

ENVISIONING A POSTFEMINIST

COMPOSITION STUDIES

by

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Dedication

In memory of my daughter, Madeleine Miles McCarter

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Abstract

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We must look at the changing sociological conditions that challenge many of the foundations of composition studies in order to develop the discipline. Although postfeminism is evident within academic and popular culture, so far postfeminism has been little addressed in composition studies. In the composition classroom, we can see evidence of postfeminism in the student resistance to overt and subvert expressions of feminist pedagogy and/or content. The essentialist and emancipatory elements of both feminism and composition studies not only are limiting pedagogically, but, in my view, also in themselves generate student resistance. I argue that, in order to mediate this resistance, we must be willing to question feminism's role in the composition classroom. I suggest theoretical and pedagogical ways we can move past student resistance by recognizing the postfeminist turn that has taken place in our larger social context, especially postfeminism's role in popular culture. I argue that we can envision a postfeminist composition studies, i.e. one that moves past the limits imposed by composition studies' intersections and parallels to feminist scholarship and activism.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Since the 1960s, second-wave feminism has so influenced American culture that it now permeates the way we do intellectual work in the academy, how we define ourselves, and how we interact with each other.¹ The chief themes of second-wave feminism include the omnipresence of patriarchy; the inadequacy of existing political organizations; and the celebration of women's difference as central to the cultural politics of liberation.² These themes are such important and common tropes in our culture, and they have been characterized and mischaracterized in so many ways, consciously and unconsciously, that they pervade our worldviews in and outside of the university. In fact, one of the main forums for feminist theory and praxis is the academy, because efforts to attain women's equality are rooted in a larger resistance to oppression made possible by the humanist context of higher education. In turn, feminism has made its mark on the academy by providing ways to understand how gender shapes our identities and how there are intersections between power, knowledge and discourse. Because there is a tradition³ within composition studies to expose oppressive power dynamics, and to understand how these dynamics are constructed through language and social

¹ There are at least two ways second-wave has permeated the academic community: in women's access to it and the scholarship in the academy. There are more women in higher education, particularly in the liberal arts. than ever, and feminism has been a guiding force in many liberal arts departments; in Chapter 2, I examine how feminism has influenced composition studies.

² First-wave feminism has also influenced American culture, specifically in spurring "a number of egalitarian and radical issues which included equal rights...and suffrage" (Hammer & Kellner html). For the purposes of this dissertation, I focus on second-wave feminism beginning in the early 1960s.

³ In Chapter 2, I discuss some aspects of this emancipatory tradition that aren't limited to feminism, such as cultural studies and radical pedagogy.

relationships, many compositionists have turned to pedagogies that attempt to subvert oppressive power dynamics. To that end, some compositionists have also tried “to transform students into critical thinkers *and* democratic citizens” while using the classroom as a community that can lead to justice and equality for both men and women (Perry 201). Although it may be, according to Joy Ritchie, “almost impossible to tease out its influence in the classroom,” feminism has provided one justification for the composition classroom as an emancipatory space, which makes possible the resistance to restrictive and damaging conceptions of gender dynamics (587). Feminism has also been used to raise awareness about “the working conditions of female instructors, gender politics in the classroom, the feminization of English teaching, and opportunities for feminist scholarship” (587). Even as feminism seems in many ways to have triumphed in our culture, a backlash is equally as evident. Just as feminism has permeated our culture in defining what it means to be equal in our social context, anti-feminist sentiments have attempted to undermine these emancipatory efforts.⁴ Within the classroom, we can see resistance to learning about feminism, negative impressions about what feminism entails, and students refusing to self-identify as feminist (Carrillo 207). In our larger social context, this backlash is just as visible. For example, in a 2012 TIME/CNN poll, only “28% of the women surveyed believed feminism was relevant to them personally” (Issues 202). Ironically, this disinclination to see the relevance of feminism is partly due to the

⁴ When I use the term “anti-feminist,” I recognize there isn’t some monolithic organized movement against feminism in the present American culture, but an undercurrent of dissatisfaction and ignorance of feminism, which I further discuss in Chapter 3.

perceived influence, if not success, of feminism. Women who believe that feminism is irrelevant don't want to discuss "whether men and women have equal rights because they've grown up in a world of information and opportunity democratization" (Goudreau html). Despite the belief that feminism has already accomplished its goals, the successes of feminist activism are not without criticism in the larger non-academic cultural context. For example, we can see this in sentiments antithetical to feminism within the 2012 Republican Primary candidates; Michelle Bachmann, Rick Santorum and other social conservatives have blamed feminism for the breakdown of the family and have moral objections to the feminist promotion of reproductive rights (Roberts-Guardian html). We saw one consequence of this backlash when conservatives challenged Obama's health care policy that was designed to insure full coverage of the cost of contraception without exceptions, even for employees of religiously affiliated institutions (Fox News Insider html).⁵ This example, among others, is not only evidence of an ongoing backlash against feminism, but of the tensions caused by the coexistence of anti-feminism and feminism within our contemporary American culture.⁶

The tension caused by feminism's permeation in society and continued backlash against this permeation was evident when I first started to teach as a graduate teaching

⁵ This anti-feminist stance has occurred after a string of attacks, by different state legislators, on reproductive rights in the last year, including attempts to dismantle Planned Parenthood, "personhood" initiatives, which had the possible consequence to make certain contraceptives illegal, and the requirement of trans-vaginal ultrasounds as a requirement prior to abortion services (Rapoport--The American Prospect html).

⁶ Conservative commentators who express antifeminist sentiments include Glenn Beck, Rush Limbaugh, Ann Coulter, and Laura Ingraham; for a more detailed discussion of the relationship of antifeminism to conservatism, see Ronnee Schreiber's *Righting Feminism: Conservative Women and American Politics*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.

assistant. I realized my enthusiasm was probably inspired by my undergraduate experience at a private liberal arts women's college, but my enthusiasm wasn't that unusual compared to the other graduate students in my program. It wasn't until later in my teaching career that I began to sense that ignoring or being unaware of this possible cynicism or negative reactions to feminism can lead to particular complications in the composition classroom. My first opportunity to understand the resistance to feminism came when I started my first full-time appointment as an English instructor at a community college and I was given the opportunity to design my own composition course. Based on my interest in feminism, I designed a course around this special topic; I created my own custom textbook and curriculum that asked students to interrogate the role feminism has in our culture through media critique, social experience, and personal narratives. Perhaps naively, I didn't expect any resistance to such a topic, especially since I thought I was presenting a certain neutrality on the subject of feminism, and simply asking students to question the roles gender, politics and popular media play in their lives. However, as the semester went on, I noticed increasing displays of resistance. This resistance ranged from students wondering why we were discussing and writing about feminism in a composition classroom to students writing scathingly sexist and polarizing essays. At times, some students seemed totally uninterested in the topic; at other times they reacted by writing nothing at all. I didn't know whether to interpret these actions (or non-actions) as resistance, cynicism or paralysis. At the end of the semester, after teaching this course in two separate classrooms, I only had one student

who seemed wholeheartedly excited and grateful about taking such a course. I asked this one student why she thought her classmates didn't react in a similar fashion. Her response was that the resistance was caused by a lack of maturity of these community college students who lived in a very privileged and conservative area of Texas. I asked her why she wasn't like this, what made her more "mature"; she let me know that she was an international student from Australia and her experiences there were different. This conversation supported my emerging view that resistance to feminist inquiry was normal in these two composition classes. In trying to understand my students' reactions, I stumbled upon the idea that their perspectives were indicative of a larger postfeminist cultural context in the United States.⁷

When we look at the contradictory aspects of postfeminism, we can make sense out of the co-existence of feminism and anti-feminist sentiments, and the ambivalence present in our culture about progresses inspired by feminist activism. On the one hand, postfeminism is characterized as a form of anti-feminism used to "describe the contemporary moment as one in which the goals of feminism have been achieved" (Yaszek html). As a result, some feminists have argued that postfeminism promotes the anti-feminist perspective of equality and gender roles as a choice, with consumerism as a

⁷ I realize that I am generalizing when I claim there is a postfeminist cultural context in all of America, but I do so for two reasons. One, because there are postfeminist sentiments unique to American culture and clearly different from perspectives on feminism in many other countries. Two, because of my own experience in two very different regions of the country, Michigan and Texas. In terms of the second reason, I recognize there are limits to anecdotally referring to these regions as evidence for a postfeminist context, but my observation is supported by the work of media studies theorists such as Meredith Love, Rosalind Gill, among others. They argue that, even though there may be some regional differences in postfeminist sentiments expressed throughout the United States, we have a national media advocating and reinforcing these sentiments that homogenizes our culture.

method for making this choice (Cotter html). On the other hand, while others may agree that postfeminism can have anti-feminist elements, the reality is more complicated because it can be seen to be “within feminism on the one hand and calling for a move beyond it on the other” (Reinelt html). There is a cognitive dissonance in the coexistence of anti-feminist and feminist notions which causes tension in our culture. Postfeminism is part of our cultural landscape and figures into the consciousness of men and women who have grown up in a culture where people accept many feminist premises even as they challenge the consequences of feminist activism. The composition classroom is not immune to postfeminism’s influence on our contemporary cultural context. As Alan France points out, if composition itself is a cultural practice, the composition classroom is always a space for “maintaining or reproducing particular values, bodies of knowledge and meaning, and interests” (72). Thus, because postfeminism has or can have a complicated function in the cultural practice of the dominant ideology, it is important to understand how postfeminism has value for students, teachers, and in the construction of the composition classroom itself. In fact, postfeminism reveals itself in multiple ways that may have been overlooked, such as: when students refuse to self-identify themselves as feminist because they see it as a derogatory term; when gender roles (and challenges to these roles) are manifested in the classroom; or when cultural references to postfeminism become visible in various forms of media outside of the classroom. In the larger culture, postfeminism is reflected particularly in the notions of femininity transmitted through consumerism.

Later on, in the context of these courses and others that I subsequently taught at four different colleges, I noticed these multiple ways in which postfeminism reveals itself, especially in terms of a larger resistance to any discussion of gender or sexuality. I have a particular memory of witnessing student discomfort when the topic of Britney Spears came up in a discussion. At the time, some students felt like she was a bad role model and nothing more, while others thought she wasn't worth talking about at all. However, when I tried to frame the discussion about Britney Spears in terms of our larger cultural belief systems about sexuality, the students argued that I was reaching and were disinclined to consider this type of analysis. In another course, I showed the French movie, *My Life in Rose*, about a transgendered child, and another movie, *Osama*, about a girl forced by the Taliban in Afghanistan to live her life in the garb of a boy in order to survive. Both movies aroused strong reactions of disapproval, disgust and confusion from both male and female students. This reaction, it is important to note, was not limited to a certain type of students in a specific environment; these reactions occurred at two large research universities in two different states (one in the North/Midwest and the other in the South) and three community colleges serving very different populations. So, I couldn't pin it on a certain type of curriculum, type of college, or even specific community standards or belief systems. Despite these situational differences, I saw trends of similar reactions in the context of the different courses I taught; I even saw this type of reaction when I taught an online philosophy course that included a short section on feminism. I might have even chalked up the resistance to the common denominator of

myself or my teaching style, except, as I read about resistance, in particular to feminism as a topic or pedagogy in the any classroom, I began to see certain similarities in how this reaction occurred. As I read these different theories of resistance and various experiences that other instructors have experienced, and even thought back on my own experiences as a student, I began to think about how feminism is taught or spoken about in different college classroom environments, and what reactions there are to these feminist pedagogical practices.⁸

I found three examples in the form of blogs written by fellow composition instructors.⁹ In the first, appleadayproject.wordpress.com, a composition instructor asks how a feminist should dress in the classroom in order to create “a classroom culture that fosters flexible gender roles and freedom of expression no matter how your emerging identity is manifesting.” She grapples with the desire to “look pretty” in order to feel good, and had found she felt most comfortable in “feminine garb, rather than [the] gender neutral clothing” she thinks is more readily associated with feminism. While recognizing the performative aspect of gender, and her choice in propagating or challenging certain categories of femininity, she is aware of the role her student's perceptions play in the

⁸ I was first exposed to feminist pedagogy during coursework I took with Dr. Nancy Wood and GTA training courses with Dr. Audrey Wick at UT Arlington. Later, there were other influences on my thinking about feminist pedagogical practices, including reading *Feminism and Composition Studies: In Other Words*. Ed. Susan C. Jarratt and Lynn Worsham and *Feminism and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*. Kirsch, Gail E., ed.

⁹ The questions raised in these blogs are not unique in composition studies, we can see considerations of authority, feminist space, etc. in the works of Ritchie, Kathleen Boardman, Elizabeth Flynn and others; I discuss this scholarship in Chapter 2. However, at this point in my understanding and interest in postfeminism, I turned to blogs as a validation of my own experiences. I would later read feminist composition theorists who explored these issues in a peer-reviewed context; at this point before I read that academic work, seeing other instructors who were my peers question feminism was important to me.

composition classroom. Thus, she asks, “Can we reclaim traditionally feminine dressing and make it our own?” When one's gender performance has the ability to subvert or maintain certain social paradigms, the choices an instructor makes about non-verbal aspects of their identity comes into play and can give students certain messages about gender relations. On the one hand, this instructor wanted to promote feminist ideals within the classroom, but, on the other hand, she is concerned that she reinforces patriarchal values by dressing in a feminine manner. Even if she tries to transcend the social categories or “queer” those perceptions, she is always located in the context, reflecting varied ideas about gender, power and language. After reading the blog entries, I wondered whether or not feminism itself can adequately address this instructor’s concern that her personal behavior would undermine her political beliefs. In another blog, cliobluestockingtales.blogspot.com, I became aware of how some instructors try to challenge “repressive hierarchies and structural inequalities” by altering the structure of the classroom and creating alternative spaces for different gender performances (Cotera html). In this blog, the instructor asks, “Could a classroom that includes an authoritative teacher and contains lecture also be a feminist classroom?” One answer might be to promote a “student-centered pedagogy where power is shared among the members of a writing community and the political purpose of the writing course is openly acknowledged” (Hunter 233). While authority doesn't have to be associated with an essential or universal category of masculinity, even trying to remove embedded gendered social dynamics causes tensions. In contrast, while a feminist approach recognizes

ideology might “challenge values students hold which are part of the dominant ideology,” this approach maintains the notion of difference and identity as essential to undermining oppressive discourse practices (Weiler 124). This attempt to transform the classroom into a feminist space made me wonder if feminist pedagogies can adequately address the tensions caused by those pedagogies in the classroom. The concern for promoting a feminist classroom is further explored in a blog, www.harpyness.com. After citing studies that show female students are less likely than male peers to participate in class discussions, the instructor asks her blog readers how she might herself avoid sexism in her classroom. Her concern was rooted in the fear that feminism might not provide a way out of this situation because of deeply encoded gender differences, and that our teaching practices function in the larger context of complicated gendered performances. This blog made me wonder what alternatives to feminism there may be to address these performances. After reading these three blogs, I asked myself, what will replace feminism if it in itself does not provide a road map for answering questions about gender performance, social inequities and continued categories of difference? I also asked myself, could postfeminism help explain the experiences described in these blogs? After reading about other experiences in the classroom and reflecting on my own, I was forced to question why I had assumed that there wouldn't be any resistance when introducing any aspect of feminism, gender, or sexuality into the classroom. In fact, my optimism in introducing feminism, gender and sexuality could be evidence that I was working on a postfeminist premise, in which I assumed that they were easy or acceptable topics to

address. This bias could have been influenced by my own undergraduate education at a women's college, where feminism was the focus or at least an underlying theme of every course I took, or developed later during my graduate education, in which coursework explicitly or implicitly supported feminist values or activism.

When students resisted the alternative conceptions of gender I presented in the composition classroom through various films and readings, I started to think about what I could have done to take into account the postfeminist cultural context. For example, perhaps I could have framed the discussion through notions of gender that might have seemed, at first glance, anti-feminist and hope that our discussion would allow us to see (and/or critique) what purposes they serve, culturally and individually. Or, instead of focusing on the resistance to the flexible notion of gender in the movie *Boys Don't Cry*, I could have shifted the topic to how, when the male main character is revealed to be female, this reveal led to acts of violence against this character in the film and asked my students why they thought this violence occurred.¹⁰ In starting to think about a possible postfeminist composition studies approach, I saw how the classroom isn't just a place to encourage change and transformation, but a place to develop critical thinking that allows seeing the world in unfamiliar ways. This consideration of a possible postfeminist composition studies also made me question what my purpose was in the composition

¹⁰ Or, in order to understand the resistance I saw in the classroom, I could have pointed out the ways in which people turn to violence when language breaks down.

classroom. Was it my duty to inspire this type of critical thinking? Or would a postfeminist composition studies “do” something else entirely?

There are few considerations of postfeminism in composition studies. In general, the few explorations of postfeminism by compositionists have been limited to post-structural approaches, which tend to frame postfeminism as a form of postmodernism, or when it is characterized as a strand of anti-feminism.¹¹ In other fields, such as media studies and sociology, the discussions about postfeminism are more complicated, such as locating it as an extension of individualist and consumerist ideologies deeply ingrained in ourselves and our culture.¹² These fields, influenced by this characterization, tend to focus on understanding “these interactions, these points of mediation: in order to relate to the worldview of our students and ask them to engage with images that complicate the ubiquity of the ‘self-empowerment via consumerism’ message fed to them” (Love 50). If postfeminism is to be understood as a social force, composition studies must grapple with the implications. In order to theorize and map a postfeminist composition classroom, I navigate the relationship of feminism to composition studies in order to see what this complicated relationship means for students who resist pedagogies explicitly or implicitly rooted in feminist values and praxis. I recognize the element of backlash present within postfeminism and how this presents fallout, in which “students readily believe that women's equality has been achieved and need no longer be struggled for” (Dietzel 129). I

¹¹ Examples of this connection of postfeminism to postmodernism can be seen in the work of Ann Brooks, Diane Davis, Tania Modelski and others.

¹² Thomas Reichert, Matt Levy and Davis have all discussed the ways in which the composition classroom is ideologically consumerist.

examine how “the successful manipulation and reception of mass media images about womanhood and feminism” contribute to the construction of identities of our students, and how postfeminism can reflect the lived experience of contemporary women (129). I address the many links between postfeminism and postmodernism, such as trying to “reconcile feminist desires for a coherent, teleological history on one hand and the challenge that poststructuralism has presented to such forms of history making” (Wiegman 814).

In order to conceptualize the postfeminist classroom, I argue that we must look at the relationship of feminism to composition studies and how that legacy informs pedagogical choices and theoretical considerations. Feminism and composition reflect shared beliefs about the intersection of power and agency, the gendered dimensions of discourse and the ideological consequences of human interaction. We can see how feminism overlaps with composition studies by “developing a growing body of work on discourses and practices of difference, representation, and the social construction of knowledge and its subjects” (Jarrett 3). For example, both composition studies and feminism are concerned with the gendered differences within this construction and its influence on teaching, making meaning and communicating. Postfeminism overlaps with this focus, while understanding postfeminism mediates¹³ the resistance to feminism. In

¹³ In “Arts of The Contact Zone,” Mary Louise Pratt explores the idea of cultural mediation. She argues there are two possible understandings of the mediator: as translator and facilitator. Each makes communication possible when contact zones occur. They help avoid misunderstandings and find common purposes. When I discuss how postfeminism can mediate resistance, I am referring to these two forms of mediation.

order to interrogate these overlaps, I examine the particular ways in which feminist principles figure into pedagogical practices, such as how “feminist perspectives have produced analyses of the gendered nature of the classroom, the feminizing of English teaching, the working conditions for female teachers, and the implications of feminist theory for scholarship” (Ritchie 585). At the same time, because “prior to the mid-1980s, feminism seemed absent from composition but present among compositionists,” it is important to note that feminism’s role in the discipline isn’t always visible in the scholarship (586). According to Ritchie, discussions of feminism are lacking in the journal articles that occurred from the 1960s to the 1980s. Even without overt considerations of feminism, we can see feminism’s influence on composition studies scholarship in the discussions of how identity is constructed through language and social relationships; even if feminism doesn’t have an explicit manifestation in the theories or practices in the composition classroom, there is evidence of its “unspoken presence” (Harris 17). According to Cynthia Caywood, the “parallel lives of composition and feminist theory” and the connections between them set the stage for the possible framework of a postfeminist composition classroom (595). In fact, feminism is so embedded in composition studies that compositionists have continually challenged “masculinist, patriarchal ways of being” (596). Thus, in order to envision a postfeminist composition studies, it is important to understand how feminism is embedded in the field of composition studies.

According to both James Berlin and Sharon Crowley, from the 1950s and even earlier, students were primarily indoctrinated into "correct" language, i.e., masculine discursive practices, through "current-traditional" rhetoric. They argue that, in the late 1960s, there was a shift from current traditional rhetoric to pedagogical strategies emphasizing product and then process; this shift opened up the possibility of more feminine language practices. As a consequence of this shift, one's identity, including one's gender, character and sense of self, became central to compositionists when they were understanding the discursive process. Later on, in the 1970s, compositionists would push for developing a more inclusive sense of self that can be developed and expressed; through the expressivist strand of composition studies, the notion of an authentic identity was promoted, which could be revealed and bettered by the writing process, and could challenge dominant and restricting (and patriarchal) conceptions of identity. According to John Trimbur, in the next decade, patriarchal modes present in discourse and pedagogy were challenged through the emergence of cultural studies in composition studies (29). Social constructivism extended the emphasis on identity with the goal of social change. Understanding the social aspects of identity led not only to questions about how discursive practices provide opportunities to train and oppress individuals and social groups, but about ways to emancipate people from these oppressive discursive practices. Feminism and composition shared similar values inherent in emancipatory thinking, such as a belief in progress and democracy, and the importance of an essentialist identity

politics in making this emancipation possible.¹⁴ These parallels between feminism and composition studies, in terms of conceptions of identity and the goal of emancipation from constrictive notions of identity, still influenced contemporary critical pedagogies, in which personal experience, personal narratives, and identity politics are viewed as means of constructing a writing classroom that not only fosters a state of mutual understanding and tolerance, but also encourages personal liberation. I will discuss the many feminist revisions of traditional composition studies that have stressed the use of personal narrative, the search for an authentic voice, the conception of writing as a collaborative process, and the importance of personal experience in lieu of "objective" knowledge.¹⁵

Composition studies and feminism have both promoted ideas of agency through arguments and practices that are based on the belief that it is necessary and possible to resist social control through language practices.¹⁶ Instead of seeing gender characteristics as biologically determined, they looked at how the individual becomes gendered through a social process. Because of the implicit and explicit overlap of feminism and composition studies, we see backlashes against views about how identity is composed in the composition classroom. Although students might not be aware of how a pedagogical act may or may not be feminist, they may be uncomfortable with pedagogies that they are unfamiliar with. In earlier educational experiences, students may not have been asked to

¹⁴ It's not surprising that feminism would have this position on oppression; having roots in the abolitionist movements of the 19th century, feminism in its various forms has always tried to emancipate women from oppressive cultural, political and personal situations.

¹⁵ These feminist revisions are expressivist; in Chapter 2, I discuss these revisions in detail.

¹⁶ See Berlin, Crowley, Trimbur, among others, for social epistemic writing theory explications.

examine the ways in which their identities are socially constructed. When they are challenged to interrogate their identity positions in the composition classroom, we can see resistance because students believe their identities are fixed and/or don't feel comfortable trying on new subject positions. One of the goals of social epistemic composition studies is to show students how their socially constructed subject positions create opportunities to move out of those constraints. Instead, these challenges to a sense of a core identity can lead to a type of resistance.¹⁷ For example, composition instructors complain that students resist new ways of thinking, new ways of writing, and feel there is often a lack of growth evident in the writing of many students over the course of a semester.¹⁸ I examine how this resistance of students, to the political aims of feminism present in the composition classroom, is rooted in feminism's emphasis on emancipation and essentialism. After I saw resistance within a feminist-themed course, I believed that if I worked out of a modernist emancipatory position committed to foundationalist notions of truth and ethics, this resistance would not be mediated. I started to consider a possible postfeminist approach, one which may go beyond liberal humanist notions that can cause resistance.¹⁹ I realized that there were some fundamental aspects present in the theory and discipline of composition studies that promote emancipatory and essentialist

¹⁷ For a comprehensive discussion of the ways in which the social turn and constructivist ideas of identity can cause resistance in the composition classroom, see Fitts, Karen, and Alan W. France. *Left Margins: Cultural Studies and Composition Pedagogy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1995.

¹⁸ For examples of instructors' complaints about student resistance, see Berman, Jeffrey. *Diaries to an English Professor: Pain and Growth in the Classroom*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1994.

¹⁹ By liberalist notions, I mean the belief that education is designed to develop the character of the individual, not just provide them knowledge. By beyond, I mean avoiding emancipator goals that go along with these notions.

modernist/humanist notions and that I believed would not appeal to postfeminist sensibilities. I also realized that there were already moves within composition studies that perhaps would be useful in managing this postfeminist context, even if they weren't explicitly linked.²⁰ While second-wave feminism has a complicated relationship to composition studies, they share the premises of essentialism and emancipation. These shared elements create student resistance that cannot be mediated through feminist pedagogy alone. Understanding various strands of postfeminism can mediate this resistance. These strands can challenge the essentialist notion of a "fixed identity," where this belief in identity is essential for emancipation to take place. When the postfeminist strands are considered, the kinds of questions we ask about process, product, and pedagogy shift dramatically. Postfeminism opens up new ways of understanding how political power and agency function in the face of the postmodern destruction of the subject.

This dissertation is composed of five chapters, including this introductory first chapter and an epilogue. The goal of Chapter Two is to give an overview of the parallel relationship between feminism and composition. I look at the different ways expressivist and social epistemic pedagogies mirror consciousness-raising groups in second-wave feminism. I show how expressivism involve strategies similar to that of consciousness-raising promoted by feminists in the 1970s, where in both there is value in relying on

²⁰ In Chapter 4, I discuss some of these moves, including those of post-process (see Kent), post-critical (see Hawk) theories and pedagogies focused on digital theory (see Ulmer).

collaborative practices in order to develop what Gayle Yates calls “the emerging selves they want to become” (363). I look at the parallels between social epistemic theorists and those in consciousness-raising groups becoming aware of the way in which their social environment figures into their self-evolvement. I look at how social change is important in both in feminism and within composition studies through understanding the complex set of responses to differing ideas about power relations, region, history, and opportunity. In comparing both process and social epistemic pedagogies to second-wave feminism, I explore the relationship between the personal and the political.²¹ I look at the complications in terms of the relationships between feminism and composition studies, such as how the essentialism of feminism has influenced compositionists ideas of what Devoney Looser identifies “composing as a woman” to mean (57). According to Janice Lauer, feminization of the discipline is a consequence of essentialism, i.e. feminization takes place when certain feminine characteristics are applied as a method of marginalization and oppression (280). I look at how this feminization has influenced the pedagogical directions taken by compositionists and has been both a negative and positive force in the political and structural aspects of the field. I explore the essentialist consequence of the “ethic of care” and its role in the composition classroom; influenced by feminist psychologist Carol Gilligan, the notion of the “ethic of care” shows how men and women have different ways of knowing and interacting with others. According to

²¹ Such as in the way in which “literacy for personal growth” was extended by the emergence of “critical literacy;” at the same time this was occurring, the early focus on finding personally meaningful lives in the context of traditional models of feminist made way for situating personal oppression in the context of larger patriarchal social systems.

Gesa Kirsch, the commitment to personal interaction, according to this construct, is considered of greater value than an ethics simply based on principles attained through rational inquiry (21). The “ethic of care” has been used to elevate characteristics normally coded as feminine, such as empathy and cooperation, over more dominant patriarchal values. In order to more fully understand the essentialist model, I examine the various consequences of the ethic of care within composition studies, such as challenging patriarchal ethics based on, as Peter Mortensen argues, “universal principles’ that turn out, time and again, not to be universal at all, but to privilege only those values held by a dominant group” (xxi). As Looser notes, there are important pedagogical consequences of essentialism within the composition classrooms. For example, the ethic of care is a justification for collaborative pedagogies. Based on the essentialist²² model, antagonist and logos-centered argumentation traditionally promoted by compositionists is the result of masculine ways of knowing and being, while collaboration is coded as feminine. According to Farrar, the feminist ethical turn provides a basis for favoring collaboration and cooperation over logos-centered argumentative theories and practices (493). Patriarchal values and ways of communicating have been privileged over women’s ways of knowing. Looser argues that essentialized notions of femininity are often used as a basis for emancipatory politics and pedagogy. While emancipation has been a strong focus within composition studies through critical theory, such as in the work by Henry

²² By essentialist, I am using Looser’s definition of difference between male and female, that is not necessarily fixed or universal.

Giroux, Paulo Freire and Ira Shor, feminism's promotion of essentialist models of femininity over masculinity has provided another foundation for emancipatory pedagogy within composition studies. I address how this promotion has answered various questions about authority, i.e. whether it should be and/or can be maintained in the composition classroom based on liberatory goals, and how resisting traditional models of authority signals a "movement against the dominant ideology" in sympathy with a "movement toward emancipation" (Chase 15). The hierarchical nature of patriarchy relies on the foundation of authority and the feminine model values community and cooperation over attempts to maintain order in the classroom. If power is not solely located in the authority of the composition instructor, it is present in the dynamic between students and teachers.

In this dynamic, instructors often have emancipatory goals that they try to attain through process writing, radical pedagogy, the politics of location and revisionary historiography. While feminism and composition studies have a tradition of resisting dominant ideology, I look at the cultural, emotional and cognitive aspects of resistance to the essentialist and emancipatory strands present within the theories and practices of feminists and compositionists. Resistance to the dominant beliefs in culture, whether they are beliefs in capitalism, patriarchy, colonialism, or some other ideology, is considered a crucial step in the emancipatory process. I am interested in what happens when people refuse to be emancipated and choose to believe in the dominant ideology or

some other competing alternative ideology. I show how understanding postfeminism can help mediate resistance in the classroom.

In Chapter Three, I provide a deeper understanding of postfeminism in order to discuss its potential role in the composition classroom by exposing the limits and complications of both essentialism and emancipatory elements, including student resistance.²³ In order to argue for how useful it is to be aware of postfeminism, I delineate the nature and function of postfeminism in both non-academic and academic contexts. I identify three strands of postfeminism (while recognizing that they are not a reflection of all the varied definitions or considerations of postfeminism).²⁴ These strands include the backlash to feminism, the free-market cultural role and the postmodern approach. One of the most visible popular representations of postfeminism takes place in the form of a backlash to feminism. For instance, Susan Faludi portrays “postfeminism as a devastating reaction against the ground gained by the second-wave” (22). The negative reactions against using the “F-word” has led to the re-emergence of traditional gender roles

²³ I recognize that there are already moves within composition studies that challenge essentialist conceptions of identity and the need for political and social change as a foundation for pedagogy. While I recognize that composition studies has already taken a post-critical turn which has challenged some of the essentialist and emancipatory foundations of the field, I argue that postfeminism can expand the discussion in important and different ways.

²⁴ It is important to note that this discussion will differ from previous ones having to do with third-wave feminism, which is considered more of an extension of feminism rather than a reaction to it, and sets itself apart from postfeminism as a generational extension of second-wavers (Hammer and Kellner html). In this chapter, when I refer to my own experiences in the classroom, these students are of a later generation than those of third-wavers (and actually, I would fit more in this category of born during the advent of the second-wave). Additionally, theorists delineate third-wave from postfeminism by their differing goals; in the third-wave, feminist goals are still useful, although they might need to be extended to deal with differing cultural contexts, but in postfeminism, these same goals have been completed, whether to the betterment or detriment of men and women today (Piepmeier html).

because the changes precipitated by feminism have led to dissatisfaction among a certain number of men and women. Postfeminist beliefs about femininity don't undermine patriarchal values, and "opting out" of public life is now seen as a legitimate choice, rather than a result of imposed social constraints. The feminist deconstruction of traditional forms of femininity is resisted by postfeminism. At the same time, postfeminism relies on the advances made by feminism, especially in terms of women's regulation of their own bodies. Postfeminist choices are often coded as oppressive by feminists. There are material²⁵ and social constraints that figure into the various options available for women and men today. The free-market strand of postfeminism doesn't agree with feminism about what these constraints are. For example, postfeminism suggests that, according to Bonnie Dow, "the victimization of women is exaggerated and/or all in feminists' minds, and that feminist orthodoxy is disempowering women by encouraging them to see themselves as victims" (205). Postfeminism undermines feminism by "challenging the hegemonic assumptions of earlier feminist epistemologies while remaining an important site of political mobilisation and debate" (WACC html). We can see evidence of postfeminism's challenge to feminism in the consumerist culture and media representation. The free-market is seen as the primary opportunity for equality and choice. Rather than identifying capitalism as an oppressive tool of patriarchy,

²⁵ Postmodernism has been criticized for denying the reality of the female body and/or ignoring the category of woman based on material/physical realities. However, Alaimo and Hekman have presented materialism in terms of postmodernism and postfeminism by arguing for the agency of nature and for a material feminism that "reconceptualizes nature in ways that account for "'intra-actions' (in Karen Barad's terms) between phenomena that are material, discursive, human, more than-human, corporeal, and technological" (5).

postfeminism sees the marketplace as liberatory. Postfeminism has been most visible in popular culture and, according to Georgina Isbister “popular postfeminist representations highlight the ambiguities faced by young women negotiating perceived opposition to heteronormative relationships” (3). These media representations reflect the cognitive dissonance present in the postfeminist cultural context, including the question of how to balance the advances made by feminism while also embracing postfeminist values. I interrogate the various media representations that reveal how the backlash and free-market strands of postfeminism, according to Kristen Gagne, “converge in the belief that there are fundamental differences between men and women that cannot and must not be ignored” (1).

In academic discourse, postfeminism has been equated with postmodernism. For example, *Écriture féminine* and gender performance are aspects of the postmodernist strand of postfeminism. They reflect the postmodernist challenge to the essentialist and emancipatory foundations of feminism. According to Jodi Ramar “postfeminism may be the best way of naming a discourse of feminist concerns that is informed by the postmodern era” (html). The postmodernist strand of postfeminism allows for a new conceptualization of gendered identities and relationships that deny the universal category of woman. The strand reflects a complicated understanding of how material realities can influence gender and power. The postmodern understanding of the body/discourse relationship shows how the body is linguistically constructed even as discourse is shaped by material conditions. The postmodern strand of postfeminism

shows the complex relationship of the body/material to discourse/language. This strand challenges the emancipatory goals of composition studies and feminism. For example, post-process theory and other radical moves away from essentialism and emancipation provide new ways of understanding the postfeminist classroom.

In Chapter Four, my aim is twofold: to call for a pedagogy that recognizes the postfeminist condition and to suggest particular features of such pedagogy. I examine the implications of a postfeminist turn within composition studies, and pedagogical possibilities in light of this turn, in order to establish some features of a postfeminist composition studies which are not essentialist or emancipatory in nature. The backlash and free-market strands can not only challenge the essentialist and emancipatory framework, but also open up pedagogical possibilities that perhaps cannot be afforded only by second-wave feminism. Here I rely on some of the reactions to emancipatory and essentialist foundations provided by media studies. I look at various frameworks within composition studies, including feminist pedagogy, post-critical pedagogy and digital literacy, and how they can address postfeminist sensibilities. I look at pedagogies that examine the myths that inform the cultural reserve of our students, and without critiquing the underlying ideologies, and how to engage with those ideologies (Arroyo 263). Post-critical pedagogies help students notice patterns while also deconstructing categories. By using language as play, they can better see boundaries as opportunities for linkages that might not fit logically. I refer to post-critical pedagogical moves that open up non-essentialist/non-emancipatory “lines of flight” or networks of possibilities, such

as the mystery. The mystery allows us, according to Gregory Ulmer, to see unique and interesting connections without denying the import of our differing social contexts or relying on preconceived notions about what that social context might be (226). The mystery is a post-pedagogy²⁶ that relies on metaphor and chance, and is a method that emerges in the inventive process, and that resists being reduced to logical, discrete parts (8).²⁷ In turn, I envision an opportunity to be open to the kairos (i.e. the right time/right place) of the classroom through improvisation that is both revolutionary/radical and non-emancipatory in how it unsettles and disrupts belief systems of all participants, instructors and students. The pedagogical strategy of “mystery” is a way to avoid the essentialist and emancipatory foundations within the field. The mystery may provide opportunities for transformation, but isn’t predicated on it. In envisioning a postfeminist composition studies, I agree with the post-process claim that we can never step out of our situatedness, while arguing that we can develop shared situation(s). This approach relies on the belief that all ideologies have cracks. According to Sarah Arroyo, the challenge is not to rush to fill those cracks with other ideologies (78).

I accept that postfeminism is disruptive and unsettling, but argue that it provides an opportunity for growth in composition studies that might not otherwise occur. Instead of just seeing how postfeminism can be applied to the field of composition studies, we need to see how understanding postfeminism can “create the conditions” for thinking

²⁶ It becomes a post-pedagogical project because it must be “re-invented” by each practitioner.

²⁷ It also relies on the affectual domain, in that our emotional responses reflect our deepest beliefs, which may or not be rooted logically or ideologically within us.

about composition studies that allows for, according to Sidney Dobrin, “the possibility of becoming and learning” that may not be possible when relying on essentialist and emancipatory foundations (14). In doing so, I hope to avoid what Gary Olson calls “pedagogy hope” or the belief that our field will move forward only if we are able to provide a foundation for our pedagogies (423). While specific pedagogies in themselves might not be so radically changed by considerations of postfeminism, our understanding of what we do in the classroom may change. This means questioning the values and purposes that have been constants in our field, including the belief that we must transmit a body of knowledge or modes of thinking or being. According to Arroyo, this means encouraging our students and ourselves to create new values and purposes for the writing classroom (694). In trying to avoid a “pedagogy (false) hope” I resist fixing postfeminism’s role in composition studies and see the fluid and ever-changing performance of postfeminism that relies on what Dobrin calls “moments of communication,” which occur in “non-codifiable systems” (143). By resisting both pedagogy and theory “hopes,” we can see how every theory must have an application and every teachable moment must have a pedagogical need. Just as with post-process pedagogy/theory, postfeminism allows us to be concerned with the social-public uses of language, in that understanding the postfeminist cultural context reveals how, as Kent argues, “every communicative act is situated, i.e. rooted, in its role as a discourse, rooted in community” (169). Here every pedagogical situation becomes a scene for invention, rather than only a place where preconceived or predictable skills are mastered. In other

words, methods emerge and are invented as the pedagogy is practiced. I recognize this approach is messy and everything “is a tangle” when you abandon both pedagogy and theory hopes. Understanding the complexities afforded by the postfeminist context is messy--it resists the simplistic reduction of essentialism and emancipation that feminism affords composition studies, and that composition studies tends to rely on. However, my envisioning isn't without hope, but one that affirms Anna Quindlen's claim that “life is so messy that the temptation to straighten it up is very strong and the results always illusory” (html).

Chapter 2

Relationship of Feminism and Composition Studies

According to Patricia Sullivan, in the 1970s on college campuses, both second-wave feminism and composition came “into their own” (37). At the same time feminism became an important political voice in American culture, composition studies emerged in academia as a discipline in its own right. Even though this “coming of age” occurred around the same time period, there are at least two different perspectives on the relationship of second-wave feminism and composition studies.²⁸ One is that feminism and composition have led parallel lives, another is that they have been more than on a parallel track, and that the relationship is one of “connection and continuity” (Boardman 151).²⁹ In terms of the first perspective, Kathleen Boardman argues that the similar timing of both doesn’t necessarily mean a direct (and conscious) relationship or interaction. She also points that many compositionists who considered themselves influenced by second-wave feminism did not make explicit connections between feminist ideas and activism in their study and practice of composition studies. Flynn agrees, arguing that not only did “feminist studies and composition studies...not engage each other in a serious or systematic way,” but that there is evidence of composition pedagogy conflicting with feminist principles (179).³⁰ In terms of the second perspective, Laura Gray-Rosendale argues that there are “critical points of synergy, commonality, and

²⁹ See more works on the relationship of composition studies to feminism by Kirsch; Caywood; Boardman; Ritchie; Looser; and Flynn.

shared purpose” between feminism and composition studies (111). According to Ritchie, the relationship between feminism and composition is hard to tease out because “much early feminist work in composition is not documented in our official publications, having occurred in informal conversations, in classrooms, and in committee meetings” (586). She also points out that the “near-absence of feminism from our publications does not constitute absence from the field” (587). In her view, the links between feminism and composition are implicit. Although I can appreciate the argument that there were few explicit connections between feminism and composition studies during second-wave feminism, I believe the implicit influence of feminism on composition studies is continued in pedagogies used in many composition studies classrooms. It is important to see how expressivist and social approaches in composition studies parallel second-wave feminism in order to understand why students exhibit resistance in a composition classroom.³¹ We can see how composition studies and feminism parallel each other in their views about the nature and value of feminine types of discourse. According to Looser, the shift in focus in composition studies from the product of writing to the writing process mirrors feminism’s emphasis on feminine models of language practices (54). One way we can see second-wave feminism’s emphasis on feminine models of

³¹ The process movement and the social turn both challenged the current-traditional model, but primarily in different time periods, with the first in the 1960s and 1970s, and the second in the 1980s and 1990s. It is important to note that there is a third strand of composition studies often juxtaposed to the expressivist and social process in its challenge to current-traditional theories and practices. The cognitive model tended to overlap with the other two approaches, highly visible in the 1970s and 1980s . (See *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*. Ed. Gary Tate, Amy Rupiper, and Kurt Schick. New York: Oxford UP, 2001.) However, it is beyond the scope of this project to address the rich tradition of empirical research present in composition studies.

language practices is in consciousness-raising groups that occurred in the 1970s. There are parallels between consciousness-raising groups and expressivist and social epistemic perspectives on feminine discourse practices.³² Second-wave feminists and these two types of compositionists believe there is value in relying on collaborative practices in order to develop, according to Yates, “the emerging selves they want to become,” while becoming aware of the way in which their social environment figures into this sense of self (363). The focus on process, rather than product, emerged in the 1970s as new model challenging “current traditional” models of writing. Barbara Killingsworth argues that the teacher’s role in the traditional classroom was to play an authoritarian role that helped students be able to convey truths through their writing (23). As Berlin points out, in the current-traditional model, participants are limited to the reiteration of known facts because “the role of the writer is to discover truth and then report it without establishing a relationship between the writing and the writer” (558). This model relied on the certain foundational principles, such as: objective knowledge exists; truth can be known through empirical methods and induction; and knowledge can be communicated to others (559).

According to Linda Adler-Kassner, the expressivist strand emphasizes dialogue within the classroom and how writing can help “preserve and build community” and

³² It is important to note, I will be arguing that there are different similarities between expressivist pedagogy and feminism, and social epistemic pedagogy and feminism. I am not trying to conflate expressivist and social epistemic pedagogies. Nor am I claiming that social epistemic pedagogy is the same as process writing, but that expressivist pedagogy is a form of process writing.

“help students unearth their genuine selves” (218).³³ The phenomenon of consciousness-raising groups within second-wave feminism reflects a similar concern.³⁴ Like the expressivist strand of process pedagogy, consciousness-raising (CR) groups emphasized personal growth through collaborative models. Both expressivist pedagogy and CR proposed a communicative process emphasizing connections with others, and provided a place where, as hooks writes, “we learned our troubles could be talked about, and were shared with many” (200). In both CR and the expressivist strand of process writing, the purpose of communication is individual discovery, rather than objective truths; both encourage the expression of an authentic voice because all knowledge is seen as uniquely tied to personal experience. Social epistemic pedagogy has different similarities to CR. Unlike expressivism, the social epistemic strand challenged the notion that language practices were an individualized (and, to a degree, private) act and allowed women to see how, as Chandra Mohanty writes, “certain relationships and social arrangements” were factors in their sense of alienation and unhappiness, rather than as a product of a character defect or internal flaw (45). The expressivist strand of pedagogy and CR emerged in the 1960s and 1970s by different means. CR was influenced by the “Chinese communist

³³ In contrast, advocates of the social epistemic strand argue that “producing written artifacts did not result from a writer thinking individually through a problem” (Bacha 30). According to Trimbur, while there is a difference between the source and nature of the writing process, in terms of the individual or the community, both the expressivist and social strands are concerned with how language practices contribute to epistemology and ethics.

³⁴ Jacqueline Rhodes warns against a “mishistoricized tale of consciousness-raising groups”; thus, it is important to note that, while, for the purposes of this chapter, I do make generalizations about this phenomena within second-wave feminism, there is no monolithic experience attributable to this practice (10). In fact, there were many debates about the how and for what purposes consciousness-raising groups should be run in order to best promote self-realization and political goals.

practice of 'speaking pain' and by the freedom schools and other popular education practices of the civil rights movement in the United States" (Cricket 24). According to Anita Shreve,

by 1970 there were small women's groups, most of which met for the practice of consciousness-raising, in every major city of the country. New York City alone had hundreds of such groups. Most universities were forming consciousness-raising groups. Even high schools were organizing (11).

By 1972, "consciousness-raising ... was among the Women's Movement's highest priorities" and, by 1973, "some 100,000 women belonged to consciousness-raising groups nationwide--making it one of the largest ever education and support movements of its kind" (12). In the 1980s and 1990s, the social epistemic strand of composition studies echoed the political aims of CR, which developed, according to Lester Faigley, "when the great social issues of the Civil Rights movement and the Vietnam War were being debated publicly and when education was widely believed to be the chief means of ending social inequality" (32).

There are many similarities between CR and expressivist pedagogy's challenge to dominant ideology through the discovery of shared experiences. For instance, in both the pamphlet "Guide to Consciousness-raising" (Anonymous html) and Peter Elbow's conception of the teacherless classroom (76), the ideal number of participants ranges from six to twelve. Both resist the idea of a central authority figure controlling the communication process in order to allow everyone to have an equal opportunity to speak;

to that end, everyone must support each other in a trusting, respectful, empathetic and non-threatening manner (Lauer 30). The goal is to "eliminate preexisting habits of passivity, dominance, the need for outside instruction, or a hierarchy" (Anonymous html). Just as the process writing classroom doesn't focus on the writing product, within CR groups the explicit goal wasn't activism; in both, the goal is to develop an authentic voice in a supportive community. The safe spaces of both types of environments were intended to allow for self-discovery and communication in ways that not only opened up the participants to new ways of looking at the world, but also allowed for different understandings of the emotional consequences of language practices. Compositionists such as Alice Brand have argued for the integral relationship between emotions and the writing process (437). Likewise, CR participants were encouraged, as Kathie Sarachild writes, to "share our feelings and pool them... [to] let ourselves go and see where our feelings lead us" (27). This role of emotions rejects the perspectives of patriarchal belief systems and masculine language processes favoring rational (and thus unemotional) inquiry that were the hallmark of current-traditional pedagogy and dominant patriarchal ideologies. Grounded in the Enlightenment tradition, this preference of reason over emotion framed language as the means of unproblematically representing both the internal knowledge of an individual and what is observed externally; emotions are seen as, at best, a distraction.³⁵ In contrast, CR and process writing rely on nurturing

³⁵ Although the Enlightenment period was "largely responsible for separating emotion and reason in our current understanding of the human mind," this dualism is seen throughout our modern historical and philosophical tradition, from Plato to Descartes, among others (Long & Brecke 123).

emotional practices, peer responses and collaboration. They also share the premise that the support of the community is necessary to create the safe space for disclosure and emotional expression (Summers-Effler 49). Just as there was a parallel between the expressivist emphasis on emotional expression and personal experiences, CR compares to the social epistemic model because, according to Lori Jacobs, “emotion is not only individually experienced, but is socially experienced and constructed” (32). In this shared understanding of the importance of the emotional response to social conditions, difficult experiences “is not necessarily a personal problem or inadequacy” (Effler 49). Not only is this link between the personal and the social further manifested in the social turn, the activism which would be influenced by CR mirrors the social epistemic “experiment in radical democracy” (Cornell 42).³⁶ The “social turn” in composition studies reflected the shift in focus from personal expression to understanding cultural production of language practices. Through both cultural studies and critical pedagogy, the social epistemic strand looked at how personal identity is shaped through the “notion of rhetoric as a political act involving a dialectical interaction engaging the material, the social, and the individual writer, with language as the agency of mediation” (Berlin 692). Unlike the highly individualized form of expressivist pedagogy, social epistemic pedagogy is based on the belief of “teaching writing as an inescapably political act”

³⁶They proposed alternative visions for shared responsibility and equality based on progressive values.

(Berlin 693).³⁷ As a result of the “social turn” in composition studies, Berlin argues that “social-epistemic rhetoric views knowledge as an arena of ideological conflict: there are no arguments from transcendent truth since all arguments arise in ideology. It thus inevitably supports economic, social, political, and cultural democracy” (489). Second-wave feminist activism, which raised the awareness of personal dissatisfaction in the context of social conditions, led women to recognize how the “personal is political” (Hesford 39).³⁸ Similarly, when Freire created an educational program that combined literacy with critical consciousness in Brazil, he argued critical consciousness was essential for social change. Proponents of CR and Freire also argued for a development of critical consciousness, i.e. awareness of the oppressive social conditions, as a co-creation with others in a community, rather than being received passively from an authority figure. This epistemological process is supposed to upset the master-slave dynamic and allow for true “liberation.”³⁹ Just as expressivist composition studies has turned to Freire to support non-authoritarian modes of pedagogy, the social epistemic approach has embraced feminist principles by uniting Freirean views of critical consciousness with the feminist attempt to liberate men and women from socially prescribed constructions of gender and power. An important aspect of the Freirean

³⁷Although, in examining the links between feminism and composition studies, I focus on two strands of process writing, the social and the expressive, a third strand, i.e. the cognitive, has also been identified as an important element of the taxonomy (Berlin 485).

³⁸ The phrase, “The personal is the political” was introduced by Carol Hanisch in a 1969 article, in which she considers how “consciousness-raising” is an important strategy within feminist activism.

³⁹ There is some evidence that second-wave feminism also turned to colonial critique argued by Freire, as in the work of Kate Millett and Robin Morgan in the 1970s when they both argue masculine Western values have shaped our culture’s perspective on gender relationships.

model and the feminist approach, as exemplified between the similarities between consciousness-raising and conscientization, is the importance placed on self-awareness and self-critique for personal and political transformation. We can see this in terms of the social aspect of being reflexive, i.e. reflecting on one's inner state and social prescribed influences. Prior to the "social turn" in composition studies, expressivism used the personal narrative as a means to identify and share one's authentic self. The social epistemic approach opened up the way to view personal identity in the context of a socially constructed matrix, where reflection on one's own position can lead to a better understanding of social pressures, and also opened up ways to resist those pressures and "inevitably supports economic, social, political, and cultural democracy" (Berlin 489). According to Berlin, the liberatory models posited by Freire and provided by social epistemic pedagogy helped to examine the resistance provided by socially constructed false consciousness, "the democratic model of social relations, used to problematize the undemocratic quality of social life," and the critique of unequal power relationships in the classroom where the student is a passive receptacle (95). Just as process pedagogy echoes Freire's support of non-authoritarian modes of interaction, the Freirean ideas of critical consciousness parallel the feminist attempt to liberate men and women from socially prescribed constructions of gender and power. Consciousness-raising and Freire's conscientization show how awareness and self-critique are important to personal and political transformation.

Both expressivist and social epistemic pedagogies mirror feminism's focus on the relationship of the personal and the political. On the one hand, prior to the "social turn" in composition studies, expressivism used the personal narrative as a means to identify and share one's authentic self. In contrast, the social epistemic approach viewed personal identity in the context of a socially constructed matrix, where reflecting on one's own position can lead to a better understanding of social pressures and how to resist those pressures. Not only does the understanding of the relationship of internal and external reflect the second-wave feminist mantra, the personal is political, social epistemic pedagogy allows for what Freire calls "critical consciousness," but only after reflecting on one's particular role in that social dynamic. The intersection of the personal and social is seen in how cultural studies and critical theory have been useful tools for compositionists in shaping pedagogical practice and helping transform students into critical thinkers and democratic citizens, but without re-inscribing patriarchal ideals. Cultural studies opened up the possibility for, according to R. D. Glass, "education as a practice of freedom" (16). The emphasis on political consequences reflects "critiques of existing understanding, the discovery of new material and new questions and the development of a theoretical understanding of women's subordination" (Balsamo 52). In Thomas Rosteck's view, the intersection of cultural studies and composition studies introduced the idea of experience being a cultural text, "how power is materialized in discourse," and "how textual practices [can be] forms of control, resistance and performance" (51). Social epistemic pedagogy uses the cultural studies concept of the

“identity politic” as a way to eradicate injustices done to social groups based on identity. Defending this identity has relied primarily on the philosophical concepts of essentialism⁴⁰ and emancipation. Essentialism is a primary philosophical underpinning of feminism (although not all feminists are essentialist).⁴¹ Second-wave feminists such as Barbara Ehrenreich, Shulamith Firestone, and Angela Davis argue that the marginalization of certain social groups—in this case women—occurs because of certain essential differences that have been denigrated or undervalued.⁴² Emancipation is seen by feminists as a way to promote social change through empowering women to resist patriarchal control. The social and expressivist frameworks in composition studies extended the possibility of language as an emancipatory process. Compositionists such as Elizabeth Flynn, Catherine Lamb and Eileen Schell developed pedagogies to challenge the oppression and marginalization of women due to their different and essential feminine values and characteristics. Through activism, feminists appealed to this concept of emancipation as a way to promote equality, despite any perceived or actual differences between men and women, either by changing the oppressive social system or changing sexist perceptions of women (Bradley 247).

⁴⁰ In the second-wave feminist view, the properties that are essential and universal to all women can be either natural or socially constructed. For a detailed discussion of feminist essentialism in the context of composition studies, see Looser.

⁴¹ In “Towards a Non-Essentialist Feminist Pedagogy,” Bondi opposes the view that feminists should preserve traditional gender dualisms but revalue the feminine elements; later on, I explore the postmodern feminist challenge to essentialism.

⁴² For a comprehensive discussion of various second-wave feminists who are essentialist, see Grosz, E. “Sexual difference and the problem of essentialism.” in *The Essential Difference*. Indianapolis: Indiana UP. 1994 and Fuss, Diana. *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference*. New York: Routledge.1990.

The focus on essentialism and emancipation is one of the ways second-wave feminism has influenced composition studies and, within composition studies, essentialism and emancipation have both endured as lightning rods for disagreement and as foundations for many pedagogical advances. Various forms of feminist composition studies have addressed the roles that essentialism and emancipation have had in shaping the ways in which composition is taught. For example, the essentialist notion of the ethic of care, in which women are considered natural nurturers, has influenced pedagogical discussions about what the roles of collaboration, argumentation and argumentation should be in the composition classroom. The thematic element of essentialism within feminism helps explain some contested areas of composition studies, including various claims about the feminization of the discipline. Compositionists use essentialism to challenge patriarchal ideals and actions. According to Looser, essentialism is evident two different strands of feminist composition theory, empiricist (product-oriented) and expressivist (process-oriented), which reflect the concern of how women write differently from men. The product of women's writing is often identified as evidence that women write differently, such as in the Mary Belenky's "Woman's Way of Knowing." From a study of over hundred women, Belenky and other researchers concluded that there is a feminine mode of communicating and that patriarchal and masculine epistemes are oppressive to this feminine mode (79). In this view, women are at a disadvantage when it comes to traditional, masculine, rhetorical practices, and a feminist composition studies is a way to create pedagogies rectifying this inequality. Much of composition studies

rooted in feminist theory assumes a gendered binary when it comes to communication. Looser argues that the gendered binary is so inherent in Western culture that there has always been a distinction in such concepts as “personal” vs. “public” and “nature” vs. “culture” based on perceived differences between men and women (60). These essentialist notions and binary thinking are challenged by various postmodern perspectives in composition studies, because “the old binary opposition which put femininity at one end of the political spectrum and feminism at the other is no longer an accurate way of conceptualizing young female experience” (McRobbie 409). A distinct exclusionary concept of “woman” or “women’s experience” is crucial to a politicized articulation of oppression and resistance and much of feminist composition studies, which uses this exclusionary practice as a pedagogical foundation. Feminism’s essentializing of “the feminine” also provides a foundation for pedagogies that emphasize the female way of knowing and being in the world, and the essentialist influence of feminism on composition studies promotes pedagogies that are “collaborative, student centered, and nurturing” (Lauer 276).

According to Marcia Dickson, traditionally feminine ideals are promoted within composition studies through a strong belief in an “ethic of care,” which has not only shaped pedagogical concerns and direction within the field, but also shaped the way in which composition programs are administered (201). Introduced by Carol Gilligan, the concept of the ethic of care comes from a theory of moral development in which women are socialized to place a higher value on relationships, and what feelings those

interactions elicit, than men; in contrast, the standard male approach, the ethics of justice, is centered on fairness and impartiality.⁴³ Within composition studies, one application of this ethic of care involves an advancement of various maternal teaching paradigms that contribute to a feminized perception of composition as a discipline. Because the caretaker role is considered more rewarding and morally advanced than roles informed by traditional male values, women have an advantage because of their socialization (Gilligan 76). We can see how this ethic of care approach advances various feminine values and principles commonly attributed to instructors in composition, and how feminine ideals are seen as suppressed by masculine or patriarchal ideals (Dickson 211). Specifically, we can see evidence of the ethic of care in expressivist pedagogy, with its commitment to process over product, when “teachers try to create safe and nurturing spaces for students to give voice to their authentic selves” (Jung 81). One pedagogical consequence of the ethic of care is the belief that maternal thinking advocates the creation of a supportive and non-hierarchical environment. Edith Babin argues that students are supposed to learn better in a non-confrontational and nurturing environment (125). The figure of the authoritative father present in traditionally masculine classroom environment is replaced with what Flynn identifies as “an image of a nurturing mother” (113). Many of the ongoing debates within composition studies, whether theoretical or in real-life applications, can be understood in light of this “ethic of care” approach. The various essentialist notions of what it means to teach, to think, and to write like a woman

⁴³ See Carol Gilligan’s *In A Different Voice*.

promotes the classroom as an ideological and ethical space. A composition classroom informed by “an ethical stance that positions gender concerns as central to culture and power” has definite consequences in regards to the pedagogical choices of composition instructors and the lives of students (114). The ethic of care also promotes a certain vision of what it means to be human, based on, as Donna Haraway points out, “models of solidarity and human unity and difference rooted in friendship, work, partially shared purposes, intractable collective pain, inescapable mortality, and persistent hope” (265).

The ethic of care has informed the challenge to traditional argumentation within composition studies. According to Babin, the challenge to traditional argumentation is informed by “women's very concern for others” that seeks to “negotiate a resolution by exploring each other's needs in detail, brainstorming multiple solutions, and discussing alternatives to find a mutually agreeable resolution” (101). According to Deborah Tannen, traditional forms of argument tend to “criticize, find fault, and attack” (27).⁴⁴ In contrast, feminist compositionists such as Eileen Schell, Catherine Lamb and Flynn have challenged this critical mode based on the belief in collaboration over antagonistic argumentation. These compositionists have been influenced by the feminist belief in conflict-free rhetorical styles as less oppressive than masculine discourse practices; they also argue that women’s ways of communicating are more effective than traditional argumentation (Hunzer 88). Traditional argumentation has focused on a clear thesis,

⁴⁴ The traditional form of persuasion is crucial in the development of composition studies designed to train white men, privileged in various professions, as seen in the instruction at elite colleges as early as the 1800s; in fact, women were prevented from taking courses where argument was taught when they were first allowed to attend institutions of higher learning (215).

taking one particular side, and rigorous support. Additionally, practitioners of traditional argumentation often try to provide the most persuasive argument even without feeling confident or passionately about a particular “side,” as Nancy Wood points out, even if these sides aren’t clear or distinct (28). This traditional view of argument asks students to win over their audience or audience even if it means conquering the opposite point of view. Feminist argumentation honors the gray areas within issues and suggests various ways issues can be discussed in a more dialogic and less oppositional manner.⁴⁵ Consensus in the process of gaining knowledge is more important than just proving that rightness of any position. As a result, the feminist position goes beyond rhetorical practices associated with persuasion (Hunzer 214).⁴⁶ One of the main ways compositionists have challenged traditional forms of argumentation is through essentialism. As Lillian Bridwell-Bowles points out, some feminist theory has identified argumentation as a form of violence, where “rhetorical aggression” emerged from “warlike, pugilistic, and phallic metaphors in writing” (93). Essentialism provides “new

⁴⁵ More recently, we can see resistance to traditional forms of antagonistic arguments within composition studies; one example is compositionists using the psychology of Carl Rogers as a foundation for non-adversarial forms of argumentation (Hunzer 213). Introduced by such compositionists as Richard Young, Alton Becker and Kenneth Pike, Rogers’ conceptualization of a communication driven therapy identified a critical and judgmental stance as a barrier to communication and a limit to the ability to empathize and see another’s point of view (282). In contrast, their introduction of a “Rogerian argumentation” was based on “sincere attempts to listen” and accept the validity of others’ positions; this type of argumentation has the goal of understanding, rather than winning (Brent 445). Other compositionists, influenced directly and indirectly by Rogers, developed cooperative and collaborative pedagogical practices in line with feminist principles.

⁴⁶ Later on, compositionists would turn to other theorists, such as Mikhail Bakhtin, in help supporting a dialogic and interconnected classroom, and Freire, in terms of supporting a non-authoritarian pedagogy; these influences would challenge patriarchal limitations and provide an alternative to adversarial discourse (Hunzer 224).

theories of socially constructed knowledge and social change" needed to replace "old patterns of argument, based on revealing a single truth (a thesis)" (94). According to Brody, the essentialist nature of argumentation challenges the belief that "to write well in Western culture is to write like a man" (12). Feminists argue that men have been guilty "for centuries" of imposing "images of their best selves on descriptions of good writing: selves that are productive, coherent, virtuous, and heroic" (13). In this view, men have promoted and produced "writing that is plain, forceful, and true" (43). Echoing this criticism, compositionists such as Lauer, Kirsch, Gail Stygall and Ritchie, have reacted to this masculine and patriarchal concept of argumentation by promoting collaborative learning, in which the idea of teacher as authority, an approach that is seen as the product of a masculine ethic, is abandoned in favor of teacher as midwife.⁴⁷ Not all compositionists agree that a feminine form of argumentation should be based on the ethic of care. According to Susan Jarratt, the classroom isn't and shouldn't be a conflict-free and solely nurturing environment, and adversarial thinking shouldn't be discredited as outdated and inherently masculine (107). In challenging an essentialized notion provided by the ethic of care, Jarratt claims students learn by addressing conflicting ideas in order to think and write critically; she also denies traditional argument is a type of violent expression (107). Instead, she argues that the value-free "womb-like" classrooms promoted by Donald Murray and Peter Elbow can create inequalities through "the

⁴⁷ The idea of associating teaching with midwifery has a long tradition, from Plato's Socrates, "who helps give birth to children," to Belenky's characterizing composition instructors as midwife-teachers who "assist the students in giving birth to their own ideas, in making their own tacit knowledge explicit" (92).

attempt to create a harmonious nurturing community of readers” (110). Further, since maternal figures are not always valued as much as paternal figures in patriarchal systems, her view is that this essentialized view of argumentation puts women at a political disadvantage when they exhibit maternal characteristics (111). Another consequence of a composition instructor who is nurturing can be the difficulty in establishing authority in her classroom. Jarratt claims this approach is "doubly disempowering" for women instructors who already struggle to overcome patriarchal power (117). In this view, collaboration can be detrimental to women and can reinforce hierarchical divisions in the world by mimicking outside rules (118). In trying to establish the appropriate role of collaboration and argumentation in the classroom, Andrea Lunsford discusses the role of the teacher’s authority in the classroom. In the traditional classroom, talk is controlled by the teacher; in the collaborative model, students work within peer groups without a teacher’s overbearing interference (Buchanan 44). The pedagogical conflict between argumentation and collaboration reflects the way in which gender inequities are re-inscribed by the structure of the academy. If gender is socially constructed, then the classroom environment is in danger of only promoting unhealthy gender categories and differences when authority is established and maintained by gendered perceptions and the relationship between the student and teacher.

Addressing the role of authority raises the question of how argumentation and collaboration can function within the composition classroom without reinforcing patriarchal structures. If the composition classroom does not rely on the authority of the

teacher and is instead rooted in the structure of the classroom dynamics, then the teacher, whether male⁴⁸ or female, can promote “feminine” essentialized values of cooperation and non-coercion. According to William Breeze, these feminine values undermine structural power relations inherent in patriarchy through non-hierarchical participatory pedagogical moves, such as collaboration (63). However, Stygall argues that just introducing these non-hierarchical moves won’t eliminate patriarchal power dynamics, such as when women do not tend to speak up in mixed gender peer groups even when collaboration is emphasized over traditional argumentation (72). Although composition instructors can try to restructure their classrooms in order to allow for more female participation, Patricia Bizzell points out those pedagogical decisions are always linked to the role of authority has within the classroom. In order to allow for more participation of women in the classroom, composition instructors must realize that both peer and teacher led activities can silence women. In the current-traditional pedagogical model, authority is established through hyper-masculinity and patriarchal systems (847). In contrast, in a classroom informed by critical theory and/or informed by cultural studies, the role of authority reflects the way in which power is exercised through various liberatory practices, such as those advocated by Freire and Berlin.⁴⁹ The exercise of power through liberatory practices is so deeply connected to essentialized notions of gender that male-

⁴⁸ If authority doesn’t come from a female essentialized experience, one important consideration is how a male instructor can establish authority within composition studies without reinscribing patriarchal power dynamics (Breeze 61).

⁴⁹ In “Freirian Pedagogy in the U.S.: A Response,” Berlin points out a teacher’s authority can never be totally eliminated; even in a “Freirean classroom, the teacher shares the right to dialogue while never relinquishing the authority to set certain agendas for class activities” (418).

oriented patriarchal displays of power are seen as rooted in coercion, while the feminine model emphasizes partnership between instructor and student (848). If each party is free to interact in the way it sees fit, centralized power, in which the teacher is seen as a leader who exercises control over the classroom, is challenged in favor of a networked notion of cooperation. In this feminist model of authority, teachers and students are seen as “freely negotiating equals” (849). Bizzell claims that if teachers are to have any sort of authority and standards, or encourage any sort of writing process, it is because the student and teacher have entered into an agreement where the student freely accepts the expertise of the teacher; only within an atmosphere of freedom can the student possibly learn and engage in critical thinking (139). Bizzell’s model of authority demands a type of persuasion that isn’t adversarial, manipulative, or deceitful. This type of communication involves a certain pedagogical and discursive good faith (269). In the non-authoritarian model, the teacher isn’t just trying to liberate the student, but engages in a non-oppressive environment allowing a free transaction of ideas. According to this view, the democratic classroom is inherently feminist because authority is established through non-patriarchal means. The issue of what type of authority composition instructors should have in the classroom is complicated by the way composition instructors are “taught to nurture” in the classroom (Hunzer 233). According to Susan Hunzer, we can see the nurturing relationship between instructor and student reinforced by the “ethic of care.” When composition instructors “mother,” rather than “father,” students, there are pedagogical consequences (234). For example, in the feminist model, the patriarchal expression of

authority is less pedagogically important than the nurturing relationship the instructor has with the student. One question is how to promote these values without reinforcing “stereotypical female roles,” and continuing “to oppress women” means not viewing care as gendered, such as seeing it in terms of nurturing, but instead seeing authority as a way to “augment” social relationships (Mortenson 178).⁵⁰ If authority is not rooted in gender traits, but in a more universal notion of a caring, then a theory of argumentation based on the values of cooperation and dialogue does not have an essentialist product. This concept of authority goes beyond many feminist notions of gendered argumentation and allows for both consensus and conflict as models of discourse within the composition classroom.

One such model of discourse is the personal narrative; the differing understandings of and/or reactions to the pedagogical use of personal narrative reflect a complicated emancipatory perspective. Looser argues that personal narrative is a feminist alternative to traditional argumentation (60). Feminism has had a history of identifying politics as personal; yet, in the scope of composition studies as a discipline, there has been a backlash against the personal aspect of expressivist writing. We can see this backlash in certain criticisms of expressivist pedagogy, such as how personal narrative was/is not a critical mode (62). From a feminist pedagogical standpoint, the separation of “personal” writing from public or social discourse is a patriarchal act,

⁵⁰ Hannah Arendt notes how the word authority, from the Latin *auctoritas*, shares its root with *augere*, to augment. In this view, authority isn’t as much as supposed opposed on other people, but a way to bring rituals, traditions and social practices into the present.; thus, “Authority then becomes an intermediary between those subject to its power and a foundation upon which that power rests” (Dawney 4).

privileging the masculine rhetorical form of communication over what is seen as more feminine and thus inferior (Banks 33). In response to this sexism, feminist compositionists have used personal narrative as a political statement. The uniting of the personal and the political, through such feminist models as consciousness-raising, and collaborative models integrating expressivist and social epistemic pedagogies, is a prime example of the intersection between feminism and composition studies. The intersection of the personal and the political in both realms opens up a positive space for “composing oneself” in the context of the community (Brandt 48). Not all compositionists believe feminine discourse practices can eliminate oppressive conditions. According to Schell, one consequence of feminist essentialism is the reinforcing of a persistent “feminization” of composition studies, in which the feminine aspects of the field are undervalued and denote a marginalized status (55). We can see this feminization in the way part-time/adjunct composition instructors, many who are female, are “undervalued” and “over-worked” (57). Schell argues that, not only do male tenured academics publish more than their female counterparts, but also part-time instructors are “unable to find time for their own research,” because they are expected to “tidy up student essays with painstaking, careful commentary and hours devoted to students in one-on-one conferencing” (58). Although the prevalence of male tenure track compositionists differs depending on the institution, there is a tendency for adjunct work to be “feminized” (Jung 81). We see a gendered division of labor where “part-time composition teachers have much in common with the proverbial housewife who contributes greatly to the running of

the household (or the university) but gets no actual recognition for it (e.g., tenure, salary increases, office space, and resources)" (58). One of the political consequences within composition studies, because nurturing is a skill less valued in larger patriarchal value systems, is that the teacher often feels invisible and alienated, rather than valued and in control.⁵¹ This recognition of how the field is feminized has resulted in emancipatory re-examinations, some of which challenge essentialist features of composition.

The various essentialist aspects of composition studies have specific pedagogical consequences that mirror many second-wave feminist goals of emancipation. In both, the division between femininity and masculinity is used to challenge oppressive patriarchal dynamics. Compositionists who favor this binary tend to believe that social change is needed and that educators can initiate change. In particular, essentialism allows for certain liberatory practices, such as opening up the space for feminist pedagogical models challenging oppressive patriarchal dynamics. As Andrea Greenbaum points out, in this emphasis on essential differences between the way men and women communicate, language practices can both be a method of social control and a way to resist this control (21).⁵² There are certain "narratives of emancipation," such as the notions of social progress, democratic idealism, and critical awareness (Vitanza 14).⁵³ Just as

⁵¹ If the ethic of care, which values interconnectedness, is not to be reduced to feminization, it can only be empowering as long as the patriarchal academic hierarchies are challenged.

⁵² These tenets have been explicitly considered in feminist applications to composition studies, because, according to Kirsch and Ritchie, "Feminist research can be distinguished from other research traditions by its emancipatory goals" (20).

⁵³ According to Henry Giroux, one way the narratives of emancipation have developed in composition studies is through cultural studies (114). Others argue that composition studies can owe this emancipatory

emancipatory thinking functions within composition studies, liberatory practices are fundamental to feminist theory and activism.⁵⁴ Feminism in its various forms and in different time periods has always tried to emancipate women from oppressive cultural, political and personal situations. With emancipation as a core of both composition studies and feminism, and the influence of cultural studies of composition studies introducing many emancipatory elements of feminism, the composition classroom has been a fertile ground for the development of feminist composition pedagogy. For example, feminism has given compositionists ways to see how discourse can be used to both maintain social order and challenge it. Feminism has also influenced the belief that discourse can be used for personal empowerment and self-expression, while at the same time discourse is shaped by culture.⁵⁵ Feminism has also influenced the belief that social change is possible through discourse. According to Anne Balsamo, these beliefs are reflected in the emergence of the “critiques of existing understandings, the discovery of new material and new questions, and the development of a theoretical understanding of women’s subordination” (52). Feminist compositionists have used these moves to present “education as a practice of freedom” and experience as a cultural text (Glass 16).

foundation to rhetoric because, “from Isocrates and Plato to Burke to contemporary composition theory,” there has been a tradition of resisting dominant culture through rhetorical practices (Paine 10).

⁵⁴ We can trace these practices from as early as the French Revolution of 1789, which created a temporary space for women to be politically active, and the Enlightenment period in America when classical economic and political liberalism opened up the discussion about equality (Offen 146). Further, feminism has roots in the abolitionist movements of the 19th century, early socialism and the religious non-conformist movement of Quakers, Unitarians, and transcendentalism, all of which inherently had emancipatory foundations (Paletschek 310).

⁵⁵ This use of language “assumes that when individuals develop insight into the way their lives are being oppressed by systemic forces, they can become emancipated from these situations through individual or collective action” (Humble 201).

Rosteck argues that feminism continues to influence composition studies through a continued “interest in how power is materialized in discourse” and how textual practices can be “forms of control, resistance and performance” (51). Thus, emancipatory practices are embedded in composition and feminism.

We can better understand how emancipation functions in the feminist-influenced composition classroom by examining how feminism frames power relationships. Second-wave feminist activists such as Robin Morgan, Betty Friedan, and Gloria Steinem believed individual power relationships between men and women were the result of larger social forces.⁵⁶ Just as feminist theorists examine how power relationships develop as a result of various social constraints, cultural studies provides an opportunity to understand how social and economic conditions shape the dynamics of various individuals.⁵⁷ Many compositionists strive to transform, instead of reproduce, the social conditions dis-empowering to students and teachers (Jarratt 3). Feminism also has influenced compositionists, such as Lunsford, Ritchie, and Flynn, in their critique of the conditions that support patriarchal values; further, according to Jarratt, they seek to understand how epistemes maintain and transform various social systems (6). We can see this focus in how composition studies, influenced by feminism, seeks to understand the ways in which patriarchal power shapes, establishes and maintains certain academic material conditions, and how these conditions influence certain pedagogical choices. For

⁵⁶ For a comprehensive history of second-wave activism, see Linda Nicholson’s *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*. New York: Routledge. 1997.

⁵⁷ See Giroux; Alan France; and Trimbur.

example, these compositionists are concerned with the way in which non-hierarchical, teacher-centered, curriculum reinforces patriarchal power dynamics (Winkelmann 435). This concern is primarily the product of emancipatory goals, unlike in prior pedagogies, which (according to the emancipatory perspective) sought to maintain oppressive conditions. Through the critique of power dynamics, composition instructors establish the foundation for emancipating students from oppressive conditions.⁵⁸ Not only are potential oppressive dynamic attributed to larger societal conditions, but feminist composition studies seeks to challenge these oppressive elements through analysis, such as examining how patriarchal notions of power reinforce alienation.⁵⁹ In fact, feminism opens up a way for compositionists to examine the structural oppressive elements in all cultural contexts, including academia.⁶⁰ The emancipatory thread within the field is thus used as a pedagogical and political tool. Feminist compositionists often use cultural criticism and radical pedagogy to understand how material changes are needed to eliminate various systems that produce and sustain alienation, reinforcing this emancipatory thread. Radical pedagogical theorists such as Freire, Giroux and Shor argue many long-standing pedagogical traditions do not promote learning or social

⁵⁸ Authority is an important consideration of both emancipatory and essentialist aspects of feminism and composition studies.

⁵⁹ According to Michel Foucault, language practices are the means by which power oppresses in the larger cultural context because, “Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart’ (101).

⁶⁰ Such as the dependence on contingent faculty, the role of the teacher in the classroom and the gendered nature of the composition classroom.

change (Bernard-Donals 153). In contrast, liberatory practices help map the way education can be a powerful path to freedom (hooks 12).

According to Rosi Braidotti, feminist compositionists use the concept of politics of location, which is “one of the epistemological foundations of feminist theory and gender knowledge,” to challenge the oppressive conditions in and outside of academia without relying on essentialism (168). Lunsford argues that understanding how the individual is “located” encourages us to avoid essentialized conceptions of authority. The concept of rooting authority in location, rather than in the gendered individual, parallels the idea of the “rhetorical situation,” a concept used in composition studies to show that argument is always situated (71).⁶¹ For example, considerations of how language is situated in a community allow compositionists a way to avoid re-inscribing gendered values, whether privileged as masculine or feminine, because authority doesn’t have to be framed as masculine or feminine in order to understand the social situation of the individual or how values are embodied in a person (74). This approach allows cultural studies and critical theory to be useful tools in shaping pedagogical practice, and in understanding how these tools help to transform students into critical thinkers and democratic citizens, without re-inscribing patriarchal ideals. Coined by Adrienne Rich, the “politics of location” help compositionists understand how we are situated. It shows the difference between what Audre Lorde calls “the passive be and the active being”

⁶¹ The politics of location and the rhetorical situation overlap in the notion of “rhetorical space”; rather than denoting an actual physical place, it represents the matrix between rhetor, audience and the cultural context in which the conversation occurs (Mountford 41).

(111). For Rich, this situated knowledge refers to the “articulation and interrogation” of the personal and social location made possible through feminist politics and power relations (219). By examining how this politic is positioned in time and space, compositionists can explore how women have been othered or marginalized; thus, a woman’s location is both a theoretical space and physical space on the margin (hooks 149). Using the politics of location, feminism allows for the personal and political space to become an object of critical reflection. Emancipatory practices present in composition studies open up this space where composing can take place and resist various forms of patriarchal limitations. Using this space means interrogating personal experiences in the context of larger social contexts.⁶² This interrogation can then reveal how gendered perceptions are not something to avoid or embrace, but are instead rooted in specific locations shaped by specific epistemes. In addition, because this emancipatory framework shows how gender is rooted in the social context rather than in a woman’s individual identity, this subjectivity becomes a function of larger political dimensions. Recognizing the political dimension of identity allows for the oppressive social context to be critiqued and used to provide an epistemic awakening.

For both second-wave feminism and feminist compositionists, epistemic awakenings lead to personal transformation. The values of transformation and personal agency are promoted in composition studies and function as a challenge to patriarchal

⁶² According to Lorraine Code, the rhetorical space is an intersection between the public space, discourse, and the individual; this space functions as epistemology, framing the world in such a way that binds the personal to the larger social context (3).

locations or social contexts. Just as consciousness-raising was a method used to empower women and transform patriarchal social institutions, feminist compositionists believe that the composition classroom can serve the same purposes (Fonow 213). The feminist approach seeks to privilege certain locations. In the model of consciousness-raising and in the composition class, the personal experience of the individual is located in the larger patriarchal struggle. In considering the intersections of the personal and political, and in paralleling the feminist model, compositionists struggle with how to establish authority with a non-patriarchal foundation at the same time as establishing certain ethical modes.⁶³ However, to abandon all claims to authority (and thus emancipatory goals) challenges the institutional function of the academy, which has stated its purpose to judge, evaluate, and even indoctrinate or prepare students to function in the larger social context.⁶⁴ The conflict between maintaining the status quo and transforming oppressive conditions reflects a major complication of the relationship between feminism and composition studies. Composition functions in a disciplinary context that challenges patriarchy and in an institutional context that can be oppressive. At the same time compositionists conceive of emancipatory pedagogies, the disciplinary context creates tensions that are unique to its social context. As a result, emancipatory goals can become muddled.

⁶³If this ethical mode is to promote equality and justice, one question is, what foundation is needed to maintain authority, or does this ethical model subvert any attempt at authority? Later, I will argue that a postmodern feminist approach can better deal with this question than the epistemological focus provided by feminism can.

⁶⁴ This is not to say that the intent to indoctrinate by way of the academy is only a function of patriarchal ideologies or educational practices; Maxine Hairston has famously warned of putting “the social goals of the teacher before the educational needs of the student,” in response to attempts to politicize the classroom from left of the margin perspectives (180).

Some compositionists, such as Jarratt, Liu Xiu and Theresa Enos, use historical revisionism to challenge the oppressive elements of academic discourse practices. They argue that institutions often silence women throughout history in order to maintain power dynamics. We can see a struggle to provide a foundation for the emancipatory element of composition studies through revisionary historical methods, based on the idea that all histories have an ideological framework (Berlin 118). There is also a tradition within composition studies of turning to the history of rhetoric in order to establish a disciplinary foundation, as explored in the work of Berlin, Crowley, and William Covino. Further, Jarratt, Enos and Lunsford have reexamined the traditional, masculine, and patriarchal ways of doing historiography by presenting an alternative view of these histories of rhetoric and the ways they influence composition studies.⁶⁵ According to Michelle Ballif, “woman is the text that paradoxically cannot speak but nevertheless speaks in its silence, her silence is the message; it desires to be read” (91). By introducing the female voice and *being* into the historical discussion, this revisionism allows certain political and pedagogical concerns to challenge the very epistemological basis of making historical claims and the danger in doing so in service to praxis (Vitanza 170). Because they challenge the patriarchal/modernist mechanisms of doing history, one of the primary considerations of composition theorists who advocate a revisionary historiographical approach is how history, and the appeal to (and understanding of) history matters, i.e.,

⁶⁵ According to Jarratt, the revision of history relies on new definitions of rhetoric; in opening up what rhetoric encompasses, she claims marginalized voices can be added to these histories (12).

has political and pedagogical consequences. Similarly, a cultural studies approach, including a feminist approach, tries to undo the negative consequences of particular aspects of the rhetorical tradition. This undoing is possible because the feminist compositionist approach recognizes that all histories are ideological and seeks to reclaim what is “at the margins” (hooks 14). In particular, one strategy is to reclaim rhetorical figures who have been ignored or overlooked in the traditional (and patriarchal) rhetorical tradition. Lunsford, in *Rhetorica Reclaimed*, advocates re-reading classical texts to re-imagine the rhetorical tradition through the lens of feminism.⁶⁶ For example, in this collection of essays, Jarratt and Rory Ong try to “reclaim” one particular figure, Aspasia, in order to add her voice to the rhetorical tradition (181). In another example, Cheryl Glenn uses this inclusionary method of recovering women as a way to add to the rhetorical tradition and see how women have always played a role in shaping rhetorical history (40). Glenn argues a feminist approach would be collaborative in order to understand the rhetorical nature of silence and the consequences of “othering” through certain historiographical practices (43). These examples of a feminist compositionist approach to historiography show how revisioning the rhetorical tradition is an activist position and involves “speaking for” women of the past who were silenced, forgotten or ignored (44). In order to do this activism, feminist compositionists try to create new methods that allow for new voices to be heard. For example, one alternative method

⁶⁶ Opening up the space in historical periods, such as the classical era, which have been primarily the domain of male rhetors, serves as a type of resistance that functions ideologically. However, it also points out the underlying ideological aspects of traditional histories; the marginalized voices are no more politicized than the standard.

understands how the elements of empathy and foregrounding of emotional experience provides a way to recover female voices (Bizzell 6). As a consequence of recovering various female voices in the rhetorical condition, compositionists can discover how women are placed at the margin in composition studies, and how an activist positioning can have larger consequences in the social movement for women's liberation.⁶⁷ By using feminist historical methods in order to recover/re-imagine gendered relationships, compositionists provide a foundation for altering power relations in the classroom.

One criticism of the feminist approach to historiography is that women are inserted into the rhetorical tradition for political purposes, such as emancipation of contemporary women, in order to present women with positive histories (Xiu 362). Along with Victor Vitanza's argument that much of historiography is a fictional ideological construction, this criticism reveals the ways in which historical interpretations are always contingent and situated, and how it is impossible to emancipate figures from the past with any accuracy or apart from our current historical context (324). Another criticism is that historical revision ignores how recovering women in the rhetorical tradition is done for a specific current community, which is not stable or generalizable (Xiu 264). Just as there is conflict within feminist theory about what it means to be a woman and what values should be advocated, the process of recovering past histories of women is complicated and susceptible to conflict. The "rational reconstruction"

⁶⁷ This recovering of voices is not isolated to composition studies; as Mimi Coughlin argues, the idea of women as history makers, as subjects and historians, has a rich history in all disciplines (472). In fact, her thesis is that by the masculinization of who does history did much to silence marginalized voices, i.e. who makes "real history" (476).

rhetoricians attempt puts “current questions into the dead philosophers mouths” (Vitanza 372). The motives of these feminist compositionists are thus more telling than the actual voices of the recovered past. One attempt to solve this problem of “fact” vs. “fiction” is to use historical narratives as a type of mythos capable of informing our present (Jarratt 68). While it may be impossible to know why women in the rhetorical tradition “got lost,” their stories can be useful for current feminist, political and pedagogical, goals (69). As a result, historiography doesn’t have to be posited as traditional/objective vs. feminist/fictionalization, because all histories involve a certain element of postmodern uncertainty, i.e. that the objectivity of truth isn’t possible, but rather the goal is to provide a way to open up new perspectives and possibilities (Glenn 387).⁶⁸ Another concern about the revisionary historiography of rhetoric is whether or not the emancipatory goals of feminism can coincide with postmodernism. In Vitanza’s view, when he criticizes this feminist methodology, modernist ways of thinking, which are inherent in feminism, cannot answer postmodern questions, such as “who is excluded and silenced to control and limit those considered subjects,” and “what happens to those who don’t fit into this feminist paradigm” (322). Because a feminist approach to historiography is founded upon a “strategic negative” (a breaking down/or critique mode), essentialism is used as a method to promote an emancipatory agenda (325). Further, emancipatory pedagogies give exigence for essentialist historiographical methods that are promoted by feminists.

⁶⁸ This instability challenges ideological consistency or the idea that historical methods can and should have a foundation outside of the social context they come out of. Feminist methodology favoring “grand narratives” is particularly difficult to maintain in light of this instability.

These relationships, again, reflect a fundamental connection between composition theory and feminism.

The commonalities and intersections of feminism and composition studies are further complicated by the reactions of students and those in the larger culture more generally. Resistance, which may be present in the composition classroom, and the backlash to feminism have similar roots in a shared emancipatory agenda, both of which similarly complicate various pedagogical practices in the composition classroom.⁶⁹ There is a common concern in regards to resistance within educational contexts that student resistance is not easily managed or even identifiable in the real classroom environment. Some argue this resistance functions as a sort of self-defense for students, while others argue that the dynamic between teacher and student promotes resistance, or that resistance is the product of cynicism (Levy 349-350). Whatever the pedagogical context or cause, it is evident that some students resist liberatory strategies calling for transformation, personal growth, and social activism, and the ways transformative and critical pedagogies emphasize self-awareness and democratic citizenship (Greenbaum 21).⁷⁰ According to Giroux, in the context of critical pedagogy, and the process of teaching politicized subjects and ideology, resistance is considered a product of the

⁶⁹ The causes of student resistance have been attributed to unprepared students, the limitations of the academy itself, and/or the faults of a particular instructor, as seen in such popular representations as “Dead Poets Society,” “Stand and Deliver,” “Dangerous Minds,” “Lean on Me,” “Freedom Writers,” “Precious,” and “Mona Lisa Smile.” Resistance can take the form of apathy, confrontation or disrespect. This resistance can be in reaction to politicized subjects, a general resistance to certain assignments and topics, or even having to take a course or attend school.

⁷⁰ This resistance is of particular concern to these educators because the willingness to cooperate is essential to a successful pedagogical outcome is a premise in these strategies.

student's "false consciousness," or the dominant cultural values held by these students; this flawed perspective can be seen to prevent students from recognizing the root causes of inequality or injustice (27). As a corollary, the transformative pedagogical strategy of "conscientization," or the act of critical consciousness, shows how an individual is located in the political and social context and moves students past resistance through awareness and self-reflection (Berlin 415). These approaches challenge the current-traditional pedagogical stance of the academy as a neutral space, and may not reflect students' prior educational experiences.⁷¹ In fact, many students come into the academy believing that education is objective, non-political and nonhistorical (Miller 21).⁷²

To a certain degree, the problem of student resistance is considered within composition studies, and many compositionists recognize that pedagogy doesn't always lead students to become willing participants in their education (Trimbur 3). However, these considerations in composition studies tend to frame student resistance as ignorance or as a defense mechanism that prevents critical thinking and encourages negative emotional reactions. Further, they tend to dismiss the cognitive and emotional investment in such beliefs of students. The fact that students don't recognize themselves in text or theory, or that these ideas conflict with their personal experiences, must be addressed for

⁷¹ In fact, the current-traditional model's focus on writing as a skill, which is challenged by the idea of writing as a social process, continued to be a primary educational force in elementary and secondary education long after the "social turn" in college composition classrooms.

⁷² This belief might be reinforced by earlier educational experiences in high schools, especially public schools, which do promote such non-political perspectives.

resistance, in both education and the larger culture, to be fully understood.⁷³ One reason for student resistance to political and ideological pedagogies is the conflict between the ideological bent of faculty and the increasing number of students coming from conservative households. In our larger American culture, there is evidence that conservatism has been on the rise since the 1970s, such as in a study of college campuses conducted in 2012 (Gross 236). According to Neil Gross, we see a particular divide between the politics of academics, which tend to be more liberal than the general population, and non-academics, who are increasingly more conservative in some areas of the country. In many areas of the country⁷⁴, academics who attended graduate school in the 1960s and 1970s, and their own graduate students in the 1980s and 1990s, and who were influenced by liberal activism and philosophies, are continually faced with more and more students who “grew up with traditional and conservative values” (Horowitz 27). Both the student resistance to liberal values, exhibited among certain college professors and students, and the backlash in American culture to liberal ideas, is influenced by the ongoing American value of individualism. The “mythos of individualism,” which is taught in school and displayed in mass media, primes students to

⁷³ The importance of understanding student resistance relies on a notion of identity, and how students see themselves. As Butin argues, “if identity is always under construction, then student resistance can be re-conceptualized as the attempted maintenance of a particular identity through the refusal and/or inability to see oneself in an alternate identity” (6). This raises the question of not only “how to promote alternative developments of student identity” but whether or not this promotion should be the aim of education.

⁷⁴ The 2012 election showed how the country is being polarized politically between conservatives and liberals in terms of region, the Midwest/South as more conservative than the East/West, and in terms of more conservative rural areas compared to cities, which tend to be more liberal.

be wary of any politics or pedagogy associated with collectivism (Herzberg 309).⁷⁵ When you combine the academic and more general social contexts, the composition classroom is a perfect storm for students who entering the academy to challenge liberal pedagogies. The first-year composition classroom is a particularly “dangerous” context for competing interests, assumptions and ideologies, and provides a perfect breeding ground for resistance when it maintains emancipatory features.⁷⁶

Many factors contribute to the sociology of the composition classroom and the larger cultural context, especially when it comes to the values and beliefs that can lead to resistant behaviors and feelings. Understanding the cultural context of students, shaped by their prior educational experiences and family situations, allows us to see how resistance can be the result of conflicting values and ethical judgments (Richmond 24). Students don’t come to the classroom as *tabulae rasae*; they have myriad expectations that conflict with the pedagogical goals of the college level composition course, such as expecting to learn specific concrete skills, rather than more abstract values or different ways of thinking. According to various studies, students resist because they don’t want to change, they don’t know how to change, or they don’t believe they can change (Dembo 2). Whatever the mechanisms, student resistance has emotional consequences in how students express their discomfort with new ways of thinking and in how they react to

⁷⁵ This “mythos of individualism, “is based on the desire "To escape from imposed systems . . . to seek by themselves and in themselves for the only reason for things” and because, “in most mental operations each American relies on individual effort and judgment” (Tocqueville 429).

⁷⁶ One way we can see this contrast between secondary and college environments is using Freire’s “banking concept of education,” in which knowledge is “deposited” in the student’s mind, rather than through critical thinking (66).

any challenges to their world-views.⁷⁷ Understanding how students emotionally manifest resistance, such as in their reaction to the unexpected and challenging focus of the composition classroom, further elucidates the complexity of student/teacher interactions in a postfeminist context.⁷⁸ Combined with unfamiliarity with being critical of their own outlook on life, with their expectation that the composition classroom is supposed to be a neutral place to learn skills, students are primed to react emotionally.⁷⁹ For example, one emotional reaction is for students to feel targeted as victims by teachers or readings when they believe their lifestyles, choices or identity are challenged, in part because of the uneven power relationships present within the classroom dynamic (Boler 3). Students might react negatively or positively to the judgment of the instructor or the expectations and/or prior experiences of other classmates, or be primed to react to “any imposition of authority,” which challenges their own world-view or perception of themselves (Boler xv).

The emotional dimension of resistance is even more evident in the various reactions to ideological charged issues, such as when students, after seeing many success stories of women in popular media, react negatively to feminist claims of continued oppression of women (Clark 188). In fact, the particular nature of the composition

⁷⁷ According to Jack Mezirow, student resistance is necessarily an emotional process, and “inherent when teaching for change” (10).

⁷⁸ There is evidence in educational studies that there may be a “natural” resistance to critical thinking because it requires behavioral change. For example, one study shows that asking individuals to change their thought patterns isn’t enough; they must be motivated to change their behaviors, which in turn can influence their thinking (Keeley 140).

⁷⁹ This goes back to the differences between high school and college in the learning practices; student’s ideas aren’t only being challenged, their previous orientation towards learning is as well.

classroom can be said to intensify the emotional dimension of resistance because it is impossible to write without triggering emotions (McLeod 30). If instructors don't consider the role of emotions in the process of writing or in terms of classroom dynamics, it is possible resistance can be amplified in the form of confrontation or paralysis (Davis 232). This consideration of emotions is particularly important when trying to understand how the interrogation of gender emphasized by feminism may elicit resistance and help mediate the student resistance caused by the backlash to feminism. According to Susan McLeod, students may feel paralyzed in the face of new problems or "interruptions to their plans" or, similar to the way in which the growing conservative population reacts negatively to liberal politics, they may lash out by expressing extreme ideological positions in a way that insults, challenges or surprises people who disagree with them (32). In either case, resistance has an important emotional function⁸⁰ as a manner of psychological protection, often in reaction to fear, whether the fear of losing one's sense of identity, of not succeeding, or of the unknown.⁸¹ Even though resistance can make the writing classroom an intense experience, not all instructors are trained or experienced in dealing with such emotionally charged classroom dynamics; some even blame students for their emotional reactions (Micciche 172). The instructor may refuse to consider the emotional context of the classroom; however, as Ratcliffe points out, resistance isn't just

⁸⁰ It is important to note that I am not arguing that resistance is only an emotional experience; I will discuss the cognitive aspects as well, although the two cannot always be separated from each other.

⁸¹ The idea of resistance as a defense mechanism has strong precedence in psychodynamic theories (Wachtel 206).

the purview of composition students, but is also a factor for teachers (140).⁸² For example, teachers may fear losing control or being too much of an authority figure in the classroom, which can either prevent an instructor from appropriately challenging students or overcompensating and overpowering students in discussions or comments on essays (Vanderstaay 286). When the element of ideology is introduced, particularly in an emancipatory context, we can see resistance in the composition classroom. One further complicating factor in managing, both the student's and teacher's, emotional reactions is the issue of whether to express ideological beliefs or to appear ideologically neutral (Ratcliffe 141).⁸³ This concern is evidence of the ways in which intersections between feminism and composition studies have real consequences. For example, the seeming unpredictability of the emotional reactions might be more comfortably ignored or dismissed; it is common for emotional displays to seem threatening in public discourse, especially when informed by gender categorizations (Hariman 5).⁸⁴ Even if an instructor is uncomfortable with acknowledging the emotional dimensions of that classroom, there

⁸² Teachers can also be motivated by fears (as graduate teaching assistants, adjuncts and instructors who are trying to achieve tenure), whether caused by external pressure or reaction to classroom dynamics.

⁸³ Whether or not instructors disclose their belief systems with the class, the emotional aspect is always a factor. One student might fear that a professor who expresses a belief might penalize those who disagree with that belief, or reward those that agree with that belief. If an instructor chooses not to express their beliefs, other students may feel uncomfortable with a teacher who appears unwilling to fully participate or might feel silenced in fear of saying the wrong thing by accident (Costello 168).

⁸⁴ Informed by these pedagogies, both students and teachers can be ill equipped to deal with emotional displays of resistance.

are emotional consequences when people are asked to encounter new world-views or rethink the way they see the world in the first place.⁸⁵

We can see resistance manifest itself in emotional expression, but also in the shifting epistemological stances available in the composition classroom and the larger cultural context. For example, we often see pedagogical considerations of resistance through different cognitive processes, such as in the challenge of process writing to current traditional models of education, or in the social constructionist resistance to the process pedagogy emphasis on individualism (Berlin 688). One apparent example of how resistance functions as a cognitive process is in the way in which critical pedagogy uses resistance as a liberatory tool. According to Charles Paine, the critical pedagogical model allows students to resist the subject position imposed upon them and students learn to develop their own way at looking at and making sense of the world (184). The social constructionist influence on composition studies makes possible the teacher's role of helping students see how their own identities are socially constructed and imposed upon them. In this pedagogy, instructors have the goal of showing students that their "essential sense of self" has no foundation and that identity isn't a product of their own agency, but instead a function of their social contexts.⁸⁶ This cultural studies approach asks students to question every part of their identity and what role identity has in the larger social

⁸⁵ The psychological concept that denotes this type of negative reaction to differing worldviews is called "reactance" (Brehm 90).

⁸⁶ Another question is whether or not the performance of neutrality must be adopted for a successful student/teacher interaction, particularly in a classroom informed by feminism. One answer might be to choose pedagogical practices that avoid any student resistance, which may or may not be possible; but another way is to see possible pedagogical value in that resistance.

matrix (185). An important consideration is whether or not an instructor can mediate resistance when she introduces gender as a topic in the classroom. If students resist the content, rather than specific teaching methods, one question is how to manage student resistance. In addition to the emotional dimension, resistance begets more resistance to these cognitive shifts. In the cultural studies view, having students listen receptively, without a defensive reaction of resistance, is an important factor in a successful learning environment. However, it isn't uncommon for students to resist because of their own, often differing, cultural contexts, which can elicit certain emotional reactions, and challenge their own ways of making sense of the world.⁸⁷ To achieve this understanding, of how resistance arises in both the composition classroom and our larger culture, means recognizing the need to script/plan critical moves that acknowledge how resistance can mask feelings of helplessness or lack of clarity about one's own beliefs. We need to understand what situational/social factors shape composition courses and how these factors influence the clinging/shaping of certain identities for all involved.

Resistance that results from the intersection between feminism and composition studies can be addressed in light of the various forms of resistance already present in the discipline and practice of composition studies. According to Flynn, there is a rich tradition in the humanist approach, an important historical force in academia, to resist intolerable and unjust conditions (11). This resistance provides an important foundation

⁸⁷ It is important to note that higher education can have a liberalizing effect; for example, students may have had conservative viewpoints, but through indoctrination (or trying to assimilate), they start to espouse more liberal perspectives over time.

for many compositionists to “do” resistance pedagogically, politically and personally, whether as a way to resist sexism, racism or economic injustices. One of the goals of the composition classroom, according to this tradition of resistance, is to teach critical thinking, rather than *what* to think. In fact, critical pedagogy frames resistance as important in developing what Shor calls the “critical habit of mind,” such as in resisting cultural norms or social conformity (62). This view of resistance and its relationship to critical thinking assumes that students *can* change how they think and perhaps can have an effect on the culture they live in. Cultural studies pedagogy tends to reinforce this belief in social change, asking students to move from being victims of circumstance to being agents of change through resistance and critical thinking. However, the tradition of linking resistance to critical thinking is challenged when resistance is viewed as a barrier to learning, especially when it comes to having students adapt to the culture of the university (Bartholome 140). At the same time students are asked to resist dominant forms of ideology in order to be initiated into academic discourse, they are also asked to develop a writerly identity appropriate to context of the college environment (Love 90). Not only are students asked to question everything and deconstruct all identities, they are simultaneously asked to function within the culture of the university by accepting certain, often unfamiliar, assumptions about human nature, language practices, and moral actions. As a result, because the university is the product of particular social and political realities, students must learn to navigate this new terrain, with ideologies and beliefs that they may have never encountered before and must adapt to. The instruction to challenge previous

notions of one's identity in order to adapt to the discourse of the community can be disorienting and perhaps this is another factor in the emergence of a student's resistance.⁸⁸ Thus, it isn't uncommon for the expectations of instructors and students to be at odds. Similarly, the call to think critically in the context of the discourse of the university can be at odds with students' deeply held beliefs or sense of identity (Kopelson 119). However, the academy itself isn't often asked to bend; students are often asked to make some sort of change in their own perspectives. If students are asked to make this shift, because they haven't had the opportunity to learn how to participate in academic discourse, it shouldn't be surprising that some might be resistant. This resistance is further amplified in the shift between pedagogies they are more familiar with to those more emancipatory in nature. While resistance might be overt and tangible, it can also take the form of tacit acceptance or apathy. Students might seem willing to be initiated into the university, and uncritically comply with the ideology or belief system presented in the classroom, and even replicate it in their own writing, due to the power of the "pedagogy's master narrative" over students rather than true transformation (Paine 189).

Performance is important in understanding student resistance (and the backlash against feminism). If students, consciously or unconsciously, try to meet these expectations via appearance, rather than sincere transformation, Karen Kopelson claims instructors might not be aware that resistance even functions in the classroom (220).

⁸⁸ One common refrain from such students might be "Tell me what to do," because they may want to know what writing identity they should perform in order to be accepted into the academy (Treglia 127). In response, some instructors might feel frustrated, as if they are being asked to give these students a shortcut to such an identity.

Social epistemic and expressivist pedagogies ask students to change, evolve or develop in certain ways, whether politically or personally. Current-traditional approaches, which students might be more familiar with from prior educational experiences, only ask for students to develop certain skills and don't ask students to undergo radical transformation (Crowley 146-147). In terms of composition theories that encourage such transformation, resistance can occur when students don't learn how to argue or think critically, but instead learn how to deliver a convincing performance of transformation.⁸⁹ This issue of resistance is further complicated because some compositionists have turned to the feminist essentialism of gender roles as a way to reframe how they manage and understand resistance. In particular, these composition instructors may take on a mothering or nurturing (i.e. traditionally nurturing) role in order to mediate different forms of resistance (Rhodes 16). If a composition instructor, especially a woman instructor, doesn't exhibit these feminine qualities, there can be even more intense forms of resistance as a result of culturally accepted notions of female authority and the backlash against non-feminine displays of power (i.e. "the Bitch factor") (Greenbaum 51). In this context, resistance doesn't only depend on the intent, the pedagogy or the aims of a particular feminist classroom; just being female and showing up leads to resistance. However, when considerations of gender are made explicit, instructors can, unintentionally and unwittingly, instigate angry resistance, such as one student's reaction:

⁸⁹ The question of performance, as Kopelson points out, is crucial in understanding how resistance can be addressed (119).

"I hate discussing all that gender shit" (83). According to Lori Jacobs, because of a larger cultural resistance or backlash towards issues of gender, there is "a disassociation of our teaching practices from feminism and the disassociation of young women and girls from the F-word" (html). The specific nature of this resistance to feminism has even more complicated cultural, emotional and cognitive dimensions.⁹⁰ In terms of the cultural context, it is important to note that, as feminism was losing momentum in the cultural mainstream, it had increasing influence in the academy. In fact, there was a growing sentiment that feminism should be an academic, rather than political, practice (Siegel 54). This disconnect became apparent as more and more women who self-identified as liberated did not feel comfortable being called feminists (55). For example, in 1992, a Time/CNN poll reported that over 82 percent of women thought feminism made life better, although only 33 percent self-identified as feminist. These women attributed problems in their life to personal limitations, rather than to problems that they saw to be the result of external oppression. Just as with more general forms of student resistance, Deborah Siegal points out that "recent decades have seen the decline of liberalism and a decline in social commitment to collective, progressive change," which has served an important function in the backlash against feminism (57). She also argues that, due to this cultural shift, it is not surprising that students and younger women in general "lack an awareness that many of their conflicts are shared" because they have grown up believing

⁹⁰ So far, I have gone in great depth about the function of general resistance without connecting it specifically to the relationship of feminism and composition studies because understanding the backlash to feminism within the classroom and general culture must be teased out from the ever-present function of resistance in pedagogical contexts.

“girls can do anything boys can” (Siegal 6).⁹¹ Although these women won’t deny that “equality is a balance between the male and the female with the intention of liberating the individual,” they challenge the role collective action has in achieving this balance (Baumgardner 36).⁹² Bombarded with complex media representations of women who find personal happiness in their own lives through their own actions without engaging in political action that might be subversive, students are primed to deny the efficacy of feminism.⁹³ They may also feel personally threatened, as in the fear that the value of family or marriage has to be rejected in favor of equality or liberation (Tasker 62).⁹⁴ The negative impression of feminism means students want tangible tools for their own personal happiness without considering theoretical implications of collective social

⁹¹ One manifestation of this individualism is in associating sexuality with power, as seen in the writings of Kate Roiphe, Andrea Dworkin and Rene Denfeld. While the second-wave of feminism advocated sexual freedom, collective action was crucial to this achievement; in contrast, the “postfeminist” links power to individual expressions of sexuality. We can also see the challenge to the collectivist principles of feminism in the emergence of a “new breed” of the conservative woman, such as Sarah Palin, Michelle Bachmann, Ann Coulter, and Laura Ingraham, among others. These figures are willing to embrace power, as long as it doesn’t disrupt patriarchal values, such as the challenge posed to male dominance through female sexuality, especially outside of marriage.

⁹² One way we can see this challenge is in how the “feminist badass” emerged in popular culture in the 1990s, such as “Buffy the Vampire Slayer” and “Tank Girl” and still functions today, as in “The Hunger Games,” and “The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo” (Siegal 124). Through a mixture of sexual bravado and a willingness to use violence, these female representations are able to succeed through their own individual actions; in fact, there is very little female solidarity in these examples which contributes to their own success.

⁹³ Furthermore, current economic conditions intensify student resistance to feminism; with so many people just trying to make ends meet, functioning with less and working more, and perhaps struggling with unemployment, certain freedoms and efforts for equality can seem like luxuries rather than basic rights to fight for. This anxiety also translates into the classroom, where students feel more pressure to attain an education (and perhaps even stay in school longer) without the hope of being able to compete in a struggling economy.

⁹⁴ Further, feminist activism has had setbacks, such as the failure of the Equal Rights Amendment and the erosion of the reproductive rights, and isn’t the same political force as during the second-wave; older feminists find these failures or setbacks as evidence that feminism isn’t dead, while others use them as examples of feminism’s impotence.

actions. These women “emerge from their academic experience, benignly complacent, content to find that elusive but much touted ‘good job’...” rather than trying to transform the culture they live in (Greenbaum xvi). This negative view of feminism also provides a fertile ground for resistance in the classroom.

The issue of resistance is complicated because, through an emancipatory stance, feminists and compositionists claim their knowledge as legitimized and morally superior to that knowledge of those influenced by the dominant patriarchal ideology. Rather than seeing how both knowledges represent historicized and ideologically charged perspectives that presuppose superiority over another, the feminist and compositionist perspective can reduce resistance to the limits of those who resist their emancipatory efforts. Further, non-feminists do not see gender in the same essentialized way. The feminine isn't seen as superior to the masculine and the masculine continues to be valued over the feminine. Feminists see this resistance as evidence of a lack of awareness, or an inability to escape the influence of anti-feminism. Both the essentialist and emancipatory foundations of feminism and composition studies assumes “you're either with us or against us.” This assumption prevents any recognition of ambivalence, confusion or different world-views. However, students who resist aren't just reproducing the pathological episteme of the larger cultural context; they are also engaging in similarly valid means of critique. Compositionists and feminists who attempt to help students “see the light” in regards to their own oppression only substitute their "own reifications for those of the dominant culture" (Lather 75).

If critical thinking and understanding the role of language practices are pedagogical goals, the question is how to move past the emphasis on the liberation and transformation of the students. Feminism itself cannot do this when it necessarily relies on an emancipatory and essentialist foundation. Additionally, composition studies is informed by social and expressivist pedagogies that are deeply emancipatory by nature and that emphasize essentialist categorizations. There have been moves in composition that avoid essentialism and emancipation and, without this mediation, the essentialist and emancipatory features of composition studies might result in a pedagogical backlash, perhaps even giving an exigence for returning to a current-traditional based teaching philosophy or practice.⁹⁵ In other words, if “ideological” pedagogies cause seemingly insurmountable tensions in the classroom by creating complications in assessment or testing practices that are increasingly being pushed in higher education, then “less dangerous” forms of pedagogies will seem more attractive, even if they promote modernist or patriarchal values. In fact, these institutional demands may even blind educators to the way in which current-traditional methods create oppressive conditions that were challenged by the epistemological and political shifts provided by the social

⁹⁵ From my experiences teaching at community colleges, I saw this real fear in the English department that current traditional methods would be reintroduced by faculty members who are resistant to newer pedagogical methods. Part of this is due to the fact that community colleges tend to have institutional demands that rely on easily codifiable teaching practices. However, it is also because instructors who have traditionally worked at the community college are not trained specifically in rhetoric and composition studies (particularly at the doctoral level) and so their training is usually current-traditional in nature, even if they are ideologically informed by feminism.

epistemic movement.⁹⁶ To abandon this progress and return to a current traditional paradigm would mean that real advances in composition theory would be lost, such as the emphasis on audience/context, genre/rhetorical situation, and intent/exigence. Further, the recognition of how important invention is to the composing process (i.e. how we generate ideas) could be lost in a return to current traditionalism.

The essentialist and emancipatory commonalities of feminism and composition studies raise two important questions: Is it possible to maintain the epistemological and/or pedagogical progress of composition studies without relying on emancipatory/essentialist foundations? Or, would the goals of composition studies, or what composition studies looks like, be entirely different if we were to persist with this abandonment? In the next chapter, I try to answer these questions, by not only relying on moves that are already trying to separate composition studies from essentialist and emancipatory foundations, but also by showing ways postfeminism is uniquely poised to re-orient composition studies from essentialist and emancipatory tendencies it has in common with second-wave feminism.

⁹⁶ One answer to this dilemma of replacing ideologically driven pedagogies with ones that subvert these advances is to re-introduce the rhetorical tradition of the Ancient Greeks and Romans. This reintroduction does not in itself deny emancipatory goals. See Crowley and/or Berlin in their discussion of the institutional limitations posed by current traditional rhetoric and/or pedagogies.

Chapter 3

Understanding Postfeminism

In the last chapter, I examined how transformative and liberatory pedagogical frameworks in composition studies are derived from expressivist and social epistemic theories and practices of writing, and how these frameworks mirror the essentialist and emancipatory traditions of second-wave feminism. I also examined how these parallel frameworks and traditions contribute to the phenomena of resistance in both the composition classroom and in the larger culture. Specifically, I looked at how this resistance reflects prior belief systems, ways of communicating, and social dynamics, including reactions to an essentialist gender categorization and valuations that are different, conflicting or unfamiliar. In this chapter, I argue that understanding postfeminism can help us mediate our student's resistance to the essentialist and emancipatory foundations of composition studies. It is important to delimit what I mean by postfeminism, because it doesn't have a stable or universal meaning. For Ann Cacoullos, postfeminism is a form of anti-feminism which presumes patriarchy is dead and/or feminism is "no longer moving, no longer valid and no longer relevant."⁹⁷ In contrast, Stephanie Genz argues postfeminism "is both retro- and neo- in its outlook and hence irrevocably post-," and thus cannot be reduced to anti-feminism (8). For our purposes, we must recognize the innate contradictions within postfeminism and, rather

⁹⁷Third-wave feminists are especially critical of postfeminism, characterizing it as undermining second-wave feminism (Genz 156). They want to extend second-wave feminism and its relevancy to current women (Tasker 126). Some use postfeminism and third-wave interchangeably (for examples, see Genz, Gill, Piepmeier, among others).

than attempting an inclusive definition, we must try to identify the most important features that influence students in the composition classroom. In some ways, this definition can lead to a certain amount of simplification and over-generalization about what postfeminism *is* or *does*, but I believe this categorization doesn't prevent an adequate overview of postfeminism for the specific purposes of my argument. In my examination, postfeminism can be defined in terms of its relationship to feminism in myriad ways. For example, postfeminism can be a rejection, because feminism is seen to be no longer necessary and/or harmful to women and their relationships with others, and a mischaracterization, because the goals and accomplishments of feminism are not understood. In this chapter, I argue that these relationships manifest themselves in backlash, free-market, and postmodern strands of postfeminism. Each of these strands has different ways to interrupt or complicate the essentialist and emancipatory foundations of feminism and composition studies, addressing ethical and practical dimensions of gender roles that feminism cannot, and introducing alternatives to feminism's ideas about power dynamics between men and women.

Three overlapping and contradictory strands of postfeminism are the legacy of second-wave feminism's critique of larger oppressive forces. The backlash strand emphasizes traditional gender roles. The free-market strand believes consumerism and individualism liberate women. The postmodern strand challenges essential gender roles and the goal of liberation. These various strands of postfeminism reflect the reality of the current composition classroom and how being female today involves an "impure choice"

of being part of the dominant culture and/or critiquing it (Genz 41). According to Sonja Foss, the backlash strand addresses “what feminism is - or has been” (37).⁹⁸ Ann Braithwhite argues that, because postfeminism generally “refers both chronologically and semantically to that which comes 'after' feminism,” we can see “a critical reaction to (an earlier) feminism” in the backlash strand (24). For both,⁹⁹ backlash is characterized as a form of “anti-feminism”; however, this strand involves a much more complex reaction to feminism. The backlash strand presents a limited sense of what feminism entails and sees feminism as a form of brainwashing or “groupthink.” According to Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, the backlash strand is a conservative reaction to “a certain kind of (liberal) feminist perspective” and promotes the perception of feminists as “harsh, punitive and inauthentic” (205). These reactions to feminism are visible both in and outside the academia and reflect a larger resistance internalized by many people in the academy and the larger culture. Many students are exposed to this strand of postfeminism through the critical messages in our larger culture. They aren’t clear about what the principles of feminism are and they see feminism as a rigid orthodoxy that permits no dissent. Feminism can conflict with their prior beliefs and experiences.¹⁰⁰ According to Siegal, younger women are increasingly resistant to using the “f-word” because of general disdain for labels or -isms and because of negative stereotypes about

⁹⁸ Not only has this backlash become used interchangeably with postfeminism, it relies on the assumption that there is a standard narrative or cohesive view of feminism to rebel against (Braithwhite 19).

⁹⁹ See “The Myth of Post Feminism” (Hall); “A Critique of Postfeminism” (Kulcsár) and *Interrogating Postfeminism* (Tasker & Negra), among others.

¹⁰⁰ Students react negatively to a sense of feminism’s over-bearing presence when instructors introduce feminism within the classroom based on their belief that they are liberated.

what a feminist is. While these students oppose the “f-word,” they still believe in women’s equality (12). Other women do not like the influence of feminism on the larger culture.¹⁰¹ There is also the increasing concern that, while women today may have “everything that feminism demanded for, being able to ‘have it all’...only succeeded in making them more miserable than ever” (22). On the other hand, women reject second-wave feminism at the same they take advantage of the advances made possible by it.

This cognitive dissonance is visible in postfeminism’s reaction to feminism’s unsettling of traditional gender roles. There has been a re-emergence of the value of traditional roles as a way to remedy some of the problems women are seen to have as a result of feminism.¹⁰² According to Anne Braithwhite, it is the postfeminist belief that in order to “achieve feminist change” women must stop being traditionally feminine (23). Tasker and Negra see a backlash in younger women to feminists who “fail to engage women who embrace femininity” (284). These women believe that when traditional gender roles are subverted, so is male power, which can be threatening to men and women (Sommers 358). Because these women want to avoid tensions with men, want to be desired by men, and desire masculine men, they struggle to “negotiate the scripts of femininity” (Ussher 355).¹⁰³ At the same time postfeminism encourages women to be feminine, women exhibit traditionally masculine characteristics, such as working outside

¹⁰¹ Whether it is an impression manufactured by consumer culture and/or the result of real cultural change.

¹⁰² This traditionalism also promotes the idea of home as a sanctuary from the stress from the working lives, stress made possible by feminism.

¹⁰³ One example of this is when Lady Gaga said in an interview on YouTube, “I’m not a feminist. I love men. I hail men” (StilettoREVOLT).

the home. This conflict in gender roles complicates how women and men behave in private and public spheres of life. Patricia Misciagno argues that, prior to the second-wave of feminism, women were expected to function mainly in the private sphere and women who participated in the public sphere were often considered an aberration or the product of unusual and/or unfortunate circumstances (40). In other words, the private sphere was considered to be a traditionally feminine space. The feminist movement made it more acceptable for women to be in the public sphere, such as when they are in the workplace. Consequently, how gender roles affect this public domain is an ongoing consideration for both women and men. Prior to feminism, the private sphere was the space in which women exhibited traditional feminine qualities of care-giving in order to support men's participation in the public sphere. Men were expected to function primarily in the public sphere, displaying their masculinity through their ability to earn money in order to support their wives and family (Buhle 310). As more and more women entered into the work-place, this symbiotic relationship was interrupted, and feminism opened up a way to see how the private and public divide was structured by patriarchal values and practices (Pateman 132). However, much of the emphasis in this resistance to patriarchal social structure was on how women should be able to participate in the political sphere, whether through political involvement or financial independence, rather than valuing the private sphere. In fact, a prominent theme of second-wave feminism is how women's only participating in the private sphere was, in itself, not fulfilling emotionally and led to depression and low-self esteem, while those who

functioned exclusively in the public sphere we seen by feminists as experiencing fulfillment and happiness.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, because women's capacity to bear children is often used a patriarchal reason to justify why women are naturally inclined to be care-givers within the private sphere, one feminist argument is that the private sphere itself is a source of subjugation of women.¹⁰⁵

In the wake of this feminist argument about the public and private spheres, there has been a backlash to the valuing of the public over the private, as seen in a 2012 *New York Times* poll in which 48% of women felt they "had to sacrifice too much for their gains [because] children and family life end up as the primary casualties" (Cowen html). We can also see this backlash to feminism in the growing number of mothers¹⁰⁶ who are choosing to stay at home rather than work, partly because the cost of child-care can make working outside of the home unprofitable, and also because some women¹⁰⁷ want to have a more traditionally gendered role as non-working participatory mothers (Covert html).¹⁰⁸ These women are generally more highly educated than homemakers of earlier generations, which allows them a choice to opt out of well-paying jobs or go in and out of

¹⁰⁴ See Friedan, Steinem, and Robin Morgan for examples of this belief.

¹⁰⁵ Second-wave feminist Shulamith Firestone argued that in order for women to be truly equal, there must be a severing of the biological connection of women and child-bearing; instead, she advocated for "the reproduction of the species by one sex for the benefit of both would be replaced by (at least the option of) artificial reproduction: children would born to both sexes equally, or independently of either" (11).

¹⁰⁶ The latest census showed, in the last decade, a large employment drop-off for women between 20-24 because of their decision to be stay-at-home mothers (Otto 19).

¹⁰⁷ Especially the increasing number of women who have struggled to have children because of infertility.

¹⁰⁸ However, in terms of mothering, alongside this new traditionalism, are more complications of gender roles made possible by feminism, such as the growing number of stay-at-home dads and single mothers who must work.

the workplace.¹⁰⁹ They represent a new traditionalism, or the “new domesticity movement,” in which a growing number of women are returning to the “lost arts” of homemaking and demonstrate a “new found mania for old-fashioned domestic work” (Matchar 23). The emergence of new traditionalism counters the feminist argument that the role of the housewife leads to “toil and confinement” by presenting women working outside the home as the root cause of stress and unhappiness (Genz 53). The sad, passive housewife is reframed as an independent, creative “domestic goddess,” who avoids the tensions between the public and private spheres. On the one hand, these women side-step the complications of being “pulled in two ways”; on the other hand, these women do nothing to dismantle the patriarchal social structure that feminists have argued creates this tension in the first place. Women who do choose to stay home are subject to the criticism that they are actually undermining the feminist goal of women having financial independence and a fulfilling purpose outside of their domestic obligations (Bennetts 42). Many women believe feminism has failed women because it makes life more difficult for them. Because of unilaterally freeing women from the servitude of domestic life through the accessibility of child-care and full-time work, many women have a “double load” in having to do more household and care-taking duties *in addition* to work than their male partners (106).¹¹⁰ In the classic essay “I want a Wife,” published in *Ms. Magazine* in

¹⁰⁹ Other complications in gender roles in terms of parenting include the growing number of gay and lesbian parents.

¹¹⁰ Many women who are of lower economic status aren’t able to make the choice between the two extremes, straddling the demands of pre-feminist expectations of care-taking responsibilities and also the need to work due to their socio-economic circumstances.

1971, Judy Brady satirically expressed her own desire to have a wife to take on all the “wifely duties,” in order for her to have the fulfilling life that a man seemed to have. However, according to postfeminism, second-wave feminist activism has not always provided “liberated women” with the same support men have traditionally had. Despite this activism, we see women and men who choose to take on these duties and who see value in the “domestic” life, including home-making and child-rearing; in these cases, the masculine work-oriented path is not considered more worthy or fulfilling than traditional “women’s work.” In fact, there is a rise in stay-at-home dads or caregiver fathers who work part-time, men who share household and child-rearing duties equally with their female partner or single, divorced, widowed or gay men who participate in care-giving (Smith 10).

Women’s participation in the public sphere is suspect because of postfeminism. New traditionalist women believe the private sphere should be women’s primary source of happiness and they believe that, because of feminism, femininity must be rejected in order to succeed in the public sphere. This postfeminist belief about gender roles is evident in “the Iron Lady effect,” a term first used to describe Margaret Thatcher, a leader who seemed to downplay her femininity in order to be perceived as powerful. There is backlash to this effect, such as in the emergence of a new wave of “conservative women,” e.g. Sarah Palin¹¹¹, who opened up a way to avoid “many of the female

¹¹¹ While, the “feminizing” of the female politician, in contrast to the “Iron Lady effect,” allows women to appear nurturing and cooperative in a socially acceptable way, there is still a struggle for women to appear sufficiently competent in light of ongoing gender stereotypes.

dichotomies--mother/politician, attractive/successful, passive/go-getting--by combining them all at once” and elevated femininity itself as a political tool (Denton 31).¹¹² These conservative women do not believe it is as simple as acting feminine in order to be attractive to men and acting masculine in order to succeed professionally. In resisting the “Iron Lady effect,” some women may redefine success in a less dichotomous fashion, while other women feel the only way to resist an abandonment of femininity in order to succeed is to avoid situations coded as masculine.¹¹³ The domestic goddess role provides a reprieve from this effect, and prevents various complications that arise from women having to take on masculine characteristics, such as becoming undesirable to men or feeling less attractive as a woman. However, the backlash against the “Iron Lady effect” isn’t limited to the expression of gender roles by women--men themselves feel a double-bind, expected to appear sensitive and “enlightened” but also encouraged to behave in a manly fashion, or, as Lena Dunham’s character expresses in the HBO series “Girls,” to avoid being a “man with a vagina.”¹¹⁴ The feminist desire to elevate femininity because masculinity is associated with oppression is challenged by a new postfeminist double-bind, in which men are expected “to be potent as long as they aren’t assholes” (Kimmel 279). While women may want men to be men, and men may want women to be women,

¹¹² We saw this double-bind in particular with Palin, who was chosen because she was sufficiently feminine, and yet also didn’t appear sufficiently competent.

¹¹³ For example, while women do not feel as much pressure to “play dumb” in order to be perceived as attractive, it isn’t uncommon to see young women change their behavior in a way to emphasize certain gender traits in order to receive external approval (Mulqueen 87).

¹¹⁴ The complications of male gender expression in the postfeminist era aren’t limited to heterosexual men; gay men also feel pressure to appear masculine or feminine depending on certain expectations and dynamics.

and both want to be successful at work and successful in personal relationships, the current complications of gender roles present challenges. In particular, the perception of gender roles in our postfeminist era challenges the essentialist notions of femininity and masculinity in both pre-feminism and feminism.¹¹⁵ Because postfeminism opens up the possibility of viewing work in the private sphere as just as fulfilling, if not more, as work in the public sphere, most people don't want an either/or life, in which they sacrifice domestic life or work life for another; they want a "life between the extremes" of pre-feminist and feminist gender roles.¹¹⁶ However, this rejection of the private/public split seen in the postfeminist context, unlike with feminism, does not challenge the oppressive social conditions that maintain the division. Instead, women's desire to appear feminine and yet also function successfully in both the public and private spheres is rooted in a desire for individualized happiness and balance. Thus, while second-wave feminism introduced a political dimension to the private lives of women, the backlash from of postfeminism tends to focus on the choices women make in their own personal experiences.

The conflict between private and public spheres is complicated by the fact that women's bodies have both personal and public dimensions. Feminism politicized women's private lives through their sexuality, reproductive choices, and other issues

¹¹⁵ However, because of the backlash to feminism, those growing up in the "postfeminist era" may not be aware that these complications were always challenges for women, and that there was no single answer to the questions of gender roles in the feminist narrative.

¹¹⁶ For example, the differing expectations of whether to stay at home or work as a mother has led to "the mommy wars," in which women are pitted against each other because of their choices or due to circumstances (Douglas 4).

having to do with self-regulation, such as social or state control over their bodies. Within postfeminism, there is also a focus on the body, but specifically in terms of “personal responsibility, empowerment, and choice” (McRobbie 47). It is important to note that feminism has made many of these choices about the body possible, such as whether or not to use birth control or carry a baby to term. As a result, women have more sexual agency than ever before. According to Genz, feminism showed how sexual interactions could be manifestations of patriarchal oppression, such as in cases of rape, prostitution and pornography (91). These moral limits have been challenged by postfeminism, as seen as in the backlash against the concept of date-rape, the romanticizing of the lives of sex-workers, and the acceptability of pornography by both women and men. This emphasis on sexual power is a form of backlash to feminism that occurs because postfeminism suggests that the inequalities we see today aren’t the result of continued oppression, but because “women plead for kinder treatment on the basis of victim status, rather than trying to change where the system works unfairly” (Paglia 179). The postfeminist idea of “power feminism” challenges the idea of women as victims and opens up sexual freedom as a path to independence (180).¹¹⁷ The shift, from the perception of feminism as promoting victim-hood to the idea that personal choices can override or circumvent this powerless position, is rooted in the postfeminist belief that, “women are not straightforwardly objectified but are presented as active, desiring

¹¹⁷ For example, women might find power by making their own porn, being in porn, or watching porn, for their own pleasure (Bright 17). The backlash is further fueled by the anti-sex reputation of some feminists who view that pornography necessarily objectifies women through the “male gaze” (Dworkin 88).

subjects who choose to present themselves in a seemingly objectified manner because it suits their liberated interests to do so” (Gill 32). The new understanding of power can, in particular, be seen in the concern within the postfeminist context of self-regulation of one’s own body as the ultimate responsibility and moral aim for any woman, rather than the feminist emphasis on dismantling the social conditions that shape the mapping of the body in the first place. The control of one’s body has always been a primary concern of feminism because of both the differing material conditions of men and women in terms of reproductive potentiality and the patriarchal and oppressive power dynamics associated with these material conditions. The use of technology has been a means to expand the material potential; in the wake of feminism, self-regulation of the body is a more complicated issue because of the advances in technology since the advent of the birth control pill in the 1960s.¹¹⁸ Prior to the birth control pill and the political allowance of abortion that occurred during second-wave feminism, mothering was not always a choice for women. Recognizing that the limitations posed by the material conditions exist independently of patriarchal power dynamics has fueled this backlash and continues to do so because of new options in the self-regulation of women. We can see complicated notions of freedom in how younger women, while being offered more choices, are seeing the consequences of these choices in ways not even possibly envisioned within the feminist context. In terms of these issues of self-regulation, women's choices regarding

¹¹⁸ We can see the evolution of self-regulation in terms of the ever-expanding reproductive choices women (especially higher socio-economic class of women) have in the postfeminist era. In addition to the increased access to birth control pill and safe pregnancy terminations, emerging technologies such as ART and IVF, opened up important paths for freedom through self-regulation.

their bodies are not explicitly tied to the political dimensions of women's lives. For many of these women, their reproductive options are more complicated than when birth control pills and abortion were first made available. The reality is that there are many uncharted grey areas in the postfeminist context.

According to McRobbie, we can see complications of these choices in the media representations and messages our students are bombarded with in non-academic contexts, as seen in the presentations of femininity and self-regulation of the body produced in many different mediums such as movies, television shows and women's magazines (79). Through such genres as "chick lit," we can see "extraordinary contradictoriness" played out within popular culture, which reinforces side-steps and conflicts with feminist principles.¹¹⁹ In understanding this literary form, and other consumer culture representations of women, we can see how postfeminism today is not just what comes after feminism, but is about the conceptual shift, "from earlier debates largely focused around equality issues to the current focus on multiplicity, plurality, and difference" (Brooks 4). This shift has inspired a backlash to certain consequences of feminism and has amplified ongoing pre-feminist and anti-feminist assumptions about femininity and sexuality. For example, in the genre of chick lit, we can see conflicting desires, such as wanting to be economically self-sufficient and also maintain certain traditional gender roles, as in the common theme of "the fear of being alone and never finding a mate" and

¹¹⁹ The genre of chick lit is seen as particularly postfeminist because it provides a commentary "on feminism's gains and deficiencies" (Harzewski 41).

the belief that, “women are the victims of their own choices” (Gagne 6). Thus, the postfeminist characters are faced with the dilemma of whether traditional--and often times unequal--romantic relationships are possible while maintaining a strong personal identity and independent career focus. In turn, “there is the fear of loneliness, the stigma of remaining single, and the risks and uncertainties of not finding the right partner to be a father to children as well as a husband” (McRobbie 261).¹²⁰ We can also see in this genre the effects of the new perspective on the self-regulation of the body through the complicated representation of women’s sexuality. In the chick lit genre “achieving desirability in a heterosexual context is explicitly re-presented as something to be understood as being done for yourself and not in order to please a man” (Gill 14). At the same time, the female characters are socially constrained in their sexual behaviors because of courting rules that reinforce the idea of the man as sexual aggressor. In this postfeminist representation, sexuality is never divorced from the desire to be sexually available, responsive and attractive to men. Further, even if women do depart from these courting rules, the normative heterosexual committed relationship (preferably marriage) is often presented as of a higher moral value than being a “singleton,” i.e. a young urban single person as defined by novelist Helen Fielding’s postfeminist character Bridget Jones. Thus, we see how, even when women in the postfeminist context may have a

¹²⁰ The novel *Bridget Jones*, the television series “Ally McBeal,” and the television show and movie franchise “Sex and the City” are prominent examples considered in many discussions of postfeminism. In fact, a 1998 *Time* magazine cover famously cited Ally McBeal is an indicator that feminism is dead.

wide-range of available choices in their gendered and sexual expressions, options for happiness are limited by postfeminist social expectations.

According to McRobbie, postfeminism replaces the focus on the liberation of women with capitalist values, i.e. women's "vexed relationship with feminist ideologies around issues of consumption, as the protagonists of chick lit market themselves as commodities both inside of and outside of their novels" (269). In the free-market strand of postfeminism, women express these choices through consumption. The reliance on personal choice and freedom in a capitalist context has encouraged some critics to claim postfeminism is a product of an oppressive capitalist globalization because the free-market strand views the marketplace as a means to liberation (Eisenstein 40). However, there are new ways of thinking about gender roles made available by opportunities allowed in the management and commodification of the body in our "new economy."¹²¹ Thus, the trope of "choice" used in the genre of chick lit, and reflected more generally in our culture, reveals the postfeminist belief that capitalism creates free agents who are capable of making enlightened choices. For example, we can see this focus of choice in terms of gender roles in "the new sexual contract" (McRobbie 22). Requirements for this "new deal for young women" include abandoning a critique of patriarchy and relinquishing divisive political identities and engaging in a range of practices that are "both progressive but also consummately and reassuringly feminine" (56). While all

¹²¹ By "new economy," I refer to the shift from a labor-focused market to a consumerist culture, and the shift from a goods based economy to a knowledge worker and product focused marketplace (Pupo 43).

previous gender regimes, prior or during feminism, established what women should or should not to do, whether to maintain social order or as a liberatory practice, the new sexual contract operates through a “constant stream of incitements and enticements” and “encourages capacity, success, attainment, enjoyment, entitlement, and social mobility” (57). Thus, the expression of gender and the relationship of men and women are considered a product of the current reality of societal and economic situations, and this consideration establishes the potential for women’s agency and power. The idealized version of a woman who successfully manages this gendered conflict can be seen in media representations of women who are financially independent and sexually assertive, yet don’t give up their femininity or personal relationships. In this postfeminist narrative, women who fail at this balance aren’t seen as victims of patriarchal oppression; their failures are the result of character flaws, a lack of work-ethic, or inexperience. In postfeminism, according to Deidre McCloskey “capitalist bedding needs to be torn off the bed and thrown away” and the free-market “is viewed as one way to attain liberation” (364). One of the criticisms of this free-market strand is that this view of femininity is a product of the “pro-capitalist femininity-focused repertoire” and “plays directly into the hands of corporate consumer culture eager to tap into this market on the basis of young women's rising incomes” (McRobbie 22). The free-market strand of postfeminism is considered a way for women to have power in their consumer choices; i.e. through their power as consumers, they can feel free to buy into femininity, literally and figuratively. In fact, one of the criticisms of postfeminism is that it is a product of late modern

capitalism and a media construct, with the purpose to promote a patriarchal economic and social system.¹²² This criticism of postfeminism actually reflects a paradox inherent in our culture. Advanced capitalism challenges the ideal of social justice at the same time it “defeats the very conservative dreams that it so perversely aroused” (Braidotti 2). According to Genz, not only is “financial success or status an indicator of the status of women” in the free-market postfeminist strand, financial freedom replaces political emancipation in late capitalism (110). The challenge for postfeminism is how to avoid “supporting consumption, capitalism, and corporatism at the expense of the family, marriage, and the environment” (111).¹²³ There still is a tendency for feminists to distrust any reliance on consumer culture representations of femininity. As a consequence of this anti-capitalist argument, feminists have criticized the emergence of complex conservative female role models because they argue that “the emancipatory potential of feminism has been appropriated and commodified and has been used to re-energise the political right” (McRobbie 211). Because left-leaning political foundations have had a close relationship

¹²² These criticisms are present in the various works of McRobbie, Gill, Baumgardner, among others.

¹²³ We can also see the expression of economic power in terms of the body through the choices made available by advances in technology, as in biomedical treatments available for easing menopausal symptoms. One choice for women is to “construct the menopause as medical ‘pathology’ caused by physiological decrement and generally advocate correcting or suppressing symptoms by ‘treatment’ with hormone replacement therapy (HRT)” (Coupland 108). Another choice “recommends that women take personal and active ‘control’ by using ‘natural’ remedies and making lifestyle adjustments” (109). In either option, women are seen to have increased agency, whether the choice to embrace aging or stem the tide of aging with or without medication, and power in controlling the course of their aging process through consumptive practices; these choices are reflected in their economic decisions. In one “uber-politic of the body,” these technologies provide a way to transcend the material limits by providing a “victory lap over the curse of being born female” (Barr 23). Thus, the body is mapped in the context of social, economic and political constructs and reflects competing ideologies present in the postfeminist context.

to feminist activism, these conservative role models are used as evidence of the problematic nature of postfeminism. Politicians like Sarah Palin, Christina O'Donnell, and Michelle Bachman are presented as examples of this “enlarging the small crew of free-market feminists,” who reflect the belief that “equal ‘rules of the game,’ not substantive equality, is the goal” (Sher html). Further, the conservative women’s movement challenges the feminist notion that “patriarchy oppresses women and women can never succeed” because conservative women believe they succeed because they are “strong and empowered” (Schlafly 15). Because of the association conservatism has had with free-market economics, this politic reinforces the postfeminist values of choice and independence through consumerism. It is no coincidence that the emphasis on individual action within media representations of women dovetails with “our capitalist economy’s prescription for success” (Manzano 10). One of the best examples of this portrayal is in the television series *Sex and the City*. In this show, and other examples of the chick lit genre such as *Bridget Jones* by Helen Fielding, we see evidence of independence, but it is punctuated by interruptions of the desire to be “rescued” through romantic attachments, whether from “crooks, con-men, single motherhood or even from themselves” (McRobbie 118). In these representations, women struggle with competing expectations of shifting gender roles despite “being employed, financially independent and initiating sexual relationships” (Gill 6). They do value autonomy and the freedom to make individual choices (major consequences of second-wave feminism); however, their navigation through the instability of gender roles means these women make choices that

would be regarded by many second-wave feminists as problematic, both located in the normative notions of femininity and the desire to be independent. This cognitive dissonance caused by gender roles reflects the complex relationship between feminism and femininity, particularly through the “grammar of individualism” and their economic choices; in the new sexual contract, women’s choices are situated in the context of a late-capitalist society characterized by consumer culture (Gill, Haywood & McLean 205). The free-market characterization of the ideals associated with postfeminism has been critiqued because it posits the contemporary women's movement as “an unwitting co-conspirator in the deadly process of capitalist globalization” (Eisenstein 40). One of the consequences of the free-market strand of postfeminism is that it redefines capitalism as a tool for freedom, rather than a means of oppression.

The postmodern strand of postmodernism provides a different way of looking at feminism than the backlash and free-market strands do. To the postmodern strand of postfeminism, the backlash is just as essentialist as feminism. According to Baliff, the free-market strand struggle between retaining and rejecting certain elements of feminism is flawed because of its similar reliance on emancipatory practices (155). Postmodernism is a strand of postfeminism that explicitly confronts this struggle; it stands in stark contrast to the emancipatory goal of second-wave feminism that “can clearly be traced to the liberal humanism of enlightened modernity” and challenges the essentialist belief in distinct and different biological markers, gender characteristics, and behaviors (Brooks 29). The liberal tradition is based on the values of equality and freedom and has a rich

historical goal of liberating others based on those values; the tradition is also based on the belief that essentialism is the foundation for making choices and the ability to change political realities. Postmodernism destabilizes these values and provides the opportunity to develop new paradigms without relying on traditionally modernist philosophical underpinnings. These paradigms challenge the modernist metanarratives of essentialism and emancipation because they are “grounded in the metaphysical assumptions about the traditions of subjectivity, truth and language” (Baliff 156). In signifying “the specific historical situation of post-industrial societies after the decline of modernist tropes,” postfeminism reveals the complications of modernist liberatory practices (Braidotti 1). Further, postmodernism opens up a way to break through the foundations by challenging both the binary thinking underlying essentialism and the emancipatory colonizing tendencies of Western civilization; in turn, postmodernism raises challenging questions about identity, agency, and political action (Lotz 201). In contrast to postmodernism, the essentialist and emancipatory foundations of second-wave feminism support the idea that all “grand narratives involve a power structure,” which, in the case of feminism, necessarily results in all forms of resistance (Skelton 31). For example, the postmodern strand can mediate this resistance by challenging the essentialist thinking that, according to Pierre Bourdieu, “legitimizes a relationship of domination by embedding [gender] in a biological nature that is itself a naturalized social construction” (21). As a result of socially constructed essentialism, feminists who appeal to these categorizations are able to express their domination through the value they subscribe to these “natural” and

different gender characteristics. The postmodern strand of postfeminism provides an opportunity to challenge the essentialist conceptualizations of these categories and opens up the opportunity to understand how these categorizations don't just reflect inherent or immutable differences, but transform the actual embodiment and increasing polarization of gender that might not otherwise exist (27). Practically speaking, resisting patriarchal dominance is difficult because gender socialization isn't a matter of reason or awareness, but instead, according to Bourdieu, functions on the level of "habitus" or unconscious and embodied behaviors (40). In order to transform this "habitus," there has to be a "radical transformation of the social conditions of production...that [leads] the dominated to take the point of view of the dominant" (42). Rather than transforming the habitus of our students, which can mean asking for a radical transformation that may inspire resistance, the postfeminist strands incorporate the complex categorizations that make up the habitus of our students and are afforded by pre-feminism, feminism and anti-feminism. This re-categorization can reaffirm the unconsciously and deeply held belief systems rooted in dissonant conceptualizations of identity, including the dominance afforded by differing forms of essentialist categorizations, in contrast to a recognition of how the gendered identity is always in flux.

Because the postmodern strand of postfeminism challenges feminism's conceptualization of identity, there are new ideas about how one is born, is made or becomes a woman. These new ideas develop through the challenge of the seemingly immutable core sense of identity that some feminists argue for and by going beyond the

conceptualizations of gender derived from essentialism.¹²⁴ But this isn't as simple as "renaming to create new political realities" because the differences "are deeply held, and can be the fabric of our culture, and aren't just roles performed out of choice" (Bourdieu 103). Students have a deeply rooted sense of identity that they can't easily change. The deeply rooted sense of identity, which may differ from a feminist essentialism, presents a challenge to emancipatory goals of feminism, including dismantling the oppressive forces that have shaped what is seen to be constricting or damaging to our consciousness. Postfeminism opens up new ways of looking at these forces and how they influence the way we see the world through what Mann calls, a "frontier discourse" that can "bring us to the edge of what we know, and encourages us to go beyond" (Mann 208). This postfeminist frontier discourse interrogates the shift from modern to postmodern conceptualizations of identity and agency and the way this shift shapes the possibilities for political and pedagogical actions. In terms of identity, postmodern theorists such as Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida provide an opportunity to oppose essentialist perspectives. These postmodern theorists oppose essentialism by positing social groups (such as women) or structures (including patriarchy) as objects outside our understanding or discourse about them; their views lead to a dismantling of notions of universality or objective truths which, Giroux argues, "assert primacy of social criticism" (34). As Judith Butler points out, instead of the feminist reliance on a stable identity, the

¹²⁴ One example of the political consequence of essentialism is in the exclusion of intersex, transgender and male victims of violence from the "Take Back the Night" campaign at Rutgers University in 2003, which contradicted the essentialist assumption that it is men who are violent and victimize women (Greenwell html).

postmodern strand of postfeminism presents our being and behaviors as fluid and performative in nature (101). Thus, this strand challenges the idea that gender exists as a natural category and represses what Nicholson calls “the differences among women of different classes, races, sexual orientations and ethnic groups” (31). In contrast, “while some women share some common interests and face some common enemies, such commonalities are by no means universal; rather, they are interfaced with differences, even with conflicts” (35). In this framework, according to Ann Brooks, there are significant dangers to “using women as a unitary, absolutist category” and in “making statements about ‘women’ in general, that might only apply to some white, Western, middle-class and heterosexual women” (5). Jarratt claims that this essentialist practice has the consequence of “othering women, which has allowed feminists to argue that women should not only be equal despite their differences, but that this inequality is the result of denying the essential nature of women” (68). Postmodernism challenges this essentialist sexual order of gender roles that occurs because of this othering, and opens up a way to establish moral action without appealing to the foundation of “difference.”

Unlike second-wave feminism, which relies on the principles of truth and equality based on the foundation of essentialism and emancipation, the postmodernist strand of postfeminism focuses on performance and the instability of identity and seeks to understand how discourse functions to challenge, shape or maintain the material realities that keep a sense of a core self. If gender doesn’t belong to the modernist notion of the “real” or have an essential and unchanging biological nature, but instead reflects certain

political and moral consequences of how language is used, linguistic constructs open up new conceptualizations of agency. According to Braidotti, discourse reflects how the body is “far from a biological essence...it is a crossword of intensive forces; it is a surface of inscriptions of social codes” (8). If the matrix of identity is a fluid and socially constructed mode of existence, second-wave feminists’ reinforcement of gender categories as immutably sexed only serves to maintain a rigid binary between feminine and masculine gender roles. In challenging the biological foundation of these gender roles, the way in which gender is performed is particularly important in understanding postfeminism. While this view of performance can challenge or reinforce the dominant ideology, it rejects the idea of a universal category of woman materially situated in the body. In this view, identity isn’t unified and stable, but dialogical, free-floating, unfixed, and always under construction (Benhabib 212). Genz believes that for feminists this view of self can be seen as a threat to subjectivity, the ideal of autonomy, and the concept of agency, because of the political power of identity (111). The postmodern idea of identity as performance can threaten feminism’s role as a political force for change, and can undermine the theoretical articulation of the aspirations of women for emancipation, because a stable notion of the subject’s identity is impossible. In turn, the performance of gender inscribes the categorization of the body and shows how these symbolic categories are limiting. Identity might be stable because we have a “tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions are obscured by the credibility of those productions” (112). If there is no original or “proper” category

of identity, the postfeminist focus isn't on being but becoming; as a result, gender is categorized in terms of certain assumptions created and maintained by one's own culture. This flexibility in how gender is expressed means, according to Genz, "we need to be aware of the multiple ways our language, our narratives, our culture shape our identities" (25).¹²⁵

We can see the postmodern strand of postfeminism in media representations in terms of what Burke calls a "crisis of representations" because of the instability of identity and the conflation of the real and imagined this postfeminist framework provides (15). Postmodernism life in the machine of mass media opens up complicated ways of collapsing the subject and representation of the subject, challenging the scope of this subject's agency and whether this subject can or should be emancipated. One example of these complexities in popular culture can be seen in the prevalence of reality shows on television. On face value, because "reality television...depends on a certain degree of apparent authenticity," and is reliant on narratives of personal transformation, there really is "no reality in reality television" (Salamon 4). Unlike the modernist emphasis on what Guy Debord calls "comprehending of 'objective reality' through direct observation," the postmodern strand of postfeminism reveals how the "modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles... all that once was directly lived has become mere representation" (137). Through this spectacle of reality television, we see a sort of "hyperreality," which provides a "hyperauthenticity," in

¹²⁵ This performance approach serves as a virtual bridge between social constructivism and relativism.

which there is an intersection of lived experience and performance (Wood 295). In addition, through this conflation, we see a complex identification of both backlash and free-market forms of postfeminism in shows which promote traditional forms of gender relationships (such as in “The Bachelor” franchise), the idea of consumer culture as an expression of independence (such as in the “Real Housewives” franchise), and the challenge of balancing economic independence with a desire for family and romantic relationships (such as in “The Kardashians” franchise).” Further, the experience of these re-presentations is participatory through new media, such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook, which allows a sense of intimacy that reinforces the impression of a real experience and heightens these postfeminist identifications. For example, Kim Kardashian and all of the “Real Housewives” tweet often to their “followers” or fans, as if they were friends in real life so that, “by following celebrities, the public can know where they are, when their favorite shows will be airing, and even when the celebrity’s child is sick” (O’Shaughnessy 208). The intensity of their messages is hyper-realized and reinforces the other postfeminist media representations students are exposed to. In terms of this popular culture example of reality television, we can see the intersection of the backlash and free-market strands with the postmodernist form of postfeminism. Through the postmodern concept of “productive surveillance” that is “designed to stimulate consumption...habits and styles” of the audience are influenced (Andrejevic 234). Further, by reflecting desire already inherent in the audience, i.e. pre-feminist ideals of gender and its conflict with feminist ethos, the shows are particularly seductive and

influential in shaping the audience's consumptive desires through "the promise of interactivity and participation" with such new media practices as Twitter (235).

Through such hyper-realized representations of gender performance, we can see multiple ways in which gender is interrogated, disrupted and shifted in contrast to that of second-wave feminism. These multiple ways of understanding gender are also visible in the various backlash and free-market strands and reflect the commonalities and intersections of the different forms of postfeminism. In the free-market postfeminist strand, the trope of choice is more important than changing material conditions; by not relying and focusing on emancipation from these conditions, performance of gender emphasizes how masculine and feminine gender roles are flexible, multiple, contextually-shaped, and overlapping. In addition to this instability, the backlash strand of postfeminism reveals how it is difficult to transcend our social categories. The three strands of postfeminism show how assumptions about femininity can limit a commitment to social change and, if identity isn't stable, the resistance we see might be evidence of the ways our gendered performance, "infolds volitions and cognitions that are nothing if not situated" (Massumi 30). Recognizing this situatedness of gender allows us to see how we "make meaning out of personal and collective experiences," and shows how performance of gender doesn't have to rely on emancipatory or essentialist foundations. The media is instrumental in the construction of female subjectivities and reinforces backlash and free-market strands of postfeminism. In addition, the postmodern strand provides a "revolutionary possibility" that not only goes beyond the idea of a self defined

by gender, class and race, but also raises the question of whether the self can or should be liberated from those constraints (Khan html). Postmodernism also raises the question of whether postfeminism precludes gender equality, reinforces oppressive conditions or re-inscribes problematic cultural values. In order to answer questions about gender construction that are raised by postmodernism, we need to recognize how the various strands of postfeminism all permeate our sense of emerging constructs of femininity and gender, and how gender is situated (both socially and physically), but in different, and sometimes conflicting, ways. These strands show how the “complex and ambiguous portrayals of femaleness, femininity, and feminism” reflect a pendulum between “female emancipation and self-abnegation” (Genz 98). This cognitive dissonance is often conceptualized as anti-feminist, but just like the “post” in postmodernism isn’t a clear rhetorical, metaphysical or epistemological break from modernism, postfeminism doesn’t represent “sequentiality” or “polarity.” Instead postfeminism reveals its “restless and revisionary energy...into an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment” (Bhabha 4).

The strands of postfeminism discussed in this chapter straddle the division between feminism and antifeminism and contain both feminine and feminist desires. Postfeminist media constructs are just as likely to reinforce patriarchal ideas as to “dramatize the complexity of the in between position and articulate a space that refuses to impose the idea of an appropriate and monolithic feminine/feminist identity” (Genz 103). Postfeminism doesn’t mean “the end of the story,” but instead means recognizing that,

while there are possible senses of a gendered identity that have political and personal consequences, these consequences are more complicated and ambiguous than seen in second-wave feminism (Hekman 92). In fact, all three of these postfeminist strands extend and subvert the stories of second-wave feminism and anti-feminism by breaking through the binary thinking of both paradigms. These strands all question authoritarian paradigms and fixed, universal categories such as ‘gender’ or ‘heteronormativity,’ and reconceptualize identity by rejecting essentialist notions of it, or by deconstructing them. In addition, in all of these strands “difference” becomes a contested notion that complicates the essentialist divisions between men and women (Lotz 201). We can see postfeminist expressions of different values that are not evident within second-wave feminism. Both free-market and backlash postfeminisms appear to be structured by the current increase of individualism that has invaded major parts of the social or the political, and that has pushed any idea of the individual as subject to pressures, constraints or influence, outside of them and to the margins. In these two strands, the entrepreneurial, independent, calculating, self-governing subjects of neo-liberalism bear a strong resemblance to the dynamic, freely choosing, self-reinventing subjects of the post-modern strand.¹²⁶ This similarity reinforces the idea that essentialism itself isn’t the goal of postfeminism, unlike second-wave feminism, in which the basic similarity between sexes, universalism and sisterhood relies on binary categorizations, such as man/woman or straight/gay.

¹²⁶ This synergy is even more significant in popular cultural representations where women are called upon to exercise self-management and self-discipline, to a much greater extent than men (Gill 112).

Postmodernism doesn't postulate a fixed unitary identity ("the female identity") or employ a monolithic conception of "woman." According to Genz, postfeminism opens up a way to critique the essentialized differences that tend to oppress women and men (337). The binary categories are pierced and multiple identities are promoted through the generation of contradictions we see in all of the strands. Postfeminism reveals how women can recognize their own personal mix of identities, some of which can contradict each other, and reveals how the fluid dynamics of identity that are available to them do not depend on essentialist notions of identity.

Because the postmodern strand of postfeminism has been a consideration within composition studies, it can help us rethink essentialist notions of gender in order to appeal to the postfeminist sensibilities of our students. In composition studies, there is a understanding of the complexities of gendered identity through the influence and use of the *Écriture féminine* tradition introduced by Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva. These theorists offered ways to understand the intersection between the body and language and provided a theoretical foundation for gender differences in the writing process.¹²⁷ According to Cixous, writing as a woman "is necessary for the linguistic liberation of women" (Cixous 27). Through this agency, women enter language differently, and *Écriture féminine* is concerned with "specificity of female psychology and its symbolic realizations" (Kristeva 19). Further, this psychology rejects the male-

¹²⁷ Proponents of this tradition include compositionists such as Cynthia Caywood, et al in *Teaching Writing*; Suzanne Clark, in *Julia Kristeva: Rhetoric and the Woman as Stranger*; and Nancy Fraser in *Revaluing French Feminism: Critical Essays on Difference, Agency, and Culture*.

centric theories of Lacan¹²⁸ in which the male writing process is the norm and women are defined in relationship to this standard. By reversing this relationship, the proponents of *Écriture féminine* argue that, in order for a woman to “write her body,” she must accept her role as a sexual and gendered being; thus, Cixous’ call to women: “Write your self. Your body must be heard” (76). This intricate connection of the female body to language reflects the rejection of a “phallogocentric discourse,” which has been the foundation for much of the modernist and Enlightenment thinking celebrating rationality, truth and objectivity; further, it rejects the reliance on the mind/body dichotomy that underscores this modernism. In contrast, the *Écriture féminine* tradition is rooted in the conceptualization of the “somatic mind,” and rejects the idea that there is a conflict between our material and spiritual beings. Thus, by elevating femininity, according to Fleckenstein, there is the “opportunity to challenge cultural truths and material conditions” (285). Rather than disregarding the importance of physical bodies in the language process, this tradition shows how the feminine, rooted in the female body, cannot be thought of outside of the discursive process. In composition studies, one consequence of this shift is the recognition of the limitations of asking students to adapt to masculine writing styles because this request disregards the importance of our gendered bodies and how gender, as a function of language practices, shapes our way of looking at and interacting in the world. By seeing the body as a discursive phenomena,

¹²⁸ There is debate about how much this tradition actually breaks from Lacan. See Elisabeth Roudinesco’s *Jacques Lacan*. New York: Columbia UP, 1997.

Écriture féminine opened up the possibility for a non-male-oriented composition studies and, as a result of challenging the valuations of the fixed material male-gendered body, this tradition “reconceptualizes nature in ways that account for “‘intra-actions’ ... between phenomena that are material, discursive, human, more than-human, corporeal, and technological” (Gaard 26). We can learn from the postmodern strand of postfeminism when compositionists try to understand the relationships of body/language and emotion/affect. Postmodernism gives ways to subvert essentialist and emancipatory categorizations of gender that is often associated with these relationships. Understanding the way emotions guide language allows a different conceptualization of the various possible composing styles and the invention processes.¹²⁹ Rather than marginalizing emotions in the writing process, compositionists such as Berman and Berthoff have begun to interrogate how affect is fundamental in the writing process. Heavily influenced by the expressivist strand of process theory, these new interrogations rely on reflection and self-awareness as integral parts of both psychological and discursive growth. Consequently, in the new views of affect and the role emotions have in the discursive process, a pedagogy that ignores emotions will lead to a limited understanding of how we make meaning or convey that meaning.

Despite claims of how “women’s ways” of writing have opened up new interrogations of emotion, limitations of second-wave feminism’s influence on these

¹²⁹ For example, Alice Brand argues against previous beliefs that emotion limits or gets in the way of writing, and how it underscores the importance of disclosure, intimacy and safety in the writing classroom (304).

interrogations have become visible within composition studies. As a result, there is a resistance to embracing non-masculine discursive modes as essentially superior or having the most emancipatory potential that parallels the backlash strand of postfeminism. For example, some compositionists recognize how the typical demands of writing classes may invite conflict because there is a tendency for academic writing to repress emotional expression in favor of restraint, formality and caution (Brand 304). Although some compositionists, such as Susan McLeod, Jeffrey Berman and Ann Berthoff,¹³⁰ have begun to focus on the role emotions play in the writing process, pedagogical practices continue to suggest muting emotions in making arguments within a text or seeing pathos/emotions as something to be analyzed rather than to be embraced in practice. According to Joanna Russ, this masculine discourse practice can cause conflict in the understanding of how emotion functions in discourse because some “women writers have resisted being coerced into accepting the claims of traditional rhetorical forms by concealing their feelings...in order to even find an audience, they expressed their experiences in a rhetoric of disguise” (7). Feminism has thus opened up the way for compositionists to challenge how “women's writing has been suppressed because their concerns are judged as too limited because too personal, and their emotions as interfering with rational discourse” (8). The conflict still arises within the composition classroom because students internalize, as Patricia Annas argues, “a sense of audience, and this

¹³⁰ See McCleod's *Notes on the Heart: Affective Issues in the Writing Classroom*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1997; Berman's *Risky Writing: Self-disclosure and Self-transformation in the Classroom*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2001; and Berthoff's *The Making of Meaning: Metaphors, Models, and Maxims for Writing Teachers*. Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1981.

academic establishment privileges rationality over emotional expression” (4). As a result, the attempts to subvert this sense that reason is more valuable than emotions, while also asking students to be initiated into the university, creates a cognitive dissonance that feminism itself cannot always fully address.¹³¹ Instead, we can learn that addressing emotions in a composition classroom can be emancipatory. We can see this emancipatory potential in how empathy can function within a cultural context. Within a political context, anger can be evidence of perceived injustice and our reaction to it as ethical beings; within composition studies, anger has been posited as an acceptable aspect of argumentation in which women can participate so as to serve emancipatory purposes. In this perspective, the goal isn't to understand anger in an individualized way, but to see it as a generalized resistance¹³² to oppression and to open oneself up to empathy as a way to facilitate social change.¹³³ In this emancipatory perspective, the body and its emotional reality are always present because beliefs expressed through language happen in the

¹³¹ Another complication that parallels the backlash strand can be seen in the introduction of the discussion about emotions within composition studies; through the “inextricable emotional and rhetorical relationship between anger and conflict...emotions complicate the process of argument and lead to a need to create “safe-houses” where students feel safe to express themselves. (Pratt 43). This recognition avoids separating the study of conflict from the study of anger “because such analyses artificially divorce conflict from its tense emotional and rhetorical content” (46). In fact, anger can be “a powerful tactic when introduced into academic discourse because it opens up a rhetorical space for ambiguity and disrupts—at least for the moment—the privileged position of rationality” (Bean 104). Thus, a discussion of anger functions within composition studies as an important aspect of argumentation.

¹³² We can see an awareness of emotion in the role of educators as “agents of emotional management” when “students are asked to render successful affective performances to create viable personae as middle-class critics and producers of discourse” (Bean 113). In other words, displaying too much emotion is discouraged for those who want to achieve middle status.

¹³³ However, cultural theory within composition has also shown the way language and emotions can be commodified and exploited. One of the strategies compositionists have used to avoid this consequence is to remove “personal” writing from students' possible “rhetorical performances, and turning instead to text-based writing so that students are never compelled to act too deeply” (Bean 114).

body, not just the mind. According to Brian Massumi, emotion is always present in discourse because “the body doesn't just absorb pulses or discrete stimulations; it infolds contexts, it infolds volitions and cognitions that are nothing if not situated” (30).

While the postmodern interrogation of the body has been a way to see how postfeminism can function in the composition classroom, feminism has helped open up the discussion of how the body functions in terms of a discursive process and still plays an important role in the development of beliefs about the body and affect. More specifically, feminism helped show how the “embodied” in discourse “highlights the ways in which liberation is always both social and individual, a truly symbiotic relationship” (Banks 22). However, composition studies does have a history of appealing to reason. According to Crowley, “Liberal reliance on reason and empirical fact is now being seriously challenged by this style of argument, which derives its truth claims deductively and guarantees them by means of their resonance, by a rightness that is deeply felt rather than rationalized” (170). Compositionists have tried to resist the marginalization of emotion and affect through understanding the role of the gendered body in discourse production. We can see this gendered body in the tradition of constructing the “composition teacher as nurse/mother/disciplinarian” (Miller 48).

According to Susan Miller,

[The composition instructor] is a nurse who cares for and tempts her young charge toward "adult" uses of language...she is, no matter what her gender, the "mother" (tongue) that is an ideal/idol and can humiliate, regulate, and suppress the child's desires. But she is also the disciplinarian,

not a father figure but a sadomasochistic Barbarella version of either mother or maid (48).

According to McLeod, this positioning of the gendered instructor in composition studies has led to examinations of “how teachers' expectations, their empathy, and their own sense of self-efficacy have an effect on their teaching or on their students” (173). Empathy is often coded as feminine, and when empathy is singled out as a central ingredient in the learning process, the composition instructor has a tendency to be gendered in such a way to “understand the student's reactions from the inside” to promote “the likelihood of significant learning” (375).¹³⁴ The feminized metaphor of the composition instructor merges the essentialist and emancipatory elements of second-wave feminism and composition studies. However, there are complex reactions to this gendered understanding of the composition instructor that are parallel to the backlash to postfeminism. Within the postfeminist context and the feminized field of composition studies, there is a crisis of gendering, “where the valuation of women’s gendered characteristics influence our conceptualization of what ‘women’s work’ should entail” (Bartlett 261). We see criticisms of the feminization of composition studies because associating the discipline with “women’s work” can lead to oppressive conditions when the feminine is dis-valued in our culture. In turn, feminist attempts to associate *Écriture*

¹³⁴ In composition studies, the introduction of Rogerian rhetoric within composition studies was one of the first ways empathy was heralded as a useful tool within discourse production. Based on the psychology of Carl Rogers, the goal of empathic understanding involves not only understanding “the other person's affective world, but also to communicate this understanding to the other in a sensitive, caring way” (Rogers 118). Such pedagogical moves highlight how our bodies matter and how the way the social is inscribed on our bodies can't be ignored in how we interact with our students, what we expect from them, what they expect from us, and, when those expectations diverge, how we manage our bodies/emotions as instructors.

féminine with the writing process and the re-categorization of emotion as essential to the discursive process can end up reinforcing this feminization, rather than serving the emancipatory goals as intended. This complication reflects the inherent crisis of gendered identity present at large in the postfeminist context.¹³⁵

There has been a pattern within Western culture to associate the private with femininity and the public with masculinity, based on a dualist perception of the world and the body. Banks illustrates one consequence of this separation of mind and body when he writes, “socially constructed gender traits, such as emotion, are often used to maintain dominance by feminizing a racial or cultural group through the labeling of them as ‘emotional’ rather than ‘rational’” (33). In fact, postmodernism has revealed how repression of the feminine is essential to the production of rational because, according to Dallery, “all binaries come out of gender binary” (59). In the conception of the human body as text, various forms of feminism identified how particular bodies function in discourse, history and culture. Their feminist solution to male privilege is to reverse the binary so that the female body/sexuality is identified as primary rather than derivative. Feminist compositionists heavily influenced by *Écriture féminine*, for example, have argued writing the body means seeing their sexuality as separate and not defined by male desire, and because the human body becomes male or female through discourse, “a real

¹³⁵ Another complications arising from the advancements of the understanding how gender in meaning making and discourse can be seen in the social epistemic shift within composition studies away from expressivism, which allowed a marginalization of personal writing, one of the primary ways emotions have had a role within the writing process with the composition classroom. One move to avoid this conflict between the personal/emotional and social/rational is to recognize “it is impossible to separate the producer of the text from the text itself” (Banks 33). This approach balances a sense of self with social implications.

body prior to discourse is meaningless” (59). Gayatri Spivak argues that the goal here isn't to challenge patriarchy not only on an ideological basis, but also “through the symbolic” (172). This challenge means questioning the “linguistic strategies and categories they employ,” i.e. how history has marginalized the feminine, and understanding how “the hegemony of patriarchy is embedded in language” (Dallery 62). In feminist critique, the dualistic Western tradition has led to seeing women, and the body, as, according to Susan Bordo, “distraction from knowledge, seduction away from God, capitulation to sexual desire, violence or aggression, failure of will, even death” (5). Positioning women as only a body is to dismiss and distrust corporeal matters, and if women are associated with the body, “then women, by association, are going to be treated with similar disdain” (5).

We can see complications of this feminist consideration of the body in terms of the material constraints within academic culture, with its dualistic foundation that privileges features associated with the masculine: the “academic clock is lined up with the typical male life cycle, in which the first few years require intense career focus while the seemingly mindless matters of living- having and caring for children and maintaining a home- are left to the wife” (Hesse-Biber and Carter 68). With academic life in direct conflict with the female biological life cycle, bearing children often becomes impossible, particular in the case of career advancements such as tenure. According to Shope, a body-based gender bias, or “the no-uterus rule,” has tended to advance a system that privileges males who are “unfettered by the body (and emotions)” (40). The material

differences between men and women are seized upon by those wanting to maintain power, just as we have seen in other cultural contexts; however, if the oppressive conditions of the discipline of composition studies are to be challenged, there must be a recognition of how the crisis of gendering is maintained by political and economic realities that are essentialist and emancipatory in nature.¹³⁶ It isn't enough for compositionists to blame capitalism for the maternal constraints imposed by the "academic clock." When compositionists use their belief that capitalism creates these oppressive conditions to justify their liberatory practices, we can see resistance in the classroom. There is a tradition in composition studies to critique capitalism through their pedagogical practices.¹³⁷ Through both the "social turn" and the influence of cultural studies, composition studies has a tradition of what Trimbur calls "linking everyday practices to the social order and the formation of class consciousness" (73). In turn, these practices have dovetailed with the second-wave feminist challenge of "corporate capitalism" and "bourgeois individualism" (Berlin 492). Now we can see an increasingly complex interrogation of capitalism emerging in more recent composition studies scholarship. This interrogation can help us understand ways in which capitalist economic

¹³⁶ Despite these criticisms of the dualistic foundation of academic life, many compositionists have argued for a political program of liberation that relies on the idea of difference (Baliff 81). In fact, composition studies has been wary of abandoning difference because of the fear that political power and agency would be impossible (82).

¹³⁷ Some historians of composition studies point to Dewey as an early advocate for using pedagogy to help students become ethical democratic citizens who valued social justice (Fishman 2). Later on, theorists presented a clear shift in the prevailing ways of thinking about culture, literature, and history within theories of pedagogy.

conditions shape the emancipatory goals of composition and how those goals can serve as a cover for their capitalist intents.¹³⁸

Through the three strands of postfeminism we can see new ways of understanding the complexities and contradictions present in the discipline of composition studies. According to Patricia Bizzell, postmodern understandings of how “everyday lives are organized by consumerism [through] an instant gratification of an increasing array of desires” help re-frame the discussion of this crisis of gendering in a way that essentialist and emancipatory frameworks preclude (487). The lack of stable gendered identities within the postfeminist context comes from the general schizophrenic nature of postmodernist culture, in which there is “an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to linkup into a coherent sequence” (Jameson 118). Through cultural forces that “scramble and confuse” this prior sense of gendered identity, the postmodern condition of our current culture resists the critical/modernist framework that underlies prior constructions about what it means to be gendered. Postmodernism itself doesn’t serve as a way to deconstruct pre-feminist or anti-feminist conceptualizations of gender and through means of nostalgia and kitsch may even end up reinforcing these representations of gender that second-wave feminism has sought to subvert. As evident in the complicated economic predicament of the feminization of

¹³⁸ Because of the deeply rooted emancipatory goals of composition studies, many English departments are loathe to abandon the first-year composition course because it is seen as a “deeply needed service,” in which teaching writing is seen as a crucial aspect of students being initiated into the academic culture--i.e., if the English department doesn’t do this, the legitimate emancipatory concern for the department is who will, and the more economically oriented concern of the larger university is how to be cost-effective if contingent faculty are not used.

composition studies, modernist/critical traditions cannot subvert the patriarchal or capitalist power structures that are present in our postfeminist context. The only way to subvert any attempts to re-instate prior gendered belief systems during the crisis of gendering is to “reject the category of woman” (Davis 158). For pre-, anti-, and pro-feminism to succeed, woman must be a stable subject; the fragmented nature of postfeminism implodes these ways of defining woman. To encompass these attempts to renegotiate feminism and open up a way for postfeminism in the classroom, there must be courage to move away from the essentialist and emancipatory foundations of composition studies.

In recent years, there have been a series of moves away from the emancipatory and essentialist concerns (which inadvertently supported oppressive conditions) within composition studies. One of the concerns currently within the discipline of composition studies is how to advance a post-critical approach, especially in the context of a field so reliant on emancipatory and essentialist foundations. The post-critical turn within composition studies is influenced by the moves outside of the field, such as in sociology, philosophy, history, and psychology, which challenge fundamental ideas of identity, agency and truth. We can see these post-critical attempts in rhetoric and composition in the works of Victor Vitanza, Sarah Arroyo, Diane D. Davis, and Michelle Baliff. Considerations of post-process by Thomas Kent and Gary Olson are also non-essentialist and non-emancipatory. I argue that these pedagogical moves intersect, support and widen with the various strands of postfeminism and provide a starting point to conceive a

postfeminist composition studies. Post-critical moves are unsettling, disrupting, and interrupting, and they challenge the idea that the continued development of the field is rooted in its potential political agent for change (Flynn 981). While process writing paralleled second-wave feminism, post-process rejects essentialized ideas about gendered writing because it rejects the idea that writing is codified, generalizable, and definable or (Breuch 199). The post-process assertion that discursive processes are not generalizable and teachable in a codified way, but instead are always situated in the larger cultural context, intersects with the postfeminist destabilization of generalizable gendered identities and emancipatory goals. If discourse itself can't be generalized as masculine or feminine, and these conceptualizations of gender are always rooted in the complex social context that gives rise to these generalizations, then emancipatory attempts to subvert the patriarchal valuations of gender, or oppressive consequences of feminization, are undermined. Through such moves as the "third sophistic" or "dissoi paralogoi," which challenge the dualistic antagonisms of male/female and, according to Vitanza, "everything that has been excluded because of this silly disjunctive logic," gendered generalizations become interrupted and replaced with murkier notions and possibilities (341). There are also other promising moves in composition studies that form radical breaks from the essentialist and emancipatory foundations of composition studies, such as in choragraphy, paralogy, dialogic, and electronic literacies. These moves consider how the communicative interactions are both socially situated and materially conditioned and how these interactions don't have to serve as competing ideologies with the goal of

winning out over another; instead, they all present discourse as a way to see how situations influence our perspectives, while affirming that these situations aren't immutable. All of these moves are particularly useful in consideration of the postfeminist context because they open up spaces for non-essentialist and non-emancipatory frameworks.

Despite these promising moves, composition theory still tends to rely on the essentialist and emancipatory elements that have bound the field to feminism. One of the reasons for this reliance is that postmodernism in itself functions not only has a deconstructive mode, but can be destructive, especially to a discipline so reliant on pedagogy. For example, in the post-process solution to the emancipatory and essentialist nature of composition studies, any generalized or codified practices are irrelevant, at best. Within this framework, we are always caught up in a hermeneutic circle, i.e. unable to advance theory based on any external foundation. Without theory, pedagogical implications are limited to a series of hermeneutic guesses. Philosophically, this is similar to nihilism; the lack of an absolute truth is presented as evidence that there is no reality. Even if there are limits to our "theory hope," or to the belief that we can create truths out of our guesses, we as educators cannot (and will not) stop trying to understand how we can move human knowledge forward. I believe that student resistance is indicative of the current limitations of our field, a field that often relies on the foundations of emancipation and essentialism. We need new ways to mediate this resistance and re-frame the discussion of what composition studies is, and does, without

relying on emancipatory and essentialist foundations, and without resorting to nihilism. To do so involves a strategic move highlighted by Vitanza in *Negation, Subjectivity and the History of Rhetoric*, in which we are to say “yes” to possibilities that at first glance seem impossible.¹³⁹ In short, saying yes is opposed to the dialectical negation afforded by modernism, which is inherent in essentialist and emancipatory thinking. The postmodern strand of postfeminism has much in common with the “yes” moves already taking place within the post-critical turn of composition studies. In a discipline so rooted in feminism and other liberatory frameworks, it might seem contrarian to find value in the other two strands, i.e. the backlash to feminism and the free-market approach. If we are to step outside our own theoretical prejudices, and assume for a moment that it is not our job to emancipate our students or establish their gendered identities, we might find that there is value in seeing the world from the perspectives of these strands, even if only to mediate student resistance. In the next chapter, I examine what saying yes can mean and what possible moves we can make within a postfeminist composition studies.

¹³⁹ In short, saying yes is opposed to the dialectical negation afforded by modernism, and, I argue, is also inherent in essentialist and emancipatory thinking.

Chapter 4

A Postfeminist Shift

Earlier, I discussed how feminism and feminist composition studies do not adequately address the sociological phenomenon of postfeminism because of their shared essentialist and emancipatory features. In order to envision a postfeminist composition studies, there must be theoretical and pedagogical shifts that subvert these shared features. To do so entails experimenting with new ways of conceptualizing the purpose and process of communicating and meaning making. We must be open to pedagogies that promote this experimentation. I recognize that opening up the field to new strategies, modes or teaching practices isn't easy. It means changing our frame of reference, something that we only tend to do if we have a new frame. In the beginning of any such transformation, in which the frames we rely on are challenged before we have a frame to replace it with, our position is tenuous at best. Undermining the very foundations of composition studies (and also the foundations of academic discourse itself) invites a danger of not having a new foundation to jump to. It is a risky process, but there are road-maps to chart this new journey. In "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism," Lyotard describes the first awareness of the postmodern condition as "given first by the sensibility without any conceptual determination."¹⁴⁰ The postfeminist condition can be sensed as well on a non-conceptual level, functioning more as an aesthetic than a comprehensive and systematic world-view. According to Rosalind Gill,

¹⁴⁰ See *The Postmodern Explained to Children*. Sydney, Power Publications. 1992.

postfeminism is best understood as a distinctive sensibility, rather than an analytical perspective or a stable discourse (148). In this chapter, I call for composition studies to recognize the postfeminist condition and appeal to the postfeminist sensibilities of students. This appeal would rely on moves in and outside of our discipline that aren't essentialist and emancipatory. To that end, in this chapter, I will discuss a series of pedagogical moves that emphasize discourse as a dialogic "storytelling" process that is socially situated. These moves rely on feminist pedagogy, media studies and digital literacy to allow us to understand the social and personal interaction inherent in discourse production. I will suggest how these moves can be used to develop rhetorical agency in our students in order to appeal to postfeminist sensibilities.¹⁴¹ In all of these moves, I look at how an awareness of the rhetorical nature of discourse production and our role in that production can be used to envision a postfeminist composition studies.

Feminist theories of argument can be used to appeal to postfeminist sensibilities by emphasizing contextual, relational and supportive discourse practices associated with femininity. Proponents of traditional argumentation favor antagonistic, linear, abstract, and rational styles that are often associated with masculinity. Many advocates of feminist argumentation believe that privileging the masculine over the feminine is problematic. Deborah Tannen argues women have difficulties in participating in masculine driven arguments because of how they are socialized.¹⁴² Postfeminism blames feminism for

¹⁴¹ In the Appendixes to this dissertation I give specific assignments that demonstrate these moves in the context of postfeminist composition studies courses.

¹⁴² See *You Just Don't Understand* and *The Argument Culture* by Deborah Tannen.

encouraging women to take on masculine characteristics in order to succeed,¹⁴³ while feminists attribute the push for masculine discourse practices to patriarchy.¹⁴⁴ Regardless of why it may be difficult for some women to engage in masculine discourse practices, both feminists and postfeminists agree that in order for women to succeed they shouldn't have to use masculine discourse practices. The feminine style of argumentation advocated by feminist compositionists could be an alternative to these masculine discourse practices. Students can be introduced to evidence that some feminine discourse practices can actually serve purposes in communicative situations that masculine ones cannot. For example, narrative, empathy, and anecdotes are often used in political discourse in order to humanize candidates, create common ground, and establish intimacy. Students can learn that antagonistic forms of argumentation can be counter-productive when the goal of a communicative interaction is consensus. For example, students could be introduced to the Rogerian rhetorical model that emphasizes the feminine discourse practice of listening because of its value in establishing consensus. Introducing students to these different forms of argumentation advocated by feminist compositionists can appeal to postfeminist sensibilities. Women who grow up in a postfeminist culture tend to favor feminine discourse purposes, such as communicating so as to feel heard, to reaffirm beliefs, to be socially accepted, and to resolve conflict. Teaching these feminine discourse practices in the classroom is one way to appeal to

¹⁴³ See Gill, Love, McRobbie, among others.

¹⁴⁴ See Firestone, Friedan, Fuss, among others.

postfeminist sensibilities and argumentation would serve different purposes than in traditional masculine discourse production. Women who are uncomfortable behaving in traditionally masculine ways might find the alternative feminine discourse model more appealing. The feminine model can allow compositionists to adapt their teaching practices to postfeminist sensibilities of their students.

There are pedagogical applications of feminist argumentation that can appeal to the sensibilities reflected in the three strands of postfeminism. For example, the appeal to feminine forms of argumentation can be reinforced by the postmodern strand of postfeminism. According to Roger Aden, postmodern audiences tend to respond arguments that are fragmentary and contradictory (54). Because there are many contradictory elements of postfeminism, a postmodern audience might not find these contradictions inherent in the three strands to be off-putting. The enthymemes, or common assumptions, of multiple contradictory paradigms within postfeminism might encourage a less linear form of feminine discourse practices than traditional argumentation does. Aden argues that postmodernism encourages the rhetor to “give up the luxury of absolute Truths, choosing instead to put to work local and provisional truths” (55). Because masculine forms of argument tend to emphasize an objective standard of truth, using feminine discourse practices that do not rely on this standard might be seen as more advantageous to students growing up in a postmodern context. Additionally, compositionists can appeal to students’ postfeminist sensibilities by using pedagogical strategies that emphasize the importance of the female body, personal

choice, and popular culture. The emphasis on gendered writing advocated by feminists might actually be attractive to students informed by postfeminism, because “one of the most striking aspects [of postfeminism] is its obsessional preoccupation with the body” (Gill 26). Through *Écriture féminine*, and new research on the importance of emotion/affect in the process of writing, compositionists can emphasize the importance of the feminine body in terms of discourse practices. Pedagogies that emphasize rhetorical choice can be used to appeal to the postfeminist value of personal choice, such as seen in the free-market strand. For example, teaching students to use rhetorical analysis in order to see how an argument is constructed can give them more choices in their own discourse practices. Seeing how rhetors construct argumentative texts, or seeing “behind the curtain,” can allow students to develop their own rhetorical agency in the classroom. In developing rhetorical agency, students could learn about possible choices they can have in composing an argument, and how those choices are informed by cultural and discursive expectations and traditions, using various genres and conventions. For example, students might learn to use the Toulmin model or identify the rhetorical use of the classical appeals of ethos, logos and pathos in order to analyze and construct an argument.¹⁴⁵ Postfeminism can help us understand the roles popular culture has in developing our students’ epistemes, including those roles evident in the backlash strand of postfeminism. Interrogating these roles in the classroom can appeal to postfeminist sensibilities. For example, one of Andrea Lunsford’s textbooks, *Everything’s An*

¹⁴⁵ See Nancy Wood’s *Perspectives on Argument* for examples of these pedagogical strategies.

Argument, encourages students to see the rhetorical nature of discourse practices in popular culture by showing how argument, whether masculine or feminine in style, permeates all forms of discourse. Focusing on the rhetorical features of these conversations, rather than asking students to critique the values embedded in those discourse practices, could be a way to engage students. Using popular culture as a text can appeal to our students' postfeminist sensibilities because students can learn how the rhetorical nature of all communicative practices is relevant in the "real world," and not just in the academy, without fear that their belief systems would be denigrated.

Because feminist pedagogy opens a way for these belief systems to be framed as valid storytelling that occurs in a social context, we can teach the personal narrative as a genre that can appeal to postfeminist sensibilities. Many feminists advocate its use because they believe that women's personal experiences have traditionally been ignored within patriarchal contexts. Thus, we see the feminist historiographical introduction of female rhetorical figures by Jarratt, Xiu and others. In addition, feminists argue that personal narratives of women reveal patriarchal oppression. Whatever the political goals of feminism are in terms of the personal narrative, it is important to understand what role the personal narrative should have in the postfeminist composition classroom. The personal narrative is important in a postfeminist composition studies, but for different reasons and purposes than in feminist composition studies. While feminism emphasized the ways in which narrative is, as J. Blake Scott argues, "social meaning making through language," postfeminism emphasizes how narratives are contradictory self-authorings as

a result of the complex matrix of discourse communities we belong to (109). Unlike feminists who focus on how the “personal is political,” i.e. that all personal experiences of women have political implications, women influenced by postfeminism focus on how the politics of feminism affect their personal lives. The backlash to feminism and emphasis on the free-market in shaping women’s lives all reflect this postfeminist position that politics are, in fact, personal. If we are to ask students to write some form of personal narrative, we must acknowledge the postfeminist relationship between the personal and the political, and how this acknowledgement differs from a feminist conceptualization. For students influenced by postfeminism, the personal is always a starting point. In social epistemic composition pedagogies shaped by cultural studies, the political is emphasized over the personal.¹⁴⁶ Students may only be asked to write about their personal experiences in order for them to develop a critical consciousness. This pedagogical intent can lead to resistance. In order to avoid student resistance, the postmodern strand of feminism can be used to address both the political and personal contexts of discourse practices. In this strand, identities of men and women are shaped more by their gendered performances than any essentialist categorizations. These gendered performances manifest themselves in the narrativity of human experience; in other words, the stories we tell relate to how we see the world and how we behave. The stories that are told within feminist and postfeminist frames of reference are very different; as a result, the narrativity of gendered experience has different pedagogical

¹⁴⁶ See Trimbur.

implications depending on which frame of reference we use. For example, the narrative I shared in my introduction revealed how tensions can occur because we all have different stories that inform our belief systems and performances.

The postfeminist genres of chick lit and reality television programs reveal some of the important postfeminist tropes in our culture and in the storytelling of our students. The literary forms and media representations of postfeminism aren't just in themselves evidence of the cultural storytelling that takes place, but evidence of the ways in which men and women use narratives to shape their identities, and how agency is manifested through various gendered performances. We can appeal to the postfeminist sensibilities of our students by asking them to recognize how our behaviors relate to our stories, such as having students create autoethnographies. According to Deborah Reed-Danahay, the autoethnography is a genre of writing that developed out of the discipline of anthropology as an alternative to the ethnographic genre traditionally used. In contrast to ethnographies, which positioned anthropologists as objective observers, autoethnographies were designed to show how the different cultural contexts of anthropologists influenced their interpretations.¹⁴⁷ One implication of the autoethnographic genre is that we are not only socially-constructed, but that we are continually authoring ourselves. Feminists and compositionists have often used

¹⁴⁷ See Reed-Danahay's *Auto/ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social*. Oxford: Berg, 1997.

autoethnographic assignments to service critical pedagogies.¹⁴⁸ Autoethnography can also be used to appeal to the postfeminist sensibilities of our students, by asking our students to see how we author ourselves in a social context. Through the use of autoethnographies, we can relate to the emphasis on personal agency present in the free-market and backlash strands of postfeminism. The literacy narrative is a form of autoethnography that can appeal to our student's agency by asking students to reflect on the choices they make in the composing process.¹⁴⁹ Through a literacy narrative, students can interpret the development of language practices within the different discourse communities they participate in.¹⁵⁰ Media and digital literacy can also be explored in these narratives. Students can create multimodal and/or digital literacy narratives that help them interrogate the ways in which their personal experiences function dialogically within the larger cultural context. For example, they could use a digital literacy narrative to look at the ways media representations of gender connect to their own lived experiences. Students wouldn't have to critique these media representations, which can cause resistance; they would explore how media representations are factors in the storytelling they do in their own lives. Further, students could recognize how the

¹⁴⁸ See Norman Denzin's *Performance Ethnography: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA, 2003 and Joy Webster Barbre's *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989.

¹⁴⁹ See Lee Nickoson and Mary P. Sheridan's *Writing Studies Research in Practice: Methods and Methodologies*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2012.

¹⁵⁰ For example, Richard Rodriguez's autobiography, *Hunger for Memory*, might be used to show how speaking Spanish at home and English at school shaped his identity.

fragmented and contradictory elements of their story-telling reveal a complex matrix of identity developed in a social context.

By avoiding the critical stance often taught in the feminist classroom, the personal narrative and autoethnography could also mediate the possibly contentious relationship between the instructor and students. For example, when I taught a feminist-themed composition course, I could have acknowledged, to myself and/or to my students, that I was doing a form of storytelling in describing my gendered performance. I could have emphasized how our differing cultural contexts influence these narrative constructions and how there is a dialogic nature to discourse. This discussion could have focused on how we author ourselves and are authored by our cultural context in a dialogic manner. By framing our perspectives as collaborative narratives, rather than arguments, there would be no epistemic violence. The feminist emphasis on collaboration could be used to appeal to postfeminist sensibilities. For example, students can collaborate in writing workshops, where they are asked to brainstorm ideas with their peers and comment on each other's works. Students could write essays or participate in group projects collaboratively. One might think that collaboration would not appeal to the postfeminist sensibilities of our students because of the individualist aspects of the backlash and free-market strands of postfeminism. While the feminist conflation of collaboration as collectivism would not be appealing to free-market postfeminist sensibilities, collaboration could be appealing when it is framed as a social act that allows for individual agency. Because students already function collaboratively in many different

digital spaces, these types of collaborative interactions can be used in the classroom to appeal to postfeminist sensibilities. For example, the writing workshop could take place in a digital space. Students could be asked to peer edit other students works through Google docs or dropbox, or students could brainstorm ideas using blogs. The socially mediated digital spaces that students experience on a daily basis may allow for a more organic collaborative learning environment than possible within the traditional “face to face” classroom. While students engage in collaborative learning practices in the traditional classroom when they are prompted by their instructor, outside of the classroom our students already collaborate with each other in digital spaces through social media. They engage differently in these digital spaces than they do in the traditional classroom, and these engagements are often multimodal in nature, through text, images, and video. We could use the collaborative potential of these multimodal literacies available in the digital space to appeal to our students’ postfeminist sensibilities.¹⁵¹ For example, students could interrogate the social ways gender is performed online, such as looking at how celebrities construct certain gendered personas through their use of Twitter or how their “friends” perform gender on Facebook when they upload pictures or post status updates. Collaborative uses of the digital space can

¹⁵¹ In addition, the collaborative nature of the digital space could be used to mediate student resistance caused by issues of authority. For example, the non-hierarchical, non-linear and non-temporal nature of various digital spaces discourages any student or instructor from controlling discourse production. Further, students engage more publicly in digital spaces than they do in the traditional classroom, which can lead to a sense there are some social consequences to discourse. This larger sense of audience could affect the dynamics in the classroom so that issues of authority are mediated.

help students become aware of the rhetorical choices people make in a social context, and how all discourse production involves a certain aspect of storytelling. By seeing the social and rhetorical nature of all discourse production, academic and non-academic, students can explore how gender itself is a function of this production. They can see that while our stories are shaped by our cultural contexts, we have choices in our storytelling. Students can engage in discourse production that emphasizes the contradictory and complex nature of identity in a social context that marks all forms of postfeminist sensibilities.

Because much of the storytelling that goes on in the backlash and free-market strands of postfeminism occurs in popular culture, the ways in which the connections of the personal and social are examined by media studies could be used to appeal to postfeminist sensibilities.¹⁵² Students could examine all mediums as cultural texts that are embedded in the ideological formation of the community. When students examine these cultural texts, they could be asked to discern particular ways ideology influences individuals through different types of mediums. Media studies theorists have been at the forefront of understanding postfeminism because it is so visible in the context of contemporary popular and consumer culture.¹⁵³ We can learn from this interrogation of postfeminism in consort with an emphasis on “media literacy,” in which students learn

¹⁵² See Brian Dutton’s *Media Studies: An Introduction*. Harlow: Longman, 2000.

¹⁵³ See Gill, McRobbie, Piepmeier, among others.

how ideologies function within different mediums.¹⁵⁴ The composition classroom is a perfect pedagogical site for developing media literacy because of our discipline's emphasis on discourse as a cultural practice.¹⁵⁵ In order to appeal to postfeminist sensibilities, it is important that we do not use media studies to try to develop our students' critical consciousness. We can mediate resistance by appealing to the postfeminist sensibilities of our students by using different mediums to introduce our students to the rhetorical nature of discourse production. Since personal agency is emphasized in backlash and free-market strands of postfeminism, students could look at the rhetorical choices made in constructing visual and multimodal texts, such as videos, movies, webpages, commercials, and print ads. They could experiment with their own rhetorical choices by creating their own visual and multimodal texts.¹⁵⁶ We could show our students the importance of audience awareness in non-academic interactions that tend to be public and how this awareness can help them negotiate the "contact zones" in rhetorical contexts. Media studies could be used to demonstrate the rhetorical nature of social interactions and how to develop rhetorical agency in their own composing practices.¹⁵⁷ Instead of using a critical approach emphasized by feminist pedagogy,

¹⁵⁴ See Allison Smith's *Teaching in the Pop Culture Zone: Using Popular Culture in the Composition Classroom*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning. 2009.

¹⁵⁵ Despite the potential use of media studies in the composition studies, I've heard some instructors lament the fact that students don't want to develop media literacy either because it can interfere with students' enjoyment of popular culture.

¹⁵⁶ In my own experience, it seems that students enjoy rhetorically analyzing popular cultural texts, maybe because our students tend to engage in visual and multimodal discourse practices outside of the classroom for fun.

¹⁵⁷ Not only would this experimentation appeal to a postfeminist sensibilities, "the ability to negotiate through life by combining words with pictures with audio and video to express thoughts will be the mark of

students can use media studies to interrogate the complex interaction between the personal and the social. According to Bryson, this approach would displace pedagogies that are reliant on a conception of the individual

as constituting a unified subject whose true or essential ‘nature’[and] bodies of knowledge as constituting coherent subject matters, with clear epistemological boundaries, appropriate methodologies, truth conditions, and so forth” (html).

Focusing on new media and the digital space, instead of encouraging students to, as Sue McIntosh writes, “adopt the conventions of discourse and ‘jump through hoops’ by adopting the ideas and knowledge deemed important by their disciplines,” could help students see the complicated ways identity develops in a social context. Not only can new media and digital technology can help us appeal to postfeminist sensibilities, a post-critical digital literacy can challenge and extend a print-based literacy that reinforces essentialist and emancipatory foundations of composition studies.

We can appeal to postfeminist sensibilities by addressing the major shift in our discourse practices that has occurred because of the emergence of new literacies in the digital space of the Internet. Students engage in new discourse practices within this space, including social networking (including Facebook and Twitter), and instant communication. These literacy practices provide opportunities for inventing new ways of seeing the purpose of discourse, or what entering into a discourse community means. For example, there are multiple (and perhaps indeterminate, if not infinite) purposes for

the educated student” (Yancey 305).

participating in discourse communities in the digital space.¹⁵⁸ Participation in online social interactions establishes and enforces a sense of identity through a spirit of experimentation. “To do” discourse online is all about taking chances because as soon as discourse practices become stale or solidified another discourse opportunity is available.¹⁵⁹ As the digital space changes, the inventive possibilities of discourse evolve and expand.¹⁶⁰ For example, hypertexts have provided a new discursive possibility, proving to be a radical departure from other discourse practices, and transforming the written text from a linear process to one that involves multiple possible entry points and unexpected connections between texts.¹⁶¹ Evolutions in digital space have inspired new forms of literacy that are significantly different from the visual, written and oral discursive shifts that have come before. In fact, the web has become a digital space that is reliant on a hybrid of possible literacies, or what Gregory Ulmer calls “electracies.”¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ For example, people use Facebook and Twitter for different motives, including popularity, commerce, social connections, and pleasure.

¹⁵⁹ Such as in the emergences, and then retirements, of MySpace, Friendster, and Usenet.

¹⁶⁰ I first learned of the inventive possibilities of digital spaces during my freshman year in college when I first was introduced to the fledgling “World Wide Web.” That year, 1992, the web was very different than the Internet we use today. The only discourse practice available in the digital space was text, such as in writing emails or posts to Usenet (an electronic bulletin board). At this point, the majority of web users were college students because the vast number computer servers that could transmit data over the web were located on college campuses. In the course of this expansion, the web browser developed as a medium distinctly different from other media of public discourse because of the connections between web pages made available by “hyperlinks.” In the early use of web browsers, because very few people were fluent in the programming language of html that was used to create hypertexts and/or very few had access to web servers where web pages “lived,” the content of the web was limited. These early web browsers only included text.¹⁶⁰

¹⁶¹ The best print-based metaphor I can use to explain this technological expansion is that it manifested the spirit of a “Choose Your Own Adventure” book because the multitude of choices available in the reading process transformed discursive possibilities

¹⁶² The emergence of the digital space rivals the emergence of alphabetic writing in Ancient Greece, which inspired the shift from orality to literacy (Ulmer.networkedbook.org html). In oral culture, the discursive

According to Ulmer, in the transition from orality to literacy, a new print-based apparatus of communication emerged and the space shifted from the physically and temporally bound oral experience to the written page itself. This space would also serve the varied interests of the community, and teachers who would help people become successful participants as this social space emerged.¹⁶³ We can learn from the historical shift from orality to literacy to better understand the shift from literacy to electracy.¹⁶⁴ The rhetorical potential of electracy in the digital space inspires a different way of knowing and conveying meaning than is available in a print-based medium. In the emergence of electracy, we have an opportunity to look at the world or communicate in ways that might appeal to postfeminist sensibilities that isn't available in other literacies. Because our students are increasingly comfortable with electracies, their fluency might provide us opportunities to use the digital space in ways that are appealing to postfeminist

space was the *agora*, a public gathering place that served social, political and commercial interests of the community; the web emerged as a similar space (Thomas 179). This type of space involves a particular structuring of knowledge and communicating of such knowledge. In Ancient Greece, to become successful participants in this discursive space, people turned to teachers of rhetoric, called Sophists, who would develop specific rhetorical strategies, or heuristics (Vitanza 125). Prior to this transition, the education process was relatively informal; in its wake, more formal "lyceums," or schools, would develop, such as Aristotle's Lyceum and Plato's Academy, where rhetoric became an important part of the student's education.

¹⁶³ For example, in oral cultures, memory was important in order to solidify the continued and accurate transmission of knowledge; thus certain rhetorical strategies such as mimesis were developed. In literate cultures, the written page made one's memory less essential, opening up possibilities for the rhetorical strategy of invention.

¹⁶⁴ I think compositionists who are wary of their role as the sole source of authority in the classroom might find it attractive for students to help us navigate the digital space.

sensibilities. When students invent new discourse practices with their instructors, there may be fewer opportunities for epistemic violence.¹⁶⁵

New discursive practices that are being used in the application of post-critical theory can help us use the digital space to appeal to postfeminist sensibilities. While post-critical pedagogy has not focused on the sociological phenomenon of postfeminism, it can be used to explore discourse practices that occur in the strands of postfeminism. For example, Gregory Ulmer's post-critical mystory, which uses the inventive potential of the digital space to show how our epistemes continually shift, can mediate "contact zones."¹⁶⁶ The mystory allows a way to interrogate the social categorizations that make up our illusory cohesive identities without reinforcing essentialism, and opens up non-emancipatory ways for reader/writer/teacher/student to engage with each other. The mystory provides a playful exploration of our core beliefs without imposing those beliefs on one another.¹⁶⁷ The "observational method" of the mystory reveals the contradictory

¹⁶⁵ I think compositionists who are wary of their role as the sole source of authority in the classroom might find using students to help us navigate the digital space attractive.

¹⁶⁶ The mystory was "designed to simulate the experience of invention, the crossing of discourses that has been shown to occur in the invention process" (Ulmer xii). According to Ulmer, "the modes of academic writing now taught in school tend to be positioned on the side of the already known rather than on the side of wanting to find out (of theoretical curiosity) and hence discourage learning how to learn" (xxi).

¹⁶⁷ Without showing someone an example of a mystory, it is hard to really understand the genre. However, I would like to use the metaphor of quantum mechanics to try to explain the way the mystory can be used to appeal to the postfeminist sensibilities of our students.¹⁶⁷ In the first experiments of quantum dynamics, physicists found that when they used a particle detector they would observe light acting as discrete particulars; however, when physicists used a screen, they would see light behaving as a wave pattern (Zohar 41). In other words, the way the light appears to behave depends on the observational method, with the resulting contradiction that the particle and wave function differently and have differing definable qualities. One possible explanation is that the act of observing causes the light to function either as a wave or a particle; however, other interpretations are that the particular method of observing, or the "reality tunnels," or our own frameworks used to make observations, determines what our observations mean to us (Wilson html).

aspects of what Robert Anton Wilson calls the “reality tunnels” that form our identities. This method shows how we behave reflects our own vantage points, which are located by chance in time and space and, in turn, affect not only what we see, but what exists and what this existence means for us. Just as we are located in a particular time and place, so are our discourse practices. The situated nature of the mystery provides a way to recognize how “reality tunnels” are inherent in discourse. We can use the particular anti-essentialist and anti-emancipatory nature of electracy to develop postfeminist pedagogical strategies in the composition classroom. For example, instead of just creating heuristics to teach our students how to become members of our academic discourse community, we can use the mystery as an “aleatory method of invention” that operates in “an open-ended fashion that is more random and based on chance connections” (Hawk html). The mystery uses this type of invention by connecting students’ personal experiences to their cultural contexts. This type of invention is different from asking students to use academic discourse practices to interrogate texts (including cultural texts). Instead, in the mystery, students are asked to generate texts from accidental connections because “we are our accidents” (Hawk html). In turn, the mystery provides an opportunity for students to see their socially constructed identities as illusory, which can help us to avoid essentialist or emancipatory positions. The mystery also provides an opportunity to see how there are parts of us that resist categorization because “we derive our identities through social discourses and interactions with institutions [and] we cannot predict how they will all come together in/through us”

(Hawk html). The mystery genre provides a discursive opportunity for students to “look for associative connections (not logical or figural ones) that create an uncanny or accidental relationship.”¹⁶⁸ Students are asked to see uncanny relationships, or unexpected connections, without resorting to epistemic violence.¹⁶⁹ They can use the mystery to examine the discursive frames they have in order to participate in their discourse communities, using their experiences as what Ulmer calls a “cultural archive” (214).¹⁷⁰

In my personal experience, Ulmer’s method of mystery was valuable as a tool to mediate student resistance. When I taught a feminist themed course, I asked my students to use print-based literacy practices. The next semester I applied Ulmer’s post-critical use of electracies in another freshman composition course.¹⁷¹ Unlike my experiences with the thematic course, which in its structure was firmly rooted in essentialist values

¹⁶⁸ I use uncanny to mean an “unhomelike” experience in which they may have discomfort or a sense of unfamiliarity when coming in contact with members of other discourse communities.

¹⁶⁹ There are various examples of mysteries available on the web, and in all these examples the structure, content and aesthetic vary widely. One way to conceptualize a mystery is by using the metaphor of a recipe, which has structure but can be improvisational as well (Jarratt html). The first ingredient in this “recipe” is our experiences, which Ulmer divides up in the categories of different discourse communities, such as home, school, work and entertainment. The second ingredient is to identify an icon or image that can metaphorically connect these disparate discourse communities through accidental linkages. For example, students could be asked to use search engines, or non-linear browsing on the web, to identify an image. This image isn’t logically derived, but reflects a deeply personal and perhaps unconscious relationship of ourselves and to the different ways we make meaning and communicate it in different situations. The last ingredient is to see how these linkages can help us “adapt the pattern to devise new schema” (Hawk 832). With this recipes, students “cook” new ways to look at personal experiences within different discourse communities.

¹⁷⁰ It is important to note that Ulmer suggests that the mystery can be a print-based activity if it relies on many of the chance connections that the digital space provides.

¹⁷¹ I used the Robert Scholes, Nancy R. Comley and Gregory Ulmer’s *Text Book: An Introduction of Literary Language*, which applied Ulmer’s theories about electracies, and the pedagogical practice of the mystery, to the study of literature.

and emancipatory foundations, this literature course was well-received. I saw how aleatory procedures, rather than pre-described and pre-determined heuristics, opened up an engagement with literature that was exciting. I also saw how the accidental linkages between personal experiences and literary texts could lead to insights I couldn't have anticipated.¹⁷² The mystery is a pedagogical practice that can mediate the “contact zones” between the differing epistemes of postfeminism and feminism. Individuals who participate in digital and print-based mediums have developed the ability to go in and out of different literacies and can potentially shift back and forth between drastically different epistemes.¹⁷³ The mystery uses the nature of the digital space to facilitate these shifts; and it is through this shifting among modes of communication and knowing that postfeminist pedagogies can emerge.

The use of the digital space doesn't have to be limited to the mystery. The digital space opens up digital literacy, a type of literacy which can be used to appeal to postfeminist sensibilities. Digital literacy involves different ways for our students to interact with each other beyond those than allowed in oral or print-based communication. Before I ever learned about post-critical uses of digital literacies, I used digital spaces pedagogically and saw discursive possibilities that I didn't see in the “traditional” classroom.¹⁷⁴ For example, in using “online chats” as an alternative to group discussions,

¹⁷² In hindsight, I wonder what would have happened if I had introduced electracies into the feminist-themed course.

¹⁷³ In fact, just as a literate culture is still an oral culture because print does not replace oral communication, the digital space does not replace prior communication processes and/or epistemologies.

¹⁷⁴ I realize that these mediums are becoming more and more accepted as pedagogically mainstream.

I noticed marked differences in how students expressed themselves, and in how they addressed me, sometimes more enthusiastically (and more playfully) than they behaved in oral or print-based pedagogical contexts. I also saw how various problems associated with “gendered communication” (such as men participating more than women) occurred less frequently in these online chats. When using blogs in the classroom, I saw students, who struggled with invention in the process of writing an essay or research paper, be able to brainstorm successfully in blog entries. When searching for and watching YouTube videos that were related to a text we were reading, I saw students engage more enthusiastically with the text.¹⁷⁵ Because non-traditional discourse practices are located in a space that is ever-emerging and ever-evolving, this space opens up exciting possibilities for experimentation. The digital space is reliant on exponential changes in technology that occur more rapidly than with prior previous changes in communicative apparatuses, and this means less of a chance that heuristics or rules will become codified. Just as we think we have become proficient in a discourse practice, another one comes along that makes the previous practice obsolete or irrelevant. It is a dynamic space that resists all emancipatory and essentialist attempts, partly because of the inability to freeze discourse practices.

In addition to using the digital space because it already is non-emancipatory and non-essentialist, we must create develop spaces in a postfeminist composition studies that

¹⁷⁵ I am sure that there are newer technologies, or ones I am not familiar with, that might also augment traditional pedagogical practices.

appeal to postfeminist sensibilities. To re-conceive composition studies beyond an emancipatory and essentialist framework is more than introducing any one particular assignment into the classroom; it means seeing how the writing program itself may be rooted in that framework and what structural changes can take place in order to subvert this framework. In addition to trying to use specific pedagogical strategies to appeal to the postfeminist sensibilities of our students, we must be open to restructuring the writing program itself. An important component in academic writing programs is the freshman composition course. Some universities are already re-structuring the composition class, such as seeing it as an “Introduction to the Humanities,” “Writing Across the Curriculum” or “Learning Community” course.¹⁷⁶ However, the systems and methods of such courses in themselves do not necessarily subvert the emancipatory and essentialist features of the educational process. For example, in Stanford’s re-structuring of their freshman composition courses, they created interdisciplinary seminars called “Thinking Matters,” and “Education as Self-Fashioning,” which are “intended to help students reflect on ways they can fashion satisfying lives for themselves through education” (Stanford Report 8/2/12 html). Such a course explicitly reinforces the idea that education itself is liberatory and implicitly suggests that such a course can aid this liberation. We can also see attempts to restructure the writing program in the use of non-traditional teaching practices such as portfolios, auto-ethnographies, creative projects, field-trips,

¹⁷⁶ See Keith Wheeler’s *Education for a Sustainable Future: A Paradigm of Hope for the 21st Century*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum, 2000.

and service learning.¹⁷⁷ These practices in themselves do not prevent an essentialist and emancipatory framework. For example, service learning can be emancipatory when students establish “civic literacy” through being of service to their communities, so as to recognize, according to Hart, “the individual’s right and responsibility to participate publicly; a sense of political efficacy; value for the principles of equality, community and liberty; and the requisite intellectual skills to participate in public debate” (18). Using service-learning to help students develop a democratic citizenship in order to resolve these societal problems puts them in the privileged position of liberators in their own communities. Introducing students to the discourse practices of the university without acknowledging the nature of those practices can re-inscribe problematic values as much as any other “traditional” teaching practices. Other writing programs are being structured as an introduction to rhetoric and/or discourse studies, rather than simply servicing other disciplines.¹⁷⁸ While this rhetorical focus may hinder the goal of indoctrinating students into the other discourse communities of the university and stop departments from relying so much on contingent faculty, this move does not eliminate all the essentialist and emancipatory elements of our own discipline, which will continue to exist within the composition classroom when they aren’t acknowledged or challenged.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ See Kathleen Pithouse’s *Making Connections: Self-Study & Social Action*. New York: Peter Lang, 2009.

¹⁷⁸ For example, see St. John’s University explanation of their writing program at <http://www.stjohns.edu/academic/centers/iws/what_is_writing_studies.stj>

¹⁷⁹ Sharon Crowley argues that the very existence of a first-year composition course is bound to the essentialist and emancipatory framework. She claims it is bound because its current role is a gatekeeper, whose purpose is to indoctrinate students into the academic discourse as a service to the rest of the

How, then, are we to challenge the essentialist and emancipatory elements of our own discipline and restructure the freshman writing program so that it appeals to the postfeminist sensibilities of our students? To create such a program would have to reflect the awareness of how the underlying foundations of essentialism and emancipation can be problematic, and how these foundations can inspire epistemic violence and encourage student resistance. A first-semester freshman composition course could introduce students to the rhetorical choices available in general forms of discourse production, while a second-semester freshman composition course could address the underlying foundations of academic discourse production and could problematize how academic discourse tends to rely on those foundations.¹⁸⁰ In such a postfeminist writing program, both the first-semester and second-semester freshman composition course could expose students to new and different ways to envision the world, and the way the world is envisioned in academic discourse communities, without negating their previous epistemes. Depending on the teaching philosophy of the instructor, the departmental ethos, and the political climate of the institution, there are a variety of possible objectives

university. If the writing program's role isn't a gatekeeper, what is the purpose of a postfeminist writing program? In order to answer this question, we need to add postfeminism to our disciplinary focus.

¹⁸⁰ This course could be designed to problematize discourse practices is to see how postmodernism addresses the emancipatory and essentialist underpinnings of academic discourse. Students could engage with academic and cultural texts that problematize these underpinnings and experiment with post-critical ways to subvert these foundations. In such a course, postmodernism can be used to interrogate the ways every utterance is epistemologically bound, and, in turn, has moral implications. However, postmodernism could be problematized to show how it can't reconcile all the epistemological and ethical contradictions inherent in our discourse practices. Students could learn how critical and modernist practices may positively inform our ways knowing, being, communicating, and behaving. In exposing the contact zone of postmodernism and modernism in a freshman composition course, students could see how, when world-views are shaken, when what we know is challenged, and when we grieve the loss of what we assumed and relied on to be true, we don't have to resort to epistemic violence.

in the composition classroom. One such objective that could fit into many of these contexts is an introduction to various academic discourse communities, the epistemes underlying the discourse practices of these communities, and the rhetorical nature of these practices. This purpose allows many different pedagogical strategies, whether rooted in current-traditional, social epistemic or expressivist frameworks. We can ask our students to problematize the discourse practices and underlying epistemes in both academic and non-academic discourse communities. In introducing our students to the rhetorical nature of all discourse communities, we can move past the desire to indoctrinate students into the academic discourse community. At the same time, we can introduce our students to the particular disciplinary focus of rhetoric and composition studies. In this introduction, students can see how we live in many different discursive spaces and the benefits of being able to shift between various discourse communities. A freshman writing program can introduce students to the various disciplines of the university and to the rhetorical nature of those disciplines. This program could help mediate student resistance by introducing students to contact zones of nonacademic and academic discourse practices. They could learn to see the cultural and epistemological differences between various discourse communities without fear of epistemic violence.

In order to prepare graduate students to administer a postfeminist writing program we would have to develop graduate level courses that teach these students about postfeminism and how to appeal to postfeminist sensibilities. These courses can give future compositionists the opportunity to engage with emerging ideas in and out of our

field, and allow them to experiment with new pedagogies in teaching their own courses.¹⁸¹ My “call” for a postfeminist composition studies could be directed to graduate students, who are at this early point in their development as compositionists, through a graduate level course. This course would expose graduate students to the problematic nature of the essentialist and emancipatory connections between feminism and composition studies. Not only could students learn about the postfeminist condition and how to appeal to postfeminist sensibilities, students could be asked to experiment with how to develop new non-emancipatory and non-essentialist pedagogical strategies in the postfeminist classroom. This experimentation would allow students to both apply what they have learned from composition studies and develop their own focuses that might not have already occurred in the discipline of composition studies; the classroom would become their laboratory.¹⁸² Graduate instructors could either add a section about postfeminism to an existing graduate teaching assistant (GTA) training course or a GTA training course could be developed around the issues I explore within this dissertation. For example, there could be considerations of different types of composition theories, including current-traditional, process, social epistemic, and post-process writing theories; feminist pedagogies, such as collaboration and argumentation; and student resistance in

¹⁸¹ In my own experience as a graduate student, taking graduate level courses and teaching freshman composition augmented each other in developing a teaching philosophy and orientation towards rhetoric and composition studies as a discipline.

¹⁸² When I took the GTA training course at UT Arlington, I was exposed to many of the different possible focuses in the discipline of composition studies. However, problematizing these focuses was not the goal; instead, students were asked to apply what they learned about composition studies to the freshman composition courses they taught.

GTA training curriculums in order to problematize the essentialist and emancipatory foundations of composition studies. To do this problematizing would help students in developing their own freshman composition courses. One of the requirements of these training courses could be to create syllabi for postfeminist freshman composition courses.¹⁸³ Making graduate teaching assistants aware of the problematic foundations of emancipation and essentialism within composition studies can help us move our discipline into different directions, opening us up to unexpected possibilities. Graduate students' roles in developing postfeminist composition studies are important, because as Thomas Kuhn argues, "Almost always the men who achieve these fundamental inventions of a new paradigm have been either very young or very new to the field whose paradigm they change" (html). Developing a graduate course that problematizes the relationship between feminism and composition studies could encourage graduate students to envision a postfeminist composition classroom. In turn, this envisioning might help the discipline of composition studies do the same.

At the colleges where I have taught at, writing programs relied on a combination of current-traditional, social epistemic and expressivist pedagogies. Often times, there were conflicts between teachers who favored one type of teaching practice, depending on the composition theory they subscribed to. Postfeminism's particular stance towards feminism could help compositionists rethink the often antagonistic relationships between

¹⁸³ Because many universities are dependent on graduate teaching assistants to staff the bulk of freshman composition courses, asking students to create and use syllabi which address the postfeminist condition has the greatest potential to actually develop our discipline's awareness of this condition. This would open up even more ways of envisioning a postfeminist composition studies.

post-process, process, social epistemic, and current-traditional pedagogies. While feminism is articulated, repudiated, expressed, and disavowed by postfeminism, students who grow up in a post-feminist context accept many of the contradictions posed by these different responses to feminism. Similarly, compositionists could learn to embrace the contradictory nature of the many teaching practices in our field, and not be as quick to disavow previous paradigms. We can learn from postfeminism's positive and negative view of feminism and recognize the benefits and limits of all pedagogical practices in our discipline. For example, we can learn from postfeminism's acceptance of contradictions in our attempts to resolve an ongoing debate between process writing and social epistemic theorists.¹⁸⁴ Currently, one answer to this debate is to posit a post-process approach, in which generalizable pedagogical strategies are abandoned in favor of "hermeneutic guesses" dependent on specific social contexts and intentions.¹⁸⁵ In conceiving a postfeminist composition studies, there are a few questions to ask: What roles would expressivist and social epistemic pedagogies have in the classroom? Would a postfeminist pedagogy necessitate a post-process approach, or would there be a return to the current-traditional model? Because the process writing approach came about in response to current-traditional model of composition studies, the return to traditional values present in the backlash and free-market strands of postfeminism might suggest a return to current-traditional teaching strategies. Current-traditional teaching strategies

¹⁸⁴ See David Smit's *The End of Composition Studies*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2004.

¹⁸⁵ See Kent's *Post-process Theory: Beyond the Writing-process Paradigm*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1999.

would not fit within a postfeminist framework because the model favors traditionally masculine discourse practices. Instead of the current-traditional appealing to postfeminist sensibilities, one might argue that backlash strand of postfeminism would favor an expressivist approach, in which students are free to compose using masculine or feminine discourse practices. The free-market strand of postfeminism might reinforce the expressivist approach because of its emphasis on individual agency. Because postfeminism encompasses a postmodernist strand that resists essentialist notions of gendered identity and emancipatory goals, there could be an integration of some aspects of both the expressivist and social epistemic forms of writing pedagogies. The complex nature of the postmodern strand of postfeminism makes possible for a semblance of identity, but one that is fluid and contradictory; in this complexity is the possibility for both a social epistemic and expressivist point of view. Because gender is performed, and this performance is bound to the social context of the individual, the dualistic tension between expressivist and social epistemic writing theories may disappear. Post-process theory could also be used to appeal to postfeminist sensibilities, emphasizing how writing is a public social act and writing is contextual. The postmodernist strand of postfeminism is consistent with the postmodern elements of post-process theory. A postfeminist composition studies does not negate the basic underlying principle of the social and expressivist frameworks, in which we can recognize and learn from generalizable patterns in discourse production. We can recognize generalizable patterns within the backlash and free-market strands of postfeminism, although these patterns are

contradictory, fluid and complex in various conceptualizations of identity and agency. The post-process consideration of the contextual scope of discourse production can augment a non-essentialist and non-emancipatory postfeminist composition studies. This augmentation is possible because post-process emphasizes disparate and contradictory forms of writing pedagogies and resists attempts to create a “theory of everything” within the discipline of composition studies. Post-process also doesn’t claim to free students from the oppressive forms of discourse production generated by specific regimes of power.¹⁸⁶ The post-process resistance to a unified notion of discourse production is consistent with the postfeminist conceptualizations of identity as fragmented, fluid and contradictory.¹⁸⁷ Compositionists might learn from the coexistence of contradictory

¹⁸⁶ It is important to note that so far I have ignored another form of framework of writing, i.e. that resulting from a cognitive framework. I have done so because the framework does not necessarily reflect the feminist pedagogical focus on essentialism and emancipation. Because a cognitive framework does not have this focus, a cognitive approach might help postfeminism avoid the nihilism that post-process might lead to, while also moving past the limits of the socio-epistemic and expressivist forms of process writing that post-process criticizes. The cognitive model of the composing process developed out of various studies that attempted to empirically map the actual thought processes that gave rise to various forms of discourse processes.

¹⁸⁶ In delineating the three strands of postfeminism, I have also tried to describe the thought processes that give rise to a complex set of epistemes. Additionally, I examined some of the cognitive elements of student resistance in describing a postfeminist challenge to feminism. By looking at the choices students make in the composing process, the cognitive model opens up a discussion of agency in the context of discourse production. In other words, writing isn’t just a social act, it is a private act.

¹⁸⁷ In this conception of identity, choice is important to both the backlash to feminism and free-market strands of postfeminism. The cognitive model in composition studies might appeal to postfeminist sensibilities because it focuses on the role agency has in the composing process. In establishing a postfeminist composition classroom, we could rely on empirical understandings of how agency can be developed in the composing process. Additionally, a postfeminist pedagogy could be examined in a qualitative empirical manner in order to see if it aids in developing agency and mediates student resistance, if increased agency and less student resistance are correlated. For example, a Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Test, which looks at the level of anxiety and self-evaluation of competency in the course of student’s composing processes, could be given before and after a post-feminist pedagogically developed composition course (See <http://vrcbd.missouri.edu/pdf/DALYWAT.PDF> for copy of test).

strands of postfeminism. The free-market and backlash strands of postfeminism emphasize the importance of personal agency; they also suggest that our gender roles are both socially and biologically constructed and constrained. The contradictory frameworks in composition studies can also reflect the paradox of being socially constructed at the same time as having personal agency. In accepting this paradox, perhaps essentialist and emancipatory views of the composing process might be seen as unnecessary constraints in the discourse production that occurs within the composition classroom.

In my initial call for a postfeminist composition studies, I recognize there are many possibilities I can't currently envision. Some of these possibilities may be present in the emerging research of composition studies. For example, new research on emotions and affect may suggest non-essentialist views of identity and other post-critical theories may challenge emancipatory frameworks. Introducing postfeminism to composition studies can encourage us find new ways to avoid epistemic violence. Avoiding epistemic violence through our pedagogies might not be entirely possible, but recognizing that we do engage in this violence may help. This recognition of epistemic violence will encourage us to embrace new paradigm shifts and help move past just asking our students to say "yes" to our frame of reference and help us say "yes" to theirs. Saying "yes" to our students' epistemes can inspire us try to change some of the problematic elements of the academy and aid in attempts to re-think the academy. To fully challenge the emancipatory and essentialist foundations of composition studies, we must recognize that

any pedagogical method can be a tool of epistemic violence.¹⁸⁸ For example, I saw this epistemic violence in non-traditional teaching practices when I taught as an adjunct at a community college in Michigan, in a “transformative learning” freshman composition program that used the ideas of Jack Mezirow, Peter Elbow and Paulo Freire. Transformative learning argues that personal transformation occurs through critical understanding and that social change occurs because of this transformation. My pedagogical objective as the composition instructor was to facilitate this transformation through helping students revise their own writing and critically reflect on that revision. Rather than evaluating each individual essay for evidence of a mastery of skills, we as a department would collectively review each student’s portfolio of essays, including drafts and revisions, paying particular attention to evidence that the students had actually shifted their frames of references and evolved into successful participants in our discourse community. Students were also asked to write a “self-reflective” essay to go along with their portfolio to highlight what revisions they made and why they made them. During these portfolio reviews, the instructors would complain about students who demonstrated resistance to making substantial revisions and their simplistic self-reflective efforts. Much of the impetus for this transformative learning approach was

¹⁸⁸ For example, some doctoral programs are re-thinking the genre of the dissertation, allowing students to submit performance-based, hypertext, auto-ethnographic and collaborative works. In rethinking what we do in the freshman composition classroom, instructors are using portfolios to provide alternative methods of assessment. However, these attempts do not in themselves necessarily challenge the epistemological frameworks of essentialism and emancipation as guiding practices in the classroom. In other words, we are expected to be conversant and proficient in the discourses of the university, but epistemic violence isn’t simply rooted in the forms of this discourse, but in the epistemes that underlie these forms.

dissatisfaction with the current-traditional model, which emphasized mastery of a set of skills demonstrated in a successful final product; however, I might have just been doing a cloaked form of teaching mastery *and* transformation. At the time, I felt incredibly uncomfortable during this assessment process and was left with a series of unanswered questions: *Who was I to determine this growth? Was it my job to inspire transformation? Were these students actually “growing” or just learning to appear like they were?* I didn’t know the answers to these questions, but I knew they reflected cracks in the essentialist and emancipatory foundations of composition studies.¹⁸⁹ I couldn’t ignore the fact that every teaching/discourse practice I was taught during my graduate education and/or in teaching at other colleges was rooted in certain epistemes; ones that might conflict with others, and might cause resistance from those who have not been initiated

¹⁸⁹ I first became aware of these cracks when, during my graduate coursework in rhetoric and composition, I was introduced to post-modernism. I also became aware of these cracks while training to be a graduate assistant. I was asked to question the foundations of all discourse practices and, at the same time, I was asked to maintain certain discourse practices while teaching freshman composition. For example, during a graduate teaching training seminar in which we were asked to discuss any difficult experiences in order to develop better teaching practices, I brought up my experience with an international student who had struggled with not only how to avoid plagiarism, but also why he should do so at all. I said I was impressed by the level of synthesis involved in his using seamlessly so many other people’s words and had only recognized that they weren’t his own words because they were from the readings I had assigned. However, just as I had been taught in my graduate teaching training course, I confronted my student with evidence of his plagiarism and told him, “You have to use your own words.” In reaction to my concern, he responded, “How can someone own words?” On face value, this might have seemed like a simple misunderstanding, but I realized that it was a legitimate question and responded that with intellectual property, in a sense, someone could own words. The student accepted this explanation readily and cited the sources in a standard way in his revision. In response to my anecdote about this International student, everyone seemed to agree that we still had to enforce these standards because it was the expectation of our discourse community. I felt disappointed because no one seemed particularly interested in questioning the foundations for such standards. I felt comfortable teaching students standards that were part of the genre of academic research papers; however, I was uncomfortable doing so without understanding the ethical and political dimensions of those standards. While I was learning that we should question the ethical and political dimensions of *everything*; on the other hand, I was also to learn the hard way that people do not always do this in terms of their pedagogical practices.

and/or indoctrinated into those practices. I saw cracks in the foundations of what I was supposed to base my teaching practices on, and I wondered if there was anything out there to replace this shaky ground.

As a fairly new academic discipline, compositionists are in a unique position to address this shaky ground. We can recognize and accept paradigm shifts in ways that more established disciplines might resist. Because of the applied nature of composition studies, we can see firsthand the effect these changes in social conditions can have in our classrooms. Despite this unique disciplinary perspective, we do have traditions within our discipline that can run counter to these tendencies to embrace new ideas because of the emancipatory and essentialist foundations within our discipline. Recognizing and challenging these foundations will help us to move forward disciplinarily and allow us to have a deeper understanding of where we have been as a discipline, and perhaps where we might go. According to Thomas Kuhn “no paradigm ever solves all the problems it defines”; one of the challenges in developing a postfeminist composition studies is to not view it as necessarily resolving all the contradictions and limitations in our discipline. However, the scientific concept of a paradigm shift might be inadequate in describing how a postfeminist composition studies might develop because, according to Dashu Nisula, our discipline tends to shift focus rather than abandon the paradigms that have come before (17). Despite this reluctance to abandon previous paradigms, composition studies is a discipline that is always reinventing itself. Because discourse practices continually evolve, our disciplinary focus must keep up with these changes. For

example, our increasing awareness of the importance of genre in the context of discourse practices has led to a championing of writing across the curriculum courses. In addition, as the purpose of the university shifts from creating intellectuals to preparing our students to become knowledge workers in the larger economy, there is more emphasis on the real world forms of writing. It is in this space of reinvention that postfeminist composition lies because, in a sense, our discipline is always of tomorrow. My dissertation has attempted to envision this tomorrow.

According to Richard Gebhardt, our relatively young discipline is growing because increased professionalism has allowed us to grow in “rigor and sophistication” (8). In developing our scholarly identity as a discipline, we are in a unique position to go beyond the problematic aspects of academic discourse as a whole. We are in a unique position because we see firsthand what effect our scholarship has on our students. The fact that student resistance is seen as concern and this concern influences what we do in the composition studies is a testament to this effect.¹⁹⁰ We are in a unique position as a discipline because many compositionists have administrative control and responsibilities as writing program directors. This position allows us to provide leadership in the academy and help reform purposes of higher education. Stephen North argues that one of our main concerns is how to keep a foothold in the academy, particularly because we have such disparate perspectives about what we do as compositionists. I believe this is

¹⁹⁰ An example of how our research is often rooted in the laboratory of the classroom is the way in which more and more scholarship is coming out of teachers in community college settings.

where our greatest power lies. Our ambivalence as a discipline affords us ways to reinvent what the academy is and can be. Other disciplines can only reinforce the academy as what it is, while we can move the academy into the future. Other disciplines may not want to acknowledge the postfeminist cultural shift, being so invested in essentialism and emancipation for their purposes and identity. Our disciplinary purposes and identity can be as champions for a new way of doing scholarship. According to Elaine Howard Ecklund, academia must “abandon disciplines” in order to address complicated research problems that are interdisciplinary in nature (html). Our strength is that we are interdisciplinary, turning to the disciplines of English, Communication, Anthropology, Philosophy, and others to inform our scholarship and teaching practices. We can envision a postfeminist composition studies because we are interdisciplinary and contrary. Our challenge as a discipline is not to let go of our gadfly nature in trying to establish ourselves in the academy. If we listen to Emily Dickinson and “dwell in possibility,” envisioning a postfeminist composition studies is possible.

Chapter 5

Epilogue

As compositionists we have the privilege of witnessing meaning-making processes and attempts to communicate meaning. We can choose to see the classroom as a sacred space where discourse is not only born, but is destroyed and reborn. This process may be exciting, overwhelming, fulfilling, or even humiliating, just as any other human discursive experience can be. However, teaching composition can *teach us* to embrace multiple possibilities without clinging to the illusion of ourselves and the world as fixed and immutable. In my own experiences as a composition instructor, I had to face my own illusions. While I didn't realize it when I taught a feminist themed course years ago, my ignorance of the postfeminist condition prevented me from understanding why my students resisted the topic of feminism. I expected my students to recognize the ways I thought feminism has influenced our culture. I didn't think I was doing epistemic violence because I thought I was exposing my students to feminist viewpoints in order for them to see how we are shaped by feminism. I assumed that it was my position to help my students see something they didn't see already; in other words, I thought it was my role to enlighten them. Ironically, at the same time I thought my students were "stuck" in their own point of views, I was stuck. I couldn't see outside my frame of reference. While teaching this course my own frame of reference began to shift as I tried to understand my students' resistance to feminism. I realized I also had postfeminist sensibilities, such as in my ambivalence about gender roles in the context of being a

mother and wife. I realized I did see value in some traditional beliefs about femininity.¹⁹¹ In trying to understand my students' resistance, I started to see how my discomfort was indicative of postfeminism, even if my options reflected the advances in feminism. I saw how my life choices aren't necessarily reflective of the values of either feminism or pre-feminism, but instead reflect a complex matrix of these cultural contexts.¹⁹² Many of us in composition studies are influenced by postfeminism and I am not the only composition instructor who has internal conflicts. Maybe by being aware of these conflicts we can be better positioned to develop our discipline.

¹⁹¹ One of the catalysts for recognizing my own postfeminist condition was getting married. The advances of feminism had afforded me the opportunity to go to graduate school, to delay marriage and motherhood until my late twenties, and to believe I could survive without economically depending on my husband. Because of feminist activism, these were not life choices I had to fight for; growing up in the wake of second-wave feminism, I felt good about my life choices. These choices were mapped out for me and to make traditional choices would have been strange and unfamiliar. It was this cultural position that inspired me to create a feminist-themed course. However, the advances of feminism hadn't prepared me for the struggles I would encounter. After getting married, I had internal conflicts about motherhood, housework, employment, and economic dependence that I wasn't sure how to resolve. Feminism seemed inadequate in resolving these conflicts. My beliefs about femininity conflicted with my beliefs about the equality of the sexes. For example, I felt uncomfortable if I made more money than my husband or if I depended on my husband financially. After my daughter was born, I felt guilty because I wasn't contributing financially as much as my husband because I wanted to stay home to care for her. My own expectations of what it meant to be happy and feminist collided. I couldn't blame this discomfort on oppressive patriarchal conditions because I really did have choices. We could have eventually put my daughter in child-care and I would have learned to be okay about making more money than my husband.

¹⁹² It is important to note that my internal conflicts haven't gone away. For example, I am thinking about taking my husband's surname because it would make my life easier living in a small rural community. On the other hand, I also have the desire to keep my maiden name in order to maintain a separate work identity from my husband. I continue to exist in the grey area of postfeminism. At times I am ambivalent, other times I am unsure what choices would make me happy.

APPENDIX A

FIRST-SEMESTER FRESHMAN COMPOSITION SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Sample First-Semester Freshman Composition Syllabus

“We’re all looking from the point of view of our reality tunnels. And when we begin to realize that we’re all looking from the point of view of our reality tunnels, we find it much easier to understand where other people are coming from.” --Robert Anton Wilson, author of *Schrödinger's Cat*

Course Description

In this course, we will focus on how we “compose” the world and are “composed” by the world. You already compose yourself in different ways, with different people, and in different contexts. You are also composed by your prior experiences, the communities you belong to, and your relationships with others. We compose differently when we speak and write. We even engage in a composing process when we *read*.

You will learn some of the reasons why we compose ourselves and our worlds differently depending on our situations. You will practice composing in contexts you are and aren’t familiar with. In this course, we focus on written, verbal and visual forms of composing.

The goal of this course is for you to develop “agency,” or choices in how we compose ourselves, while recognizing the ways in which we are “socially constructed,” or influenced by our world.

Our class will be a space where you can experiment with composing yourself and the world-- but this experimentation can be challenging. You will probably feel more comfortable composing in certain ways than in others. You may feel more comfortable in communicating in one situation than another. When you feel uncomfortable, frustrated and/or discouraged, keep in mind psychologist and author M. Scott Peck’s insight:

“The truth is that our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers.” Hopefully, we can move past any uncomfortableness we may feel in learning to compose in new ways, and see how enjoyable the composing process can be.

Objectives of this course:

- To learn the rhetorical nature of different discourse practices.
- To engage in multimodal literacies.
- To better negotiate between different discourse communities.
- To develop composing processes in and outside of the classroom.

Note about use of technology in the class:

You will learn in the process of the course how to develop your “digital literacy.” Digital literacy includes using the web, social media, and other technologies to understand the world. You will create a YouTube video and webpage, compose written text with Google docs and blog in this course. Some of you may be more comfortable composing in a digital context. However, you will not need to know how to use these technologies prior to this course and you will have the opportunity for instruction in using these different technologies. When I am evaluating your work, I will also keep in mind that we all have different aptitudes and comfort level when it comes to technology. You will have access in and outside of the class to the technology in order to complete the assignments.

Assignments (Details attached to syllabus) --Total 100% --100 possible points.

Blog Entries/Responses: 20% --20 pts.

Mystory: 25% --25 pts.

Digital Autoethnography: 25% --25 pts.

Literacy Narrative: 25% --25 pts.

Online Portfolio 5% --5 pts.

Course Schedule:

Week 1:

Read & Discuss in class: Labov’s 6 Part Model of Narrative

(The Labovian approach treats personal narrative as story text and produces structural analyses of specific oral personal event narratives.)

Tell an anecdote about yourself using Labov’s model (to a classmate, and then to a friend)

Read & Discuss “Storytelling, narration and ‘what I am’ story” --<http://writing.spaces.org>

Watch YouTube Video “What is a story.”

Blog Entry--Transcribe your anecdote you told in class

Blog Entry Response--Expand a classmate’s anecdote into a story

HW: Read “Fieldwriting: the grammar of observation,” from *FieldWorking: Reading and Writing Research*

Week 2:

Read “Prologue” from *Hunger of Memory* in class

Watch Episode of “This American Life” in class

Do “Fieldwork” during class; Write a “verbal snapshot” in class (*Fieldworking: Reading and Writing Research*).

Blog Entry--Continue your “fieldwork” at home, share your notes in a blog

Blog Entry Response--Read and respond to a classmate's fieldwork
HW: Read "Autoethnography: An Overview" by *Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams & Arthur P. Bochner*

Week 3:

Watch Examples of Digital Autoethnographies on YouTube, Discuss Autoethnographies in Class, watch, Morgan Spurlock's documentary "Super Size Me"

Digital Autoethnography assigned

Blog Entry--Brainstorm some ideas for your autoethnography

Blog Response--Help a classmate brainstorm

Week 4:

Work on Autoethnographies

Week 5:

Conferences

Week 6:

Present Autoethnographies

HW: Read Chapter 10: Rogerian Argument and Common Ground

Blog Entry: Discuss your classmates autoethnographies

Blog Response: Tell a classmate what you liked about their autoethnography

Week 7:

Watch YouTube Video of Carl Rogers' Counseling

Write a Rogerian Letter in Class

Read in class & discuss excerpt from *You Just Don't Understand* by Deborah Tannen

Take quiz, "What is your argument style," Discuss in class

Blog Entry: Discuss why you might have your argument style

Blog Response: Respond to a classmate who has a different argument style

HW: Chapter 1, 2, 3 & 4 from *Everything's an Argument*, Ethos, Pathos & Logos

Chapter 5 from Perspectives in Argument (Toulmin Method)

Week 8:

Watch YouTube Examples of Toulmin Model Analysis, Do Toulmin Analysis of a Magazine Ad in class, Discuss Ethos, Pathos & Logos, Analyze excerpt of debate in class

HW: Chapter 3 from *Perspectives in Argument*; Read Chapter 6 from *Everything's An Argument*

Blog Entry: Pick and share a YouTube video to analyze

Blog Response: Analyze someone else's video

Week 9:

Work on Rhetorical Analysis in class

Literacy Narrative Assigned

Week 10:

Work on Literacy Narratives, Conferences

Week 11:

Present Literacy Narratives

HW: Excerpts from Chapter 4 of *Textbook*

Blog Entry: Reflect on your literacy narrative experience

Blog Response: Respond to someone else's literacy narrative

Week 12:

Mystory Assigned

Work on Mystory

Blog Entry: Brainstorm Mystories

Blog Response: Help someone else brainstorm mystery

Week 13:

Work on Mystory & Portfolio

Blog entry: Discuss what difficulties you are having with the mystery

Blog response: Make suggestions about classmate's mystery

Week 14:

Conferences

Week 15:

Present Mystory, Turn in Portfolios

Blog entry: Reflect on class

Blog response: Respond to someone else's mystery

Online Portfolio Assignment Details

5% or 5 possible points

Objective: To demonstrate ability to compile and organize different multimodal texts in a digital space.

Goal: Your online portfolio will include the digital autoethnography, digital literacy narrative, the mystery and your blog entries.

Method: You will upload the portfolio to our class cloud, using Google docs to link to your YouTube video, webpages, and blog entries. You will also use Google docs for the written parts of the various assignments.

Evaluation: You will present your online portfolio to the class. Based on their overall impression of your portfolio, they will rate it on a scale of 1-5.

You will receive one point each for:

Content --you receive the point if you have all the assignments in your portfolio

Organization --you receive the point if your audience finds it easy to navigate

Interest--you receive the point if your audience finds your portfolio interesting

Originality--you receive the point if your audience finds your portfolio inspiring

Teaching--you receive the point if your audience learns something from your portfolio

We will average the scores from all your classmates to determine how many points out of five you will receive for this assignment.

Blog Entries Assignment Details

25% (25 points)

Objectives: To develop and brainstorm ideas. To develop audience awareness and authorial intent. To learn to collaboratively compose. To learn to write within certain constraints.

Goal: To collaborate and engage in digital conversations in and outside of class.

Method:

After most class periods you will be asked to compose a blog entry and respond to a classmate's blog entry. I will respond to some of your blog entries as well. The idea is for you to collaborate and engage in conversations outside of the class. Blogs will help you develop and brainstorm ideas. Blogs will also allow you to test out your ideas on a real audience. The length of each blog entry will vary based on what you are asked to do in class, but a good rule of thumb is that it should be around 200 words. When you write a blog response, you will be reading a classmate's blog entry and be asked to respond to it. You should try to respond to different people's blog entries over the course of the semester.

Evaluation:

20 pts. for completeness. You have 20 blog entries and responses total. You will receive a point for each blog entry/response you complete. You will not receive partial credit if your blogging is not around the assigned word count (for example, 159 out of 200 words

will not receive a point, while 198 out of 200 words will.

Digital Autoethnography Assignment Details
25 % of total grade (25 points possible)

Objectives:

To think critically about and see the possible connections between personal identity and culture.

To demonstrate and develop different kinds of literacies.

To learn how to use different types of discourse rhetorically.

Goal:

In a YouTube video you create, you will share a personal narrative about your participation in a specific cultural context. You will find inspiration in examples of other autoethnographic YouTube videos, readings, films and other texts to create your YouTube video.

Method:

- 1) You will first do “fieldwork” in order to understand the experiences of others in a specific cultural context. Your cultural context might be your home, your school, your work, or some other social situation. As you learned in class, fieldwork can include observations, asking questions, doing surveys and other types of “qualitative” research.
- 2) You will reflect on your own experiences in the cultural context you chose to do fieldwork in. You will use these two questions to guide your reflection process: How do your experiences compare with the results of your fieldwork? What possible generalizations could you possibly make?
- 3) You will brainstorm ideas with your classmates, in class and in blog entries, about how to connect your experiences to your fieldwork in order to create your YouTube video.
- 4) You will conference with me about ideas for creating the autoethnographic YouTube video, and ask any questions you might have.
- 5) You will receive instruction in class on how to create a YouTube video; you will be given access to the technology needed to create the YouTube video.

Product:

Your YouTube video will be approximately 10 minutes, about half of which must include text, written and verbal material. Keep in mind, each page of double spaced text equals one minute of speech. You will include pictures, music, and/or video from your fieldwork, your own personal collection, or what you have permission by others to use.

Evaluation:

Content 10 pts.

Do you connect your personal experience to your cultural context in a thoughtful, insightful and engaging way? Do you sufficiently describe and explain your cultural context and personal experience to your audience? Do you insightfully and critically reflect on any conflicts caused by your relationship to the cultural context you examine? Do you generalize about your experiences and other people's experiences and show the complications and limitations of these generalizations?

Execution 5 pts

Is your video's content clearly focused and organized? Is your content original, engaging and interesting? Do you use multimedia content in an aesthetically interesting, arresting, and/or pleasing way? Is the verbal/written content well developed, engaging and clearly presented?

Self-Assessment 5 pts

You will answer the question: does your audience respond to the video in the way you want?

Digital Literacy Narrative
Assignment Details
25% of Total Grade (25 points possible)

Objectives: To become aware of the roles of different discourse practices in different types of media. To develop rhetorical awareness and agency. To learn to shift between academic and non-academic literacies.

Goal: To rhetorically analyze, respond, and reflect on a multimodal text.

Method:

1. Pick a popular cultural text (a scene from a movie, a television show episode, a YouTube video, a website, a commercial, a music video, a song, etc).
2. Using the rhetorical tools you learned in class, including Aristotle's use of Ethos, Pathos and Logos, and the Toulmin model, analyze the popular cultural text. You will have practice in class using these tools.
3. Create your own multimodal text as a response to the popular cultural text. It should be in the same multimedia form or genre (for example, if you analyzed a YouTube video, you create your own YouTube video; if you analyzed a song, you can create a song in response, etc.).

4. We will discuss in class the different purposes that you can have for creating this response, such as parodying, challenging, reaffirming, and/or questioning the original text.
5. Exchange with another student the original texts and responses. You each should write a one page peer editing review saying: what was effective, insightful, successful and interesting about each other's response, and what needs to be improved.
- 6: Write a one page revision plan and identify what rhetorical moves you could make in order to transform your text into a print-based essay. We will discuss the possible range of rhetorical moves that can be made in a print-based essay during class.
7. Write this print-based essay (3 pages, double-spaced, 12 pt. Times Roman).
8. Have this essay peer-reviewed; peer review someone else's essay.
9. Revise your essay.
10. Write a reflective paper about the process of responding to a popular cultural text and transforming it into a print-based essay, and what you learned from this process.

Evaluation: (5 points each, 25 points total)

1. Rhetorical Analysis --Do you use the rhetorical tools, Ethos, Pathos and Logos, and the Toulmin model, in insightful and interesting ways that demonstrate an understanding of why these tools can be useful?
2. Multimodal Response--Does your multimodal text sufficiently respond to the original text, based on the standards discussed in class?
3. Peer Editing Review--Is your peer review helpful to the other student (points will be decided by peer)
4. Print Based Essay--Does your essay meet the generic standards of a well written essay, based on the standards discussed in class?
5. Reflective paper--Does your paper show insight, raise interesting questions, and engage the audience?

Mystory Assignment Details
25% (20 points possible)

Objective: Demonstrate critical and emotional connections between discourse communities and personal identities through various literacies.

Goal: The mystory assignment is a way to bridge the "reality tunnels" that Robert Anton Wilson talks about. We can use the mystory to look at the world from another vantage point. The mystory is designed to allow students to see *accidental* connections between their personal experiences and the different discourse communities they participate in.

Method: You will use the Internet to find and demonstrate the accidental connections by

using a search engine. You will create a main page and four sub-web pages. On each subpage you will identify four different discourse communities, i.e. the name of an academic discipline you plan major in or particularly enjoy, and the headings of family; popular culture; and community.

1. Search for an image on the web that you identify with or think can represent who you think you are. Use some of the texts or topics in the class to inspire this search for an image. Put that image on the homepage of your website.
2. Write a narrative on this homepage explaining why you identify with this image. (200 words)
3. You will search for and then pick different images that you associate with each discourse community. Put each one on the corresponding sub-web page.
4. On each subpage, write a narrative that metaphorically connects the images you associated with the discourse community and the image on the main webpage. (200 words on each subpage)
5. Within this narrative, hyperlink some words or phrases to other pages that you find on search engines. They don't have to be logical links, but instead are connections that you randomly associate with these words or phrases.

Evaluation:

You will receive five points for each step completed. 20 points possible.

APPENDIX B

SECOND-SEMESTER FRESHMAN COMPOSITION SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Second-Semester Freshman Composition Course:

The Shifting Foundations of Academic Discourse Practices

Objectives

Each week, you will be exposed to the discourse practices of different disciplines in the contexts of postmodernism (and its relationship to modernism) and post-postmodernism and the complications of these contexts; for example, there is a section on: post-humanism, including the subset of cyborgs and dystopias, which are dealt with in the disciplines of literature, philosophy, science and technology; and a section on post-politics and post-history, which introduces disciplinary questions from cultural studies, politics, history and economics. Additionally, there are smaller sections on post-psychology and post-pedagogy. I will also introduce postfeminism and post-environmentalism; each will allow you to look at various interdisciplinary connections in real world experiences. I would also allow one “free” section in which you will be asked to bring up examples of your own “post” that could be associated with your own academic interests.

In a sense, this is a “meta” course, in which you will engage in practices that are both modern and postmodern in order to understand the contact zone of academic and nonacademic discourse. The purpose of the course will be to introduce you to what rhetoric and composition studies can do as a discipline, which is to interrogate the rhetorical nature of discourse practices and what they mean for how and why we engage in the world.

Pedagogical Strategies

My choice of pedagogical strategies in this course is based on the recognition that, just as emerging literacies don’t simply replace the ones that come before, pedagogies don’t replace prior pedagogies My course asks you to engage in discourse practices that are used in many academic discourse communities, through the academic conventions of a researched essay and annotated bibliography. You will be asked to read a variety of “texts,” academic and non-academic in nature, in various different media. The academic texts will introduce you to some of the main tensions within academic discourse communities posed by the contact zone of postmodernism and modernism, and what paradigm shifts these zones have elicited. These academic texts would also expose you to a diverse range of genres, styles and conventions. You will write short “Summary/Response/Synthesis” papers to see how academic texts can connect to non-academic texts in popular culture and to their own personal experiences.

I would also ask you to engage in the post-critical practice of the mystery in a digital medium, which you will present to the class at the end of the course. You will use

the insights you have, from creating a mystery to doing each SRS, as inventive strategies to help write an annotated bibliography and a researched essay, and in revising this essay. There will be time set aside in the class for writing workshops and conferences in order to help with this process. These written assignments and mystery will be collated in a portfolio (including all inventive and revision work products). Your portfolio will also include a Critical Reflection essay in which you write about their experiences in the course.

Some of the assignments are collaborative. For example, in the use of mystery and in the peer writing workshops, you will be collaborate when responding to each other's works and revising based on this feedback.

The discussions of the disciplinary consequences of postmodernism will allow you to think critically about the conceptualization of authority in general when we get to the post-pedagogical section of the course. Also, you will have the opportunity to demonstrate authority when you bring in their own ideas about other postmodern disciplinary moves visible in your own fields of expertise in a variety of print and non-print exercises. You will write a researched essay, which requires you to explicitly argue a position based on their research. In creating your mystery process, you will find connections between your personal experiences and the content of the course. Also, you will engage in other non-adversarial discourse practices, such as summarizing, synthesizing and responding to texts.

You will be exposed to the conventions of academic discourse, while also problematizing these discourse practices, and hopefully become comfortable navigating between different discourse communities.

Course Description

To some, postmodernism is dead. To others, it is passé. However, in the wake of its supposed death and/or irrelevance has come a range of "post-"s that rely on many of the moves postmodernism afforded. These moves are anti-foundational and anti-authoritarian in nature, and raise questions about knowledge, power and identity in ways that are still alive and well in the humanities and social sciences, much less contemporary culture. In fact, some of the most vibrant interdisciplinary scholarship takes the form of a "post" --including, post-humanism, post-critical pedagogy and post-politics. Each "post" opens up new ways to consider history, epistemology, aesthetics, and sociology, among others. However, just as postmodernism resists any unifying theory or easily derived practices, each "post" deconstructs many of the goals or strategies inherent in what we do in our Western tradition, including the work done in the academy. In this semester long course, we will engage with the consequences of decentering our disciplinary foundations. Further, we will examine some of the assumptions we may have about the discourse and methods available to us in the humanities and social sciences. In doing so, we will grapple with Gorgias' argument:

1. Nothing exists;
2. Even if something exists, nothing can be known about it; and
3. Even if something can be known about it, knowledge about it can't be communicated to others;
4. Even if it can be communicated, it cannot be understood.

Our challenge is to engage with what comes after the “post” in postmodernism without resorting to nihilism, silencing our discussions, or leading to paralysis. Instead, we hope to challenge some of what we think we know and how we communicate it --and embrace the unexpected possibilities for meditation and action.

Requirements:

Doing “postmodernism” from a critical perspective, or engaging with the various “post” moves that come in the wake of postmodernism, is difficult, at best. However, our attempts to engage will revolve around three processes:

Reflecting

Doing

Playing

You will be asked to *do* summary-response-syntheses for readings assigned over the course of the semester, an annotated bibliography and a researched essay. 30%

You will be asked to *reflect* on your experiences over the course of the semester in a critical portfolio containing an annotated bibliography and researched essay (including pre-writing activities, drafts, and revisions).and a critical reflection essay. 40%

You will *play* with the ideas in the class in a post-critical project that you present at the end of the course. 30%

Required Books

Most of the readings are available online. You will be asked to purchase the following books:

Crying of Lot 49 by Thomas Pynchon

Snow Crash by Neil Stephenson

The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Embryo Culture by Beth Kohl

Aftershock by Robert Reich

Course Schedule

Week 1

Is Postmodernism Dead?

Introduction to Class

--How to do a summary-response-synthesis (SRS)

Read in Class: “The Postmodern Condition,” by Lyotard

<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPST/BodyWorks/readings/LyotardWhatIsPostmodernBR.html>

Watch excerpts of the movie “Adaptation”

Do SRS for:

The Crying of Lot 49 by Thomas Pynchon

“Adaptation” Movie

Metafiction

<http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Metafiction.html>

Homework Readings:

Judith Halberstam & Ira Livingston, "Introduction: Posthuman Bodies," *Posthuman Bodies* (Available on Google Books)

Judith Butler, "Introduction," *Bodies that Matter* pgs. 1-23. (Available on Google Books)

Week 2

What is Post-Humanism?

Read in class: “The Post-human Manifesto -- <http://intertheory.org/pepperell.htm> and

“Post-Humanities” -- http://www.carywolfe.com/post_about.html

Discuss HW readings

Do SRS for:

Katherine Hayles "How we became posthuman”

<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/321460.html>

Neil Stephenson, *Snow Crash*

Watch "Life After People" episode 1

HW Readings:

Frederic Jameson. *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*. Part 1 (Available On Google Books)

Week 3

Post-human dystopias

Watch “Handmaid’s Tale,” Movie

Discuss HW Readings

Read in class: “The Critical Role of Art: Adorno between Utopia and Dystopia by Paolo Bolanos”

http://www.kritike.org/journal/issue_1/bolanos_june2007.pdf

Do SRS for:

The Lottery by Shirley Jackson,

http://www.d.umn.edu/~csigler/PDF%20files/jackson_lottery.pdf

The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

excerpt from *Anarchy, State and Utopia* By Robert Nozick

<http://vault.hanover.edu/~ahrens/texts/Nozick%20Anarchy%20State%20Utopia%20excerpt.pdf>

HW Readings:

“The Future is Here: Cyborgs Walk Among Us”

<http://www.livescience.com/10317-future-cyborgs-walk.html>

“Cyborg Embryo” by Sarah Franklin

<http://tcs.sagepub.com/content/23/7-8/167.full.pdf+html>

Week 4

Post-Humanist Cyborgs

“Look in Class: Surrogacy India,” <http://www.surrogacyindia.com/>

“The Cyborg Surrogate: The Future of Gender in Robotics”

<http://prezi.com/xx-lw8q8zfys/the-cyborg-the-surrogate-the-future-of-gender-in-robotics/>

Discuss HW readings, Mystory Assigned

Do SRS on:

“A Cyborg Manifesto” by Donna Haraway

<http://www.egs.edu/faculty/donna-haraway/articles/donna-haraway-a-cyborg-manifesto/>

Embryo Culture by Beth Kohl

Episode 1, “The New Normal,”

<http://www.nbc.com/the-new-normal/video/pilot/1415027>

HW Reading:

Look at examples of mystories online

<http://mason.gmu.edu/~bhawk/bystory/mystory.html>

<http://courses.jamesjbrownjr.net/mystories>

#OccupyDemocracy,

[-futures.org/2011/12/08/occupydemocracy/](http://futures.org/2011/12/08/occupydemocracy/)

“Melting into Air,”

http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2008/11/10/081110crat_atlarge_lanchester?currentPage=all

The movie, “The Flaw”

Week 5

Post-Politics--it's all economics

Watch Movie, “Margin Call”

Annotated Bibliography (Due Week 7) and Researched Essay (Due Week 12) Assigned

Do SRS for:

Aftershock by Robert Reich

Excerpt from Nickel and Dimed:

<http://www.pbs.org/peoplelikeus/resources/essays7.html>

Sections of “The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” Fredric Jameson:

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/us/jameson.htm>

HW: Reading:

Introduction and Chapter 1: *Homo Redneckus*, Handout

“Can the Subaltern Speak?” Spivak,
[http://www.mcgill.ca/files/crclaw-discourse/Can the subaltern speak.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/files/crclaw-discourse/Can_the_subaltern_speak.pdf)

Week 6

Post-Politics--where's identity?

Watch “Sarah Palin” HBO Movie

Discuss HW Readings, Work on Mystory

Do SRS for:

“The Feminine Effect on Presidential Politics”

<http://www.npr.org/2011/06/09/137056376/the-feminine-effect-on-presidential-politics>

“How Obama Became Black”

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/how-obama-became-black/2012/06/14/gJQA8CnKdV_story.html

“Identity after Identity Politics,” Nicholson

<http://digitalcommons.law.wustl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1065&context=wujlp>

HW Reading:

“The End of History,” <http://www.wesjones.com/eoh.htm>

Hayden White, “History as Narrative”

<http://www.grin.com/en/e-book/109135/hayden-white-history-as-narrative-a-constructive-approach-to-historiography>

Week 7

Post-History

Discuss HW Readings

Postmodernism and History Slideshow

<http://www.slideshare.net/mesterman/postmodernism-and-history>

Annotated Bibliography Due

Do SRS for:

Chapter 1, *Dreams From My Father* by Barack Obama

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/16262641/Dreams-From-My-Father-by-Barack-Obama-Excerpt>

“Obama and our post-modern race problem”

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704254604574614540488450188.html>

Jib Jab: Time for Some Campaignin’

<http://www.youtube.com/v/adc3MSS5Ydc&fs=1&source=uds&autoplay=1>

HW Readings:

“Postmodernism and You: Psychology”

<http://www.xenos.org/ministries/crossroads/dotpsy.htm>

“To Thine Own Selves Be True”

<http://www.nyu.edu/classes/stephens/Postmodern%20psych%20page.htm>

“Postmodernism and Psychology”

<http://postmodernpsychology.com/>

Week 8

Post-Psychology

Discuss Readings,

Watch Episodes “United States of Tara,” HBO Series

Do SRS for:

“Postmodern Diagnoses”

<http://www.laurakkerr.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/LKKerr-Narrative-Matters.pdf>

“We can remember it for you wholesale,” Philip Dick,

http://www.english.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Dick_Wholesale.pdf

Parallel Universes and how to change realities

<http://www.youtube.com/v/cfHjkKmmz0A&fs=1&source=uds&autoplay=1>

HW Reading

Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Chapter 2, Paulo Freire,

<http://www.webster.edu/~corbetre/philosophy/education/freire/freire-2.html>

“Is there a Text in this Class,” Stanley Fish,

<http://www.english.unt.edu/~simpkins/Fish%20Acceptable.pdf>

“Mystory in an Online Environment,”

<http://www.brighthub.com/education/online-learning/articles/38858.aspx>

Week 9

Discuss Readings, Work on Mystories

Conferences, Workshops

HW Readings

“Disneyworld Company,” Baudrillard,

<http://www.cttheory.net/articles.aspx?id=158>

Section: “Sacred History, History and Historicism” Mircea Eliade, 104-113 from *The Sacred and the Profane: Nature of Religion* (On Google Books)

Multiverse: The Case for Parallel Universe

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=multiverse-the-case-for-parallel-universe>

Do SRS on:

“Dreams Are True”

http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-04-23/news/ct-met-trice-dreams-0423-2-20120423_1_dreams-rem-sleep-metaphysics

“Choose a reality: only if he could”

<http://tv.nytimes.com/2012/03/01/arts/television/awake-starring-jason-isaaacs-on-nbc.html>

Dreams and Meditations

<http://www.dreamsandmeditations.com/>

Week 10

Post-Reality

Discuss HW Readings

Technology in the Desert of the Real,

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLYl2nqS9k4>

Do SRS For:

Chapter 15 *Ender's Game* (Available on Google Books)

Play Doom Video Games Online: http://doom3.fre3.com/online_games/

“Travels in Hyperreality,” Umberto Eco

<http://public.callutheran.edu/~brint/American/Eco.pdf>

HW Readings:

“Postfeminism and Popular Culture,” McRobbie

<http://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/site/human/women/students/biblio/historiog/McRobbie%20-%20postfeminism.pdf>

“I’ll be a postfeminist in a post-patriarchy,” Jervis

<http://www.salon.com/2007/08/29/postfeminism/>

“The Semiotics of Premature Burial”

http://www.cepa.newschool.edu/tcds/syllabi/wr11reader_gender/11-hawkesworth-semiotics-of-premature-burial.pdf

Week 11

Postfeminism

Discuss HW Readings

Watch episodes of “Girls”

Do SRS on:

“What is Chick Lit?”

<http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/writingpostfeminism/gutsy>

Episode 1: The Mindy Project <http://www.fox.com/the-mindy-project/>

“Television and the single woman,”

<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/tv/showtracker/la-et-st-preview-single-ladies-20120909,0,2024519.story>

HW Reading:

“Misleads on Climate Change”

http://reason.org/files/how_ipcc_misleads_on_climate_change_impacts.pdf

“Killing Environmentalism to Save it”

<http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/cross-check/2011/12/26/killing-environmentalism-to-save-it-two-greens-call-for-postenvironmentalism/>

Zodiac by Neal Stephenson

Week 12

Your own “post”

Work on Research Paper/Mystory, Critical Reflection Assigned

Come up with 3 readings of a “post” you identify

Do SRS on:

“Wicked Problems,” <http://thebreakthrough.org/index.php/dialogue/wicked-problems/>

Revolution--Their Journey is Our Hope

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtBSifBrYIQ>

Seasteading Institute Website, <http://www.seasteading.org/>

Week 13

Research Paper Due

Discussion of your “posts”

Do SRS for 3 readings from someone else’s “post”

No HW readings

Week 14

Critical Reflection Due

Work on Portfolios,

Work on Mystories

Conferences

No HW or SRS

Week 15

Portfolios Due

Mystory Projects Presented

Assignment Descriptions

(Rubrics will be available during the course)

SRS Assignment

In your SRS, you will summarize and respond to the assigned texts in 500-550 words, using these conventions:

<http://www.ccc.commnet.edu/sensen/part3/seventeen/summary.html>

Additionally, you will synthesize the texts in 250-300 words using these conventions:

<http://www.findingdulcinea.com/features/edu/Strategies-for-Synthesis-Writing.html>

Annotated Bibliography Assignment

For details about how to write an annotated bibliography:

<http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/skill28.htm>

Your annotated bibliography should be the sources will refer to in writing your researched essay; you need 10 sources.

Researched Essay Assignment

Your essay can be about any topic we have discussed in class or a topic inspired by this class. It needs to be between 1500-2000 words and in MLA format; you will need to follow the general conventions of an essay as described here in this slideshow: <http://www.smsu.edu/academics/collegenow/the%20college%20essay.ppt>

Critical Reflection Assignment

Your critical reflection will cover all of the contents and writing you will do in the class. It should be 1000 words, and you should use this guide to help you write this reflection: <http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/pdf/reflective.pdf>

Portfolio Assignment

Your writing portfolio will include what you consider three SRSs, the work-product (drafts, brainstorming, etc) and final versions of your researched essay, and your critical reflection essay. You should follow the conventions of a portfolio, as described here: http://www.cengage.com/custom/enrichment_modules/data/1428262148_WH_Assembling_watermark.pdf

Mystory Assignment

According to Robert Anton Wilson,

We're all looking from the point of view of our reality tunnels. And when we begin to realize that we're all looking from the point of view of our reality tunnels, we find it much easier to understand where other people are coming from (html).

The mystory assignment is a way to bridge these “reality tunnels” and look at the world from another vantage point. The mystory can help you see connections between postmodernism and the different discourse communities you participate in. You will use the digital space to find and demonstrate chance connections by creating a website and using a search engine.

First of all, you will search for an image on the web that you think might be postmodern. You can use some of the texts or topics in the class to inspire this search for an image and you would put that image on the homepage. You will then create four sub-web pages based on four different discourse communities, i.e. the name of an academic discipline you plan to study in college, perhaps even your major; and the headings of family; popular culture; and community. On each subpage you will pick an image that you think connects each category with the initial postmodern image and then write a narrative that uses metaphorically connects the two images. Within this narrative, you will hyperlink certain words or phrases to other pages that you find on search engines.

They don't have to be logical links, but instead are connections that you might randomly associate with these words or phrases.

You would then create a blog where you do pre-writing activities for your researched papers. The pre-writing activities will occur during the writing workshop and individual conferences, where you expand their narratives in order to generate ideas for what you can write about. Additionally, these blogs and mystories would be visible to other students in the course, and you all will be able to comment on their other students' blogs, in order to generate other inventive possibilities.

More details about the mystory assignment can be found here:

<http://yourmystory.weebly.com/>

APPENDIX C

GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT TRAINING COURSE SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Graduate Training Assistant Course

The purpose of this course is to introduce graduate students to some of the fundamental theories and practices in composition studies. Students will also learn about issues and topics currently discussed and debated in the field of composition studies. Students will develop an understanding of composition studies as a discipline and learn pedagogical practices they can use in their own composition classrooms.

Assignments--

Reading/Response Journal: You will summarize and respond to each book and article assigned. The entry for each book needs to be approximately 250 words, the entry for each book needs be approximately 500 words. This assignment can be adapted for a freshman composition course.

Rhetorical Analysis: Rhetoric is a fundamental aspect of composition theory and pedagogy. You will be asked to do a rhetorical analysis of a popular cultural text. This assignment can be adapted for use in a freshman composition course.

Digital Literacy Project: Digital literacy is an emerging focus in the field of composition studies. You will engage in a multimodal project that utilizes technology. You will interrogate the role of personal identity in the context of different discourse practices. You will have the choice of doing a mystery or digital autoethnography. This assignment can be adapted for use in a freshman composition studies.

Create a Syllabus: You will create a syllabus that can be used in a freshman composition course based on the pedagogies and theories you learn about in this course. You will be asked to incorporate one or more of the assignments in this course into this syllabus, in addition to any others you choose to include.

Organization of this Course:

Week 1: An introduction to the field

Week 2: Overview of current-traditional, expressivist, social epistemic and cognitive theories and pedagogies

Week 3: The role of rhetoric in composition studies

Week 4: Theories and practices of Argumentation and Collaboration

Week 5: The postmodern turn in composition studies

Week 6: Digital Literacies and their role in our field

Week 7: The role of affect in the composition classroom

Week 8: Queer & Disability Theory and Pedagogy

Week 9: Feminist Composition

Weeks 10: Postfeminism

Week 11-14: Work on Assignments/Conferences

Week 15: Turn in Assignments; present digital literacy project

Required Books:

Babin, Edith and Kimberly Harrison. *Contemporary Composition Studies: A Guide to Theorists and Terms*. Greenwood, 1999.

Belenky, Mary Field et al. *Women's Way of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind*. New York: Basic, 1986.

Bernard-Donals, Michael F. *The Practice of Theory: Rhetoric, Knowledge, and Pedagogy in the Academy*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 1998.

Crowley, Sharon, and Debra Hawhee. *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999.

Elbow, Peter. *Writing without Teachers*. New York: Oxford UP, 1973.

Halasek, Kay and Nels P. Highberg, Eds. *Landmark Essays on Basic Writing*. Mahwah, NJ: Hermagoras Press/Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001.

Vitanza, Victor J. *Negation, Subjectivity, and the History of Rhetoric*. Albany: State University of New York, 1997.

Wood, Nancy V. *Perspectives on Argument*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998.

Required Readings:

Introduction

Berlin, James. "Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories." *College English* 44 (1982): 765-777.

Crowley, Sharon. *Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays*. Pittsburgh Series in Composition, Literacy, and Culture. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1998. (excerpts)

Hairston, Maxine. "Diversity, Ideology, and Teaching Writing." *CCC* 43.2 (1992): 179-193.

Nystrand, Martin, Stuart Greene, and Jeffrey Wiemelt. "Where did Composition Studies Come from?: An Intellectual History." *Written Communication*. 10.3 (1993).

Pratt, Mary Louise. "Arts of the contact zone." *Profession* 91. New York: MLA. (1991): 33-40.

Current Traditional, Expressivist, Social Epistemic & Cognitive

- Adler-Kassner, Linda. "Ownership Revisited: An Exploration in Progressive Era and Expressivist Composition Scholarship." *CCC* 49.2 (1998): 208-233.
- Bartholomae, David. "Inventing the University." *Journal of Basic Writing*. 5 (1986): 4-23.
- Berlin, James. "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class." *College English* 50 (1988): 477-494.
- Berlin, James A, and Robert P. Inkster. "Current-Traditional Rhetoric: Paradigm and Practice." *Freshman English News* 8 (1980): 1-14.
- Bizzell, Patricia. "Authority and Critical Pedagogy." *American Literary History* 3.4 (1991): 847-863.
- Emig, Janet. *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*. Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1971. (excerpts)
- Flower, Linda, and John R. Hayes. "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 32(1981): 365-87.
- Flower, Linda. *The Construction of Negotiated Meaning: A Social Cognitive Theory of Writing*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1994. (excerpts)
- Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. Harmondsworth, Middlesex : Penguin, 1972. (excerpts)
- Giroux, Henry A., and Peter McLaren. *Between borders : pedagogy and the politics of cultural studies*. New York ; London: Routledge, 1994. 27-50.
- Glass, R. D. "On Paulo Freire's philosophy of praxis and the foundations of liberation education." *Educational Researcher* 30.2 (2001): 15-25.
- Hart, S. "Breaking literacy boundaries through critical service-learning: Education for the silenced and marginalized." *Mentoring & Tutoring* 14.1 (2006). 17- 32.
- Killingsworth, M. Jimmie. "Product and Process, Literacy and Orality: An Essay on Composition and Culture." *CCC* 44.1 (1993): 26-39. *JSTOR* Web. 7 Aug. 2012.
- Murray, Donald M. "Teach Writing as Process not Product." *Rhetoric and Composition: A Sourcebook for Teachers and Writers*. Ed. Richard L. Graves. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1984: 89-92.

Rhetorical

- Bacha, Jeffrey Alan, "Establishing Pedagogical Practicality by Reconnecting Composition Studies to the Rhetorical Tradition" (2007): *English Theses*. Paper 23.
- Bitzer, Lloyd F. "The Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1.1. (Jan. 1968): 1-14.
- D'Angelo, Frank J. *Composition in the Classical Tradition*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2000. (excerpts)

Burke, Kenneth. *A Rhetoric of Motives*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950. (excerpts)

Levy, Matthew Asher. *Comp and Circumstance: Cynicism and the Rhetorical Situation*. Arlington: University of Texas, 2005. Print. (excerpts)

-- *Rereading the Sophists: Classical Rhetoric Refigured*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1991. (excerpts)

Paine, Charles. *The Resistant Writer: Rhetoric as Immunity, 1850 to the Present*. Albany: State U of New York P, 1999. (excerpts)

Ratcliffe, Krista. "The Current State of Composition Scholar/Teachers: Is Rhetoric Gone or Just Hiding Out?" *Enculturation* 5.1 (Fall 2003): http://enculturation.gmu.edu/5_1/ratcliffe.html

Vitanza, Victor J. "Seeing in Third Sophistic Ways." *Rhetoric and Composition as Intellectual Work*. Ed. Gary A. Olson. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2002. 164-74.

Argumentation & Collaboration

Brent, Doug. "Rogerian Rhetoric: Ethical Growth through Alternative Forms of Argumentation." *Argument Revisited, Argument Redefined: Negotiating Meaning in the Composition Classroom*. Ed. Barbara Emmel, Paula Resch and Deborah Tenney. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1996.

Brent, Douglas. "Rogerian Argument: An Alternative to Traditional Argument." In *Argument Revisited, Argument Redefined: Negotiating Meaning in the Composition Classroom*. Eds. Barbara Emmel, Paula Resch, and Deborah Tenny. Sage, 1996. 73-96. Web.

Bruffee, Kenneth A. *Collaborative Learning: Higher Education, Interdependence, and the Authority of Knowledge*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1993. (excerpts)

Buchanan, Linda. "Forging and Firing Thunderbolts: Collaboration and Women's Rhetoric." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 33.4 (2003): 43-63.

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Harris, Jeanette. "Toward a Working Definition of Collaborative Writing." *Authority and Textuality: Current Views of Collaborative Writing*. Ed. James S. Leonard, Christine E. Wharton, Robert Murray Davis, and Jeanette Harris. West Cornwall, CT: Locust Hill P, 1994. 77-84.

Ede, Lisa, and Andrea A. Lunsford. "Collaboration and Concepts of Authorship." *PMLA* 116 (2001): 354-369.

Tannen, Deborah. "Agonism in the Academy: Surviving Higher Learning's Argument Culture," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2000): B7.

The Postmodern/Post-Critical Turn

Arroyo, Sarah. "Playing to the Tune of Electracy: From Post-Process to a Pedagogy Otherwise." *JAC* 25.4 (2005): 683-715.

--"W/holes: Rethinking Writing Spaces, Moving Toward a Post-Critical Composition." *JAC* 23.2 (2003): 259-289.

Breuch, Lee-Ann M. Kastman. "Post-Process 'Pedagogy': A Philosophical Exercise." *Journal of Advanced Composition* 22.1 (Winter 2002): 119-150. *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory: A Reader*, 2nd edition. Ed. Victor Villanueva. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2003.

Davis, D. Diane. *Breaking up (at) Totality: A Rhetoric of Laughter*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2000. (excerpts)

Ebert, Teresa. *Ludic Feminism and After: Postmodernism, Desire, and Labor in Late Capitalism*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1996. (excerpts)

Dobrin, Sidney I. "Paralogic Hermeneutic Theories, Power, and the Possibility for Liberating Pedagogies." *Post-Process Theory: Beyond the Writing-Process Paradigm*. Ed. Thomas Kent. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1999. 132-48.

Hawk, Byron. *A Counter-history of Composition: Toward Methodologies of Complexity*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh, 2007. (excerpts)

Kent, Thomas. "Introduction." *Post-Process Theory: Beyond the Writing-Process Paradigm*. Ed. Thomas Kent. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1999: 198-214.

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Digital Literacies

Faigley, Lester. "Literacy after the Revolution." *Literacy after the Revolution*. UTexas. Web. 31 Aug. 2012. <<http://www.cwrl.utexas.edu/~faigley/work/literacy.html>>.

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Affect

Bean, Janet. "Manufacturing Emotions: Tactical Resistance in the Narratives of Working-Class Students." *Studies*. Ed. Dale Jacobs and Laura R. Micciche. *A Way to Move: Rhetorics Emotion and Composition* of Portsmouth, NH: Boynton, 2003. 101-12.

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Micciche, Laura R. "Emotion, Ethics, and Rhetorical Action." *JAC* 25.1 (2005): 161-185

Queer & Disability

Bryson, Mary. "Queer pedagogy: Praxis makes im/perfect." *Canadian Journal of Education* 8.2 (1993): 285-305.

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Feminist Composition Studies

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Breeze, William. "Constructing a Male Feminist Pedagogy: Authority, Practice, and Authenticity in the Composition Classroom." *Feminist Teacher* 18.1 (2007): 59-73.

Dickson, Marcia. "Directing Without Power: Adventures in Constructing a Model of Feminist Writing Program Administration." *Writing Ourselves Into the Story: Unheard Voices from Composition Studies*. Ed. Sheryl I. Fontaine and Susan Hunter. Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1993. 140-53.

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<<http://archive.org/details/FeministConsciousness-raisingGroupGuideTopics>>.

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