of the control society, William Burroughs. Burroughs understood that redirection and manipulation of, not resistance to, the system is what is needed. Burroughs' argument is not unlike Dyer-Witheford's and de Peuter's in *Games of Empire*, where they argue that video games contain within them not only controlling forces of Empire but the skills needed to empower the multitude: "To grasp this paradox, one might say that while games tend to a reactionary imperial *content*, as militarized, marketized, entertainment commodities, they also tend to a radical, multitudinous *form*, as collaborative, constructive, experimental digital productions" (228).

In order to manipulate and redirect the system, we need to examine and understand our actions online. This goes back to the previous sections on filter bubbles and the attention economy. The consequences of our actions can be seen in the advertisements in the side bar of Facebook, in the promotional Tweets in our Twitter feed, in Amazon's product picks, etc. The online actions recorded on our computer generate different identities based on algorithms. Here we see concretely Deleuze's concept of becoming as each searches redefine or reconstitute us. Our identities are always in motion, morphing with the flow of information we input. Pariser explains the process as such

> [Facebook's] primary way of thinking about your identity is to look at what you share and with whom you interact. That's a whole different kettle of data from Google's: There are plenty of prurient, vain, and embarrassing things we click on that we'd be reluctant to share with all of our friends in a status update. And the reverse is true, too. I'll cop to sometimes sharing links I've barely read--the long investigative piece on the reconstruction of Haiti, the bold political headline-- because I like the way it makes me appear to others. The Google self and the Facebook self, in other words, are pretty different people. There's a big difference between 'you are what you click' and 'you are what you share.' (114)

The question is, who do we want to be? Choose your clicks, shares, and likes accordingly and Google and Facebook can help encourage the formation of your ideal self. If we follow the logic

of algorithms, we can decide who or what should receive the public's attention. Because we are being tracked, we lead those follow us. Instead of considering our data as exploited, what if we considered it as directive? It's important that we see ourselves not only as consumers, but curators, of information. In the words of Howard Rheingold, "we're all each other's filter." When we interact with and share information online, we must consider the continuity of our online experiences and actions, as they leave "tracks which shape the future" (Fishman and McCarthy *Challenge of Classroom Practice* 31).

It's also important to note how the characteristics of the online environment work and potentially shape behavior. According to Hayles, it is what Deleuze and Guattari neglect, "By insisting that flows of intensities follow only the dictates of desire, Deleuze and Guattari erase the powerful role of constraints in creating complex feedback loops that make organism and environment into an integrated system" (155). Our communicative acts are shaped both by the interface we are using and the tools at our disposal. Agency, therefore, exists in an assemblage of humans and information technologies. Hayles explains how agency works as such

> Neither completely constrained nor entirely free, we act within these systems with partial agency amid local specificities that help to determine our behavior, even as our behavior also helps to configure the system. We are never only conscious subjects, for distributed cognition take place throughout the body as well as without; we are never only texts, for we exist as embodied entities in physical contexts too complex to be reduced to semiotic codes; and we never act with complete agency, just as we are never completely without agency. ("Desiring Agency" 158)

The networked individual, then, in straddling both a geophysical location and a node on the global network becomes a new political formation, referred to as a "netizen" by Mark Poster (78). A netizen utilizes the Internet to both promote and enhance social causes that have a geophysical presence, such as Greenpeace, and create new movements, such as the SOPA strike. The netizen's two key tools are access and information; hence, a netizen works against interfaces,

laws, or manipulations that impede the flow of information and conscientiously curate information. Generally speaking, being a good netizen means being "vigilant about new opportunities for democratizing entrenched powers" (88).

To bring this back to Dewey, I believe being a good netizen means creating and "discovering the means by which a scattered, mobile and manifold public may so recognize itself as to define and express its interests" and promoting those means (*The Public and Its Problems* 146). At the heart of democracy, for Dewey, is associated and communal life. During Dewey's lifetime, he seen the rise of the automobile and factory, which dismantled and changed the fabric of community life. We are now rediscovering what community means through online networks. A community is place where "there is conjoint activity whose consequences are appreciated as good by all singular person who take part in it, and where the realization of the good is such as to effect an energetic desire and effort to sustain it in being just because it is a good shared by all" (*The Public and Its New Problems* 149).

The ideal of writing as a form of citizenship is a common component in the composition classroom. Indeed, there are even textbooks devoted solely to this concept bearing titles such as *Writer/Citizen*. And while many have moved from the letter to the editor assignment to blogs, the concept of the writer has not changed. How can we move from the citizen writer to the netizen writer? This is the question I used to guide my assignment makeover of the problem solution essay.

Assignment Makeover: Problem Solution Essay

In academic writing, we promote the vision of the lone researcher. Students choose a topic, they receive an informational presentation via their instructor or a librarian on finding

credible sources, and then they begin the process of sorting through information to support the claim they want to make. An instructor may make the obligatory gesture of having them consider other viewpoints, but really that is just a small hurdle to jump before being allowed to pursue the opinion they have already established.

Even research papers driven by discovery, such as the still popular I-Search paper, feed into the egocentric networks that many students exist in. "I search. That's the truth of any inquiry" (Macrorie "Preface"). The I-Search is just one example of the recent research in discourse production which "adheres to the Cartesian claim that a split exists between the human mind and the rest of the world" (Kent 97). Following this assumption, human subjectivity becomes "the starting point for every investigation of meaning and language use" (98). Much like modern politics, which emerged following the Enlightenment era, the central focus of the composition classroom tends to be the individual. As elaborated by Savat, "Much of modern political thought, whether it be of a liberal, socialist, or feminist variety, takes the individual and its well-being as the central goal of its theorizing (Cohen 2008). The individual's relationship to other individuals, its ability and capacity to maintain its existence or form in a reasonable state vis-a-vis others, and its ability to propagate itself are issues of key importance in modern politics" (48). As politics and composition move online, focus needs to shift from the individual.

To make this shift, we can bring back Dewey's work on individuals in problem-solving scenarios. In *Individualism Old and New*, Dewey approaches social issues through a scientific viewpoint which "finds its opportunities in problems, in questions" (162). A scientist inquires and then grapples with the disparities s/he finds. It's not an individual intellectual exercise, but an active, associative process that is fueled by interactions and communication. Dewey argues we have a tendency to think of society in static, general terms: "We should forget 'society' and think

of laws, industry, medicine, politics, art, education, philosophy--and think of them in the plural. For points of contact are not the same for any two persons and hence the questions which interests and occupations pose are never twice the same...Harmony with conditions is not a single and monotonous uniformity, but a diversified affair requiring an individual attack" (*Individualism* 166-167). Hence we need to understand our individualism as a unique, morphing perspective derived from our experiences. The job of the individual is not to singularly solve an issue but to interact with others, to communicate their experiences and hear the experiences of others, so that solutions and conjoint actions may emerge.

One of the most common research essays is the problem-solution paper. Students begin by defining a problem and trying to make a general audience care about it. They then move into exploring solutions and arguing for the best course of action to solve or ameliorate the problem they defined. During my most recent teaching of this assignment, I expanded the assignment to include collaborative knowledge building online and online activist work. The reasons for doing this were three-fold: one, it gave students an opportunity to move beyond the hypothetical to actual concrete work towards solving a problem they are interested in; two, it exposed them to viewpoints and information they may not have sought out or discovered otherwise; and three, it allowed them to develop the literacy skills necessary to navigate and utilize the affordances of the Internet. Rheingold explains that "those who understand the fundamentals of digital participation, online collaboration, informational credibility testing, and network awareness will be able to exert more control over their fates than those who lack this lore" (2).

To move beyond the boundaries of a traditional, print-based research assignment, I required that the students engage in two online activist activities, such as creating an informative Twitter feed; starting/joining an activist Facebook group; creating memes, petitions, websites,

and/or Youtube videos (assignment sheet below). At the end of the semester they completed a reflection documenting what they learned about online activism (see assignment sheet below).

Online Activism Assignment

As we research our causes and later argue for solutions, I want us to document and promote our findings online. Online activism can take many forms through social media, blogging, website creation, petitions, videos, and memes. Because of the various options and because we will be working independently, I will expect you to keep track of your posts, Tweets, and work to submit in a final portfolio. For blogs, all I need is the URL. For the Tweets and Facebook group posts, I need an actual word document with the Tweets and posts copied into it.

If you get behind on one of your tasks or decide you want to switch to another activity, that is fine. The flexibility of having the project submitted as a portfolio allows us this freedom.

More details on the requirements of each option are listed below. The Youtube video and website options are listed last, as they are the most detailed.

Option 1: Facebook group posts and comments
For this option you can start a Facebook group or join an existing group. Each week you will post or comment on a post at least five times. These posts and comments will need to be submitted in a word document at the end of the project. I suggest updating a word document every week.

Option 2: Twitter Feed
For this option you will need to have 10 tweets a week. Three of these can be retweets. You can always Tweet news stories or websites you like. There should be a hashtag related to your cause or created by you that you will use in your feed. Avoid plagiarism.

Option 3: Blog
For this option you will need to maintain a blog and post to it weekly. Blog posts need to be at least 200 words, proofread, and contain no plagiarism. You should also use tags or keywords in your posts so that you blog can be found through a Google search.

Option 4: Online petition
For this option you will need to create an online petition. You should have a strong written portion of 250-500 words.

Option 5: Three Memes

Your memes must not violate copyright laws or contain plagiarism. See examples of memes here: http://knowyourmeme.com. I suggest images with captions or parodies.

Option 6: Youtube video

For the Youtube video assignment, you must complete a storyboard, submit weekly progress reports, get feedback on a rough draft, and publish a final video on Youtube.

Your Youtube video should make a compelling argument for your cause and/or solution. My suggested length is three minutes. However, we can negotiate this when you complete your rough draft. If you don't have a video editor you prefer to use, I suggest using wevideo.com, which is a cloud-based editor. I have a tutorial for the program here: http://youtu.be/35pnAQnMdgc.

Option 7: Website

- Create a website using www.weebly.com, www.wix.com or site builder of your choice
- Repurpose your 5-7 page Problem/Solution essay to fit the conventions of writing for the web (see online activism module under content)
- Have at least four distinct pages
- Choose or design a fitting template
- Pick images that communicate your message (www.creativecommons.org, www.flickr.com, www.morguefile.com, or http://photobucket.com)
- Avoid plagiarism or copyright issues

Examples from my Winter 2012 English 112 class:

http://poverty.natemealey.com/
http://childabuseprevented.weebly.com/
http://solvepoverty.weebly.com

Online Activism Reflection

Minimum word count: 500 words

Throughout almost half the semester, we engaged in online activities designed to promote a cause and bring about awareness and change. Now we are going to reflect on our experience, discussing what we learned about online activism.

Introduction:

In your introduction you want to describe your cause and what you wanted to achieve through your online activist activities. End with a thesis statement that discusses what you learned, what opinions you formed, and how successful your endeavors were.

Body paragraphs:

Make at least three claims that support your thesis statement. Back up those claims with specific examples and analysis of those examples.

Conclusion:

In your conclusion, look to the future. Do you think you'll use these skills again? Do you feel that these skills empower you to create change in the world?

Assignment Reflection

Throughout the semester, through readings, discussions, and announcements, I framed the online activist project as an exploration. Meaning, my goal was not to sell online activism to them, but to expose them to its potential and limitations. I emphasized that they could have a negative or positive opinion about using tools such as Twitter and Facebook; however, they had to back up that opinion with observations and firsthand experience. Their grade depended not on the conclusion they reached but on how they supported that conclusion. Based on the variety of responses I received to the project, from total enthusiasm, to disappointment, to firm recommitment that geophysical activism is still superior, I believe that the reflections were overall honest and did not contain coerced answers.

Overall, students seemed empowered by the process and were surprised by how social media could be used for more than sharing personal feelings and celebrity gossip. One student, who was advocating for animal wrote:

> I used Twitter for my awareness and was blown away by how many other people were behind the same cause. Seeing new posts everyday about a dog or cat needing a new home made me determined to spread the word... Communicating with others over the internet allowed me to learn about all the cruelty that happens with animals. For instance, I read posts and saw photos about grizzly bears being strapped in jets and ejected to see if the systems worked. Using Twitter in this way opened my eyes to things that were going on that I'd never heard of. I began to read articles from other countries and became acquainted with organizations from around the world. My passion for fighting for animals grew even stronger.

Many students had similar reactions of surprise and noted how much Twitter actually helped them with researching their topic. They were able to tap into what Clay Shirky describes in *Cognitive Surplus*, a vast network of individuals who bring together a diverse set of talents, knowledge and skills. They were also able to engage in the type of communication Dewey relates to his vision of the public sphere, where a diverse group of individuals gather to share

various viewpoints, observations, and experiences related to common concern. As noted in the quote above, the student opened herself up to fully interact with others on Twitter and to be influenced by those interactions.

Most students defended their feelings of empowerment by making statements about "making one person aware." Some, though, felt discouraged by the difficulty of gathering a large audience or getting people to comment on their work. It's not enough to simply Tweet facts or begin a blog. It's not enough to have a voice, you need to have a network. As one student wrote:

> In doing this project, I found out that getting your name out there, and networking with other bloggers or tweeters like you is very important. With tweeting it can be as simple as mentioning someone in a tweet, and they will most likely respond to you. On Twitter, I learned how easy it is to connect with someone, even if they live across the world or are famous. And that is why I think it is important we did this project, because it taught us that we can connect with people all around the world, and have our voice heard.

The most fruitful online activist in the class utilized his Facebook network to seed an activist group, which multiplied quickly to over 400 members and led to a successful online petition that garnered support from all over the world. This students writes of the process:

> With my petition, I shared the link in my Facebook group as well as on my personal Facebook page. After posting it on my Facebook page, my family and friends went to the link and signed the petition. After they signed it, they would share the link on their own page, making my petition reach people outside of my own personal network. Each time they would share the petition, their family and friends would sign it and then share it as well.

Whereas the first student quote I used reflects a sense of distributed cognition, a group thinking through a problem collaboratively through the use of a networked environment, the next two reflect how agency is also distributed online. The success of an individual depends largely on how well they use the social software and the size and investment of their network. As Hayles explains, "Neither completely constrained nor entirely free, we act within these systems with partial agency amid local specificities that help to determine our behavior, even as our behavior also helps to configure the system" ("Desiring Agency" 158). Essentially, our ability to act is

shaped by the tools we are using, such as Twitter, and the reception of our acts by others. In many cases, the hashtag students used had more power than the words they wrote.

Based on the feedback of my students, I believe this assignment needs to be a full-semester project with more training on building a network. Online activism only works with time and effort in conjunction with online technologies. As noted above, not all students were able to give up their initial intentions and plans to adapt with the flow and organization of information online.

Progressive New Media Practices

The endpoint for most critical classroom is the concept of praxis, a type of action that follows the heightening of students' critical consciousness. As I stated in the first chapter, praxis is most often discussed as a type of intervention on the dominant narrative and history that have oppressed and marginalized masses of people. Freire describes the process as such, "Humankind emerge from their *submersion* and acquire the ability to *intervene* in reality as it is unveiled. *Intervention* in reality--historical awareness itself--thus represents a step forward from *emergence*, and results from the *conscientizacao* of the situation" (109). Interestingly, technology has not typically played a large role in this type of intervention. This oversight has become increasingly problematic as technology is not only a important tool for collaboration and communication, but it defines what actions can be taken and works as a co-agent:

> The machine cannot be separated from who or what one is in the digital. In addition, and especially in the context of the network, a problematic emerges in terms of what exactly constitutes the boundary of the machine or the human-machine assemblage, something that is even further accentuated through the development of wireless technologies, smart fabrics (Kuchler 2008), and radio-frequency identification (RFID) tagging (Crandall 2010; Hayles 2009). Indeed, the very aim of the interface is to eliminate such boundaries. The interface's function, both within and between assemblages, is to make one assemblage. When operating in the virtuality of the digital ensemble, therefore, the initial differentiation between the inside, that which is 'me,' and

> an outside, that which is 'not me', does not derive from the differentiation of an inside and outside of the body. (Savat 136)

Because we cannot be separated from the digital assemblage, we are not lone actors, but co-agents who instigate actions within the parameters set by the machines we are using. While Dewey, who died in 1952, did not live to see rise of the Internet, I do not think the concept that we work in digital-human assemblages hinders his theories on interaction and continuity for he always considered us as beings working in conjunction with our environment. He defines the environment as "whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had" (*Experience and Education* 44). The complexity of our environment may have changed; however, because Dewey focuses on "the experience," which affects all parties involved, environment included, I think he remains relevant.

What has changed is the way we need to conceive of actions taken in the name of critical pedagogy. The most common type of praxis discussed in critical pedagogy is the counterhegemonic movement, an action designed to go against the logic of capitalism or the norms of the disciplinary society. However, as this chapter indicates, critical pedagogy needs to move beyond traditional conceptions of resistance. This is not to say that counterhegemonic movements are completely without value; however, it's value will depend on other flows of information and the potential profit that may arise from the movement. The difficulty of removing oneself completely from the system of capitalism is explained by Hardt and Negri: "[t]he will to be against really needs a body that is completely incapable of submitting to command. It needs a body that is incapable of adapting to family life, to factory discipline, to the regulations of a traditional sex life, and so forth" (*Empire* 216). An existence that would be impossible for most.

More effective and feasible types of political action involve working within the system and manipulating it to serve our goals and desires. This means access and understanding of digital media is key-- "connection, access, the ability and capacity to constitute yourself as flow within the digital ensemble, whether individual or collective, a primary political issue" (Savat 184). The online activism project I describe above works with flows of information, trying to bring attention to a particular issue and create connections that may lead to conjoined actions. Castells explains the process as such, "By engaging in the production of mass media messages, and by developing autonomous networks of horizontal communication, citizens of the Information Age become able to invent new programs for their lives with the materials of their suffering, fears, dreams, and hopes" (9). In order to achieve these ends, rhetoric and composition programs need to consider the changes rendered when focus shifts from a print-based alphabetic form of communication to a multimodal digital one. The next chapter addresses how we can potentially begin to approach these new concerns and move towards an expanded vision of critical literacy.

CHAPTER 4 "REMIX AESTHETICS: ART AS EXPERIENCE"

"What do we do...when the very act of gesturing toward a different future becomes one of the most traditional gestures of all" (143) -- John Muckelbauer.

As noted by McLaren and Lankshear, critical literacy draws from an impressive list of theoretical influences, including "the disciplines of Freirian/neo-Marxist, poststructuralist, social semiotic, reception theory, neopragmatic, deconstruction, critical hermeneutics, and other postmodernist perspectives" (319). While this list is indeed substantial, it is also true that the cultural/historical conditions that made these resources relevant in earlier decades have changed significantly. In previous chapters I explored how experiential learning could reinsert affect into the critical classroom and how networked environments influence our conception of the acting subject. In this chapter, I would like to focus on how we may revise and extend our conception of critical literacy to include affect theory and autonomous Marxist and new media theory perspectives. To do this, I will be focusing on the aesthetics, reception, and production of new media texts and exploring how we can use these texts in order to best respond to our attention-driven online networks and new media systems. Understanding the making and remaking of new media texts is necessary to enact the goal of critical literacy, which is as Ira Shor explains "to discover alternative paths for self and social development" ("What is Critical Literacy" 283).

While many scholars have discussed how we can move from the traditional linear process of print composition to a more associative, web-based process of composing multimodally, their focus is often solely on functional and rhetorical literacy, not critical literacy. New media scholars have not only dropped the critical element when looking at new media texts, but the term literacy itself, which is deemed as too wedded to print technology. Within composition studies, this movement has been most famously led by Gregory Ulmer, who argues that in order to properly address the concerns and affordances of digitally-based multimodal systems of

composing, we need a whole new terminology. He uses the term *electracy* to recognize the shift needed to move beyond the print-based alphabetic system of writing: "'Electracy' is to digital media what literacy is to alphabetic writing: an apparatus, or social machine, partly technological, partly institutional" ("Introduction: Electracy"). While Ulmer's concept has been salutary for stressing the need for Composition Studies to rethink literacy, he largely neglects how instructors can apply critical interrogations within this system of invention and affective responses in a way that can lead to progressive change (indeed, Ulmer's work takes place in an explicitly "post-critical" register). Instead he takes an expressivist approach, putting individuals at the center of his assignments to illustrate how agency functions in our digital networked era[4]. While his discovery-driven approach is not without merit, it does not progress to the level of critical application. How can we apply the knowledge of how agency functions in order to revamp our approaches to pursuing sociopolitical change?

In re-examining Lankshear and McLaren's list of theoretical influences on critical literacy, one could argue the terminology that would be the most problematic to Ulmer would be "critical hermeneutics." One of the major shifts, for Ulmer, as we move from literacy to electracy, is a shift from hermeneutics to hereutics or, in other words, from interpretation to invention. As Ulmer defines it on his blog, "'Heuretics' refers to the use of theory for the invention of new texts (poetics of any sort). It is listed in the O.E.D. as obsolete or rare, and paired with 'hermeneutics,' the use of theory for the interpretation of existing texts" ("HEUretic"). The call for a renewed focus on invention is echoed, though in a different manner,

[4] An example of Ulmer's expressivist approach is the "Mystory" assignment, which brings together multiple discourses an individual has experienced: career discourses, family discourses, school discourses, and pop culture discourses. These discourses are put together in web form in what Ulmer refers to as a "widesite" to illustrate how individuals are situated. Essentially, students are asked to create a personalized historiography to "recognize the peculiar configuration of possibility in one's own moment" (qtd. in Hawk 238).

by John Muckelbauer. Muckelbauer wants to approach change, be it in institutional or sociopolitical practices, without engaging in a Hegelian dialectic of negation. With the Hegelian approach, the action of change is being defined by that which it is negating, creating a "structural repetition" (11) that "reproduces the very dynamics that enabled that [position]" (8). Instead of pursuing a particular goal through negation or critique, Muckelbauer suggests we make a move through invention without an endpoint in sight. An example of this type of invention is the process of hacking, where the individuals are not working towards predetermined results but examining the code for possibilities. As Jan Rune Holmevik explains, "They work within the *chora* of the code that they are creating while concurrently forging new methods for inventing code itself" (57), working between the known and the unknown. It's invention through discovery-driven action and play.

Ulmer brings invention into the classroom by focusing on juxtapositions and connections and prioritizing emotion and image. While Ulmer's assignments are not easily applicable in every institution or easily adaptable for every instructor, using juxtapositions, connections, play, and images as tools of invention can be folded into any composition classroom[5]. Such activities help Composition Studies facilitate a shift in emphasis from production to connection, which Johndan Johnson-Eilola argues for in order to prioritize collaboration over the final product and singular authorial voice. What the concept of electracy brings to the classroom is a way to write connectively and to gain understanding of how agency is distributed. However, I would argue that Ulmer's and Johnson-Eilola's work is only the first step in the process. After we understand how writing connectively functions, we should then explore how can we utilize connections in a critical manner.

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[5] Ulmer's former student, Jeff Rice, writes extensively about using these techniques in the *Rhetoric of Cool: Composition Studies and New Media*, which he later adapted into a composition textbook, *Writing About Cool: Hypertext and Cultural Studies in the Computer Classroom*.

To help us move towards a connected, inventive and critical composition classroom, I will first return to John Dewey, who helps redefine aesthetics in a way that is applicable to multimodal online productions. I will then focus on Johnson-Eilola's concept of writing in fragments and Jeff Rice's use of juxtapositions in order to define how new media writing works. Finally, I will try to offer a possible answer to the question of critical literacy today by pairing Deweyan aesthetics and new media composing techniques/concerns to show that we can write critically in new media environments, as well as, if not better, than with print technologies. By fusing new media scholarship and critical literacy, and through the use of Mackenzie Wark's concept of hacking, I believe a new productive path will emerge. As Wark states in his *Hacker Manifesto*, "In art, in science, in philosophy and culture, in any production of knowledge where data can be gathered, where information can be extracted from it, and where in that information new possibilities for the world produced, there are hackers hacking the new out of the old" (004). I believe through critical curation, juxtapositions, and remixes, students can utilize networks and audience participation to direct the critical play and production of new possible worlds of thought and action.

Deweyan New Media Aesthetics

In "Reclaiming Experience: The Aesthetic and Multimodal Composition," Aimee Knight argues for a return to sensory-based aesthetics to understand "how audiences create meaning via their mediated experiences" (148). To make such a move, one must first strip aesthetics of its theoretical baggage and take back to its etymological roots, the Greek word *aisthetikos*. *Aisthetikos* is what can be perceived. Perception, rather than rational or value judgments, determines the aesthetic appeal of an object. To use a clichéd phrase, does a piece speak to us? This goes against the Kantian concept of aesthetics, which Dewey critiques in *Art as Experience*:

> Kant was a past-master in first drawing distinctions and then erecting them into compartmental division...Having disposed of Truth and the Good, it remained to find a niche for Beauty, the remaining terms in the classic trio. Pure Feeling remained, being 'pure' in the sense of being isolated and self-enclosed; feeling free from any taint of desire; feeling that strictly speaking is non-empirical...Thus the psychological road was opened leading to the ivory tower of 'Beauty' remote from all desire, action, and stir of emotion. (252-3)

Kant called for a detached judgment of taste that could be agreed on objectively by a collective audience. What is lost in his approach is the active engagement of the body in the experience of art. Heavily influenced by Darwin's thoughts on evolution, Dewey argued that we are not self-enclosed, essential beings, but adaptable creatures connected and responsive to our environment. Likewise, we must be responsive to experience art. It is not a passive viewing, "For to perceive, a beholder must *create* his experience" (54).

The Internet intensifies the interactive nature of art -- we not only can perceive art, we can communicate with it, remix it, and spread it. We need to reconceptualize aesthetics as "cultural objects undergo continuous, unlimited alterations, appropriations and reappropriations enabled and encouraged by networked computing" (Poster 24). The value of art then lies its ability to build a "dynamic world of potentialities" (Qvortrup 257). The role of the audience is not simply to interpret, but to interact with the artwork. A static state of completion is no longer a necessary attribute of art. "The clear separation of artist and audience, subject and object, is broken in a new relation of aesthetics and politics" (Poster 125). An extreme example of this is a simulation by theoretical chemist David Glowacki, where the audience literally becomes the art installation. Through the use of Xbox Kinect 3D cameras, people's energy fields are displayed on a screen, becoming "a swirling mass of reactive colour that moves in realtime to the motion of [their bodies]" (Clark). In addition, sounds are created via wave analyses of people's movements. Glowacki's goal is to allow the audience to "imagine the invisible matrices we're all embedded in."

If we classify Glowacki's installation as the high-art of new media interactive art, the low-end would be what Henry Jenkins defines as spreadable media. The prototypical word used for media that moves virally through an online network is *meme*, a term that was coined by Richard Dawkins to explain how cultural ideas, practices, and symbols are transmitted "by leaping brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation" (Dawkins 189). Unlike the cultural memes Dawkins theorized, Internet memes do not maintain fidelity or an unaltered state as they pass from "brain to brain." In their study of online memes, Michael Knobel and Colin Lankshear discovered that many were altered, "the meme 'vehicle' was changed, modified, mixed with other referential and expressive resources, and regularly given idiosyncratic spins by participants" (208). A recent example of an online meme which has propagated due to modifications is the "Ryan Gosling says Hey Girl" meme. The meme began as a post on a Tumblr feed entitled *Fuck Yeah! Ryan Gosling* when a captioned picture was posted that stated, "Hey girl, No Shoes, Clear Eyes, Full Heart, Can't Wait to Kiss You" (Jezebel). This led to a circulation of a whole series of captioned Ryan Gosling photos that began with the words "Hey girl." It spawned a derivative blog entitled, *Feminist Ryan Gosling*, where after the opening of "Hey girl" the captioned Ryan Gosling delivers musings/statements related to feminist theory and literature, such as "Derrida thinks language is fluid enough to break the gender divide, but nothing will split us apart" (Henderson). At the point of this most recent iteration, who is the creator of this text? Tumblr user Jezebel wrote a caption on a photo she did not take and uploaded it to a site that she did not create. Danielle Henderson parodied the original meme to promote a feminist agenda and perhaps promote herself as an academic and writer, as her feminist Ryan Gosling Tumblr led to a book contract[6].

[6] For media coverage, see "'Feminist Ryan Gosling' Author Danielle Henderson on Her New Book" in the works cited.

If we consider aesthetics as a way of judging the value of art, then the aesthetics of online media/art involves how easily and likely a text is to be "appropriated and reworked by a range of different communities" (Jenkins et al 2). Because viral media and memes rely on the audience to transform and repurpose the original text, the value of a piece is co-determined by the audience. To reach an audience and elicit their participation, pathos is needed. According to Jenkins, Ford, and Green, spreadable media most commonly contain: "absurd humor or parody," "puzzles or enigmas which encourage us to seek out other information," a need for audience participation to be complete, and "themes of community and nostalgia" (6). As Micciche argued, emotions bind a social body together. Online, emotions are the catalyst behind likes, shares, and posts. We are not only circulating images and information, but emotions.

Understanding the aesthetics of new media texts should be recognized as a form of literacy. "Literacies call us to generate and communicate meanings and to invite others to make meaning from our texts in turn," explain Lankshear and Knobel, "This, however, can only be done by having something to make meaning *from*—namely, a kind of content that is carried as 'potential' by the text and that is actualized through interaction with the text by its recipients" (4). Whether this type of literacy should be referred to as digital literacy, electracy, aesthetic literacy, or critical literacy is up for grabs. What is clear is that we must reconceptualize literacy to glean the most from the affordances of new media. And as we reconceptualize the reader/viewer/audience, we must reconceptualize the writer.

Writing in Fragments

As Johnson-Eilola points out, the model of a single author speaking in a unified voice needs to be revised as "we live (and literally are at least partially 'composed') at the nexus connecting an apparently infinite number of social and technological forces of varying weights,

strengths, and directions" (454). While most instructors of process-driven writing argue that a text can be endlessly revised and improved/updated, the revision and updating is often discussed in terms of the original author. We may have "conversations" with others' writings, but their writing does not become our own. This type of ownership does not fit in the online environment, where words are easily copied, quoted, linked, rearranged, etc. For example, no one has complete authorial ownership of a Wikipedia entry.

One of the new media sites that best conveys the concept of writing in fragments is Twitter. A twitter feed is composed of microblogs -- some self authored, some retweeted, some retweeted with comments, some quotes, some images, and some merely links. We are not self-contained univocal writers on Twitter, but curators of information, remixed beings organizing and reorganizing our identities through sound bytes and images. Topics aren't explored by one authoritative voice but by defined by multiple voices via hashtags. It is here that we can explore true collaborative writing.

Invention in this environment works through arrangement, through assembling the fragments. A common tool for this type of assembling is the website, *Storify*, whose tagline reads, "Make the Web tell a story." To use the site, individuals type a topic into a search box, such as "Obamacare." Then they begin to assemble a collage by exploring the topic through news articles, Twitter feeds, Facebook posts, Youtube videos, Flickr images, Instagram pics, and Google search results. Rather than writing a thesis-driven essay, the story unfolds through the juxtapositions of viewpoints. Together they may make a cohesive point or illustrate the complexity of a topic. What we begin to see is that every story and every picture is a fragment, becoming part of a situated moment, only to be reoriented in a new context. Such modes of composing shed new light on how rhetorical situations function online and move students

towards a more contextual, collaborative form of writing, which is about making contributions rather than having ownership.

While Dewey speaks of aesthetic activities ending with a point of consummation or wholeness of experience, he argues against points of stasis. For Dewey, the aesthetic experience echoes the biological. As Bonnie Nardi describes, "He urged us to consider ourselves living creatures primed by millions of years of evolution to engage deeply with our surroundings, to meet its challenges responsively, and to move, grow, develop" (49). With the affordances of new media, a piece of art can now evolve with us, writing can grow and develop in this electronic environment. And as it does, our responses will change as well, carrying the piece forward.

What changes in the digital environment is the *topoi*, which "situate writers and their ideas within a fixed place of discussion" (Rice 33). In print culture, information is firmly placed spatially and easily referenced, as it remains unchanged. To understand how information functions in a digital environment, Ulmer recovers and employs Plato's concept of *chora*, "the open receptacle of meaning" (Rice 34). Instead of linear, fixed narratives and arguments that employ lists and paragraphs, choral writing works "by means of pattern making, pattern recognition, pattern generation" (Ulmer *Heuretics* 36). Ulmer argues that the new media writer must be a chorographer. To extend his concept into an analogy, we can imagine bits of information as dancers, waiting to be joined, arranged, and shaped by our direction to gather for a performance.

To compose in fragments, we must become collectors. Academic scholars have drawn from various influences to understand the role selection and arrangement play in new media writing, such as Marcel Duchamp's Green Box, Walter Benjamin's Flaneur, and William Burrough's cut up method. Geoffrey Sirc uses Duchamp's Green Box collection of personal notes

as inspiration to imagine "a compelling medium and genre with which to re-arrange textual materials--both original and appropriated-- in order to have those materials speak the student's own voice and concerns, allowing them to come up with something obscure, perhaps, yet promising illumination" ("Box Logic" 113). However, such things no longer need to be imagined. The idea of choosing and placing a variety of materials based on personal association is one of the most common uses of sites like Tumblr and Pinterest. The only difference is, unlike Duchamp's box, these repositories are linked to a network of other boxes. How many high school seniors have a Pinterest board labeled "College," where all their future goals, visions, and desires are stored, from possible majors to dorm room layouts? Like Benjamin's vision of the modern flaneur, individuals online leisurely stroll through Pinterest boards and Tumblr and Twitter feeds that beacon like storefront windows. However, unlike the modern flaneur, there is often little reflection on what these collected cultural artifacts say or mean.

So what do we do with these fragmented materials? Jeff Rice draws from Burrough's use of the cut up method to demonstrate how writers can appropriate material and use it in their own writing. Burrough's work brings both a commentary on the oppressiveness of copyright and an approach to using juxtapositions and collections as a mode of invention:

> It is experimental in the sense of being *something to do*. Right here write now. Not something to talk and argue about. Greek philosophers assumed logically that an object twice as heavy as another object would fall twice as fast. It did not occur to them to push the two objects off the table and see how they fall. Cut the words and see how they fall. Shakespeare Rimbaud live in their words. Cut the word lines and you will hear their voices. (Burroughs)

Within Burrough's cut-up method, individuals are writing with a sense of play in order to discover. They are learning through the experience of cutting up and assembling. Too often students think of learning as something that happens prior to writing. Using cut up and collecting methods to invent and understanding how juxtapositions or a collection of texts create meaning

is another specific literacy skill needed to navigate and create rhetorically in new media ecologies.

Putting the Pieces Together

While Rice and Sirc envision new approaches to composition that break from the linear, print-logic essays, they don't fully explore the critical potentials of juxtapositions or information curation. Rice doesn't take collage or remixing to the level of culture jamming. The civic and social goals of the critical composition classroom have been left on the cut-up floor. This value shift, from politics to technique, is clearly demonstrated in James J. Brown Jr.'s essay, "Composition in the Dromosphere." Brown compares D.J. Spooky's "Counter-Narrative to *Birth of a Nation*" to Girl Talk's remix of pop music. Both are created through arrangement and invention; however, Brown discusses how they operate at different speeds. By speed, he is referring to an acceleration in argument that can offer immediate response in today's *dromosphere*. Named by Paul Virilio, the "dromosphere" refers to today's networked media landscape, where information technologies have bridged time and space to create a stream of constant updates and trending stories. In such an environment, texts collide creating illuminating moments and rhetorical opportunities. The issue is the number of these collisions are multiplying and piling one upon another, allowing neither the time nor distance to pause for interpretation.

Girl Talk composes on the fly, feeding off the responses of the audience and generally drawing from the atmosphere of the performance. At best, Girl Talk makes commentary on copyright, demonstrating how all texts are remixes. At worst, Girl Talk is simply helping the audience have a good time and escape into the nostalgia brought on by a sound byte. Still, Brown places greater value on the Girl Talk remix because it "attempt[s] to write (with) the accident, to explore the rhetorical resources of the dromosphere by remaining attuned to the promises and

pitfalls of speed" (88). D.J. Spooky simply offers yet "another explanation of [*Birth of a Nation*]'s racism" and doesn't draw "on the rhetorical resources of the dromosphere" (89). Brown makes a compelling comparison of the two techniques and even gives a description of how he remixed *Birth of a Nation* in a manner more fitting of the dromosphere. However, Brown refrains from discussing the politicized content of *Birth of a Nation* and how remix can be used as a critical tool to expose the embedded racist ideology within the film. His focus is exclusively on technique, not on the quality of analysis. So while his remix may be better suited to holding the attention span and meeting the aesthetic tastes of the dromosphere, his article says nothing about the larger take-away message an audience will receive through their viewership. We need to look beyond technique and consider the purpose and effects; hence, the need for folding critical literacy into this discussion.

Instead of critical literacy, new media scholars tend to take up issues of either rhetorical literacy (like above) or functional literacy. Functional literacy is best demonstrated by new efforts to insert coding into composition classrooms. Trey Conatser has his students utilize XML when composing, stating "it presents an opportunity to teach writing as a metacognitive, iterative, and collaborative process." Students learn how to "tag" their writing and to work collaboratively on a single text by inserting their own mark ups into a document. While Conatser demonstrates that his students became more aware of their writing choices during this process, he doesn't discuss the larger potential of coding in the classroom. To justify using XML in the classroom, he quotes digital humanities scholar Matthew Kirschenbaum who states, code is "a unique and startling way of looking at the world…in fact, a kind of world-making." However, the spirit of the quote is lost as Conatser focuses exclusively on how coding enhances the writing process and not on how student's can use coding to refashion their worlds. While critical

pedagogues such as Henry Giroux are criticized for being too abstract, leaving a disconnect between their political theories and actual classroom practices, many new media scholars demonstrate a disconnect between technique/skill and critical theory. What is lost is in this disconnect is an opportunity to develop critical interventions. Rhetorical performances, not only draw from the moment, but from past knowledge, past performances. As Thomas Rickert in his book *Ambient Rhetoric* explains:

> The writer writing is not so much in the middle as extended into the very dynamics of ambience. The 'writer' writing cannot be understood as a discrete, individualized entity bounded by skin and self-image, wielding external tools and thoughts (which, by being external, can 'alienate' us), for in writing we can entwine ourselves with the accouterment of writing—pen, paper, keyboard, typewriter, computer, books, ideas, sounds, furniture, food, beverage, interruption, serendipity, the things dotting the local environment and the environment itself, the larger infrastructure, other people, even our own bodies—and lose ourselves in this immersion. Ideas emerge in the complexity of interaction beyond our individual control, since the ambient situation worlds us. We contribute, of course, but as catalyst and site of disclosure, not as sole producer and controller. (119)

To neglect critical literacy is to remove tools and knowledge that writers/performers/ artists can draw from in the emerging moment of production. In order to reinsert a civic foundation into what has become a largely post-critical field (Ulmer, Sirc, Rice), I suggest teaching new media techniques with a critical aim. The assignment below was designed with this goal in mind.

Assignment Makeover: The Critical Review

Pop culture is common theme in composition classes, as demonstrated by the multitude of composition readers from major education publishers. Titles such as *Popping Culture*, *American Mashup,* and *Reading Popular Culture* all lead students through the journey of applying a critical lens to the media messages that have permeated their lives. This approach owes much to the work of James Berlin, who promoted a course in "Codes and Critiques." The goal of this course was for students to understand their subject positions as constructed and to begin to resist the codes of "hegemonic discourses" (116). Students engaged in the semiotic

analysis of texts to understand how identities are situated hierarchically and in opposition to one another. From here they moved on to a poststructuralist ideological critique that investigated "the political and rhetorical effects of such narrative resolutions, what meanings [the texts] make available and what meanings they suppress" (124). However, as I stated in chapter two, after making these analyses and completing the course requirements students often go on to continue watching the same sexist television shows, playing the same stereotyping video games, and listening to the same bigoted songs. Perhaps they do so with more awareness, but they do not move to the level of challenging subject positions.

However, I do not suggest we abandon the theme of pop culture as pop culture offers great rhetorical opportunities with a now-ness that is fleeting. It is in these break-through moments ushered in by a new song or popular television show that students can create a moment of intervention, a moment to insert themselves into the zeitgeist and use it to catapult a message. To do this, consumers need to be able to use pop culture texts strategically or as Michel de Certeau argues "tactically."

Using media tactically is different than setting up an alternative media, which creates the kind of binary relationship that Mucklebauer warns against. Instead, to use media tactically one engages in "Poaching, tricking, reading, speaking, strolling, shopping, desiring. Clever tricks, the hunter's cunning, maneuvers, polymorphic situations, joyful discoveries, poetic as well as warlike" (Garcia and Lovink). Tactical media works with the mainstream channels to create "temporary reversals in the flow of power." By temporary, Garcia and Lovink mean these tactical moves and creations are fleeting, constantly adjusting and responding. Leah Lievrouw further explains:

> Like the communication links and traffic flows on the digital networks that support them, activist projects online organize, disorganize, and reorganize more or less

> continuously, with a high rate of attrition as a result. In this respect they resemble earlier artistic movements, such as conceptual and performance art...which were deliberately made not to leave material -- thus collectable or commodifiable -- traces or remnants. (69)

A good illustration of this is activist memes. They are not meant to endure, but to circulate while a certain story or pop culture text is trending.

The term “culture jamming” was coined by the band Negativland in 1984. They used the term to describe how they remixed appropriated media with their own original material to make statements and observations about mass media and culture. On the biography page of their band's website, they describe their work as follows: “Negativland covets insightful humor and wackiness from anywhere, low-tech approaches whenever possible, and vital social targets of any kind. Foregoing ideological preaching, but interested in side effects, Negativland is like a subliminal cultural sampling service concerned with making art about everything we aren’t supposed to notice.” They build off the traditions of the Situationist International (SI), a European group that formed in 1957 to critique capitalist society; its most notable member being Guy Debord. From the SI emerged the practice of *detournement*, acts that subvert pop culture messages, such as recontextualizing company slogans to showcase hidden agendas and practices. A modern example of this would be the juxtaposition of Nike's "Just Do It" slogan with third world sweatshops.

Sirc uses Debord and the work of the Situationists to offer an alternative to the static structures and limitations of traditional composition essays, stating, "It was an art that frustrated conventions in order to allow other meanings to surface. It involved a re-appreciation of everyday material in order to complicate the distinction between art and life. This attempt resulted in new compositional forms: Assemblages, Combines, Neo-Dada works, and, most genre-blurringly, the Happenings" (5). While he states that these acts are designed to "intensify

consciousness" (2), he focuses more on the technique than the act itself as a form of critique. The purpose of his book *English Composition as Happening* is to critique composition studies rather than to discuss how classes could create composition texts that perform a cultural critique. This is markedly different than MacKenzie Wark's use of the Situationists, who references their work to illustrate "the whole of the cultural past is a cultural commons that belongs to all of us" and to advise us to not only appropriate, "but to correct [cultural texts] in the direction of hope" (Byrne). Though he doesn't make this connection when discussing the SI, I believe repurposing the cultural commons relates to Wark's conception of hacking. As he states in the *Hacker's Manifesto*: "To the hacker, what is represented as being real is always partial, limited, perhaps even false. To the hacker there is always a surplus of possibility expressed in what is actual, the surplus of the virtual. This is the inexhaustible domain of what is real but not actual, what is not but which may become " (074). Of course, not all hacking moves toward "the direction of hope;" however, we can conceive of a type of hacking that does.

To update the 1980's concept of culture jamming to correspond with today's theories on rhetoric invention and Rita Raley's defining of tactical media in digital networked environments, I suggest we move towards a type of cultural hacking. The term "culture hacking" is currently being used in the business world to describe the practice of orchestrating organizational change. Generally the term hacking is now used to describe "the art of dismantling and reassembling to alter the intended purpose" (Johnston). I suggest new media artist-activists adopt this terminology, rather than jamming, because we are not "jamming" up the system, we are redirecting the flow of information, or in hacker terms "rewriting the code." This approach also helps us move away from the Hegelian dialectic embedded in much of the SI's work.

It is this SI and hacking genealogy that I find myself following as I envision an approach to critical analysis and review through remix. I want my students to use “found art” to create their own original arguments. By found art, I mean pop culture texts or common imagery being circulated in the news. These texts will be recontextualized through juxtaposition and student commentary, being reinscribed with a new function. Included with the assignment are three key examples or approaches to remix.

The first example remix compares two different commercial campaigns by the same parent company, Uni-Lever -- one that objectifies women and the other that supports multiple definitions of beauty. What emerges through the remix is the message that companies, such as Dove, do not really care about our young girls' self-esteem, but about the profits to be gained by marketing. The second remix example pits Edward from the *Twilight* series against *Buffy the Vampire* slayer, illustrating the anti-feminist and even harmful messages that exist within the *Twilight* series (a fact driven home further by the S&M fan fiction that later emerged based off of the popular young adult series, *50 Shades of Grey*). The final remix example is a clip from the *Daily Show*, where Jon Stewart juxtaposes news media clips to illustrate the inconsistency of politicians and the biases within partisan news commentary. All these remixes work to "hack" the messages being circulated in pop culture and mass media.

Remix Assignment

Examples: *Video Mash-up: Axe and Dove*: ***http://youtu.be/9H2rXJ2Ds8c***
Buffy vs Edward: Twilight Remixed: *http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZwM3GvaTRM*
Weapons of Mass Discussion: *http://www.thedailyshow.com/watch/thu-january-31-2013/weapons-of-mass-discussion*

Assignment Description
During our last assignment we examined the most common type of multimodal argument, the commercial. Every commercial works to persuade the audience to buy a particular product, vote a certain way, or donate to a certain cause. Now that we understand how audio, video, and text work to create a cohesive production, we can make our own multimodal arguments.
In this assignment, you will compose an argumentative video essay of at least three minutes in length, using found imagery/video/audio and remixing it.

You have two options for this assignment:
1. You may assemble a variety of audio, video, and pictorial source material to construct an original argument on a topic of your choosing. The argument you construct must be timely, responding to current events and trending stories.

2. Or you may choose to take an already existing video work and alter it via editing and juxtaposition, so as to highlight a theme or expose an ideology lurking within the original. Any media that you incorporate into your video should either be found in the public domain or, if copyrighted, be governed by "fair use" guidelines.

Accompanying your video essay will be a 500-word reflection about the argument you are making and the choices you made to persuade your audience through sound, image, and text.

Suggested free video-editing programs (I'll be demonstrating and offering tutorials on the cross-platform cloud editor, *WeVideo*):
WeVideo
Windows Moviemaker Live
iMovie

Assignment Reflection

My New Media Writing class took a variety of approaches to create their remix essays. Some constructed more traditional arguments, such as arguing for a reinvestment in the NASA space program, but most used the remix assignment as I hoped, using found clips to expose misconceptions and bring to light new perspectives. One student used what I term "the Jon Stewart approach" to illustrate how pit bulls are misportrayed in the media and misunderstood by the general public. She downloaded, edited, and arranged found clips from Youtube and other programming to expose bias, discord, and inaccuracies. One student used clip juxtaposition exclusively (without narration or text slides) to illustrate how television shows and movies trivialize and demonize mental illness.

Students from the class created the remixes under the concept of shared ownership. Most reflected on the project in a way that indicated that they weren't perpetuating the myth of a single creator, but producing meaning collectively. One student wrote, "I chose the videos I did because they made my point for me." The problem, for some, was inserting themselves into the project. Instead of building her own remix illustrating the extreme practices of PETA, one student used Penn and Teller's commentary and clips as the centerpiece of the remix and simply added several clips of support to their argument. Her grade was adversely affected because she could not claim any ownership for most of the juxtapositions and the structure of the argument.

The biggest limitations of the project were technological. Because the New Media Writing class was an exclusively online course, the quality of the videos was dependent on the students' access to technology. As one student noted, "[The remix video] required not only great writing and storytelling skills, but also technical skills like photography, video editing, etc." Issues with audio levels and over-pixelated images harmed the potential reception of some

pieces. The potential for better remixes, not just in this class, but in general, could be increased by more sharing of high-quality images, videos, and music in the Creative Commons. Our ability to "write in fragments" is contingent on the quality of those fragments, which drives home the idea that our agency is distributed and dependent on the work of others and on the functionality of our technology.

Progressive New Media Practices

In *Spectacle of Disintegration*, Wark poses the question, "How can the critique of everyday life be expressed in acts? Acts which ...become collaborations in new forms of life? Forms of life which are at once both aesthetical and political and yet reducible to the given forms of neither art nor action?" (9). Hacking is an act, a tinkering with pre-existing forms to open up new possibilities. If we take from it both the spirit of play and invention and the political motivations of change and exposure, we can then move toward acts that are critical. Unlike critical theory, which has become in Wark's words "hypocritical," due to its success and subsequent institutionalization, a critical act is not a static, repeatable practice, as it exists only in a particular moment of opportunity. These types of acts answer Muckelbauer's call to approach social change through invention rather than negation.

What has emerged through my examination of new media aesthetics and productive techniques is a practice that engages with the goals of critical pedagogy at a much more communal and environmental level. Every act, text, and artistic production is contingent on the audience and the environmental affordances. Because we are operating in what Ulmer describes, after Foucault, as a different "apparatus,"[7] it is clear how we conceive of critical literacy needs to

[7] The concept of an "apparatus" is the original work of Michel Foucault, who refers to it as a "thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions–in short, the

change. Instead of, as Shor defines, discovering "alternative paths for self and social development," we are creating movements toward other possibilities and taking advantage of rhetorical opportunities. We are moving away from "critical hermeneutics" to a type of critical invention. The praxis of this type of critical work happens through discovery, what will happen if I change this line of code, what will happen if I juxtapose these texts, what will happen if I create and share this meme, etc. Because of the nature of the web, and the reliance on other users, the end result can never be predetermined. However, this is not necessarily a problem. As Mucklebauer explains:

> Just because we cannot know our goal in advance does not mean that we will just wander randomly across the terrain. We still have direction in that we sense a certain polymorphousness about our quarry, an apparent malleability that disregards lineages and proliferates uncontrollably. It is, therefore, not paradoxical to assert that refusing to identify the goal actually focuses its trajectory: because the sophist may be everywhere, not having a model of him beforehand effectively increases the likelihood of finding him. Thus our guide instructs us that we *do* have a direction, though we *must not know our goal in advance*. (86)

Predetermination has always been one of the key problems of critical pedagogy. By predetermining the path, we limit the field of possibilities. Also, as explained in chapter one, critical pedagogues have often fell back into the trap of maintaining the "authoritative nature of the teacher/student relationship" (Ellsworth 306) by shaping their class curriculum around their own sociopolitical vision. Instead of picking a situation and examining it and defining it through critical hermeneutics, I suggest acting in the moment based on the characteristics of the situation with "sensitivity toward time, opportunity, and audience, and toward the effect of one's words" (Baumlin 178, qtd. in Muckelbauer 121). Because new media writers need to perform in the dromosphere, they need to act effectively in the moment. Acting effectively means acting with

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said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements" (Foucault 194).

technology and utilizing affective strategies to "prime" an audience, motivate action and spread a message.

CHAPTER 5: "CONCLUSION"

Throughout the course of this dissertation, I discussed new media actions that are not considered to be revolutionary, but everyday acts, such as playing video games, spreading a meme, and curating information. However, these acts move us, both affectively and literally, as they inspire participation and define the algorithms that shape our online searches and exposure to information. They represent what it means to have distributed agency and be a part of human-digital assemblages. Understanding these acts and how to utilize them is the foundation of online activism.

Because of the nature of online activism, which has resulted in negative monikers such as armchair advocacy, it is often downplayed and criticized. Malcolm Gladwell's often quoted *New Yorker* article, "Small Change: Why the Revolution Won't Be Tweeted," claims that online activism fails because it relies on non-hierarchical networks of weakly tied individuals. He compares the 1960 Greensboro sit-in to contemporary examples of online protests, illustrating how they come up short.

Gladwell's argument is not without merit. One of the strongest points he makes is when he discusses the results of sociologist Doug McAdam's study of the motivation behind those who participated in Freedom Summer, a campaign designed to register African-American voters in Mississippi. His findings concluded that those individuals who participated had a "personal connection to the civil-rights movement." It is for this reason that I began the application section of my dissertation with an assignment designed to foster empathy or a stronger connection to an issue or group of people. An emotional tie is key when it comes to inciting action in a group. Instead of dismissing online activism, Gladwell should be asking, how can we create stronger emotional ties to an issue online?

The key difference between localized revolutions and online protests is that an online protest is more likely to produce a variety of strong-ties to an issue that will erupt into different types of action, which aren't necessarily coordinated. One of the most notable online protests in recent history is the SOPA/PIPA protest. Here we have one issue being protested in many different ways by different groups. The gaming community began by posting their opposition on Youtube. Various gaming website creators came together to share the message, "Our ability to entertain you depends upon a free and open Internet." These messages, delivered via Youtube, came with a Change.org link to sign a petition to ask the ESA (Entertainment Software Association) to remove their support of SOPA/PIPA. This petition was successful, as stated on the Change.org site: "While the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and Protect IP Act (PIPA) were both put on hold on Friday, January 20, the Entertainment Software Association (ESA) became the first major industry association to drop its support for SOPA. The ESA is the main trade association for video game companies and was one of the main business associations pushing for the bills" ("Stop the ESA").

Representing the music community, Justin Bieber spoke out against the pending law, which could lead to the prosecution of music fans performing songs by their favorite artists on Youtube. Bieber, himself, was discovered through such a process when he performed Usher's "U Got it Bad" and posted it on Youtube. The site, freebieber.org, utilizes Bieber's celebrity and fan base to solicit protests by noting how Bieber's early Youtube covers, under the proposed SOPA bill, could have led Bieber to a jail sentence of five years. In order to stop such extreme actions and to keep Youtube "free," viewers are asked to sign a petition in protest. Few would think of Bieber fans as a hope for radical

social change; however, their emotional ties to the celebrity were leveraged in a way that made them care about the potential consequences of the proposed congressional bill.

These are just a few examples, as various organizations and internet companies began enlisting the support of their members and viewers. Millions of individuals signed petitions. All of these protests from divergent locations, based on a variety of strong-ties to the issue, culminated with the SOPA blackout. On January 18th, most major content and social media providers blacked out their content to illustrate the dangers of SOPA and PIPA. Soapstrike.com provided an .html code and javascript that websites could use to post a unified message, "Today, we are striking against censorship/Join the largest online protest in history: tell Congress to stop this bill now!" The standard page provided the fields and text to submit a letter to congress from any website. Does this make protest easy, one of Gladwell's main complaints about social media campaigns? Yes, it is extremely easy to sign an online petition and send a prewritten letter to Congress. Would all of those individuals who signed a petition be willing to march in front of the White House or risk their personal safety or job? No. Does this mean the online protest was ineffective? Not at all. Plans to draft the bill were postponed due to the public outcry.

Perhaps if the Internet existed in 1960, instead of one group coming together for a sit-in at a restaurant, groups across the country would have been engaging in sit-ins and other forms of protest simultaneously. Civil rights activists would have received more media coverage and exposure. Perhaps laws would have been passed more swiftly. Maybe this collective power would have stripped the confidence of those who felt they had a right to inflict physical violence on African-Americans and civil rights activists. When it comes to

the risk of activism, the size of your network matters. Bullies tend to only harm those they perceive as weaker than themselves.

For Gladwell, the level of sacrifice matters. He gives the example of the online Facebook group *Save Darfur Coalition*, where members give an average of nine cents, as a reason why Facebook activism shouldn't be glorified. His claim is that it does not motivate individuals to "make real sacrifice," only minor investments. It is true that many causes on Facebook do not inspire more than a click of the like button. However, it has also proven to be an effective tool when collaboration, testimonies, and coordinated efforts are needed, such as during Arab Spring, where Facebook was used to motivate a large audience to real sacrifice and high risk activities. The chief technology officer of the organization spurring the Tunisian protests, Takriz, refers to Facebook as "the GPS for the revolution" (qtd. in Rosen). Rosen explains that "social media's role boils down to two simple but central accomplishments: First, Facebook and elsewhere online is where people saw and shared horrifying videos and photographs of state brutality that inspired them to rebel. Second, these sites are where people found out the basic logistics of the protests -- where to go and when to show up." The Facebook site created strong ties, broadcasting reasons why people should care, and it also served structurally as a hub of information. The type of hierarchy Gladwell claims doesn't exist in social media was present here. The Facebook site (in an example of technology and individuals sharing agency) offered directions and the motivation to carry out those directions.

Manuel Castells explains how the organizational structure of social media is key to facilitating and strengthening sociopolitical movements in his book, *Networks of Outrage and Hope*:

> This decentered structure maximizes chances of participation in the movement, given that these are open-ended networks without defined boundaries, always reconfiguring themselves according to the level of involvement of the population at large. It also reduces the vulnerability of the movement to the threat of repression, since there are few specific targets to repress, except for the occupied sites, and the network can reform itself as long as there are enough participants in the movement, loosely connected by their common goals and shared values (221-222).

It is much easier to repress a sit-in at the local restaurant than a globally networked protest with numerous clusters of activity. This is not to say that geophysical activism should be abandoned. However, it should be done in coordination with the Internet (if possible).

While comparing online activism to more traditional methods of protest is a useful conversation, the comparison I find more interesting is incremental change versus revolution. Gladwell refers to low-risk online activism as "buffing [the world] around the edges," an activity that does not amount to much significance in the long run. However, as Lievrouw explains, in today's postmodern, culturally fragmented world, "the only tenable way forward for political activism is smaller, episodic, nomadic, rapid-response movements of 'resistance,' not revolution" (17). Lievrouw believes change can happen through small modifications as new media writers respond, intervene, and remake communicative texts to make an audience aware of "dominant, expected, or accepted ways of doing society, culture, and politics" (19).

Let's consider the Marxist revolutionary call, "Workers of the World Unite!" It was a call to the proletariat class to protest their working conditions and take collective action to improve their circumstances. It represents a stance against capitalism and a call for a more communal and equitable system of dispersing wealth. One of the main focuses of critical pedagogy has been to examine why the proletariat did not rise up and to create pedagogical practices to break students free of the ideological chains that keep them from

rebelling against their oppressors and self-defining their career and life paths. Many, such as Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren, tie these goals to revolting against capitalism.

In today's global economy, which consists of a multiple models of government and various types of sub-economies, a unified revolution is not possible. However, modifications and redirections are. Erik Olin Wright explains how a social compass can be applied to the system of capitalism through: "Social empowerment over the way state power affects economic activity; Social empowerment over the way economic power shapes economic activity; and Social empowerment directly over economic activity" (129). An example of the social compass at play can be seen at Kiva.org, where individuals throughout the world can give microloans to people who do not have access to traditional forms of credit. Through cooperative efforts, Kiva lenders empower borrowers, giving them the economic power to invest in their farms, businesses, and selves. Lenders do not participate to make a financial profit, but to invest in others for altruistic reasons. Giving $25 is not a large sacrifice; however, it does make a difference. Kiva and other forms of crowdsourcing illustrate how the mechanism of networks can aggregate small investments of time, money, and talent to create large changes.

Though I have not previously used this term, aggregation is a concept I have touched on in many different ways throughout my dissertation. Our perceptions are defined by the aggregation of our experiences. The way information is sorted and presented to us through Google is based on an aggregation of our prior searches. The success of our rhetorical act depends on the ambient aggregation of our prior knowledge, technological affordances, audience engagement, etc. All of this represents how every act matters.

This does not discount the possibility of a large revolution. However, I think we need to expand our notion of how revolutions happen. A revolution doesn't need to be a geophysical group with strong-ties operating under a hierarchical leadership with one singular goal in mind. A revolution can come about through an aggregation of small acts that lead culture, politics, and companies to a better practice. If you consider an issue such as gay marriage, there hasn't been one revolution, but many protests small and large. Together, they aggregate and create a more tolerant environment where change is possible.

We need to be conscious of this, of how everyday acts add up and define our culture, economy, and individual lives. Becoming conscious of this requires being critical of all actions, understanding how our agency is distributed, and knowing how to utilize the affordances of networks. This why critical pedagogy and critical literacy still matter.

APPENDIX A

(Published in *English 101: First-Year Composition*, Taylor and Brockman)

Assignment 2: Evaluating the Rhetoric of Editorials

Why Write about Rhetoric?

Argumentation and persuasion permeate our lives: the news media—newspapers, magazines, television, news magazines, the six o'clock news; the entertainment media—television, film, novels, magazines, the Internet; the business world; advertising; our friends; our families; our teachers. All in one form or another present arguments in order to persuade us to accept some viewpoint and/or to act in some way. The ways in which they construct their arguments—the rhetoric they choose—depends on what they are attempting to accomplish.

By analyzing the rhetoric, then, we can better understand not only how arguments are meant to persuade us (and how we can resist those arguments), but also how we might make use of the same rhetorical techniques in our own writing. In Assignment 2, you will analyze and critique an author's skills concerning argument and rhetoric; in Assignment 3, you will write your own argument, making use of some of the same persuasive techniques to shape your argument.

The Writing Assignment

Your assignment is to choose an editorial on an issue of your choice from a nationally syndicated newspaper or magazine (i.e., Detroit Free Press, New York Times, Time, Newsweek) OR to choose an essay from a group presented to you by your instructor and to write a four- to six-page essay in which you will analyze the editorial using the criteria we will discuss in class and then evaluate the effectiveness of the editorialist's argument. Based on your detailed analysis, you will decide whether the editorial is effectively persuasive or not. Although you may point out positives and negatives of the writer's craft, you must make some overall judgment about the piece's effect.

Things to Keep in Mind as You Prepare to Write

1. You will need to pick your editorial carefully. Choose a writer with details you can easily pick out and write about. Choose a piece that is lively and that you find interesting (if you don't find it interesting, chances are your reader won't find your argument about it interesting either).

2. In order to do well on this assignment, you will have to be able to recognize and summarize the writer's thesis as well as discuss features of his/her rhetoric (you have to "prove" that the rhetorical features either help or fail to convince a reader of the thesis).

3. You will need to support your argument with specific examples from the text. You may get a very clear feeling about the tone and authority of a text, for example, but you must be able to pinpoint where, and how, you got that feeling and why you think it is so successful or so unsuccessful in persuading.

4. Remember that you yourself are making an argument—you should have a strong thesis that focuses on what you are trying to prove about your text and its argumentative strategies.

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ABSTRACT

CRITICAL EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND RHETORICAL INTERVENTIONS IN NEW MEDIA ECOLOGIES

by

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This dissertation puts into conversation new media and network theories with the philosophical writings of John Dewey to reconstruct a more relevant and current approach to critical pedagogy that takes into account the shift in socioeconomic power as we move into a control society comprised of immaterial labor. My chapters tackle three different critical pedagogy dilemmas: the neglect of affect, agency in late-capitalism, and critical literacy in new media ecologies. Each chapter defines the dilemma, offers a theoretical response, and details a possible pedagogical application for the composition classroom.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Jennifer Niester-Mika is an associate professor at Delta College in Unversity Center, Michigan, where she teaches an array of courses, from basic writing to new media writing, and directs the WRIT Center, which handles writing, reading, and information technology instruction. Before pursuing her doctorate at Wayne State University, she received a master's degree in fiction writing from Central Michigan University. She resides on a burgeoning fruit farm with her husband and two small children.